
Volume IV—Third Nephi through Moroni

*D*octrinal
Commentary on the
Book of Mormon

Joseph Fielding McConkie

Robert L. Millet

Brent L. Top

DOCTRINAL COMMENTARY ON THE BOOK OF MORMON, VOLUME IV

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This fourth and final volume of commentary encompasses the last four hundred years of Nephite history. It starts with the cataclysmic destruction of the wicked and the sublime occurrences that follow when the risen Lord personally ministers among those who are spared. At the end, Moroni, the solitary survivor of the Nephite-Lamanite carnage, makes an abridgment of the Jaredite record (which also ends in national self-destruction), and then pens his provocative and uplifting message for our day and age.

In the spiritual climax of the entire thousand-year Nephite story, twenty-five hundred people witness the Savior's descent from heaven and, at his invitation, feel the places in his body where "he was wounded for our transgressions." He instructs his rapt and adoring audience in gospel principles and practices, heals the sick, introduces the sacrament, organizes his Church, and empowers its newly selected leaders. In dramatically spiritual scenes Jesus blesses the little children one by one and brings down angels to minister to them.

For many years after these moving experiences the people live in a celestial society—no wickedness, only love and peace prevailing. Then gradually apostasy sets in. All too soon the bitterness of war is unleashed. Mormon, prophet and military leader, vainly protests at his people's vicious wickedness and at the consequent horrors perpetrated by both "Nephites" and "Lamanites." He lives only long enough to witness the extinction of his nation, record his heart-rending cry at the devastating waste and loss, and pass the sacred records to his son Moroni.

In the pattern of the previous volumes, theme by theme the enormous contrasts—from the transcendent blessing of the divine Savior's appearances all the way down to the depths of human evil and depravity—are here the subjects of the authors' informed and insightful commentary and of the prophetic sources they quote. Thus this series, covering the entire Book of Mormon, will assist the reader's understanding in the recommended daily reading of that great Restoration scripture.



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Preface

The prophet Enoch beheld in vision the trials and triumphs of the people who would live in those times incident to the Lord's second coming, his coming in glory. The Lord told him that before the day of the earth's rest, the great Millennium, "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." That is, in the midst of gross darkness, at a time when wickedness and apostasy will have spread to the four corners of the earth, the God of heaven will save a people, will preserve those who choose to hearken to his voice and receive the revelations of his Spirit.

The Savior then described the manner in which that remarkable preservation would take place: "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.)

And what was the plan? God would bring forth the Book of Mormon. He would deliver a book of scripture to a world which had been groaning in darkness (see D&C 84:49), a world which would need the word of the Lord more desperately than its people would realize. A new book of scripture. Another Testament of Jesus Christ. And what would be the role of this sacred volume? It would bear testimony that Jesus is the Christ, the Eternal God, and this it would do to a world which had denied the divine sonship and relegated the Lord of all to the category of gifted speaker and social revolutionary. To a generation who had largely metaphorized

away the pure and profound reality of the Resurrection it would bear testimony of his rise from the tomb. It would be central to the establishment of righteousness in the earth, a vital guide in setting forth the doctrine of Christ—the formula whereby men and women can forsake a relativistic world and come unto Christ, be changed and cared for and captained by Christ, and in process of time be perfected in Christ.

The Book of Mormon, whose primary author would be Jesus Christ, would be the means whereby good men and women everywhere, men and women of a royal lineage, would be gathered to the true Church and fold of God, gathered to the lands of their inheritance. And it would be the means whereby those not of Israel, those outside the lineal descent of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, could be led to enter the covenant and become heirs to all the promises made to the ancient fathers. The Book of Mormon would prove to be a vital key in the establishment of that holy commonwealth which the scriptures call Zion, and would serve an indispensable role in preparing a people to welcome the returning King of Zion, Jesus the Christ. Truly, we have scarcely begun to realize what a treasure is in our midst in the form of the Book of Mormon. What wonders it has already worked is beyond belief, and only God knows the miracles it shall yet bring to pass!

In this work, the fourth and final volume of the series, we bring to a close our doctrinal commentary of the Book of Mormon. The labor has been its own reward. We have thrilled as new insights have burst upon our minds in the process of reflecting and pondering upon the more difficult passages. Our hearts have rejoiced as the Spirit has confirmed the truthfulness of doctrines and principles which we feel that we have always known. And our souls have been stirred and sobered as we have contemplated the seriousness of that volume of holy writ and come away knowing, more fully than ever, that in the matter of accepting the Book of Mormon and living by its principles and doctrine, salvation itself is at stake.

As in the first three volumes, we confine our commentary to doctrinal matters, leaving to others any discussion and explication of languages, culture, and history. As before, we recommend that when using this book the reader have in hand the modern editions of the LDS scriptures, so that he or she may take advantage of their footnotes, the Topical Guide, and the other supplementary material they provide.

Though for what follows we are indebted to many people, as the authors we alone are responsible for what is written; the work is a private endeavor and not an official publication either of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints or of Brigham Young University. We do, however, believe the contents of this volume to

be true and in harmony with the teachings of the standard works and of the prophets of this dispensation. It is our hope that by the use of this book readers may be strengthened in their faith in and commitment to Jesus Christ, built up in their loyalty to the gospel restored through the Prophet Joseph Smith, and made more excited than ever to ponder and sift through and treasure the priceless gems found in the Book of Mormon. It is our witness that those who properly receive this gift, the Book of Mormon, and who search its contents diligently, will come to rejoice in the gift and, more important, rejoice in him who is the giver of the gift (see D&C 88:33).

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The final expression of gratitude is reserved for our families—our wives and children. Without their patient encouragement, neither this nor any other writing projects would have been begun or completed. Without their support, so many things essential to this work and what it stands for would not have materialized.

Abbreviations

The following abbreviations have been used to simplify references in the text of this work. Publication details on each source cited are listed in the Bibliography.

<i>Commentary</i>	Joseph Fielding McConkie, Robert L. Millet, and Brent L. Top (volume 4), <i>Doctrinal Commentary on the Book of Mormon</i> , 4 vols.
CR	Conference Report
<i>HC</i>	Joseph Smith, <i>History of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints</i> , 7 vols.
<i>Hymns</i>	<i>Hymns of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints</i>
<i>JD</i>	<i>Journal of Discourses</i> , 26 vols.
JST	Joseph Smith Translation of the Bible
<i>Millennial Messiah</i>	Bruce R. McConkie, <i>The Millennial Messiah</i>
<i>Mortal Messiah</i>	Bruce R. McConkie, <i>The Mortal Messiah</i> , 4 vols.
<i>New Witness</i>	Bruce R. McConkie, <i>A New Witness for the Articles of Faith</i>
<i>Promised Messiah</i>	Bruce R. McConkie, <i>The Promised Messiah</i>
<i>Teachings</i>	Joseph Smith, <i>Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith</i>

The Third Book of Nephi

In the title page to the Book of Mormon, written by the hand of Moroni, we read that this record is “written to the Lamanites, who are a remnant of the house of Israel; and also to Jew and Gentile” for the purpose of convincing them “that JESUS is the CHRIST, the ETERNAL GOD, manifesting himself unto all nations.” Of the entire contents of the Book of Mormon, the book of 3 Nephi perhaps makes the most important contribution toward meeting Moroni’s stated objectives of convincing Jew and Gentile that Jesus is indeed the Christ, the Eternal God, and instructing the house of Israel concerning the “great things the Lord hath done for their fathers; and that they may know the covenants of the Lord, that they are not cast off forever.” The account of the Savior’s visit is the climax, the apex, of the entire Book of Mormon. All previous Book of Mormon writings had pointed forward to that marvelous event and all things recorded thereafter remind the reader of that event as a symbol of the Lord’s climactic second coming that will yet occur.

Some who are not intimately familiar with the contents of the book of 3 Nephi, upon hearing that it consists principally of an account of the Savior’s ministry on the American continent, may wonder whether and if so how it is any different from the accounts contained in the four Gospels of the New Testament. Is 3 Nephi nothing more than a “fifth gospel,” adding no new insights but only repetition? As we shall see, 3 Nephi contains not only an account of the ministry of the resurrected Lord among a group of the inhabitants of the New World but also many additional testimonies of the reality of the resurrection, clarifications of major points of doctrine, and a unique and touching description of the true nature of the immortal Messiah. These contributions not only are supplemental to the four canonical Gospels but also are essential to a true understanding of the total mission of Jesus Christ, the Messiah and Redeemer of the world. While it contains numerous important

doctrinal insights, instructions, and clarifications, the unique contributions of 3 Nephi fall into at least five major categories:

1. *It testifies of the reality of the resurrection of Jesus Christ and serves as a second witness of his divinity.* The Savior himself declared that one purpose of his visit among the Nephites was 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” (3 Nephi 11:14). In 3 Nephi thousands of people—men, women, and children—become eyewitnesses of the Resurrection and add their own testimonies, as “another testament,” to those declared by Old World witnesses as recorded in the New Testament.

2. *It defines his gospel, clarifies points of doctrine, and teaches the necessity of gospel ordinances.* In the world of traditional Christianity there is much confusion and contention concerning the true points of Christ’s teachings. Often the Bible is interpreted in so many ways that, instead of greater understanding, greater confusion results. Jesus was acutely aware of such confusion and during his visit to the New World sought to dispel disputations over doctrine. Here we shall see Jesus himself teaching in plainness and power the true points of his doctrine, the necessity of gospel ordinances such as baptism and the sacrament, the vital lifeline of prayer, and how all of these principles are inseparably bonded to the atonement of Jesus Christ.

3. *It explains the purpose of the law of Moses and teaches Jesus’ divine role in the law’s fulfillment.* The Jews, one of the primary audiences for which the Book of Mormon is intended, had waited millennia for their promised Messiah. In 3 Nephi we see Jesus authoritatively declaring himself to be the Messiah—the Lawgiver and the fulfillment of the law. In 3 Nephi we read “plain and precious” teachings by Jesus concerning the purpose of the law of Moses, its relationship to the Atonement, and how it is fulfilled in Christ. This is certainly one of the most significant contributions and important messages of 3 Nephi to the world generally and to the Jews specifically.

4. *It contains important clarifications concerning the “other sheep” and doctrinal teachings concerning the gathering of Israel.* “Ye are they of whom I said: Other sheep I have which are not of this fold” (3 Nephi 15:21), the Savior said to the Nephites. This valuable knowledge that was and still remains hidden from most of the world is revealed in clarity in 3 Nephi. We shall not only see the resurrected Lord teaching the Nephites concerning their covenantal role in the house of Israel but also will receive additional information concerning the lost tribes of Israel and the great work of gathering that is to come in the latter days.

5. *It provides us with a unique and touching view of the emotional attributes of a glorified God—the resurrected Christ.* No other volume of

scripture, either ancient or modern, affords us such glimpses into what the resurrected Christ is like, how tenderly he cares for us, and the emotions that a God can possess. We shall see in this book the greatest description in holy writ of God's compassion, love, and mercy—his tenderness toward the handicapped and the children, his sorrow and concern for the wicked, and his love and approbation of the righteous.

The book of 3 Nephi is infinitely more than just a "fifth Gospel." In it the reader will discover perhaps the greatest written account of the ministry, teachings, and nature of the Lord. It does more than just contribute to an understanding of the doctrines of Christ; it invites all men everywhere to come unto him and partake of his mercy and thereby come to know him as he really is.

The Presumed Translation of Nephi

3 Nephi 1:1-3

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.

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.

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.

1. This was the year foretold by New World prophets as that in which the Son of Man would be born. Some six hundred years have passed away from the days of Zedekiah and Jeremiah and Ezekiel and Lehi. The meridian of time, the central or key point in history—the messianic dispensation—is about to burst forth upon the world.

1. Lachoneus was the chief judge] Lachoneus will serve as governor or chief judge for approximately thirty years (see 3 Nephi 6:19).

3. He departed out of the land, and whither he went, no man knoweth] Concerning Alma the Younger, Mormon wrote: "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. Behold, this we know, that he was a righteous man; and the saying went abroad in the church that he was taken up by

the Spirit, or buried by the hand of the Lord.” (Alma 45:18–19.) The language describing Nephi’s departure is very similar to this; hence we assume that the Lord chose to translate him, to receive him into a terrestrial state without his tasting death. If so, then Nephi, like three others who will follow such a course in thirty-four years, was given power over death, power over the elements, power to come and go among the children of men as need arose, and power to continue his mortal work in bringing souls unto Christ either on this or some other planet or planets (see commentary on the three Nephites in 3 Nephi 28; see also *Teachings*, p. 170).

The Faithful Anxiously Await the Signs of Christ’s Coming

3 Nephi 1:4–14

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.

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.

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.

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.

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.

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 mor-

row 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.

14. Behold, I come unto my own, to fulfil all things which I have made known unto the chil-

dren 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.

4. A God was coming to earth and all things must be in readiness. The signs of his coming began to be shown forth, just as Samuel and other prophets had predicted. Jesus was and is the greatest of all the prophets, the prophets' Prophet, the hope and desire of the ages, and his coming needed to be signaled by greater signs and greater wonders than any other event in history.

5–7. There have always been and there always will be those who refuse to receive the truth, even when that truth stares them in the face. To the impenitent, the unrepentant, the impure, and the spiritually insensitive—to these the signs of the times are laughable, inconsequential, and unconvincing.

7. **The people who believed began to be very sorrowful]** Even the faithful exist on a hope that eventually, in the due time of the Lord, the arm of God will be bared, the power and promises of the Almighty will be shown forth in the preservation and vindication of the believers.

8. **That day and that night and that day]** See Helaman 14:4.

9. Here we witness a phenomenon which is repeated ad nauseam in the Book of Mormon: the wicked who refuse to believe dare not allow others to believe. There is no room in their tightly controlled epistemological system for faith or spirit or revelation or hope. They do not know, so they conclude that no one else knows. They cannot feel, so they dare not allow others to feel. In this case they shun the light of evidence that comes from God and refuse others the right to wait patiently on the Lord for the signs to be given.

10–11. It is painful for a believer to witness, as did Alma and Amulek (see Alma 14:8–11), the persecution and martyrdom of those who choose to follow the gospel light.

11. **Their faith in the tradition of their fathers]** “To some it is given by the Holy Ghost to know that Jesus Christ is the Son of God, and that he was crucified for the sins of the world. To others it is given to believe on their words, that they also might have eternal life if they continue faithful.” (D&C 46:1–14; compare 1 Nephi 2:16–17; see also *New Witness*, p. 372.)

12. **The voice of the Lord]** These verses cause us to reflect

upon what is yet an unanswered (unrevealed) matter—the time when the individual spirit enters the body. This is the day before Jesus is to be born to Mary in Bethlehem of Judea. We would assume that by this time the spirit of Jesus is within that infant body which is housed within the womb of Mary. How, then, does the voice of Jesus come to Nephi?

Does the spirit enter the body at the time of conception; at the time of quickening, when the mother first feels signs of life within her; or at the time of physical birth? Can it possibly come and go before the time of birth? We do not know. Such has not been made known to us in the latter days. We do know, however, that the words of God are often spoken through his servants by divine investiture of authority (see *Commentary* 2:227–29). To Adam the Holy Ghost spoke for and in behalf of the Only Begotten Son (see Moses 5:9). Such may have been the case here: The Spirit may have been commissioned by the Father to speak to Nephi in the first person for Christ, as though Jesus himself were speaking. Another possibility is that an angel, acting by that same investiture of authority, spoke to Nephi the words of Christ (see *Mortal Messiah* 1:349, note 1; compare Revelation 22:6–9). In any event, whether the Lord’s words are spoken by himself or by his anointed servants, “it is the same” (D&C 1:38).

13. On this night shall the sign be given] That is: ‘On this night there will be no night. There shall be a day (today) and a night (tonight) and a day (tomorrow) wherein there is no darkness.’

14. I come unto my own] Jesus came among his own people, the Jews, and his own received him not.

14. To fulfil all things which I have made known] Jesus the Christ was the grand fulfillment of the prophecies. He fulfilled the law of Moses. That law was as one glorious type or shadow or prophecy of Christ (see Alma 34:14); he, the Savior, was the fulfillment of the prophecy.

14. From the foundation of the world] Jesus was and is the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world (see Revelation 5:6; 13:8; Moses 7:47). The plan of salvation, which is the gospel of God the Father, was taught and understood in our first estate. There it was decreed that this plan would entail a creation, a fall, and an atonement. And there it was that Jehovah, the firstborn spirit of the Father, was chosen and foreordained to be the Redeemer and the Savior of all mankind. Joseph Smith spoke of the nature of such premortal agreements: “Everlasting covenant was made between three personages before the organization of this earth, and relates to their dispensation of things to men on the earth; these personages, according to Abraham’s record, are called God the first, the Creator; God the second, the Redeemer; and God the third, the witness or Testator” (*Teachings*, p. 190).

14. 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] This is a most difficult passage. It sounds as though the Lord is stating that he will come into the world to fulfill two wills—the will of Jehovah, the premortal God of the ancients (perhaps referred to here as “me”), and the will of the mortal Messiah (the person of “flesh”). Of course we know that they, Jehovah and Jesus, are one and the same being. At the same time, this statement dramatizes the separate and severable roles that would be played by the Master, that of the Holy One of Israel (premortals) and that of Jesus of Nazareth (mortal). There is a sense, then, in which we might speak of the Lord Jehovah, acting always under the direction of Elohim, our Heavenly Father, as the one who sent Jesus Christ into the world. Note the following language from the Psalmist: “The LORD [Jehovah] said unto my Lord [Jesus], Sit thou at my right hand, until I make thine enemies thy footstool” (Psalm 110:1; compare Matthew 22:41–45). A similar pattern emerges in the greatest of all messianic prophecies. In speaking of the suffering Savior, Isaiah wrote that “the LORD [Jehovah] hath laid on him [Jesus] the iniquity of us all.” Further, “it pleased the LORD [Jehovah] to bruise him [Jesus]; he [Jehovah] hath put him [Jesus] to grief.” (Isaiah 53:6, 10; Mosiah 14:6, 10.) In the same vein the Lord Jehovah spoke to the brother of Jared: “And whatsoever thing persuadeth men to do good is of me; for good cometh of none save it be of me. I am the same that leadeth men to all good; he that will not believe my words will not believe me—that I am; and *he that will not believe me will not believe the Father who sent me. For behold, I am the Father, I am the light, and the life, and the truth of the world.*” (Ether 4:12, italics added.)

The Signs Come to Pass

3 Nephi 1:15–21

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.

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.

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.

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.

15–21. Those who had doubted the words of Samuel—who in smug self-security had refused to accept the oracles of an anointed servant of God—now came face to face with reality. Like those at the time of the Second Coming who will have doubted the signs of the times and the warnings of the prophets, the unbelievers of the first century were dislodged and upended, both physically and spiritually.

16. Fell to the earth] See Helaman 14:7.

21. A new star] See Helaman 14:5.

Satan Spreads Lies, False Doctrine, and Secret Combinations

3 Nephi 1:22–30

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.

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.

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.

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.

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.

22. Lyings sent forth . . . by Satan] Satan always seeks to sow lies whenever there has been a great manifestation of the truth. He tries desperately to confuse, to confound, to complicate things. He works diligently to harden hearts against the plain verities of heaven as well as against the signs and wonders which are evident among believers.

22. The more part of the people . . . were converted unto the Lord] Despite Satan's efforts, great numbers of humble and teachable souls now receive fuel for their faith, evidence that their hope is solid and substantial. Theirs is a true conversion, a conversion to the Lord. They are not convinced because of the signs, but rather their faith in Christ is now sustained by signs.

24–25. The peace in the land which has flowed from the faith of believers is punctuated by a doctrinal misunderstanding. There are those who presumably begin to conclude that the birth, rather than the death, of Christ was to be that moment in history wherein the law of Moses would be done away. In reality, it is not the life of Christ—albeit that was a matchless example of perfection—on which the hinge of eternity turns; rather, the sufferings and death of Christ put in motion the atoning sacrifice, which brought to fulfillment the temporary law, the law of Moses. The scriptures plainly taught that the Lord of life must suffer and die before that law, and especially animal sacrifice, would be done away. That those who preached falsehood in this regard were not malicious in their intent is evident from their speedy conversion to the truth when they were confronted.

27-30. Dissenters from the Nephites and Lamanites, as is almost always the case in the Book of Mormon record, find their way into the camps of the enemies, in this case the Gadianton bands.

The Wicked Deny the Signs and Reject the Doctrine of Christ

3 Nephi 2:1-10

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, in-somuch 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—

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, in-somuch that he did blind their eyes and lead them away to believe that the doctrine of Christ was a foolish and a vain thing.

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.

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.

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.

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.

1. Began to be less and less astonished at a sign] The more hardened a people become, the more serious their sins, the more closed to spiritual experience, the less they are impressed by won-

ders sent forth from God or inspired acts of his servants. They are ready and anxious to provide naturalistic explanations for miracles and to shun and ignore divine intervention.

2. Does this all sound familiar? Consider the following experience some six centuries earlier: “And Laman said unto Lemuel and also unto the sons of Ishmael: Behold, let us slay our father, and also our brother Nephi, who has taken it upon him to be our ruler and our teacher, who are his elder brethren. Now, he says that the Lord has talked with him, and also that angels have ministered unto him. But behold, we know that he lies unto us; and he tells us these things, and he worketh many things by his cunning arts, that he may deceive our eyes.” (1 Nephi 16:37–38.) While there is no particular reason to question Satan’s powers of originality, it would seem that he scarcely needs creative or novel approaches as long as we do not learn from the lessons of the past, as long as we continue to stumble over the same things that ensnared the ancients.

8. Prior to the sign of the Savior’s birth, the Nephites had measured time first from when Lehi had left Jerusalem (for example, see Jacob 1:1), and later in terms of the reign of the judges (for example, see Mosiah 29:44; Alma 1:1).

9. See commentary on 3 Nephi 1:3.

Nephites and Lamanites Unite to Fight the Gadianton Robbers

3 Nephi 2:11–19

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.

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;

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.

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.

18. And thus ended the four-

teenth 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.

11–14. There comes a point where a people's only alternative is war—war against that which would destroy their civilization and way of life. Here the Lamanites and Nephites join hands in an effort to put a stop to the secret murders and robberies of the band of Gadianton. This they did “to maintain their rights, and the privileges of their church and of their worship, and their freedom and their liberty.”

15. Their curse was taken from them] The mark of God's curse, the dark skin (see 1 Nephi 2:23; 2 Nephi 5:21–23), was taken away. This was consistent with the prophetic word which declared that when the Lamanites are restored to the knowledge of Jesus Christ and his gospel, “their scales of darkness shall begin to fall from their eyes; and many generations shall not pass away among them, save they shall be a pure and a delightsome people” (2 Nephi 30:6).

16. Were called Nephites] See Jacob 1:14.

17–18. The Book of Mormon is a somber witness of the fact that military might alone cannot promote the general welfare or assure the safety of a nation. Only when a people are strong in spirit and righteous in behavior do they enjoy the strength of the Lord (see Mormon 2:26).

Gidgiddoni Seeks to Prepare His People for Battle

3 Nephi 3:1–26

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:

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.

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.

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.

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.

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.

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.

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.

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.

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 nowise be delivered out of the hands of those 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.

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.

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.

23. And the land which was ap-

pointed 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.

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.

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.

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.

1–26. In this chapter we are able to witness a stark contrast. On the one hand we find the bold and egotistical Giddianhi, the Gadianton leader who demands a Nephite surrender. On the other hand we see the quiet and righteous confidence of Lachoneus and Gidgiddoni, the humble Nephite leaders who know absolutely from whence true strength comes.

2. As if ye were supported by the hand of a god] This condescending remark epitomizes the skeptic: he or she is eager to provide alternative explanations for what the faithful believe to be divine intervention. “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” (Boyd K. Packer, *That All May Be Edified*,” p. 340).

8. I swear unto you . . . with an oath] See *Commentary* 1:39–40.

9. The secret society . . . and the works . . . are of ancient date] See Moses 5; commentary on Helaman 6:26; see also 3 Nephi 6:28.

12–16. Lachoneus, a righteous man who trusted in the Lord, sought to prepare his people for what lay ahead. First (and most important), he called them to repentance and implored his people to cry to God for strength against their enemies. Second, he sought to make those physical arrangements among the people—fortifications, appointment of key military leaders, production of weapons and armor, gathering to a central location, and so forth—which would enhance their chances against the bloodthirsty Gadianton bands.

19. See commentary on Alma 43–62.

20–21. Here we see a remarkable principle at work. God had commanded the Nephites as a people to fight only defensively, to go to war only as it was necessary to the preservation of their lives, their agency, their families, and their worship. As was pointed out in volume 3 of this work (see commentary on Alma 43–62), Christians *enter* war; they do not *begin* it. Even when it came to taking the initiative in what would appear to be a noble cause—to go into the mountains and root out the secret combinations—the sensitive Giddidoni declined the suggestion and explained that if they did that his people would not enjoy the approbation and thus the strength of the Lord.

24. Curse . . . upon the land northward] See Alma 22:30–31.

Armed with the Power of God, the Nephites Defeat the Gadianon Robbers

3 Nephi 4:1–33

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.

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.

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.

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.

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.

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 headplates 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.

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.

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 Zemnah; therefore it was Zemnah 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 furthest parts of the land northward.

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.

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.

33. And their hearts were swollen with joy, unto the gush-

ing 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.

1–33. As was noted in the previous chapter, the Nephites are led by men of faith, men who put their trust in the Almighty God, who act and work according to principle. On the other hand, the Gadianton leaders are motivated by greed and gain—they exist solely to acquire. In addition, the Nephite leaders are visionaries, men who are in tune with the Infinite, whose motives are pure and whose attitudes are selfless, and who can read clearly the spiritual vital signs of the people they serve. The secret society of Gadianton is directed by malevolent men, persons whose craving for power and profit is so great that they are unable to make the kind of reasoned judgments and the kind of far-reaching preparations which would stand them in good stead in the future. Despite their terrible appearance, the Gadianton warriors were no match for Jehovah-Sabaoth, the Lord of Hosts. He who promises to fight the battles of the faithful, of those who hearken to his word and go at his call, even he defeated the secret society in this episode. Yes, the Nephites were properly prepared for war, but God was their general and he it was who brought the victory. Giddianhi was slain while fleeing from the battlefield; the robbers' next leader, Zemnarihah, was hanged on a tree; and those followers who did not suffer a similar death became prisoners of the Nephites.

28–29. Zemnarihah is here executed in an ignominious manner, the indignity of the method typifying the ultimate fate of all who oppose the work and ways of the true and living God.

30–32. Those who have repented and forsaken their sins here gladly acknowledge the hand of the Lord in all that is good in their lives (see also D&C 59:7, 21). They shout praises to the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob for his willingness to deliver his people from those who had sought their overthrow.

32. Hosanna] This is both a statement of praise and a supplication. It means "Save us now; save, we pray!"

32. Blessed be the name of the Lord God Almighty] Indeed, blessed be the only name under heaven whereby salvation and deliverance can come to the children of men (see Acts 4:12; 2 Nephi 31:21; Mosiah 3:17; 3 Nephi 19:17; Moses 6:52). It is the name above all other names (see Ephesians 3:15; Philippians 2:9).

33. Those who have been delivered by the Almighty—whether from warring hordes or from satanic minions—let their voices ascend to the heavens in praise and thanksgiving. Tears come easily as they "stand all amazed" at God's mercy and sing out with joyful adoration, "How great thou art!"

33. They knew it was because of their repentance and their humility] The source of their deliverance is no secret; they know full well that their reliance upon Jehovah and their willingness to trust in him are what led to victory over their enemies.

The Nephites Repent and Forsake Their Sins

3 Nephi 5:1-3

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.

1-3. Having witnessed the prophesied signs of Christ's birth, the Nephites, to the everlasting blessing of those who remained faithful, chose to repent and serve the Lord.

3. Abominations] The reference is to evil doctrines and practices, the kinds of things normally associated with idol worship. It includes moral defilements. An abomination is something that evokes extreme detestation, especially as contrasted with that which is pure and holy.

3. Whoredoms] The word *whore* comes from a root meaning "to hire." Whoredoms involve immoral commerce with the opposite sex; or often, in scriptures, sexual sins generally.

The Gospel Taught to Those Taken Prisoner

3 Nephi 5:4-6

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 re-

pent 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.

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.

4-6. Having truly repented of their own sins, abominations, and whoredoms, and having come to a true understanding of the gospel, the Nephites taught it to their prisoners of war. Those prisoners who repented and covenanted that they would not murder anymore were freed; the others remained in captivity to be punished according to the laws.

Mormon Testifies of the Book of Mormon

3 Nephi 5:7-19

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.

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;

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.

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.

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

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.

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.

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—

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

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;

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

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.

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.

8. This book cannot contain even a hundredth part] See Words of Mormon 1:5; 3 Nephi 26:6; Ether 15:33. Here Mormon, the editor and compiler of the Book of Mormon, tells us that he could not include the “hundredth part” of the events that took place during this twenty-five-year period of Nephite history, the elapsed time, as they now reckoned it, since Christ’s birth. Scriptures are, by their very nature, fragmentary and abbreviated accounts of both the events they describe and the doctrines and teachings of the prophets they quote. No scriptural record is complete; all scripture requires the Holy Ghost to carry our understanding beyond the written record. Of the vision of the degrees of glory, Joseph Smith said, “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” (*Teachings*, p. 305). The same is true of much that is contained within the covers of holy writ.

9. See Helaman 3:13–17.

9. A shorter but true account was given by Nephi] Reference here appears to be to Nephi, son of Nephi, son of Helaman, who continued the writing on the large plates. The record to which reference is made is one covering the twenty-five-year period since the sign was given announcing the birth of Christ.

12. I am called Mormon] This is the first time in the abridgment of the large plates that Mormon identifies himself by name. (His name appears in the Words of Mormon, but that book is at the end of the small plates of Nephi—see *Commentary* 2:121–22.) The name of Mormon’s father was Mormon (see Mormon 1:5), and chronologically the first Book of Mormon mention of the name occurs about four hundred and fifty years before his birth, when Alma is teaching his followers at the “waters of Mormon,” in the land of Mormon (see Mosiah 18:30). The Prophet Joseph Smith linked the word *Mormon* with the meaning “more good” (see *Teachings*, p. 300). For a look at what the name *Mormon* has come to mean in this last dispensation, see President Gordon B. Hinckley, *Ensign*, November 1990, pp. 51–54.

12. The first church which was established among them after their transgression] In the days of King Mosiah I, as a fulfillment of repeated warning and prophecy (see Jacob 3:4), a righteous remnant left the land of Nephi because of the wickedness of

the people, being led northward to the land of Zarahemla. Later, after many of the Nephites had returned to the land of Nephi and subsequently had escaped the perverse jurisdiction of wicked King Noah, Alma established a church in the wilderness. (See Omni 1:12–13; Mosiah 18:1–34.)

13. I am a disciple of Jesus Christ] The word *disciple* is closely associated with the word *discipline*, and it might well be said that a disciple is a disciplined believer or adherent. The word literally means “a learner” and denotes one who follows the teachings of another. A disciple, however, is not merely a pupil but is an imitator of the teacher. In the Jewish culture of Jesus’ day a disciple of a rabbi would leave his home and move in with his teacher. He served the teacher in the most servile ways, treating him as an absolute authority. He was expected not only to learn all that his rabbi knew but also to become like him in character and piety. In turn, the rabbi provided food and lodging and saw his own distinctive interpretations transmitted through his disciples to future generations. When Mark says that Jesus chose twelve men “that they should be with him” (Mark 3:14), he accurately reflects contemporary understanding of how future leaders were trained. Inherent in such a call was the idea of a disciple’s total commitment. (See W. E. Vine, *An Expository Dictionary of New Testament Words*, p. 226.) Such would be Mormon’s understanding of discipleship, for he knew full well the charge of the Savior to the twelve he chose from among the Nephites. Of them, he asked: “What manner of men ought ye to be?” And he answered his own question, “Verily I say unto you, even as I am.” (3 Nephi 27:27.)

14. Prayers of . . . the holy ones] By way of revelation the Lord told Joseph Smith that the gold plates were “preserved . . . that the promises of the Lord might be fulfilled, which he made to his people; and that the Lamanites might come to the knowledge of their fathers, and that they might know the promises of the Lord, and that they may believe the gospel and rely upon the merits of Jesus Christ, and be glorified through faith in his name, and that through their repentance they might be saved” (D&C 3:19–20).

15. A small record] A brief or abridged record, what we know as the Book of Mormon (see Mormon 7:9; 8:12).

17. Mormon’s abridgment of his own experience is contained in Mormon 1–7.

18. I know the record which I make to be a just and a true record] Mormon testifies relative to the authenticity of his record. For him to say that his record is “just” is to say that it is right and lawful; for him to say that it is “true” is to attest that it is correct, reliable, or trustworthy. Thus his testimony is that the record he has preserved on the gold plates is a reliable account of true and righteous principles.

18. There are many things which, according to our language, we are not able to write] See Moroni's comment in Mormon 9:32–34.

In the Last Days Joseph's Seed Will Return to Christ

3 Nephi 5:20–26

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.

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.

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.

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.

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.

20. A pure descendant of Lehi] Mormon here affirms that he is a lineal descendant of Lehi, the first leader of this people.

20. No one knew it] See 1 Nephi 4:36.

23–26. The theme of these verses is repetitious in the Book of Mormon, and most appropriately so. The Book of Mormon is the book ordained in the councils of heaven by which to gather Israel from the "four quarters of the earth." The great message and testimony of the Book of Mormon is that all who believe on Christ as the Son of God and keep his commandments shall have eternal life. That being the message and the book being the messenger, then it ought to be clear that the gathering is, and must always be, first to Christ, and that no assembling of any peoples in any lands is of any lasting moment unless they have first embraced the doctrine and testimony of Christ as taught in the Book of Mormon.

The testimony of these verses is that the tribe of Joseph, which along with all the tribes of Jacob has been scattered among all people throughout the earth, will in the last days be restored to that covenant relationship known to their ancient fathers. That is, they shall come to “know their Redeemer, who is Jesus Christ, the Son of God.”

26. And then shall they know their Redeemer . . . and then shall they be gathered in] Here again we see the order of gathering: first spiritual (to Christ and his gospel) and second temporal (to the lands or congregations of the Saints).

Righteousness Brings Peace

3 Nephi 6:1-9

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.

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.

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.

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

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.

1-9. A society without pride and boasting proves to be one of peace, love, and prosperity.

4. Equity and justice] Equity and justice are chief among the

laws that rule the kingdom of heaven. Describing the coming of Christ, Alma prophesied, saying: “Not many days hence the Son of God shall come in his glory; and his glory shall be the glory of the Only Begotten of the Father, full of grace, equity, and truth, full of patience, mercy, and long-suffering, quick to hear the cries of his people and to answer their prayers” (Alma 9:26). Among the Lord’s people, equity and justice must always prevail. All who are or who can be called Saints must learn to live in a state of equality one with another. Describing such a state, the Lord spoke to our generation, saying: *“In your temporal things you shall be equal, and this not grudgingly, otherwise the abundance of the manifestations of the Spirit shall be withheld”* (D&C 70:14, italics added). “For if ye are not equal in earthly things ye cannot be equal in obtaining heavenly things” (D&C 78:6).

Pride and Boastings Open the Floodgates of Iniquity

3 Nephi 6:10–19

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;

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

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.

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.

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.

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.

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.

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.

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.

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.

10. Pride and boastings] Pride and boasting are the twin devils who sowed the seeds of corruption and destruction among the nation of the Nephites. It is difficult to read this chapter without a strong feeling that this part of Nephite history is being recounted as a warning to us of the last days.

10. Exceedingly great riches] “Wo unto the rich,” Jacob warned, “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. This verse, a brief characterization of the economic system of the day, may also be a warning for our own. Perhaps Mormon sought to warn us of the perils of a society which does not strike the needed balance between production and supervision.

12. The spirit and warning of this verse is distinctly relevant to our day. Education, like the priesthood, is a blessing of God given to his servants that they might reach out and lift and exalt others. It is no less congruent for the educated to despise the unlearned than it is for those who hold the priesthood to spurn and disdain those who do not hold that sacred authority. The priesthood can be magnified only as it is used to lift and bless others. To attempt to hoard the blessings of the priesthood or to revel in an office or calling is to lose the authority and power of the priesthood. So it is with education. To fail to use it properly and providently, to the edification and blessing of others, is to become narrow and ignorant.

14. As the storms howled, as the church “began to be broken up”—as apostasy began to set in—the humble followers of Christ stood “firm,” “steadfast,” “immovable,” “willing,” “with all diligence to keep the commandments of the Lord.” Such are attributes of faith, characteristics of those who will be saved.

15. Power, and authority, and riches] How ironic it is that this threesome make so many susceptible to the wiles of the adversary when each of the three could be used to such a marvelous effect in the cause of righteousness!

18. Wilfully rebel against God] Whereas the Spirit of Christ

is typified by his submission to the will of the Father, the spirit of Lucifer was captured in his rebellion against God. Again, it is ironic that many who refuse to submit to the will of our Father in Heaven bow so submissively to the will of the father of darkness.

Many Prophets Cry Repentance and Are Slain

3 Nephi 6:20–27

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.

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.

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.

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.

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.

20. Preaching and testifying boldly] There is an unmatched power in truth and an unequaled confidence that comes when the Holy Ghost is our companion. We could hardly imagine a prophet of God speaking with timidity and uncertainty.

20. They did testify boldly of his death and sufferings] In our day a binding testimony of Christ must embrace a witness that Joseph Smith was the prophet through whom the only true and

living Church on the face of the whole earth has been restored. It must also embrace the testimony of Christ as he is represented in the Book of Mormon. The Jewish hope of a messiah was for a conquering hero, not a suffering servant who would willingly lay down his life. Thus in the meridian day a binding testimony of Christ had to include the necessity of his suffering and death and the reality of his resurrection. This was also the testimony of the prophets who taught in the New World.

22–23. Here we see that the satanic secret combinations are in full bloom; the “Mahan principle,” the perverse dictum that one may murder and get gain (Moses 5:31), reigns supreme in their society. See commentary on verse 28.

Satanic Covenants Restored

3 Nephi 6:28–30

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.

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.

28. That covenant . . . administered by the devil] Cain, who became Master Mahan, was the first to enter into such a covenant. “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; see also Helaman 6:26–27; 3 Nephi 3:9.)

Hugh Nibley has spoken of the great secret involved in “converting life into property. Cain got the degree of Master Mahan, tried the system out on his brother, and gloried in its brilliant

success, declaring that at last he could be free, as only property makes free, and that Abel had been a loser in a free competition." (*Approaching Zion*, p. 166.)

The Division of a Nation

3 Nephi 7:1–8

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.

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.

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.

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.

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.

1–8. The brotherhood of evil, with its secret combinations, now made laws and government meaningless. Whereas previously the gospel of light and truth had united people in a common interest, the gospel of darkness and iniquity now divided them into a host of squabbling tribes. Whereas equality and justice earlier had reached out with equal warmth to the great and the small, now self-interest and group interests sought advantage one over another.

8. Those repentant ones who have been cleansed from sin and later return to their evil ways are likened to a dog eating its own vomit, or to a sow that has been cleansed but returns to wallow in its mire.

Jacob the Anti-Christ Chosen to Lead the Secret Combination

3 Nephi 7:9–14

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;

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.

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.

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 flat-

tered them that there would be many dissenters) and they become sufficiently strong to contend with the tribes of the people; and they did so.

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.

9. A man whom they did call Jacob] *Jacob* is a Hebrew name meaning “supplant,” or “deceive” (see O. Odelain and R. Seguireau, *Dictionary of Proper Names and Places in the Bible*, p. 182). Jacob, an evil and vile man, came to prominence through his role in the slaying of the prophets sent to declare repentance to the Nephites. He then became a leader among those who bound themselves together with unholy oaths and covenants. The purpose of their conspiracies was to destroy the republic and establish a

monarchy. Having assassinated the chief judge, Jacob's supporters proclaimed Jacob king.

Nephi Ministers with Great Power and Authority

3 Nephi 7:15–20

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;

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.

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.

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.

15. Nephi's purity of soul and personal spiritual preparation were of such a nature as to allow him access to the powers and personalities of heaven. He enjoyed the ministration of the Spirit and the ministry of angels.

18. Not possible that they could disbelieve his words] Nephi spoke with such convincing power that it was impossible to deny the truthfulness of that which he taught. Such is the authority of the Spirit (compare 1 Nephi 17:52). Of the sons of Mosiah we are told that they were diligent students of the scriptures and therefore "men of a sound understanding. . . . but this is not all; they had given themselves to much prayer, and fasting; therefore they had the spirit of prophecy, and the spirit of revelation, and when they taught, they taught with power and authority of God." (Alma 17:2–3.) Such is the pattern for the Lord's servants and such was the example of the Master himself, of whom it was said, "He taught them as one having authority, and not as the scribes"

(Matthew 7:29). Of Enoch it was said that his faith was so great that “he led the people of God, and their enemies came to battle against them; and he spake the word of the Lord, and the earth trembled, and the mountains fled, even according to his command; and the rivers of water were turned out of their course; and the roar of the lions was heard out of the wilderness; and all nations feared greatly, so powerful was the word of Enoch, and so great was the power of the language which God had given him” (Moses 7:13).

19. Even his brother did he raise from the dead] This was his brother Timothy, a man later chosen to serve as one of the Nephite Twelve (see 3 Nephi 19:4).

20. Were angry with him because of his power] The spirit of anger is not born of doubt; in any case, God’s existence is not the issue here. Nor is it a matter of truth versus error, for the teachings of Nephi could not be denied. The issue was simply one of spirits. Those who had so given themselves up to the spirit of the adversary feasted upon anger and hatred and lost their appetite for the spirit of peace, joy, and love which accompany the gospel and the obedient spirit.

Converts of Christ Work Miracles

3 Nephi 7:21–26

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.

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.

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

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.

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.

21–22. There is no spiritual aristocracy. Those newly born to the faith are as entitled to the attentions and blessings of a loving Father as their older brothers and sisters. True it is that those more mature in spiritual things may be entrusted with greater authority and power, but this is not to say, as was the case in this instance, that the newly converted are without the power to dream dreams, see visions, prophesy, work miracles, and generally enjoy those signs that naturally follow faith and obedience.

24. Baptism is the “strait gate” by which all must enter (see D&C 22:2). Nephi described this sacred ordinance as both the “strait” path and the “narrow” gate (see 2 Nephi 31:9).

24. There were none who were brought unto repentance who were not baptized with water] “The first fruits of repentance,” Mormon wrote, “is baptism; and baptism cometh by faith unto the fulfilling the commandments; and the fulfilling the commandments bringeth remission of sins” (Moroni 8:25).

25. Baptism witnesses to both God and man that our spirit is contrite and humble and that we are willing to take the name of Christ upon us. Baptism by immersion symbolizes the Christian commitment to Christ, the acceptance of our Lord’s death, burial, and rise unto a newness of life (see Romans 6:3–5; see also 2 Nephi 31:13; Mosiah 18:8–9; Moroni 6:2–4; D&C 20:37).

Christ’s Crucifixion Attested by Predicted Signs

3 Nephi 8:1–4

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—

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;

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.

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

1. In the Gospel of John we read the marvelous story of the man blind from birth to whom Jesus gave sight. When questioned by leaders of the Jews who sought to discredit the miracle and its author, the man said: “Now we know that God heareth not sin-

ners: but if any man be a worshipper of God, and doeth his will, him he heareth. Since the world began was it not heard that any man opened the eyes of one that was born blind. If this man were not of God, he could do nothing.” Unable to respond to the argument, the questioners angrily assaulted the character of the formerly blind man, who now saw with much greater clarity than did they. (See John 9:31–34.) It is an eternal principle that the powers of heaven are inseparably connected with righteousness (D&C 121:36). The working of miracles in the name of Jesus is an evidence that one is “cleansed every whit from his iniquity” and thus worthy of the companionship of the Holy Ghost and the powers of God. The wonders of God—the signs and miracles which always attend a dispensation of the gospel—require righteousness in the human instrument (see D&C 50:27–30).

1. A just man] This man was Nephi (see 3 Nephi 23:7). See commentary on Enos 1:1.

2–4. See Helaman 14:27.

Tempest, Earthquakes, Whirlwind, and Fire

3 Nephi 8:5–18

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.

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.

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

8. And the city of Zarahemla did take fire.

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

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

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;

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.

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.

5–18. These scenes are of value to us, not alone because they detail the events on the American continent some two millennia ago but also because they typify what lies ahead. A study of 3 and 4 Nephi is of inestimable worth in our coming to understand how to prepare for the second coming of the Son of Man, and also what life will be like during the Millennium.

5. It seems reasonable to assume that with the change in the reckoning of time among the Nephites—based now upon the signs of Christ's birth—the first month would be the month in which the sign was given. Mormon's account indicates that the signs of Christ's death came on the fourth day of the first month. Since we know that Jesus was crucified in the spring, at the time of the Passover, we concluded that Jesus was also born in the spring, as we have been taught in the restored Church.

8. The city of Zarahemla did take fire] Zarahemla had been the capital of the Nephite nation for over two hundred years. It was situated on the west side of the Sidon River and apparently was originally built by the descendants of the people of Mulek who left Jerusalem a few years after 600 B.C. Zarahemla appears to have been their leader at the time the Nephites, led by Mosiah I, discovered them; and as the city presumably was named after him it is probable that it had not been built long before the arrival of the latter people. After the arrival of the Nephites, the two peoples united as one nation; and Zarahemla became the seat of their government and the residence of the chief judge and the high priest. The city also had a temple. During the days of the judges, nearly every event of which we have record that was of importance to the nation took place or originated here. It was the headquarters of the "king-men" whose attempts to restore a monarchy led to many contentions and much bloodshed. It was captured by the Lamanites in about 51 B.C. and again about sixteen years later.

Five years before the birth of Christ, Samuel, the Lamanite prophet—preaching from the walls of the city—prophesied the destruction of Zarahemla by fire if it continued in its wicked course and if its inhabitants drove the righteous from it (see Helaman

13:12–14). Drenched in the blood of the prophets, Zarahemla was now being rewarded according to its works.

9. The city of Moroni did sink into the depths of the sea] The city of Moroni was an important coastal city in the extreme southeast of the Nephite possessions. It was built as an outpost to protect that portion of the Nephite dominion from Lamanite invasion and was thus strongly fortified.

10. The earth was carried up upon the city of Moroni-hah] Moronihah was another of the iniquitous cities of the Nephites. During the great convulsions, the earth was carried up and dumped upon it, that its abominations might be hid from the face of the Lord and that the blood of the prophets might no longer cry to heaven from the ground against it.

Terrible Destruction

3 Nephi 8:19

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.

19. The space of three hours] Christ hung upon the cross for a period of about six hours, from approximately 9:00 A.M. until 3:00 P.M. It was during the last three hours that darkness covered the land, as apparently the agonies of Gethsemane returned (see *Jesus the Christ*, p. 661; *Mortal Messiah* 4:224–26). Of this period Elder Bruce R. McConkie writes: “He will continue to suffer the curses of crucifixion for another three hours, until around 3:00 P.M. when he voluntarily gives up the ghost. Of these coming hours, Matthew and Mark say only that it was a period when there was darkness over all the land; Luke extends this turning of day into night over a greater area. ‘There was a darkness over all the earth,’ he says, ‘and the sun was darkened.’ The fact of the darkness, for which there is no known scientific explanation, is known to us, but its purpose and what happened during those three seemingly endless hours remain outside the bounds of our understanding. Could it be that this was the period of his greatest trial, or that during it the agonies of Gethsemane recurred and even intensified?

“That this darkness did cover the whole earth we surmise from

the Book of Mormon account. The Nephite prophets had spoken, Messianically, of three days of darkness that would be a sign unto them of the crucifixion of Christ. At that time the rocks would rend and there would be such upheavals in nature that those on the isles of the sea would say, 'The God of nature suffers.' (1 Nephi 19:10–12; Helaman 14:20–24.) The Nephite record tells of the fulfillment of these prophecies; of the darkness and storms and destructions that then occurred; of cities sinking into the seas; of mountains and valleys being created; of the rocks rending and the whole face of the earth being deformed. It is of more than passing import that the storms and tempests and earthquakes lasted 'for about the space of three hours,' and then 'there was darkness upon the face of the land.'" (*Mortal Messiah* 4:224–25; see also Matthew 27:45–49; Mark 15:33–36; Luke 23:44–45.)

Three Days of Darkness

3 Nephi 8:20–25

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;

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.

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.

20–25. 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 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.

The Voice of Christ Proclaims His Divinity

3 Nephi 9:1–15

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;

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!

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.

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;

7. Yea, and the city of Onihah and the inhabitants thereof, and

the city of Mocum 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.

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.

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.

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?

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.

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.

1-15. From the darkness covering the land, the voice of Christ is heard testifying that the destructions that have befallen the Nephites came from the Lord as a result of their unwillingness to hearken to his words and to repent of their wickedness. The voice declares the true nature of Jesus Christ as the Son of God and creator of heavens and earth.

10. Because of their wickedness in casting out the prophets] It is significant to note the Lord's definition of the wicked whom he had caused to be destroyed. While he could have recited an extensive listing of their abominations, the Lord simply cited their rejection of the living prophets whom he had sent unto them to "cry repentance." This phrase seems to be saying that most, if not all, of the wickedness of the world and individual iniquity could be averted through heeding the words of the Lord's living prophets (see Jeremiah 5:21; Acts 3:22-23; D&C 1:14).

13. Spared because ye were more righteous than they] See 3 Nephi 10:12.

13. Return unto me, and repent of your sins, and be converted, that I may heal you] The Savior is often referred to as the "Great Physician," because of his miraculous ministry of heal-

ing all manner of infirmities. The Gospels are replete with examples of his healing the sick and infirm, giving sight to the blind, and even raising the dead. Each example is miraculous indeed, but he is the Great Physician in a more significant way. The scriptures teach that sin induces a sickness of the spirit that is often linked to physical pains and discomforts (see, for example, the experience of Zeezrom in Alma 15:3, 5; see also *Commentary* 3:114–15). Elder Boyd K. Packer spoke of this link between the sin-induced spiritual sicknesses and the physical body: “There is another part of us, not so tangible, but quite as real as our physical body. This intangible part of us is described as mind, emotion, intellect, temperament, and many other things. Very seldom is it described as spiritual. But there is a *spirit* in man; to ignore it is to ignore reality. There are spiritual disorders, too, and spiritual diseases that can cause intense suffering. The body and the spirit of man are bound together. Often, very often, when there are disorders, it is very difficult to tell which is which.” (*That All May Be Edified*,” pp. 63–64.)

The Savior’s statement to the remnant Nephites and Lamanites is not merely symbolic but also literal. Through faith in Him and repentance, sick, sin-ridden, souls are healed by the Great Physician as much so as bodies were in the cleansing of lepers. The Savior’s healing declaration, “Be thou clean” (see Matthew 8:2–3), is a literal promise to the faithful and repentant. It may be that all of the miraculous healings performed by Jesus were but tangible symbols of the greatest healing that he alone could perform—the healing of sick spirits and the cleansing of sin-stained souls. “The greatest miracles I see today,” declared President Harold B. Lee, “are not necessarily the healing of sick bodies, but the greatest miracles I see are the healing of sick souls, those who are sick in soul and spirit and are downhearted and distraught, on the verge of nervous breakdowns” (CR, April 1973, p. 178).

14. Mine arm of mercy is extended towards you] See 2 Nephi 26:33.

14. Blessed are those who come unto me] See 3 Nephi 12:3–12.

15. I am Jesus Christ the Son of God] See 1 Nephi 11:18; Mosiah 15:2–3; *Commentary* 2:229; see also *Mortal Messiah* 1:313–15, 328–31.

15. I created the heavens and the earth, and all things that in them are] See John 1:3; Hebrews 1:1–3; Colossians 1:13–16; Moses 1:32–33; Mosiah 3:8; 4:2; Helaman 14:12; D&C 76:24; 93:9–10; see also *Commentary* 2:226–27. President Joseph Fielding Smith declared: “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.)

15. I was with the Father from the beginning] See John 1:1–3, 18; D&C 93:7–11.

15. I am in the Father, and the Father in me] See D&C 93:3–6; see also Mosiah 15:1–4; *Commentary* 2:226–27.

Jesus Declares the Law of Moses Fulfilled

3 Nephi 9:16–22

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

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.

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

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.

20. And ye shall offer for a sac-

rifice 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.

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

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.

16–22. The voice of the Savior continues to declare his divine role as Redeemer of the world and to state that in him the Mosaic law is fulfilled. He extends the invitation to “the ends of the earth” to come unto him and be saved on condition of faith and repentance.

17. And as many as have received me, to them have I given to become the sons of God] All of humanity, whether they accept Jesus as their Savior or not, are literally spirit sons and daughters of heavenly parents. It is not this relationship of which Jesus is speaking in this passage. He is referring to the way whereby men and women become his spiritual sons and daughters through receiving him by faith in his name and his atoning sacrifice, and by accepting his gospel teaching and ordinances. (See

Mosiah 5:7; 27:25; D&C 34:1–3; 39:1, 4; *Commentary* 2:169–73; see also *New Witness*, pp. 284–87.)

17. By me redemption cometh] The Savior adds his own personal witness to that of numerous prophets who before had also declared that salvation comes only through Christ—there is no other name or means by which mankind can be redeemed. (See 2 Nephi 9:6–9; Mosiah 3:17; 4:8; see also commentary on Alma 5:38–39.)

17. In me is the law of Moses fulfilled] See commentary on 3 Nephi 9:19–20; 12:17–18; 15:1–10.

18. I am the light and the life of the world] This declaration of the Savior, which was also understood by his disciples in the Old World (see John 1:4–5, 9; 8:12), should not be viewed as merely symbolic. This statement is not only a powerful declaration of his divine sonship and of his being the fulfillment of ancient prophecies concerning the true light of the Messiah, the Enlightener (see Psalm 27:1; 43:3; Isaiah 49:6), but is also something more. The Savior, in a very literal way, is the light and the life of the world.

“He that ascended up on high, as also he descended below all things, in that he comprehended all things, that he might be in all and through all things, the light of truth; which truth shineth. This is the light of Christ. As also he is in the sun, and the light of the sun, and power thereof by which it was made. As also he is in the moon, and is the light of the moon, and the power thereof by which it was made; as also the light of the stars, and the power thereof by which they were made; and the earth also, and the power thereof, even the earth upon which you stand. And the light which shineth, which giveth you light, is through him who enlighteneth your eyes, which is the same light that quickeneth your understandings; which light proceedeth forth from the presence of God to fill the immensity of space—the light which is in all things, which giveth life to all things, which is the law by which all things are governed, even the power of God who sitteth upon his throne, who is in the bosom of eternity, who is in the midst of all things.” (D&C 88:6–13.)

In some incomprehensible way not only is the Savior the light of the world as the perfect exemplar and the life of the world in that his atonement yields immortality and eternal life, but his power also ensures life and light to all creations (see D&C 93:9). He is the source of all light, life, and truth (see Ether 4:12). See also Mosiah 16:9; D&C 10:70; 45:7; 50:24, 27.

18. I am Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the end] Alpha and Omega are the first and last letters of the Greek alphabet. The use of these terms as titles of the Lord Jesus Christ has a dual application. First, they are used to imply the eternal nature of

Jesus as a member of the Godhead, or as the scriptures refer to him, “the Eternal One.” This indicates that “he is an everlasting and eternal being in whom all fulness and perfection dwell” (Bruce R. McConkie, *Promised Messiah*, p. 167). Second, the phrase “the beginning and the end” have reference to the Atonement and that Jesus is both the beginning, or author, and the end, or finisher, of the salvation of men (see Hebrews 5:9; 12:2; Moroni 6:4). Elder Bruce R. McConkie observed that Christ is not the “author” of salvation if that means the innovator of the plan of redemption, but rather he is the “cause thereof; that is, salvation is possible because of his atoning sacrifice” and that “he is the ‘leader’ in the cause of salvation” (*Mormon Doctrine*, p. 66).

19. Ye shall offer up unto me no more the shedding of blood] In declaring that the law of Moses is fulfilled (see verse 17), the Savior was not rescinding the eternal law of sacrifice but rather was declaring that the specific practice or instructional methodology employed earlier was no longer in effect. From the days of Adam to Moses and from Moses to Jesus Christ, animal sacrifices were used to symbolically point toward the future atoning sacrifice of Jesus Christ (see Jacob 4:5). Abinadi spoke of such sacrificial rites and the accompanying carnal codes as “types of things to come” (Mosiah 13:31). Inasmuch as the Savior had already shed his blood and drunk of the “bitter cup” in Gethsemane and on Golgotha and had broken the bands of death in coming forth from the garden tomb, a new day had now dawned that required new symbolism, a new type of sacrifice, and new instruction in the eternal meaning of the covenant of sacrifice.

Although the objective or instructional purpose of animal sacrifices and burnt offerings was now fulfilled in Christ, the Saints understand that as part of the “restitution of all things” such sacrifices will be reinstated, at least for a season (see D&C 13:1; 84:31; 124:39; see also commentary on Alma 34:10).

20. Ye shall offer for a sacrifice unto me a broken heart and a contrite spirit] The practice of sacrifice that was fulfilled in Christ was one of rites and rituals, whereas the new practice commanded of the Lord involved inner attitudes that would bring about outward obedience to commandments and ordinances. Just as the sacrifices of animals were to symbolize the shedding of the blood of Christ and to focus the faith of the people on the Messiah, so must our obedience stemming from a sacrifice of a broken heart and contrite spirit be centered solely on Christ. What then is a “broken heart and a contrite spirit” that is to be our “living sacrifice” to the Lord? It is, as Paul taught, a “godly sorrow” which “worketh repentance to salvation” (2 Corinthians 7:10). It is much more than just a repentant attitude; it includes a recognition of total dependence upon the Lord for salvation and a willing submis-

sion to him and his laws (see Mosiah 3:19). Lamoni's father characterized this sacrifice with his desire to come to know God when he declared, "I will give away all my sins to know thee" (Alma 22:18). Offering a sacrifice of a broken heart and a contrite spirit requires "giving away our sins" through faith in Christ, sincere and complete repentance, obedience to the Lord's commands, and pressing forward with a "steadfastness in Christ" (2 Nephi 31:20; see also D&C 59:8; 97:8).

20. Him will I baptize with fire and with the Holy Ghost] Baptism by fire is the baptism of the Spirit—the reception of the Holy Ghost that cleanses one from sin and makes one a "new creature." Elder Bruce R. McConkie taught: "The Holy Ghost is a sanctifier whose divine commission is to burn dross and evil out of a human soul as though by fire, thus giving rise to the expression *baptism of fire*, which is the baptism of the Spirit. Forgiveness is assured when the contrite soul receives the Holy Spirit, because the Spirit will not dwell in an unclean tabernacle. . . . It is the Holy Spirit of God that erases carnality and brings us to a state of righteousness. We become clean when we actually receive the fellowship and companionship of the Holy Ghost. It is then that sin and dross and evil are burned out of our souls as though by fire. The baptism of the Holy Ghost is the baptism of fire. There have been miraculous occasions when visible flames enveloped penitent persons, but ordinarily the cleansing power of the Spirit simply dwells, unseen and unheralded, in the hearts of those who have made the Lord their friend." (*New Witness*, pp. 239, 290.)

20. Were baptized with fire and with the Holy Ghost, and they knew it not] In discussing the powerful spiritual side-effects of the baptism of fire, the Savior used the faithful Lamanites as a prime example. Two important doctrinal points are seen in his brief statement about the conversion of the Lamanites. First, their spiritual rebirth came because of their faith in Christ. "True repentance is based on and flows from faith in the Lord Jesus Christ," President Ezra Taft Benson testified. "There is no other way." Numerous scriptural passages likewise declare that the conversion, the baptism of fire, the mighty change of heart, come as a result of unwavering faith in the Lord Jesus Christ (see 1 Nephi 12:8–11; 2 Nephi 2:3; Enos 1:3–8; Alma 34:14–18; 36:17–20).

The second doctrinal point is found in the phrase, "and they knew it not." For most, this baptism of fire experience is a continual process rather than a singular, dramatic event. "Most repentance does not involve sensational or dramatic changes," President Ezra Taft Benson explained, "but rather is a step by step, steady and consistent movement toward godliness." He further counseled us not to become discouraged by expecting sensational spiritual experiences or by comparing our baptism by fire experience with

those of others. “We must be careful, as we seek to become more and more godlike, that we do not become discouraged and lose hope. Becoming Christlike is a lifetime pursuit and very often involves growth and change that is slow, almost imperceptible.” (*The Teachings of Ezra Taft Benson*, pp. 71–72; see also *Commentary* 2:174–75.)

21–22. The Savior here declares the purpose of his atoning sacrifice and the condition upon which it is able to bring salvation to men. For a further discussion of the theme of these verses see commentary on 3 Nephi 27:13–22.

“How Oft Will I Gather You . . . If Ye Will Repent”

3 Nephi 10:1–11

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.

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.

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.

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.

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.

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

1–11. After a period of silence in the land, the voice of the Savior continues to teach the people in preparation for his appearance. It tells them that the destruction of many of the cities and their wicked inhabitants had been done because they would not repent and turn to Christ. Evidencing his long-suffering and mercy, the Lord instructs the people that he would have protected them and gathered them if they had but hearkened to his word as spoken by the mouths of the holy prophets. The prophesied destruction could have been averted had the people accepted the Messiah's beckoning call to partake of his mercy. He now invites the survivors to return to him "with full purpose of heart." This episode is a type and shadow of future events. He continues his efforts to gather us of modern Israel "as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings." The prophecies of destructions in the last days, like these, are conditional prophetic warnings—meaning that they will only come if the people ignore the voice of warning and refuse the invitation to partake of the mercy of the Master.

5. How oft would I have gathered you] Jesus' reminder that he had gathered and sheltered them in the past (see verse 4) as well as of his many efforts to gather them that had been rebuffed, is not unique to the Nephites and Lamanites. He used similar language in Jerusalem as he lamented the impending destruction of the Jews (see Matthew 23:37–39; Luke 13:34–35). In our own day he has again used this phrase (see D&C 43:23–25) as a beckoning call to repentance and as a warning of the consequences of rejecting his invitation.

6. How oft will I gather you . . . if ye will repent and return unto me with full purpose of heart] Not only has Christ repeatedly sought in the past to gather his flock; he will continue to seek to gather the children of men to him through the covenants of the restored gospel. Although he may seek to gather us home, we cannot be compelled into his protective arms of mercy. The promised spiritual blessings that attend such gathering are only realized on conditions of individual faith, repentance, submission to gospel ordinances, and continued obedience and endurance—all of which are required in order for us to "return to [him] with full purpose of heart." This work of gathering is the fundamental mission of the Church and kingdom of God in the last days. To the Prophet Joseph Smith the Lord declared: "For, behold, I will gather them as a hen gathereth her chickens under her

wings, if they will not harden their hearts; yea, if they will come, they may, and partake of the waters of life freely” (D&C 10:65–66). Later the Lord more explicitly explained what it means to be gathered to him: “And this is my gospel—repentance and baptism by water, and then cometh the baptism of fire and the Holy Ghost, even the Comforter. . . . And he that receiveth these things receiveth me; and they shall be gathered unto me in time and in eternity.” (D&C 39:6, 22.)

7. Your dwellings shall become desolate until the time of the fulfilling of the covenant to your fathers] The coming forth of the Book of Mormon and its being taken to the remnant of Lehi’s seed, and their acceptance of its teachings, prepares the way for lifting the condemnation and judgment that resulted from their ancestors’ earlier rejection of Christ (see Enos 1:12–18; see also D&C 84:54–61).

8–10. Upon learning of the fate of their kindred, the people again began mourning and weeping. But just as the vapors of darkness were dispersed by light, the darkness of their mourning was turned to the light of joy as they more fully understood and experienced the mercy of the Lord. Their uncertainty and despair were dispelled with the fulfillment of the prophecies—Christ was resurrected! This segment of the historical account also provides a glimpse or foreshadowing of the glory of the second coming of Christ, which likewise will bring an end to death and destruction and will replace mourning and lamentations with praises of thanksgiving and worship to the Lord Jesus Christ. Describing this glorious future event, Isaiah declared: “He will swallow up death in victory; and the Lord God will wipe away tears from off all faces; and the rebuke of his people shall he take away from off all the earth: for the Lord hath spoken it. And it shall be said in that day, Lo, this is our God; we have waited for him, we will be glad and rejoice in his salvation.” (Isaiah 25:8–9; see also Revelation 7:14–17.)

11. And thus far were the scriptures fulfilled] See 1 Nephi 19:10–12; Helaman 14:20–29.

The More Righteous Part of the People Spared

3 Nephi 10:12–19

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.

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.

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.

12. It was the more righteous part of the people who were saved] In direct contrast to the Lord's earlier statement concerning the wicked who had been destroyed (see 3 Nephi 9:10), the Lord illuminates the saving attribute of the righteous. It was that they had received the prophets who had been sent among them. In our day, the Lord declared that the righteous—those whose names are written in the Lamb's Book of Life (see Revelation 21:27)—are those who hear and heed the Lord's chosen servants (see D&C 84:36–38).

14. He that hath the scriptures, let him search them] The commandment to search the scriptures is again emphasized. Through searching the scriptures we can have testimonies strengthened by seeing the fulfillment of prophecy (compare D&C 1:37), can be instructed in righteousness (compare 2 Timothy 3:15–17), can come to know Christ more fully (compare John 5:39), and from the "words of Christ" learn "all things that [we] should do" (2 Nephi 32:3–5).

16. The prophet Zenos did testify of these things] For a more in-depth discussion of the significance of the ministry and

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?

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—

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.

teachings of Zenos see *Commentary* 1:147; 2:48. It is significant to note that Mormon, as well as Nephi and Jacob before him, was fond of quoting from Zenos and Zenock. “They testified particularly concerning us, who are the remnant of their seed.” Presumably this means the Nephites quoted Zenos and Zenock because they were descendants of these great oracles, which might explain why Book of Mormon prophets found occasion to cite the teachings of those prophets. The Book of Mormon is silent concerning the historical background of their ministries and the exact nature of their relationship to Lehi’s seed.

17. Are not we a remnant of the seed of Joseph?] See 1 Nephi 5:14; 2 Nephi 3:4; Alma 10:3; see also *Commentary* 1:49; commentary on Alma 10:3.

18. In the ending of the thirty and fourth year] The signs of Christ’s death came on the fourth day of the first month in the thirty-fourth year (see 3 Nephi 8:5). Mormon here tells us that Christ appeared to the Nephites “in the ending” of the thirty-fourth year, thus suggesting that it was several months following his Old World ascension into heaven before he came to the Nephites (see *Mortal Messiah* 4:307).

18. Great blessings poured out upon their heads] The favors and blessings here spoken of by Mormon in very deed centered in the appearance of the risen Lord. There could be no greater blessing or favor in mortality than what follows in the book of 3 Nephi—the American ministry of the resurrected Savior.

The Resurrected Christ Appears at Bountiful

3 Nephi 11:1–17

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.

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.

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.

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.

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.

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.

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.

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.

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.

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.

1–2. There was great marvelling and wondering among the people, not only concerning the voice that had been heard but also concerning the remarkable changes that had taken place on the face of the land (see 3 Nephi 8:11–14) and the fulfillment of the sign foretold by Samuel (see Helaman 14:20–27).

3–7. While marvelling upon the things they had previously seen and heard, the people heard a voice “as if it came out of

heaven." Twice the voice spoke and they could not understand it, but the third time they did. The significance of the voice is that it declares to them who is about to appear to them—The Beloved Son of God.

3. Notwithstanding it being a small voice . . . it did pierce them to the very soul, and did cause their hearts to burn] The voice of God, received through the spirit of revelation, does not have to be heard with ears, nor necessarily be transmitted by auditory nerves. It speaks to the soul of man. Hence it can be a "small voice" but can cause a person to "quake" or tremble. It is not volume but rather the spiritual power of this "small voice" that makes it unique. Compare Helaman 5:30; see also 1 Kings 19:11-12; D&C 8:2-3; 9:8; 85:6.

7. Behold my Beloved Son . . . in whom I have glorified my name] On other occasions, the voice of the Father has been heard introducing his Son and commanding people to hearken to the words of the Son (see Matthew 3:17; 17:5; Joseph Smith—History 1:17). This introduction is unique in that it adds the phrase, "in whom I have glorified my name." No doubt this has reference to Christ's fulfillment of the atoning sacrifice that makes immortality and eternal life possible for mankind—which is the "work and glory" of the Father (see Moses 1:39).

8-17. This is the crowning spiritual event in the Book of Mormon. Words cannot adequately describe the thoughts and feelings that must have filled the minds and hearts of those present at the temple in Bountiful. It is doctrinally significant to note what the Savior did as he appeared to the people and for what purposes he did it. He taught and testified of himself (see verses 10-11): He is the Christ, the Messiah who every prophet had testified would come into the world (see 1 Nephi 10:4-5; Jacob 7:11). The "bitter cup"—which is the symbolic representation of the painful demands of justice that had to be met in order for the infinite and eternal sacrifice to be fulfilled—had been drunk (see Matthew 26:36-46; Luke 22:42; compare D&C 19:16-19). Standing before the people was the glorious evidence that the promise of redemption was now realized. No object lesson or teaching method could teach these doctrinal truths more powerfully than seeing the resurrected Lord himself and hearing him declare with his own mouth these saving truths. It was not enough to just declare to the people that the "infinite and eternal sacrifice" had been made in their behalf. The Savior next demonstrated his infinite love and compassion by inviting every person present to come forth and "feel the prints of the nails" (see verses 14-15). This sacred procession must have taken several hours as each of the 2,500 people saw with their eyes and felt with their own hands the living Christ. Jesus lovingly, patiently, and tenderly stood there allowing so

many to handle him and to praise his holy name, not because he desired or needed to be the focus of their worshipful adoration but rather because he desired them to gain an apostolic witness of his divinity. “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,” was his stated objective.

This unique witness, which was given to each person there present, becomes important in their reception of the subsequent teachings Jesus gave to them. With their spirits deeply touched and their hearts softened by such a spiritual experience, they were prepared to hear and embrace the words of their Master. The resurrected Lord’s appearance, coupled with each person’s own eye-witness experience of being with and being taught by the Savior, as well as the continual teaching, testifying, and reminding of this great event, served as the foundation for a “golden age” among the Nephites where “there was no contention,” where there were “mighty miracles wrought,” and where “there could not be a happier people” (see 4 Nephi 1:1–17).

11. I am the light and the life of the world] See commentary on 3 Nephi 9:18.

14. I am the God of Israel] The resurrected Jesus, whom the Nephites heard and saw, was and is the same Jehovah who was seen and heard by Moses and other ancient prophets. He is the great “I Am” (see Exodus 3:14; John 8:56–58); the “Holy One of Israel” (see Isaiah 45:11–15; 2 Nephi 25:29); the “Shepherd of Israel” (see Psalm 80:1; Isaiah 40:11; John 10:11, 14–18). To Moses on Sinai he gave the law which pointed men to its fulfillment in him in Gethsemane and on Golgotha. He is both the Lawgiver and the fulfillment of the law (see 3 Nephi 15:5). Perhaps no more clearly and profoundly is it taught anywhere that Jesus Christ was and is a God—premortally, mortally, and postmortally—than in the Book of Mormon. As he stands before the Nephites we do not see him merely as a great moral teacher or prophet; neither is he described as our Elder Brother, but truly and literally as “the God of Israel”—the very God in heaven, who Abinadi said would “come down among the children of men, and shall redeem his people” (Mosiah 15:1).

17. Hosanna! Blessed be the name of the Most High God!] The word “Hosanna” literally means “Save now, save me pray” and is taken from a messianic psalm found in the Old Testament (see Psalm 118:25). It was commonly used in ancient times in connection with the worship of Jehovah at the Feast of Tabernacles. Shouting Hosannas and waving palm branches was a means of worshipping the Messiah and acknowledging his saving power (see Matthew 21:9, 15). No doubt the Nephites were familiar with this conceptual meaning of Hosanna. But what is most

important in this verse, is that the people were so overcome with love and gratitude that they worshipped the very person for whom these ancient “Hosannas” had been reserved. In the modern Church also the “Hosanna shout” is used as a sacred means of worshipping the Lord and expressing our profound respect, love, and gratitude for him and his holy mission. The modern proclamations of “Hosanna” are usually reserved for deeply sacred events such as temple dedications. Whether done anciently or today, it is a symbol of deep reverence for and worship of our Lord.

Jesus Instructs Nephi Concerning Baptism

3 Nephi 11:18–30

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.

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

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.

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.

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.

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.

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.

18–20. It is evident from this passage that Nephi as a humble servant of the Lord had not sought special privileges with the Savior, nor was he at the head of the line to meet the Savior. Mormon's wording is evidence of Nephi's humility: he was "among the multitude." Jesus called him forth to (1) instruct Nephi in his duties as the mortal head of the Nephite church, and (2) to demonstrate to the people who "the Lord's anointed" was. This was in a manner a "setting apart" of Nephi as the Savior's authorized servant among the Nephites.

19. Bowed himself before the Lord and did kiss his feet]

Those who have served the Master most faithfully and have hearkened to his words most closely are the ones who know him most intimately. Nephi's gesture of worship, as described by Mormon, gives us a small glimpse of the love and adoration that Nephi had for his Savior. His entire ministry was one of testifying of Jesus Christ and teaching his people to turn to Christ; now he was able to personally worship the Only Begotten as an eyewitness of the Resurrection. What greater reward could there be for a faithful follower and disciple of Christ! Perhaps we can better understand not only Nephi's action but also his innermost feelings when we read the words of a modern-day special witness of the Savior. Demonstrating a Nephi-like love for and intimate knowledge of the resurrected Christ, Elder Bruce R. McConkie declared: "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, p. 12, italics added.)

21–26. Reading these verses, one may wonder whether Nephi did not already have priesthood authority and whether the ordinance of baptism was not already being practiced among the Nephites. The answer to both questions would be yes. Nephi already had authority, and baptism was already being practiced. The doctrinal significance of these verses is not merely to reiterate the importance of baptism by the proper priesthood authority but rather to demonstrate the establishment of a new gospel dispensation among the Nephites and the accompanying ordinances and ordinances that a new dispensation necessitated. Of the events described in these verses, President Joseph Fielding Smith taught: "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 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* 3:205–6; see also 4:96–97.)

21. I give unto you power] Nephi was not being given any additional priesthood by the Lord, but rather he was receiving new authority to perform ordinances associated with the "new organization" that Christ established among them. With "old things" done away, Nephi was given power and authority to administer in the "new things" in a dispensation with the fulness of gospel ordinances. Nephi, in turn, was then able to ordain (or in our terminology "set apart") others to establish and set in order this new Church.

26. And then shall ye immerse them in the water] The practice of baptism by complete immersion did not begin in Christ's mortal ministry (see Moses 6:64; Mosiah 18:14–16), but its rich symbolism is based on the death, burial, and resurrection of Christ. In the Old World, Paul spoke often of the spiritual symbols associated with immersion (e.g., see Romans 6:3–6; Colossians 2:12). While we have no recorded teaching of this symbolism in the Book of Mormon, the ancient Nephites undoubtedly had been taught and understood it. Perhaps it was once again taught by the Savior himself as he now instructed them concerning the manner of baptism.

27. And after this manner shall ye baptize in my name] In the previous four verses the Savior had explained the qualifications for baptism, the manner of baptism, and the words to be said with the ordinance. These instructions were given as a new dispensation was established. With the restoration of the Church in this last dispensation, the Lord once again gave explicit instruction to his earthly servants concerning the same principles (see D&C 20:37, 71–74).

27. The Father, and the Son, and the Holy Ghost are one] See Alma 11:44. The Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost are "one" not in physical being as some may claim, but rather in the sense of the dictionary definition "single through union, agreement, harmony . . . of a single kind, nature, or character, a state of unity, agreement, accord." Each member of the Godhead is unique and separate, with his own important missions; and yet they are totally united in the purpose of bringing mankind to immortality and eternal life (see Moses 1:39). The Savior himself spoke of this

kind of oneness that characterizes the Godhead when he prayed to his Father that the Apostles “may be one, as we are” (see John 17:11, 21–22). He was not praying that the disciples become one in physical being, but rather that they might become completely unified in purpose. We too become one with God when, through faith and obedience, we become like them—when our thoughts and words and deeds are in total accord with those of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost. See commentary on 3 Nephi 28:10.

28. There shall be no disputations among you] The record does not identify the issues and/or doctrines that were previously being disputed among the people. All we know is that there had been disputes over doctrine. What is doctrinally significant from these passages is not the nature or cause of the contention, but rather that the Lord was extremely displeased with it. It is especially offensive to the Lord when there is conflict over his doctrines—in light of his reminder that we must be one if we are to be his disciples (see John 17:21; see also D&C 38:27). The Savior’s ancient injunction still has spiritual significance today. Elder Russell M. Nelson declared: “Divine doctrine of the Church is the prime target of attack by the spiritually contentious. . . . Dissecting doctrine in a controversial way in order to draw attention to oneself is not pleasing to the Lord. . . . Contention fosters disunity. . . . What can we do to combat this canker of contention? What steps may each of us take to supplant the spirit of contention with a spirit of personal peace?

“To begin, show compassionate concern for others. Control the tongue, the pen, and the word processor. Whenever tempted to dispute, remember this proverb: ‘He that is void of wisdom despiseth his neighbour: but a man of understanding holdeth his peace.’ (Proverbs 11:12; see also 17:28). . . . Through love of God, the pain caused by the fiery canker of contention will be extinguished from the soul.” (*Ensign*, May 1989, pp. 70–71.)

29. The spirit of contention . . . is of the devil, who is the father of contention] Contention and conflict is the antithesis of the peace and love promised by the Lord. Satan is the father of contention in that he seeks to stir men up to anger so that the Spirit of the Lord cannot be with them. In the premortal world Lucifer was the father, the creator, the source of contention that has now spread to the earth. It matters not to Satan what the contention is all about—whether it is about worldly wickedness or the doctrines of the kingdom. It only matters that contention and conflict be created in the hearts of men, because it is a “corroding canker of the spirit” that unless checked by repentance can lead to spiritual death. (See *Ensign*, May 1989, pp. 68–71.) Since Lucifer seeks the destruction of all men, and uses anger, strife, and contention as weapons that can thwart the workings of the Spirit in

our lives, it is no wonder the Savior commanded his disciples to eliminate anger from their lives. See Commentary on 3 Nephi 12:21–26.

30. This is not my doctrine, to stir up the hearts of men with anger] There is no place in the Savior's gospel—whether it be in the Church, our homes, our neighborhoods, or the workplace—for contention and anger. We can defend the faith, declare the truth, and live the gospel without contention. Disputations and anger, even in the noblest of causes, is displeasing to the Lord, cuts us off from the Spirit of the Lord, and undermines the very purposes we are seeking to fulfill (see Alma 1:19–24). As we strive to more fully live the Savior's teachings we will discover in our lives more peace and less contention—more peacemaking, mutual respect and understanding, and less disputation and conflict. The peace that will eventually cover the earth must first start within individual lives.

The Doctrine of Christ

3 Nephi 11:31–41

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.

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.

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

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.

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.

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.

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.

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.

people, and declare the words which I have spoken, unto the ends of the earth.

41. Therefore, go forth unto this

31–41. The Book of Mormon contains “the fulness of the everlasting gospel” (see Joseph Smith—History 1:34; see also D&C 20:8–9). While it does not contain all gospel teaching or practices of the modern Church, it nonetheless contains the “fulness of the gospel” in that it contains the Savior’s own teaching of what constitutes his doctrine or gospel. Nephi and his brother Jacob had previously taught and testified of those teachings and ordinances that comprise “the doctrine of Christ” (see 2 Nephi 31; *Commentary* 1:363–68). Faith, repentance, baptism by water and by fire, enduring in faithfulness to the end, keeping the commandments and following the example of the Savior—these are all integral components of the doctrine of Christ. All of the prophets have testified of these same principles and ordinances that are central to the plan of salvation.

With his appearance to the Nephites at Bountiful, the resurrected Lord personally reiterated these principles. These verses in chapter 11 become the foundation for his subsequent teaching of the gospel and preparing the people to live a life of “higher righteousness.” Here the Savior enumerates the principles and ordinances of his gospel, but later he expounds further on how each principle is linked to the others, how all are appendages to the atoning sacrifice of the Only Begotten, and how together they constitute the “fulness of the everlasting Gospel” (see commentary on 3 Nephi 27:13–27).

32. The doctrine which the Father hath given unto me|

While we commonly speak of the doctrine or gospel of Jesus Christ, this verse clearly teaches that the gospel—the plan of salvation—was not originated by Jesus, but is indeed the Father’s. Paul spoke of “the gospel of God . . . concerning his son Jesus Christ our Lord” (Romans 1:1–3). Elder Bruce R. McConkie taught: “What is the gospel? In the full and eternal sense, it is the plan of salvation, ordained and established by the Father, to enable his spirit children (Christ included!) to advance and progress and become like him. Thus, it includes all things both temporal and spiritual and is as eternal as God himself. Every truth, every eternal verity, every law and power—whether on earth, in heaven, or throughout the boundless universe—all of these are part of the gospel of God. He is their source and author, and all that *is* has been created for the benefit and blessing of man. . . .

“To us, the central thing in the plan of salvation is the atoning sacrifice of Christ. . . . Accordingly, we speak of the gospel of Jesus

Christ—he adopted his Father’s plan—to center our attention everlastingly in the One by whom salvation comes. . . . It is God’s gospel and it is Christ’s gospel, and if we believe and obey its truths and laws and play our assigned parts in the divine system, it becomes our gospel also.” (*New Witness*, pp. 132–33.)

33. They are they who shall inherit the kingdom of God]

In the context of this verse, we see that faith in Christ and the ordinance of baptism (both by water and by fire) are required for entrance into the celestial kingdom (see John 3:3–5; 2 Nephi 31:17–18). “Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God,” the Prophet Joseph Smith declared. “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.” (*Teachings*, p. 12; see also a similar statement by President Lorenzo Snow, *Teachings of Lorenzo Snow*, p. 96.)

34. And whoso . . . is not baptized, shall be damned]

Those who reject the principles of the gospel, including the ordinance of baptism, are damned, not in the “fire and brimstone” sense but rather in the sense that their progression is stopped, their joy is limited because they are not in the celestial kingdom—the only place where there is a “continuation of the seeds forever and ever” (see D&C 132:19–20). There are varying degrees of damnation just as there are varying degrees or meanings of salvation. In this sense, all who do not attain exaltation are damned, even though they are redeemed and inherit lesser rewards. With the exception of sons of perdition, and subject in many cases to long delays in the spirit prison to allow repentance and reform of those “who shall not be redeemed from the devil until the last resurrection,” all shall ultimately enjoy a glory hereafter which “surpasses all understanding” (see D&C 76:85, 89).

35. Whoso believeth in me believeth in the Father also]

Because of the oneness of God, it is manifestly impossible to believe and accept the Son without also accepting the Father (see D&C 84:37–38). “No man cometh unto the Father, but by me,” the Savior declared (John 14:6; see also Matthew 10:32).

36. The Holy Ghost will bear record unto him of the Father and me] The Holy Ghost is “God the third, the witness or Testator” (*Teachings*, p. 190). While there are numerous functions and spiritual blessings of the Holy Ghost, the primary mission of that member of the Godhead is to bear witness of the Father and the Son and to teach and testify of their plan of salvation (see Moses 7:5–7; D&C 20:27; 42:17).

37–38. Become as a little child . . . or ye can in nowise receive these things . . . or ye can in nowise inherit the king-

dom of God] The natural man cannot comprehend the things of God (see 1 Corinthians 2:11–14) and as a result cannot embrace the saving principles and ordinances of the gospel. Becoming as a little child in order to receive the teachings of the Savior implies overcoming the natural man through the atonement of Jesus Christ. The requirement to become as a little child to enter into the kingdom of God means much more than childlike innocence. It implies a submission to the will of the Father and a recognition of our total dependence upon the Lord. (See Mosiah 3:19; see also *Commentary* 2:153–54.)

39–40. Buildeth upon my rock] Acceptance of Christ's doctrine (see D&C 11:24) allows men to have their lives built upon and anchored to the rock of our salvation, which is Christ (see 1 Corinthians 10:1–4). Spiritual safety, security, and stability against "the gates of hell" can only be obtained through Christ and his gospel (compare Matthew 7:24–27; Helaman 5:12; see also commentary on Helaman 5:12).

40. Whoso shall declare more or less than this, and establish it for my doctrine, the same cometh of evil] After completing his sermon on what constitutes his doctrine and the means whereby salvation is attained, the Savior issued this sharp warning concerning those—either in the Church or without—who would seek to alter the teachings of Christ and declare such alterations as truth. To the Galatian Saints, the Apostle Paul issued a similar caution: "I marvel that ye are so soon removed from him that called you into the grace of Christ unto another gospel: which is not another; but there be some that trouble you, and would pervert the gospel of Christ. But though we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel unto you than that which we have preached unto you, let him be accursed." (Galatians 1:6–8.)

Elder Bruce R. McConkie's comments on this passage from Galatians also help to illuminate the meaning of the Savior's warning to the Nephites: "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. . . .

“And who is a false teacher, a false minister, a false prophet? Anyone who does not teach the truth, minister the elements of true religion, or prophesy truly of that which is yet to be. It is truth, pure, diamond truth that counts, and nothing else. A true preacher is one who belongs to the true Church, believes the true gospel, holds that priesthood which is in fact the power of God delegated to man on earth, and who receives revelation from the one true Spirit Being who is the Holy Ghost. And wo unto all others, for they fall under the eternal law here announced by one who was a legal administrator and who wrote by the power of the Spirit.” (*Doctrinal New Testament Commentary* 2:457–59.)

40. He buildeth upon a sandy foundation] See 3 Nephi 14:24–27.

Jesus Delivers a Preface to the Beatitudes

3 Nephi 12:1–2

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, be-

hold, 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.

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.

1–2. These introductory remarks by the Savior provide an important doctrinal context for the Beatitudes. They set forth the important concept 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 doings and desires of Babylon, received the gospel ordinances, accepted and received the

Lord's anointed servants, and committed themselves to Christ and his kingdom.

1. Power and authority to baptize] “An apostle is an elder, and it is his calling to baptize; and to ordain other elders, priests, teachers, and deacons” (D&C 20:38–39; see also 18:29).

1. Twelve] Though the word *disciples* is used throughout 3 Nephi to describe those chosen to minister to the Nephite multitudes, there seems to be no question but that they were *Apostles*. They were, in fact, disciples, followers of the Christ, before Jesus appeared in America. These were called to be special witnesses and were granted apostolic power (see Moroni 2:2; HC 4:538).

1. He stretched forth his hand unto the multitude] Jesus' sermon in Galilee (Matthew 5–7) was directed almost exclusively to the Twelve. Though there were no doubt other disciples present, the Sermon on the Mount was essentially an apostolic preparation address, a type of missionary training center for special witnesses (see especially the Joseph Smith Translation of Matthew 7). The Bountiful Sermon in 3 Nephi was delivered both to the twelve Nephite Apostles and to a multitude of other faithful people. In Bountiful, whenever Jesus desired to deliver a specific message to the multitude or to the Twelve, Mormon's account makes special notice of it (see, for example, 3 Nephi 12:1; 13:25; 14:1; 18:26).

1. Blessed are ye if ye shall give heed unto the words of these twelve] We honor the Lord by honoring his servants. We receive him by receiving those whom he has chosen. We open ourselves to the words of eternal life by hearkening to the counsel of those called by revelation to lead us. By way of warning, the Lord explained in his preface to the Doctrine and Covenants: “And the arm of the Lord shall be revealed; and the day cometh that they who will not hear the voice of the Lord, neither the voice of his servants, neither give heed to the words of the prophets and apostles, shall be cut off from among the people” (D&C 1:14). Of the presiding council in the Church, that same Lord later explained: “Whosoever receiveth my word receiveth me, and whosoever receiveth me, receiveth those, the First Presidency, whom I have sent, whom I have made counselors for my name's sake unto you” (D&C 112:20).

1. I will baptize you with fire and with the Holy Ghost] John the Baptist testified: “I indeed baptize you with water, upon your repentance; and when he of whom I bear record cometh, who is mightier than I, whose shoes I am not worthy to bear, (or whose place I am not able to fill,) as I said, I indeed baptize you before he cometh, that when he cometh he may baptize you with the Holy Ghost and fire” (JST, Matthew 3:38). It is through the atoning blood of Jesus Christ, by means of the Holy Spirit, that men and women are sanctified from sin, cleansed and purified

from the effects of their transgressions. See commentary on 3 Nephi 9:20.

2. More blessed are they who shall believe in your words] See John 20:29; Alma 32:13–16.

2. And shall receive a remission of their sins] Sins are remitted not in the waters of baptism, as we say in speaking figuratively of “washing away” our sins, but rather when the Sanctifier, the Holy Ghost, burns dross and filth out of our souls as though by fire. “Wherefore,” Nephi counseled, “do the things which I have told you I have seen that your Lord and your Redeemer should do; for, for this cause have they been shown unto me, that ye might know the gate by which ye should enter. 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, italics added; see also Moroni 6:4; *Teachings*, p. 314; *New Witness*, pp. 239, 290.)

The Beatitudes

3 Nephi 12:3–12

3. Yea, blessed are the poor in spirit who come unto me, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

4. And again, blessed are all they that mourn, for they shall be comforted.

5. And blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth.

6. And blessed are all they who do hunger and thirst after righteousness, for they shall be filled with the Holy Ghost.

7. And blessed are the merciful, for they shall obtain mercy.

8. And blessed are all the pure in heart, for they shall see God.

9. And blessed are all the

peacemakers, for they shall be called the children of God.

10. And blessed are all they who are persecuted for my name’s sake, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

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.

3–12. President Harold B. Lee was fond of referring to the Beatitudes as the “constitution for a perfect life.” They not only set forth the blessed or happy life but also describe the kind of person our Savior was and is; if we want to understand the godly attributes of our Lord and Master, we need only ponder the Beatitudes. He embodies every virtue in perfection.

3. The poor in spirit who come unto me] Those who are

poor in spirit—who are broken in spirit, sad of spirit or depressed, or those who are sin-laden and thereby spiritually bankrupt—cannot be saved on their own. The words “who come unto me” in the Bountiful sermon complete the intended message. There is no virtue in being broken or in being a spiritual beggar, except to the degree that we come unto the Lord. That is, whenever we look to the Lord, thereby acknowledging our inability to gain happiness and the abundant life without his saving grace, we are blessed. The supernal invitation is forever the same: “Yea, come unto Christ, and be perfected in him” (Moroni 10:32).

4. Blessed are all they that mourn] One is not an heir of heavenly approbation who simply spends his or her days mourning. There are, however, certain kinds of mourning which are commanded and thus commended. Those who mourn for their sins—and more important, who, like Nephi, mourn because of their fallen nature (see 2 Nephi 4:17–35)—and subsequently turn to Christ with full purpose of heart come to know the comfort and peace of forgiveness. The Saints who mourn with those that mourn—and who thus fulfill their covenantal obligations (see Mosiah 18:8–9)—shall in time gain eternal life. Those who mourn because of the cost of Christian discipleship, who face the challenges of a cynical and skeptical world head on, who “suffer his cross and bear the shame of the world” (Jacob 1:8), shall eventually find rest with him who mourned as none other has in time or in eternity.

5. Blessed are the meek] “Few virtues have such inherent worth as meekness, for the meek are the godfearing and the righteous. They are the ones who willingly conform to the gospel standards, thus submitting their wills to the will of the Lord. They are not the fearful, the spiritless, the timid. Rather, the most forceful, dynamic personality who ever lived . . . said of Himself, ‘I am meek and lowly in heart.’ ” (Bruce R. McConkie, *Mormon Doctrine*, p. 474.) Meekness is not just humility, though the two virtues are certainly related. Meekness may involve, in addition, poise under provocation, the ability to be in control emotionally. Jesus, who described himself as “meek and lowly in heart” (Matthew 11:29) stood in silent and divine dignity while his accusers spit upon him, slapped him, insulted him, and scourged him.

The meek person is one who feels little or no attachment to this world’s trappings. Joseph Smith said: “Some of the company thought I was not a very meek Prophet; so I told them: ‘I am meek and lowly in heart,’ and will personify Jesus for a moment, to illustrate the principle, and cried out with a loud voice, ‘Woe unto you, ye doctors; woe unto you, ye lawyers; woe unto you, ye scribes, Pharisees, and hypocrites!’ But you cannot find the place where I ever went that I found fault with their food, their drink,

their house, their lodgings; no, never; and this is what is meant by the meekness and lowliness of Jesus." (*Teachings*, p. 270.) In the final sense, "none is acceptable before God, save the meek and lowly in heart" (Moroni 7:44).

5. They shall inherit the earth] "For yet a little while," David wrote, "and the wicked shall not be: yea, thou shalt diligently consider his place, and it shall not be. But the meek shall inherit the earth; and shall delight themselves in the abundance of peace." (Psalm 37:10–11.) A modern revelation declared that "the resurrection from the dead is the redemption of the soul. And the redemption of the soul is through him that quickeneth all things, in whose bosom it is decreed that the poor and the meek of the earth shall inherit it." (D&C 88:16–17.)

6. Blessed are all they who do hunger and thirst after righteousness] To hunger and thirst after righteousness is to yearn with all one's soul for the things of the Spirit; to crave that goodness of character and that nobility of soul which graced the ancient worthies; to want more than anything else to enjoy the fruit of the Spirit, the gifts and signs and wonders which always accompany faith. To hunger and thirst after righteousness is to have an eye single to the glory of God; to desire what the Lord desires, to feel what he feels, to strive to do what he would do under similar circumstances. To hunger and thirst after righteousness is to trust completely in the Savior, to rely wholly upon his mercy and grace, to yield one's heart unto God. The Prophet Joseph Smith taught that the end result of hungering and thirsting after righteousness is the assurance of eternal life (see *Teachings*, p. 150).

6. They shall be filled with the Holy Ghost] "The Spirit of God sanctifies—it cleanses and purges filth and dross out of the human soul as though by fire. The Spirit does far more, however, than remove uncleanness. It also fills. It fills one with a holy element, with a sacred presence that motivates the person to a godly walk and goodly works. These persons do not necessarily plan out how they will perform the works of righteousness; they do not plot and design which deeds and what actions are to be done in every situation. Rather, they embody righteousness. They are goodness." (Robert L. Millet, *Life in Christ*, pp. 98–99; regarding one's receiving a fulness of the Holy Ghost, see Joseph Fielding McConkie and Robert L. Millet, *The Holy Ghost*, pp. 129–30.)

7. Blessed are the merciful] To the degree that we are merciful with others, God will be merciful with us. We shall be judged according to the judgment we render (see JST, Matthew 7:1–2). Alma explained to Corianton: "The meaning of the word restoration is to bring back again evil for evil, or carnal for carnal, or devilish for devilish—good for that which is good; righteous for that which is righteous; just for that which is just; merciful for that

which is merciful. Therefore, my son, see that you are merciful unto your brethren; . . . then shall ye receive your reward; yea, ye shall have mercy restored unto you again.” (Alma 41:13–14.) “Be ye therefore merciful, as your Father also is merciful” (Luke 6:36).

8. Blessed are all the pure in heart] When we manage to live in such a way that our actions are above reproach, we are said to have clean hands. When we live in such a way that our desires are appropriate and are but reflected by our righteous actions, then we are said to be pure in heart. To be pure in heart is to be single, focused, riveted, aligned with the ways and will of the Almighty. It is to have no desires but desires for righteousness. When a Latter-day Saint is pure in heart, he seeks to build up and establish the cause of Zion; Zion is the pure in heart (see D&C 97:21).

8. For they shall see God] In a metaphorical sense, a faithful person comes to “see God” as he or she begins to see more clearly the hand of God in all things; the plans and purposes of God undergirding all existence; the love of God so wondrously shed forth among all mankind. In the ultimate sense, one who, through the sanctifying powers of the Spirit, acquires true sainthood and therefore becomes pure in heart, is entitled to see the Lord face to face. Joseph Smith taught that after one has received and cultivated the gift of the Holy Ghost, if he continues to hunger and thirst after righteousness and endures faithfully the trials and tests of this life, he will find his calling and election made sure—that is, he will gain the assurance of eternal life. It will then be his privilege, based upon continued obedience and fidelity to the laws of the Lord—for this is an additional blessing—to receive what the Prophet called the second comforter, the personal presence of Christ the Lord. (See *Teachings*, pp. 149–51.) In speaking of the importance of individual and community holiness in entering the house of the Lord, a revelation declared: “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; compare Psalm 24:3–4).

Elder Bruce R. McConkie has written: “After the true saints receive and enjoy the gift of the Holy Ghost; after they know how to attune themselves to the voice of the Spirit; after they mature spiritually so that they see visions, work miracles, and entertain angels; after they make their calling and election sure and prove themselves worthy of every trust—after all this and more—it becomes their right and privilege to see the Lord and commune with him face to face. Revelations, visions, angelic visitations, the rending of the heavens, and appearances among men of the Lord himself—all these things are for all of the faithful. They are not

reserved for apostles and prophets only. God is no respecter of persons. They are not reserved for one age only, or for a select lineage of people. We are all our Father's children. All are welcome." (*Promised Messiah*, p. 575; see also pp. 584–86.)

9. Blessed are all the peacemakers] The Lord here commissions his servants to do all they can to establish peace on earth. Treaties and agreements and armistices are to be applauded, but the only ultimate peace in the world will come through the power of Jesus Christ. Jesus Christ is the Prince of Peace. His message, the gospel of salvation, is a message of peace. He brings peace—but not as the world does (see John 14:27)—to those who will receive him, come unto him, obey him, follow him, and submit to him. He remits sin, and that brings peace. He steadies the troubled soul, which brings peace. He comforts the bereaved, which brings peace. He offers heavenly perspective, which brings peace. His Spirit teaches the “peaceable things of the kingdom” (D&C 39:6; see also Moses 6:61). In addition, those whom he calls and sends forth in his name are peacemakers; these are they which bear glad tidings, which publish peace, even the message that God reigns (see Mosiah 15:13–18). “The peace the gospel brings,” Elder Dallin H. Oaks has taught, “is not just the *absence* of war. It is the *opposite* of war. Gospel peace is the opposite of any conflict, armed or unarmed. It is the opposite of national or ethnic hostilities, of civil or family strife. . . . By preaching righteousness, our missionaries seek to treat the causes of war. They preach repentance from personal corruption, greed, and oppression because only by individual reformation can we overcome corruption and oppression by groups or nations. By inviting all to repent and come unto Christ, our missionaries are working for peace in this world by changing the hearts and behavior of individual men and women.” (CR, April 1990, pp. 91, 94, italics in original.)

10–12. There is little joy in persecution itself. No one, not even the Holy One of Israel, joyed in persecution. It is not something to be desired, and certainly not something to be appreciated and enjoyed. The Lord's final beatitude is one of consolation. The true Christian will eventually be persecuted for his beliefs and way of life. In this he should not feel alone, nor should he be surprised (see 1 Peter 4:12–13), for he is in good company. The best blood of scores of generations has been shed by those who sought to malign and eradicate the believers. And should the true believer be called upon to seal his witness through the giving of his life, then glory and honor and exaltation await him hereafter. “And whoso layeth down his life in my cause, for my name's sake, shall find it again, even life eternal” (D&C 98:13; compare 101:15, 35).

The Saints Called to Be the Salt of the Earth, the Light of the World

3 Nephi 12:13–16

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.

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.

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.

13. I give unto you to be the salt of the earth] That this counsel was directed primarily to members of the Church is evident from a modern revelation. “*When men are called into mine everlasting gospel,*” the Savior declared, “*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” (D&C 101:39–40, italics added). “The Saints are asked to stand as a spice, a seasoning, a flavor among the bland and often tasteless elements of the world. Because they are there, things are better; like salt, the people of the Lord are empowered to bring out the best in others. . . . In reality, we can only make a difference if we are different. Not necessarily strange. Different. Indeed, disciples of Christ are to stand in stark contrast to those who conform, concede, and thereby compromise.” Salt is a healing medium. Like oil on troubled waters, the disciple of Christ is sent forth to bear others’ burdens, to comfort the distressed, to mourn with those that face calamity (see Mosiah 18:8–9). As a peacemaker, he is called to serve as a soothing balm in the midst of tragedy or controversy.

“Salt is a preservative. It preserves food from corruption and keeps it wholesome and acceptable. The disciples are likewise called to be as preservatives on earth. They are called out of the world to stand as witnesses against creeping relativity and the dilution of time-honored values. They are summoned by the Savior to declare with love and boldness those principles of light and virtue, those absolute truths decreed by an all-wise God and his prophets. . . . A modern revelation declared: ‘They [the Saints] were set to be a light unto the world, and to be the saviors of men; and inasmuch as they are not the saviors of men, they are as salt that has lost its savor’ (D&C 103:9–10). We note with interest the number of times in scripture the Lord warns the wicked that inasmuch as they cast

out the prophets and the righteous element from among them, they are ripe for destruction. To dispel the nucleus of faith is to sever the very lifeline which could pull them through the storms of life into a safe harbor (see Alma 10:22–23; Helaman 13:12).” (Robert L. Millet, *An Eye Single to the Glory of God*, pp. 43–45.)

Elder Carlos E. Asay explained that “salt will not lose its savor with age. Savor is lost through mixture and contamination. . . . Flavor and quality flee a man when he contaminates his mind with unclean thoughts, desecrates his mouth by speaking less than the truth, and misapplies his strength in performing evil acts.” (CR, April 1980, p. 60.)

14–16. “The Lord calls us to point the way. In a world which is too often shrouded in uncertainty and doubt, the Light of Life bids us to let our light shine, to stand as beacons in the storms of the night, and to certify our discipleship by preachment and practice. Discipleship entails example. Discipleship involves standing out from the generality of mankind and standing up for what is true and right and good. We come to make a difference only when we are different, and that difference must be substantive enough to be witnessed and then acknowledged by others. . . . We allow our light to shine—our testimonies, our witness of the truthfulness of the work in which we are engaged, and our deeds of Christian service—not that observers might commend and praise us but that they might turn their lives toward him who is the source of conviction and the personification of goodness. ‘Therefore, hold up your light that it may shine unto the world. Behold I am the light which ye should hold up—that which ye have seen me do’ (3 Nephi 18:24). Christ is the Light. We are at best lamps, dim reflections of him. But to the degree that the light of his Spirit shines in our souls, to the degree that his image is in our countenances, to the degree that our good works motivate others to sing the song of redeeming love and glorify God, we are in the line of our duty as disciples.” (*An Eye Single to the Glory of God*, pp. 47, 49–50.)

Jesus Fulfills the Law

3 Nephi 12:17–48

17. Think not that I am come to destroy the law or the prophets. I am not come to destroy but to fulfil;

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.

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.

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.

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;

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.

23. Therefore, if ye shall come unto me, or shall desire to come unto me, and rememberest that thy brother hath aught against thee—

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.

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.

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.

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.

29. Behold, I give unto you a commandment, that ye suffer none of these things to enter into your heart;

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.

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.

33. And again it is written, thou shalt not forswear thyself, but shalt perform unto the Lord thine oaths;

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;

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.

38. And behold, it is written, an eye for an eye, and a tooth for a tooth;

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;

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.

43. And behold it is written also, that thou shalt love thy neighbor and hate thine enemy;

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;

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.

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.

48. Therefore I would that ye should be perfect even as I, or your Father who is in heaven is perfect.

17-48. Christ's was a call to a higher righteousness. His repeated message of "Ye have heard such and such, but I say unto you . . ." clearly establishes his place as God, as one who spoke with authority, as one who could supplement and even expand upon the ancient prophetic word. His was a reminder of the need for pure thoughts and desires as well as for legal and just actions. His was a call to live the spirit of the law as well as the letter.

17. I am not come to destroy but to fulfil] Jesus, as Jehovah, gave the law to Moses on Sinai. He obviously did not come to destroy the very system which he had set up and established among ancient Israel. Rather, as Elder Bruce R. McConkie pointed out, "Jesus came to restore that gospel fulness which men had enjoyed before the day of Moses, before the time of the lesser order. Obviously he did not come to destroy what he himself had revealed to Moses any more than a college professor destroys arithmetic by revealing the principles of integral calculus to his students. Jesus came to build on the foundation Moses laid. By restoring the fulness of the gospel he fulfilled the need for adherence to the terms and conditions of the preparatory gospel. No one any longer needed to walk by the light of the moon, for the sun had risen in all its splendor." (*Doctrinal New Testament Commentary* 1:219-20.)

18. Jesus did not abolish or do away with the commandments associated with the law; rather, he pointed beyond the dead letter to the living spirit and intent of the law. He did not do away, for example, with the commandments against murder or adultery or the breaking of oaths. Instead, he invited his disciples to ascend the ladder of spirituality to a higher level, to acquire a higher perspective on gospel living.

19. Come unto me with a broken heart and a contrite spirit] Among the few things done away by the Savior was the offering of animal sacrifice. The Lord now required a personal offering which consisted of a broken heart and a contrite spirit (see 3 Nephi 9:20).

21–22. The prohibition against murder remained intact. People still were forbidden from wanton shedding of man’s blood (JST, Genesis 9:12–13; Exodus 20:13). In addition, however, Jesus here represents the true disciple as one who acquires control over his emotions, such that he avoids anger. We would not expect one to commit murder who was not previously afflicted by an angry rage. In one sense, we should always bite our tongue, stifle and smother angry impulses, and throttle temper tantrums. It is always better to be in control of one’s emotions, even if such control comes as a result of massive self-discipline. But in a higher sense, the follower of the Christ seeks for the nature of Christ, a nature which does more than quench anger, but rather a nature in which there is no anger. Our task in living the gospel is not simply to become more disciplined, as commendable as that might appear to be; our task is to have our dispositions changed.

22. Whosoever is angry with his brother shall be in danger of his judgment] The Book of Mormon account appropriately omits the phrase “without a cause” (see Matthew 5:22), as does the Joseph Smith Translation and many older biblical manuscripts.

22. Raca] This is an Aramaic word meaning literally “empty head,” a statement of derision and abuse.

23–24. There is an obligation mentioned here, a responsibility resting upon Christians which seems to be almost an onerous burden. It is that we are called upon to seek with all our heart to resolve and dissolve differences with people, to become a peacemaker, even when we are not directly responsible for the misunderstanding. One would expect the Savior to be teaching something like the following: “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 said. He said: “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.

25–26. “Counsel to avoid law suits 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.” (Bruce R. McConkie, *Doctrinal New Testament Commentary* 1:223.)

27–28. “Thou shalt love thy wife with all thy heart, and shalt cleave unto her and none else. And he that looketh upon a woman to lust after her shall deny the faith, and shall not have the Spirit; and if he repents not he shall be cast out.” (D&C 42:22–23.) “And verily I say unto you, as I have said before, he that looketh on a woman to lust after her, or if any shall commit adultery in their hearts, they shall not have the Spirit, but shall deny the faith and shall fear” (D&C 63:16).

29–30. This is similar to Alma’s counsel to Corianton: “Now my son, I would that ye should repent and forsake your sins, and go no more after the lusts of your eyes, but cross yourself in all these things; for except ye do this ye can in nowise inherit the kingdom of God. Oh, remember, and take it upon you, and cross yourself in these things.” (Alma 39:9.) The Savior also taught: “And now for a man to take up his cross, is to deny himself all ungodliness, and every worldly lust, and keep my commandments” (JST, Matthew 16:26).

31–32. In the Old World, carnal and fallen men had begun to take advantage of the divorce laws in their culture. Though marriage had been established in the beginning as a religious institution, a rite intended to bind the participants forever, yet in the days of Moses divorce had been permitted “because of the hardness” of the hearts of the people (see Matthew 19:3–8). By the time of Christ the situation had degenerated markedly. One historian writes: “Among Jesus’ Jewish contemporaries no one questioned the legitimacy of divorce. The only question was what constituted adequate grounds; and it was this question of grounds, not the legitimacy of divorce as such, that split religious schools into opposing factions. The teacher Shammai, for one, took the conservative position: the only offense serious enough to justify divorce was the wife’s infidelity. Shammai’s opponent Hillel, famous for his liberal judgments, argued instead that a man may divorce his wife for any reason he chooses, ‘even if she burn his soup!’ The well-known teacher Akiba, who agreed with Hillel, added emphatically, ‘and even if he finds a younger woman more beautiful than she.’” (Elaine Pagels, *Adam, Eve, and the Serpent*, pp. 13–14.) Given his understanding of life among the Palestinian Jews in the meridian of time, one can appreciate why the Savior would desire the reform of a system that allowed men to slip capriciously in and out of marriage. His was a call to a higher righteousness, an invitation to consider carefully the sacred nature of marriage and the importance of fidelity and commitment between married partners.

Elder Bruce R. McConkie has written: “Divorce is totally foreign to celestial standards, a verity that Jesus will one day expound in more detail to the people of Jewry. For now, as far as the record reveals, he merely specifies the high law that his people should

live, but that is beyond our capability even today. If husbands and wives lived the law as the Lord would have them live it, they would neither do nor say the things that would even permit the fleeting thought of divorce to enter the mind of their eternal companions. Though we today have the gospel, we have yet to grow into that high state of marital association where marrying a divorced person constitutes adultery. The Lord has not yet given us the high standard he here named as that which ultimately will replace the Mosaic practice of writing a bill of divorcement." (*Mortal Messiah* 2:139; see also 3:291–96; *Doctrinal New Testament Commentary* 1:546–48.) We are uncertain as to whether such marital difficulties also existed among the Nephites or whether the Savior provided these teachings so that the Nephites would know what was taught on the eastern hemisphere.

33–37. From the beginning of time the *oath* was the most sacred, solemn attestation a person could make to affirm a statement or his word on a matter. Before much time had passed, however, the oath was misused or used for nefarious purposes, as when Cain and his followers swore an oath to Satan in order to gain power (see Moses 5). Further, men and women over the generations began to abuse the oath through swearing by things over which they had no control: the earth, the moon, the stars, or the heavens. Jesus' was a call to a higher righteousness, an invitation to let our word be our bond. When we say yea, then let the truth of the matter be yea; when we say nay, then let nay be the word. Essentially Jesus called for the cessation of oaths and counseled his followers to be people of their word, honest and trustworthy in every regard. Though we in modern times are prone to refer to the use of profanity or vulgarity as *swearing*, and though such things are and should be reprehensible and inappropriate for one who seeks to follow Jesus, in reality these verses have nothing to do with condemning this latter vice.

33. It is written] See Leviticus 19:12.

38–42. This is the Master's counsel to avoid confrontations and counterattacks where possible. Though the Saints are in no way called upon to become the doormats of society, yet they are directed here to avoid reviling or striking back at an enemy. In short, it is better to be slightly inconvenienced or even to suffer some pain than to engage another in strife and tumult. "And unto him who smiteth thee on the cheek, offer also the other; or, in other words, *it is better to offer the other, than to revile again.* And him who taketh away thy cloak, forbid not to take thy coat also. For *it is better that thou suffer thine enemy to take these things, than to contend with him.* Verily I say unto you, Your heavenly Father who seeth in secret, shall bring that wicked one into judgment." (JST, Luke 6:29–30, italics added.)

38. It is written] See Leviticus 24:20.

43. It is written also, that thou shalt love thy neighbor and hate thine enemy] It is not known where this is written. It does not seem to be in our present Old Testament, nor does it appear to be consistent with the spirit of what we would expect in the brass plates. The Old Testament states: “Thou shalt not hate thy brother in thine heart: thou shalt in any wise rebuke thy neighbour, and not suffer sin upon him. Thou shalt not avenge, nor bear any grudge against the children of thy people, but thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself: I am the Lord.” (Leviticus 19:17–18.) In Galilee, Jesus may have been responding to beliefs that were held by the Essenes, an ultra-orthodox group of Jews who sought to escape the contamination of the world and build a life upon principles of piety and ritual cleanliness. The Dead Sea Community, believed by most scholars to have been Essenes, were essentially taught to love the “sons of light” (believers, members of the community) and hate the “sons of darkness” (outsiders). They were to “love all that [God] has chosen and hate all that He has rejected.” The member of the community was to “bear unremitting hatred towards all men of ill repute, and to be minded to keep in seclusion from them.” (*The Manual of Discipline* 1:9–11; 9:21–23, in Theodor H. Gaster, trans., *The Dead Sea Scriptures*, pp. 44, 65.) Whether such apostate beliefs were held among the Nephites, or again, whether the Lord was simply providing these teachings so that the Nephites could understand what was taught in Galilee, is unknown.

44. Love your enemies] The follower of Christ is not just to tolerate or avoid his enemies. No, in this matter too Jesus’ call was to a higher righteousness. He bids us to do away with our enemies by making friends of them. “Thou art merciful, O God,” Zenos prayed, “for thou hast heard my prayer, even when I was in the wilderness; yea, thou wast merciful when I prayed concerning those who were mine enemies, and *thou didst turn them to me*” (Alma 33:4, italics added).

To begin with, we need to act in loving ways toward our enemies, even when our feelings are otherwise. In time, if our efforts are genuine, our feelings will come along (see Brent L. Top, *Though Your Sins Be As Scarlet*, pp. 105–7). All the while, however, even as we are praying for our enemies, we need to be praying for ourselves—that our hearts may be purified of anger or bitterness or hatred. In time the Holy Spirit will transform our lives, our vision, our perspective, our understanding of things as they really are. Enos is an excellent example of what must happen if we are to pray with fervor for our enemies. We must wrestle with God in prayer, obtain a remission of our sins, be born again in regard to things of the Spirit, and gain confidence with the Almighty. Then

our prayers begin to reach beyond our thoughts, and our circle of concern expands and broadens to include those who had previously held little place in either our thoughts or our prayers.

45. That ye may be the children of your Father who is in heaven] That is, that you may become the sons and daughters of God the Father, reinstated in the royal family through the blessings of the Atonement and by means of the ordinances of the Melchizedek Priesthood (see *Commentary* 2:174).

45. He maketh his sun to rise on the evil and on the good] Like any parent, God loves all his children, all mankind, even those who choose to forsake him and his ways. “The Savior’s expression in the Sermon on the Mount about the impartial and widespread provision of sun and rain (see Matthew 5:45) might also be applied to the unselective nature of mortal misfortune. . . . There is no question that God created, governs, and controls all things—our lives included. But through his creative powers, laws and principles of nature associated with mortality were also established on this earth and set in motion. These laws not only provide great blessings and happiness for his children in mortality but also are a source of opposition necessary for the plan of salvation to fully operate. It is not to be thought, therefore, that everything of an adverse nature that happens in this life was directly willed and/or caused by God. We must allow for the natural occurrences in life, even if they provide us with pain and suffering.” (Brent L. Top, *Strength to Endure*, p. 29; see also *Teachings*, pp. 162–63.)

46–47. See commentary on verses 17–18.

48. I would that ye should be perfect] This is a staggering, a sobering, and for some a stifling commandment. It must be viewed in perspective. No person, not the mightiest Apostle or the greatest prophet—save Jesus only—has ever navigated the roads of mortal life without sin. No one but the Savior has done so in the past and no mortal shall accomplish that task in the future. How then do we proceed? “We are never justified in lowering the lofty standard held out to followers of the Christ. Nor are our actions or attitudes approved of God if we suggest that the Savior did not mean what he said when he called us to the transcendent level of perfection. Our task is not to water down the ideal, nor to dilute the directive. Rather, we must view our challenge with perspective, must see things as they really are, but also as they really can be.” (Robert L. Millet, *By Grace Are We Saved*, p. 89.)

Some have attained perfection in the sense that they did all that was commanded them, in the sense that they gave themselves wholly to the accomplishment of the will of the Lord. Specific persons like Noah, Shem, Ham, Japheth, and Job are named in scripture as those who became perfect in their generation (see Genesis 6:9; Moses 8:27; Job 1:1). President Brigham Young explained that

“we all occupy diversified stations in the world and in the kingdom of God. Those who do right, and seek the glory of the Father in heaven, whether they can do little or much, if they do the very best they know how, they are perfect. . . . ‘Be ye as perfect as ye can,’ for that is all we can do. . . . To be as perfect as we possibly can according to our knowledge is to be just as perfect as our father in Heaven is. He cannot be any more perfect than he knows how, any more than we. When we are doing as well as we know in the sphere and station which we occupy here we are justified.” (*Deseret News Weekly*, 31 August 1854, p. 37.)

We are perfect when we are whole, fully formed, finished. The word *finished* is most important here. We cannot through discipline and self-will be perfect in the sense that we are finished. We cannot conquer the flesh, overcome the trials and tribulations and sins of this world, on our own. We become finished only in and through Christ. Moroni explained that the Saints of God are “continually watchful unto prayer, relying alone upon the merits of Christ, who was the author and *the finisher of their faith*” (Moroni 6:4, italics added). In short, we become perfect, fully formed, finished, in Christ (Moroni 10:32). His grace is a divinely given enabling power, a sacred source of strength which enables us to accomplish what we could never accomplish, worlds without end, on our own. We become perfect in Christ to the degree that we trust perfectly in his infinite ability to make of us, now unworthy creatures, persons capable of and comfortable with celestial society. In speaking of that celestial glory, the revelation attests: “These are they who are just men *made perfect through Jesus* the mediator of the new covenant, who wrought out this perfect atonement through the shedding of his own blood” (D&C 76:69, italics added).

Becoming perfect is a process, one which begins in this life and which continues into the world to come. For a discussion of perfection as a process, see Robert L. Millet, *By Grace Are We Saved*, pp. 88–92; also Robert L. Millet and Joseph Fielding McConkie, *The Life Beyond*, pp. 136–42. (Compare *Commentary* 2:174–75.)

48. Even as I, or your Father who is in heaven is perfect] Even Jesus, who lived a morally perfect life in mortality, did not gain the fulness of perfection (infinite perfection) until the resurrection. At that time he received all power in heaven and on earth; he received a fulness of the glory and power of the Father (see Matthew 28:18; D&C 93:16–17).

Alms and Prayers Are to Be Performed for the Right Reasons

3 Nephi 13:1–8

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;

4. That thine alms may be in secret; and thy Father who seeth in secret, himself shall reward thee openly.

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.

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.

8. Be not ye therefore like unto them, for your Father knoweth what things ye have need of before ye ask him.

1–8. As we have seen again and again, the Savior’s sermon calls his followers to a higher righteousness. We ask: Is there more than obedience? Is more than a careful attention to duty and appropriate behavior required of those who aspire to Christian discipleship? The answer is yes. An emphatic yes. Our Lord calls us to purity of heart, to purity of soul, to purity of motive. We are not only to do the right things. We are to do them for the right reasons.

1. I would that ye should do alms unto the poor] The Saints are always to care for the poor; to see to their needs and wants, both temporal and spiritual. They are to do alms—to make offerings or deliver gifts or perform deeds of service. But these actions, important as they are, will not have the lasting impact that could otherwise be if we perform them selfishly—in order to have others notice the deed. Service that is self-serving is something less than service. Though we may not be evil individuals, yet to do good acts in order to be seen or noticed or heard is certainly less than noble and may be symptomatic of inner evil. “God hath said a man being evil cannot do that which is good; for if he offereth a gift, or prayeth unto God, except he shall do it with real intent it profiteth him nothing. For behold, it is not counted unto him for

righteousness.” (Moroni 7:6–7.) A person who does good to be seen of others already has, in the words of the Master, his reward: the praise and esteem of the observers. The unspoken part of the Savior’s chilling warning is essentially: “And let not such a person expect a reward hereafter!”

3. Let not thy left hand know what thy right hand doeth] This is a call to avoid ulterior motivation, a warning against doing a deed ostensibly for one reason—in the name of appropriate and selfless service—when in reality, in our heart of hearts, we do the deed to impress others with our goodness.

5. When thou prayest thou shalt not do as the hypocrites] “And he spake this parable unto certain which trusted in themselves that they were righteous, and despised others: Two men went up into the temple to pray; the one a Pharisee, and the other a publican. The Pharisee stood and *prayed thus with himself*, God, I thank thee, that I am not as other men are, extortioners, unjust, adulterers, or even as this publican. I fast twice in the week, I give tithes of all that I possess. And the publican, standing afar off, would not lift up so much as his eyes unto heaven, but smote upon his breast, saying, God be merciful to me a sinner.” The Savior moralized, “I tell you, this man went down to his house justified rather than the other.” (Luke 18:9–14, italics added.) Our prayers are offered to God, not to men. Our yearnings for divine assistance are addressed to the Man of Holiness, not to unholy men and women. Perfect prayer is offered to the Father, in the name of the Son, and it is spoken by the power of the Holy Ghost. Such prayers are not delivered to impress others but only to commune with our Maker.

The Prophet Joseph Smith understood this principle clearly. His petitions were fervent, his motives pure, and the blessings of heaven regular. Daniel Tyler, an associate of the Prophet, recalled an important occasion: “At the time William Smith and others rebelled against the Prophet at Kirtland, I attended a meeting . . . where Joseph presided. Entering the school house a little before the meeting opened and gazing upon the man of God, I perceived sadness in his countenance and tears trickling down his cheeks. A few moments later a hymn was sung and he opened the meeting by prayer. Instead of facing the audience, however, he turned his back and bowed upon his knees, facing the wall. This, I suppose, was done to hide his sorrow and tears.

“I had heard men and women pray—especially the former—from the most ignorant, both as to letters and intellect, to the most learned and eloquent. But never until then had I heard a man address his Maker as though He was present listening as a kind father would listen to the sorrows of a dutiful child. Joseph was at that time unlearned, but that prayer, which was to a considerable ex-

tent in behalf of those who accused him of having gone astray and fallen into sin, was that the Lord would forgive them and open their eyes that they might see aright. That prayer, I say, to my humble mind, partook of the learning and eloquence of heaven. There was no ostentation, no raising of the voice as by enthusiasm, but a plain conversational tone, as a man would address a present friend. It appeared to me as though, in case the veil were taken away, I could see the Lord standing facing His humblest of all servants I had ever seen. It was the crowning of all the prayers I ever heard." (In Hyrum and Helen Mae Andrus, *They Knew the Prophet*, pp. 51–52.)

Zenos prayed: "And again, O God, when I did turn to my house thou didst hear me in my prayer. And when I did turn into my closet, O Lord, and prayed unto thee, thou didst hear me. Yea, thou art merciful unto thy children *when they cry unto thee, to be heard of thee and not of men, and thou wilt hear them.*" (Alma 33:6–8, italics added.)

7. When ye pray, use not vain repetitions] 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.

8. Your Father knoweth what things ye have need of before ye ask him] What purpose is served, we might inquire, by asking God for something when he already knows our needs? For one thing, the spiritual discipline associated with getting in tune with the Spirit, suppressing our own selfish desires, putting away our own agenda and opening our souls to the will of God—this method of prayer, of prayer in Spirit, exposes us to the realization of our true needs. The Lord will bless us in terms of our needs, not just our wants. When we are inspired by the Holy Ghost our prayers become instructive; we learn something from them, generally about ourselves. As we, through the Spirit, begin to gain the mind of Christ (see 1 Corinthians 2:16) we begin to think as God thinks and feel as he feels. 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; compare *Teachings*, p. 278.) A modern revelation likewise

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). The process whereby we become absolutely honest before God, honest in terms of that for which we should pray, is the process by which we come to gain answers to our prayers.

Jesus Provides a Pattern for Prayer

3 Nephi 13:9–15

9. After this manner therefore pray ye: Our Father who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name.

10. Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven.

11. And forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors.

12. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil.

13. For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, forever. Amen.

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.

9–15. The Lord’s Prayer, here containing some slight alterations from that in the New Testament (alterations appropriate to the Nephites), provides a simple yet profound approach to our Heavenly Father in prayer. The Savior gave this, not so that it could be memorized and uttered forevermore in the place of either individual or group prayers, but rather that we might have a guide, a simple example of prayer.

9. Our Father who art in heaven] Christ worshipped the Father and so must we. Christ prayed to the Father and so must we.

9. Hallowed be thy name] The name of God is hallowed, made holy, held in reverent esteem by any who aspire to goodness and happiness here and hereafter. It is interesting to note that the phrase “thy kingdom come,” found in the Galilee sermon, is noticeably absent in the Bountiful address. Perhaps this is because the kingdom of God is about to be established among the Nephites in its eternal fulness, a kingdom which will result in a mini-millennium of almost two hundred years of peace and prosperity. In our own day we implore one another: “Call upon the Lord, that his kingdom may go forth upon the earth, that the inhabitants thereof may receive it, and be prepared for the days to come, in the which the Son of Man shall come down in heaven, clothed in the brightness of his glory, to meet the kingdom of God which is set up on the earth. Wherefore, may the kingdom of God go forth, that the kingdom of heaven may come, that thou, O God, mayest be glorified in heaven so on earth, that thine enemies may be subdued; for thine is the honor, power and glory, forever and ever. Amen.” (D&C 65:5–6.)

10. Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven] This is a plea, a petition that the hearts of men and women on earth might be changed, might be softened, might be opened to the mind and will of God, that righteousness might come to pass on earth, that heaven might be established on this planet.

It is noteworthy that the phrase “Give us this day our daily bread,” found in Matthew, is missing from the Bountiful sermon. This omission, though subtle, is intentional. In Galilee, the counsel to pray for daily bread, though appropriate and praiseworthy for all members of the Church, was directed specifically to the Twelve, those who would serve full-time missions and would work 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, inasmuch 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. See Commentary on verses 14–15.

12. Lead us not into temptation] In other words, “Suffer us not to be led into temptation” (JST, Matthew 6:14).

13. This part of the Lord’s Prayer in Matthew, known as a doxology, has been questioned by scholars over the generations. Many feel that it was added later by the Christian church because it contains what they conclude to be language used much later than the days of Jesus. However, a very early Christian document called the *Didache* or “Teaching of the Twelve Apostles” (late first century A.D.) contains the Lord’s Prayer, including this doxology, thus suggesting its antiquity. The Book of Mormon serves as an additional witness.

14–15. “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.)

This is an aspect of discipleship that may be one of the most difficult labors the Christian is called upon to perform. Our involvement in this work, however, makes us more like the merciful Jesus than anything else we might do. The German theologian Dietrich Bonhoeffer suggested that while only Christ’s sufferings could bring the atonement with its benefits of forgiveness for all, his disciples too must bear the sins of others—other people’s burdens—being supported in this by him who bore the sins of all. “The passion [sufferings] of Christ strengthens [the disciple] to

overcome the sins of others by forgiving them. . . . The only way to bear that sin is by forgiving it. . . . The call to follow Christ always means a call to share the work of forgiving men their sins. Forgiveness is the Christlike suffering which it is the Christian's duty to bear." (*The Cost of Discipleship*, p. 100.)

Fasting Is to Be Done for the Right Reasons

3 Nephi 13:16–18

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;

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.

16–18. The Saints are to fast for the right reasons. That fasting may be at a time of tragedy or sorrow; when we need spiritual guidance or direction; when we seek for a remission of sins; when we are struggling with a particularly difficult problem or challenge in life; or generally when we feel the need to draw near to God. But fasting is an individual matter. Though during the regular monthly fast we come together at church to teach and testify, and we enjoy social relations—all during the time of a fast—yet our fastings and our prayers are private. Fasting is something to be participated in, not something to be observed. A member of the Church need not “look the part” of one who is fasting. In fact, our obedience and our observance of the fast need to be hidden behind a pleasing appearance and a modest manner which would in no way draw attention to that which needs no attention.

In general, then, our Redeemer calls us to a higher righteousness, to a higher motivation for righteousness, to a higher and more elevated perspective on why we do what we do. In addressing an apparent paradox in the Sermon on the Mount—the command to “let your light so shine before men” (Matthew 5:16) versus the command to “take heed that ye do not your alms before men” (Matthew 6:1)—Dietrich Bonhoeffer wrote: “How is this paradox to be resolved? . . . From whom are we to hide the visibility of our discipleship? . . . *We are to hide it from ourselves. . . . We must be unaware of our own righteousness, and see it only insofar as we look unto Jesus. . . . The Christian is a light unto the world, not because of any quality of his own, but only because he follows Christ and looks solely to him. . . .*”

“All that the follower of Jesus has to do is to make sure that his obedience, following, and love are entirely spontaneous and unpremeditated. If

you do good, you must not let your left hand know what your right hand is doing. . . . Christ's virtue, the virtue of discipleship, can only be accomplished so long as you are entirely unconscious of what you are doing. The genuine work of love is always a hidden work. . . .

"Thus hiddenness has its counterpart in manifestation. For there is nothing hidden that shall not be revealed. . . . God will show us the hidden and make it visible. Manifestation is the appointed reward for hiddenness, and the only question is where we shall receive it and who will give it us. If we want publicity in the eyes of men we have our reward. . . . *If the left hand knows what the right hand is doing, if we become conscious of our hidden virtue, we are forging our own reward, instead of that which God had intended to give us in his own good time.*" (*The Cost of Discipleship*, pp. 176–78, italics added.)

How do we do this? What do we do if our motives are not always the purest? "Do we sit back and avoid deeds of service because our desires are not yet sanctified? Do we refrain from home or visiting teaching, for example, because our motivation is presently clouded more by the spirit of inspection than of expectation and covenant? Certainly not. We have duties to perform, work to do in order to bear off the kingdom of God triumphant. And Zion—as well as its municipals, its citizenry—is being established 'in process of time' (Moses 7:21). Simply stated, disciples do not wait to be transformed before they proceed in the work of the ministry. . . . We are never justified in doing the wrong thing or ignoring the work to be done simply because we are not properly motivated. Rather, the Saints are instructed again and again to seek the Spirit, to ask for, live for, and qualify for the gifts and fruits of the Spirit, which characterize the sons and daughters of Jesus Christ (see Galatians 5:22–23; D&C 46). As that Spirit begins to live in us, to remake us, we come to love the things we before hated and to hate the things we before loved. Because the Spirit is his Spirit, the works likewise become his works. . . . Our service thereby is centered in Christ, our eye single to his glory." (Robert L. Millet, *An Eye Single to the Glory of God*, pp. 58–60.)

An Eye Single to the Glory of God

3 Nephi 13:19–34

19. Lay not up for yourselves treasures upon earth, where moth and rust doth corrupt, and thieves break through and steal;

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.

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.

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!

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.

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?

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?

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?

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.

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.

19. Lay not up for yourselves treasures upon earth] “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 put 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.)

Nobility of character, charitable actions, meaningful and cherished relationships—these are the kinds of things which have everlasting worth and are the kinds of treasures we should seek to store away while we labor in mortality. It is sad that many spend most of the hours of every day of every week plotting and scheming and planning to acquire things which will not be permitted beyond the grave. We cannot take temporal things with us into the eternal world.

21. Where your treasure is, there will your heart be also]

That is, whatever we treasure—whatever we think on, ponder on, work for, and wear ourselves out to obtain—will be the focus of our hearts. If we have spent our days laboring for mammon, we shall have a heart which is undeveloped and uninterested in spiritual things, a heart which is also unequipped to abide a celestial glory (see D&C 88:22).

22–23. If our eye or mind or soul is single to the glory of God; if our desires, our ambitions, our hopes and dreams are centered in the things of righteousness; if our greatest reason for serving is to build up the kingdom of God and establish in the earth the righteousness of God—if we are thus centered, then we will be spiritually transparent, the light of the Spirit of Almighty God will shine through us and we shall be a light to the world. If our will is subject to the will of heaven, then there is in us no hindrance to the power and glory, the light, of the Father; others will see him in our countenances. Those who have and maintain an eye single to the glory of God are on that path which allows them now to see and understand things that are mysterious to the worldly and that will lead them, in the Lord’s due time, to that highest of spiritual rewards—the privilege of seeing him face to face. “And if your eye be single to my glory,” the Savior declared in 1832, “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.)

24. No man can serve two masters] “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!" (Millet, *An Eye Single to the Glory of God*, pp. 7, 9.) "There neither are nor can be any neutrals in this war," Elder Bruce R. McConkie taught. "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 either 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, p. 44.)

24. Mammon] An Aramaic word for riches or money.

25–34. We note from verse 25 that Jesus now turns to the Twelve to address the following words, counsel which is particularly relevant to those called to full-time ministerial service. In principle, all members of the Church should operate their lives in harmony with these guidelines, but as a matter of daily practice they pertain specifically to the Twelve of that day.

25. Take no thought for your life] The Lord's directive to the Twelve is to avoid *anxiety* about the necessities of life. People need to eat. They require clothing and shelter to survive the storms of the day and the cold of the night. As the next verse indicates, these needs would be supplied for them.

26–32. Behold the fowls of the air] These verses essentially repeat the divine charge to the Twelve (and, by extension, at least in principle, to all of us) to avoid anxiety and undue worry about food and clothing and shelter. If the God of heaven chooses to feed the fowls of the air, if he provides means for the growth and beautification of grass and flowers on earth, then will he not help us provide for the crowning creature of his creative enterprise—man? Christ calls on us to focus on first things, and then make proper efforts to provide for our needs. The message here follows on the heels of that which was just considered: one cannot have an eye single to the glory of God in the present if he spends every waking thought fretting about the future.

33. Seek ye first the kingdom of God] The Joseph Smith Translation of the Galilean sermon alters this verse slightly: "Wherefore, seek not the things of this world but seek ye first to build up the kingdom of God, and to establish his righteousness, and all these things shall be added unto you" (JST, Matthew 6:38). "One challenge we face on earth is to remember why we do what we do. It is not easy in a world with distractions, many of which seem to be good and noble and upright, to remain focused on fundamentals and riveted on matters of everlasting consequence. The

duty of disciples is to discern and, where necessary, discard. Knowing that we cannot do everything, the follower of the Nazarene chooses to do that which is of greatest worth.” (Millet, *An Eye Single to the Glory of God*, p. 97.)

34. Sufficient is the day unto the evil thereof] This is the Master’s way of saying: “There’s enough to worry about today without making ourselves sick over tomorrow. For example, there’s enough evil and temptation in today’s world without fretting over what we will face in a future day.”

The Saints Are to Judge Righteously

3 Nephi 14:1–5

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.

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?

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.

1. We notice that Jesus now turns to the multitude, indicating that the message which follows is for all members of the Church.

1. Judge not, that ye be not judged] This verse has been misused and abused for generations. Often it is cited to indicate that one should not take a stand, should not acknowledge evil actions on the part of others, and so forth. It is almost inconceivable that one could derive from this passage the meaning that he or she should never label or identify deeds or actions as inappropriate, or that to report such misdoings to the proper Church or civil authorities is to place one in a position of “judging his neighbor.” This is simply incorrect. In point of fact, members of the Church are required and expected to make numerous judgments each day, definite discriminations which draw upon the discernment that comes from one’s conscience, through the Light of Christ (see Moroni 7:12–19). Such is appropriate and good.

When the Lord warned against judging, he was counseling his people against *condemning* someone for his sins as well as against seeking to attribute motivation 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 8:1–11; see also Spencer W. Kimball, *The Miracle of Forgiveness*, p. 165.)

The Joseph Smith Translation once again comes to our rescue: “Judge not unrighteously, that ye be not judged: but judge righteous judgment” (JST, Matthew 7:1–2). The question is not whether the Saints of God will make judgments; the question is whether their judgments are righteous, whether they are true and good. The more we seek to be like our Lord and Master, who is the keeper of the gate (see 2 Nephi 9:41), the one to whom the Father has committed all judgment (see John 5:22), the more our judgments will be just. Later to the Nephite Twelve the Savior will say: “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, italics added.)

2. For with what judgment ye judge, ye shall be judged]

“For behold,” Moroni wrote, “the same that judgeth rashly shall be judged rashly again; for according to his works shall his wages be; therefore, he that smiteth shall be smitten again, of the Lord” (Mormon 8:19).

3–5. Part of condemning another consists of highlighting or accentuating another’s sins, parading or displaying them before the public, when in fact “all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God” (Romans 3:23). So often we are sickened by a sin in another—a sin of relatively small consequence—when in fact we ourselves are guilty of far greater offenses against God and man. A member of the Church who condemns or pokes fun at another who wrestles with Word of Wisdom problems, for example, but who at the same time loses his temper or gossips or makes a man an offender for a word, is deceiving himself. To draw upon the Savior’s humorous analogy, there is in his eye a beam—a large timber which is used to support the roof of a building. He cannot see properly, therefore, to remove the mote—the sliver, the tiny shaving of wood—which he has discovered and identifies in his neighbor’s eye.

The Mysteries Are to Be Kept Sacred

3 Nephi 14:6

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.

6. Jesus is being neither unkind nor cruel in making this request of his disciples. He is not calling nonmembers of the Church dogs, nor is he identifying those who are ignorant of the gospel as swine. Just as one does not toss a very old set of scriptures or a dated copy of a patriarchal blessing into the backyard to be kept by the pets, so the Saints should take care about how they present sacred things to others. Just as one does not drop a family heirloom or a diamond necklace into a pig pen, so the Saints should use discretion in delivering the sacred doctrine of Christ to those who do not have the gift of the Holy Ghost. In Galilee our Lord explained: "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 7:9-11.) In this final dispensation the Savior has instructed us: "That which cometh from above is sacred, and must be spoken with care, and by constraint of the Spirit; and in this there is no condemnation" (D&C 63:64). See also commentary on Alma 12:9-11.

6. Trample them under their feet] Set them at naught, consider them of little or no worth (1 Nephi 19:7).

God Grants to Those Who Ask

3 Nephi 14:7-11

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?

7–11. There is nothing quite so natural as for a father to give understanding to a son or daughter who inquires sincerely. God desires that ultimately we know all he knows. He is not possessive of his knowledge. He seeks opportunities among his children to make known sacred things. God desires that we become as he is. He is not possessive of his status, of his standing. He seeks opportunities among his children to endow them with power from on high. “If any of you lack wisdom,” James wrote, “let him ask of God, that giveth to all men liberally, and upbraideth [reproaches, censures] not; and it shall be given him” (James 1:5). Nor is God’s knowledge and power reserved for those called to lead the Church. “God hath not revealed anything to Joseph,” the latter-day Seer explained, “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” (*Teachings*, p. 149). We have but to ask, at the same time bringing our lives into harmony with the truths we already know.

The qualification placed upon our prayers is simple. “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, italics added). Centuries later Mormon repeated this teaching of the Savior’s, this time with a slightly different emphasis: “Whatsoever thing ye shall ask the Father in my name, *which is good*, in faith believing that ye shall receive, behold, it shall be done unto you” (Moroni 7:26, italics added). “Ye ask,” James directs us, “and receive not, because ye ask amiss, that ye may consume it upon your lusts” (James 4:3). Nephi likewise stated: “I know that God will give liberally to him that asketh. Yea, my God will give me, if I ask not amiss; therefore I will lift up my voice unto thee” (2 Nephi 4:35).

11. If ye then, being evil] This is a reference to man’s mortal and unsaved condition. If mortal man—man troubled on every side by temptation and trial, clouded in his vision by personal ambition and pride—is willing to provide for his own, how much more eager and able is God the Father—an exalted, immortal, saved being, one filled with mercy and love—to reveal himself and the truths pertaining to his salvation to all who ask in faith?

11. Good things] “If ye then, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children, how much more shall your heavenly Father give good gifts, through the Holy Spirit, to them who ask him” (JST, Luke 11:14).

The Savior Delivers the Golden Rule

3 Nephi 14:12

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.

12. Our guide and standard for human conduct is summarized succinctly in this verse. It is a remarkable distillation expression: it says so very much in so few words. This verse is the meaning of the command, “Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself” (Matthew 22:39; see also Romans 13:9; Galatians 5:14). Jesus did not intend to suggest that each person strive to love himself, nor did he mean to indicate that we should spend much time at all in trying to build our love for ourselves. He taught instead the ironic but infinitely true principle that only as we lose ourselves can we find ourselves (see Matthew 16:25). We gain the inner peace and stability of soul promised by the Savior only as we lose ourselves in our quest for God and as we give of ourselves selflessly in service to others. Thus the real meaning of “love thy neighbour as thyself” is: “Love your neighbor as you would want him or her to love you. Treat others as you would want to be treated.” Indeed, “If ye fulfil the royal law according to the scripture, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself, ye do well” (James 2:8).

Followers of Christ Enter in at the Strait Gate

3 Nephi 14:13–14

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.

13–14. Those who come into the true Church leave the broad road and begin their journey to exaltation along a strait and narrow path. That path, the gospel path, must be navigated with care. That is to say, once a person enters through the gospel gate, in turnstile fashion, his life is different. As time passes he finds there are fewer and fewer things he can do in the world and still retain the influence and guidance of the Holy Spirit. At first, such seems restrictive, but in time he begins to feel and sense the liberating power which flows from Christ to him through the covenants and ordinances of the gospel. What at first may have been viewed as an infringement on his liberties is now seen to be the very key to personal freedom and peace. He has come to know the Lord, who is the Truth, and the Truth has made him free (see John 8:31–32).

In a modern revelation we find an important commentary on these verses. In the revelation on marriage recorded on 12 July 1843, the Lord said: “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 [i.e., the continuation of the family unit; 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 [i.e., to the 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; see also 3 Nephi 27:33.)

14. Few there be that find it “The scriptures speak often of a ‘strait gate’ and a ‘narrow way’ which lead unto that life which we have come to know as eternal life. Stress is frequently placed upon the fact that ‘few’ will ultimately get onto that path and navigate that course which will result in a saved condition hereafter. . . .

“These are scriptural passages [D&C 132:22–25; Matthew 7:13–14; 3 Nephi 14:13–14] which must be viewed in proper perspective. In the long run, we must ever keep in mind that our God and Father is a successful parent, one who will save far more of his children than he will lose! If these words seem startling at first, let us reason for a moment. In comparison to the number of wicked souls *at any given time*, perhaps the numbers of faithful followers seem small. But we must keep in mind how many of our spirit brothers and sisters—almost an infinite number—will be saved. What of the children who died before the age of accountability—billions of little ones from the days of Adam to the time of the Millennium? What of the billions of those who never had opportunity to hear the gospel message in mortality, but who afterwards received the glad tidings, this because of a disposition which hungered and thirsted after righteousness? And, might we ask, what of the innumerable hosts who qualified for exaltation from Enoch’s city, from Melchizedek’s Salem, or from the golden era of the Nephites? What of the countless billions of those children to be born during the great millennial era—during a time when disease and death have no sting nor victory over mankind? This is that time . . . when ‘children shall grow up without sin unto salvation’ (D&C 45:58). Given the renewed and paradisiacal state of the earth, it may well be that more persons will live on the earth during the thousand years of our Lord’s reign—persons who are of at least a terrestrial nature—than the combined total of all who have lived during the previous six thousand years of the earth’s temporal continuance. Indeed, who can count the number of saved beings in eternity? Our God, who is triumphant in all battles against the forces of evil, will surely be victorious in the numbers of his chil-

dren who will be saved.” (Robert L. Millet and Joseph Fielding McConkie, *The Life Beyond*, pp. 136–37.)

A Warning Against False Prophets

3 Nephi 14:15–20

15. Beware of false prophets, who come to you in sheep’s clothing, but inwardly they are ravening wolves.

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.

15–20. Jesus here sets forth the preeminent test for prophets: the fruits. That is, we may judge and discern a prophet by what comes of the work he sets in motion. Does it bless lives? Is its doctrine sound, consistent, lifting, edifying, and expansive? Is the way of life of the religion clean and virtuous and stable? Does it produce citizens who sustain the laws of the land, lead upright lives, and mirror the message of their Master, Jesus Christ? Does this prophet teach a gospel which requires the sacrifice of all things, with the attendant promise that those who lay their all on the altar and continue labor in Christlike fashion shall eventually inherit all that the Father has? Does the religion produce people who are holy, in whom dwell the Spirit of the living God, and in whose midst the gifts and signs and wonders abound—those ancient miracles which have always attended the true Church? Truly, “by their fruits ye shall know them.”

15. Beware of false prophets] “What are false prophets? They are teachers and preachers who profess to speak for the Lord when, in fact, they have received no such appointment. . . . False prophets are false teachers; they teach false doctrine; they neither know nor teach the doctrines of salvation. Rather, they have followed cunningly devised fables that they suppose make up the gospel of Christ, and they preach them as such.” (Bruce R. McConkie, *Millennial Messiah*, pp. 70–71.) In the true Church there are those who come professing special skills or talents, those who offer insight above and beyond what the Apostles and prophets feel should be made known. There are those who, as though by divine appointment, seek to re-chart the kingdom of God, who feel some special sense of mission to set the Church straight, who

spend their days striving to “steady the ark.” There are those who seek to run before their file leaders, those who are impatient with the direction or the acceleration of the restored gospel, who propose course adjustments in the plan of God. These all are false prophets. Their preachments are false and their proposals are destructive. Unless they repent, they and all who attend to their messages will be cut off from the people of the covenant.

A Warning Against Dead Works

3 Nephi 14:21–23

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.

21. It is not just those who cry out to the Lord, not just those whose voices are raised to Jehovah, not just those whose display of righteousness is public and whose commitment to the faith is spoken regularly, who shall be saved. Rather, it is those who trust in the Lord, who perform the works of righteousness in a quiet but steadfast manner, who shall receive the approbation of heaven. “Why call ye me Lord, Lord, and do not the things which I say?” (Luke 6:46.)

Further, it is not just those who did all the right things, who carried out the assignments, who will be saved. We notice that the Lord here condemns and casts out those who have prophesied, cast out devils, and done many wonderful works. The Lord’s true Saints are the ones who do *his* works, under the influence of *his* Spirit. These perform living works, not dead works. Dead works are works not grounded in faith, deeds and actions and covenants not performed in righteousness. Dead works may also consist of works void of the motivation and staying power found in and through the Holy Ghost. “And if it so be that the church is built upon my gospel *then will the Father show forth his own works in it*. 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.” (3 Nephi 27:10–11, italics added.) Paul taught that whatever works are not of faith—are not motivated by one’s faith in and dedication to Jesus Christ, works which are spir-

itually inert—are ultimately sin (Romans 14:23). On the other hand, those works which come—as does the fruit of the Spirit—by the power of the Holy Ghost, lift and lighten. They are deeds of faith and wonder which renew. Such works focus on and witness of Christ, who is their source; these good works are seen of men, that observers may glorify God (3 Nephi 12:16). Such works are more than duty or assignment; they become liberating privileges and opportunities.

23. I never knew you] It is interesting to note that the Joseph Smith Translation of the Galilean sermon renders this line, “Ye never knew me” (JST, Matthew 7:33). Through Alma the Elder the Lord said: “This is my church; whosoever is baptized shall be baptized unto repentance. And whomsoever ye receive shall believe in my name; and him will I freely forgive. For it is I that taketh upon me the sins of the world . . . and it is I that granteth unto him that believeth unto the end a place at my right hand. For behold, in my name are they called; and *if they know me* they shall come forth, and shall have a place eternally at my right hand. And it shall come to pass that when the second trump shall sound then shall *they that never knew me* come forth and shall stand before me. And then shall they know that I am the Lord their God, that I am their Redeemer; but they would not be redeemed. And then I will confess unto them that *I never knew them*; and they shall depart into everlasting fire prepared for the devil and his angels.” (Mosiah 26:22–27, italics added.)

The Wise Build upon the Rock of Revelation

3 Nephi 14:24–27

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—

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.

24–27. The wise build upon the rock. What rock? The rock of revelation (*Teachings*, p. 274), that solid foundation which allows those who build thereon to be at rest when the winds of adversity and the storms of persecution and sophistry beat upon their houses of faith. Jesus, the Revelation of the Father, the Word, the

Messenger of Salvation, has just completed one of the most glorious sermons ever uttered in human history. He has called his followers to a higher righteousness, has beckoned them to stand on higher ground than ancient Israel did under the law. Jesus is the Rock. People must build upon him. Jesus delivers and illustrates the rock of revelation. People must build upon his word. Jesus is the Oracle, and Jesus has just delivered the oracle. People must build upon the living oracles or they cannot be saved.

In every gospel dispensation this has been the case. Adam, Enoch, Noah, Abraham, Moses—all received from the Lord not only their prophetic commission but also continuing revelation suited to their time and people. The Book of Mormon tells the same story. Revelations given to former prophets were honored as true and as significant in teaching and inculcating saving principles; but they were not of themselves sufficient to guide and sustain the current body of believers and bring them to eternal life.

Valuable as it is, there is no salvation to be had in a revelation or a scripture from bygone days. Revelation, the rock foundation of the Lord's Church and kingdom, must be modern. It must be current. It must be living. To Joseph Smith the revelator, that same Lord said: "The keys of this kingdom shall never be taken from you, while thou art in the world, neither in the world to come; nevertheless, through you shall the oracles [revelations, divine directions] be given to another, yea, even unto the church. And all they who receive the oracles of God [both the messengers and the message], let them beware how they hold them lest they are accounted as a light thing, and are brought under condemnation thereby, and stumble and fall when the storms descend, and the winds blow, and the rains descend, and beat upon their house." (D&C 90:3–5; compare 21:4–6.)

Old Things Pass Away and All Things Become New

3 Nephi 15:1–10

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.

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.

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.

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.

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.

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.

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.

1–2. Mormon includes the historical context for the doctrinal teachings that follow. The Savior had already taught the Nephites that the law of Moses was fulfilled in him, and that the rites and sacrifices associated with it were to cease. The further elaboration on this teaching comes in this chapter as a result of the people’s marvelling and wondering concerning the meaning of the Lord’s words. These Nephites, and generations before them, had known no other system of gospel living than the Mosaic law. All of their worship, religious rites, and Church organization were built upon the law. In one marvelous moment the resurrected Lawgiver virtually changed their entire religious structure. It is no wonder that it was difficult for them to comprehend that the “old things” (the law of Moses) had “passed away” and “all things had become new.”

3–5. To allay their concerns about this new order of gospel teachings and practices, Jesus reiterates his identity as Jehovah—the Lawgiver—as evidence of his authority to change their religious practice. He reminds them that the whole purpose of the law was to point to the “infinite and eternal sacrifice” which is now fulfilled in him. Three times in these verses he states that the law is fulfilled *in him*.

6–8. Many of the Nephites, as they heard the Lord speak of the fulfillment of the law of Moses, must have wondered whether the words and teachings of the previous Nephite/Lamanite prophets, as well as the Old World prophets whose teachings they had from the brass plates, were no longer relevant to them. In these verses the Savior clearly states that the fulfillment of the law of Moses does not “destroy” the words of the previous prophets. There were yet many prophecies of these earlier prophets that were to be fulfilled, and the Savior’s ministry did not alter or “destroy” them. In addition, the principles that had been previously taught were still

true; but the practices associated with the law were no longer needed. Covenants were not changed, but the manner in which they lived certain covenants was modified. In our own day, perhaps we, like the Nephites, wonder why and/or misunderstand the reason for changes in Church practices or organization. Elder Boyd K. Packer observed: "There are those within the Church who are disturbed when changes are made with which they disagree or when changes they propose are not made. They point to these as evidence that the leaders are not inspired. . . . Changes in organization or procedures are a testimony that revelation is ongoing. While doctrines remain fixed, the methods or procedures do not." (CR, October 1989, p. 18.)

The underlying purpose or doctrine of the law of Moses was not being done away with—there was still the need to come unto Christ and partake of the Atonement. The means or procedures by which men embraced the eternal gospel were all that were being changed. "The covenant which I have made with my people is not all fulfilled," the Savior reminded them. The covenant he was referring to was the eternal gospel, the new and everlasting covenant—those unchanging principles of salvation. President Harold B. Lee stated: "Keep in mind that the principles of the gospel of Jesus Christ are divine. Nobody changes the principles and doctrines of the Church except the Lord by revelation. But methods change as the inspired direction comes to those who preside at a given time. If you will analyze all that is being done and the changes that are taking place, you will realize that the fundamental doctrines of the Church are not changing. The only changes are in the methods of teaching that doctrine to meet the circumstances of our time. You may be sure that your brethren who preside are praying most earnestly, and we do not move until we have the assurance, so far as lies within our power, that what we do has the seal of divine approval." ("God's Kingdom—A Kingdom of Order," *Ensign*, January 1971, p. 10.)

9–10. The Savior is again testifying of his identity and authority in order that the people will look to him and his teachings for salvation. Since he was the Lawgiver to Moses, he commands the Nephites (and us) to hearken to the commandments and teachings that he has given to them in chapters 9 through 14. He reminds them that all of the previous prophets, practices, laws and ordinances had testified of him—Jehovah, the Creator, the Redeemer, the Christ. Previously they had been obedient to the law, but now Jesus commands them to be obedient to the Lawgiver. "I have given unto you the commandments; therefore keep my commandments." See also commentary on 3 Nephi 9:19.

9. I am the law, and the light] See commentary on 3 Nephi 9:17–18.

9. Look unto me, and . . . live] The “abundant life”—eternal life—is available only to those who have “looked to Christ” in firm faith and submissive obedience. In that way he is truly the life of the world. Without him, there is no eternal life to be obtained by anyone. He is the source to which we must steadfastly “look” if we are to truly “live” a life with Christ, like Christ. See Alma 37:43–47; Helaman 8:13–15; also commentary on Alma 37:38–47.

9. For unto him that endureth to the end will I give eternal life] Some may think of enduring to the end in terms of “hanging on” or “putting up with” or “sticking it out.” Such terms have little in common with the divine concept of “enduring to the end.” Exaltation is not bestowed upon those who can “hang on” the longest or “put up with” the most tribulation in life. It is a reward to those who have endured in faith, obedience, and continual valiance amidst the storms of life and the fiery darts of the adversary. “Patient endurance is to be distinguished from merely being ‘acted upon,’” Elder Neal A. Maxwell taught. “Endurance is more than pacing up and down within the cell of our circumstance; it is not only acceptance of the things allotted to us, but to ‘act for ourselves’ by magnifying what is allotted to us (Alma 29:3, 6). . . . True enduring represents not merely the passage of time, but the passage of the soul.” (CR, April 1990, p. 43.)

The endurance here spoken of by the Savior requires the continual keeping of the commandments, resisting temptations, repenting of our sins, exercising faith in Christ, rendering service, being prayerful, and loving God and our fellowmen. Many scriptures in all of the standard works add words such as *always* or *continually* to these gospel requirements (see Luke 18:1; Acts 6:4; D&C 10:5). Endurance that leads one to exaltation requires continual faith and faithfulness rather than sporadic spirituality and service. Fervency without frequency does not yield the same strength to endure to the end as does constancy and consistency in gospel living. (See 2 Nephi 31:20; D&C 14:7; see also Brent L. Top, *Strength to Endure*, pp. 79–130.)

Jesus Teaches About the “Other Sheep”

3 Nephi 15:11–24

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.

13. And behold, this is the land of your inheritance; and the Father hath given it unto you.

14. And not at any time hath the Father given me commandment that I should tell it unto

your brethren at Jerusalem.

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.

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.

18. And now, because of stiff-neckedness and unbelief they understood not my word; therefore I was commanded to say no more of the Father concerning this thing unto them.

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.

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.

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.

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.

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.

11–13. In the previous verses, the Savior has addressed the multitude and taught them generally. At this point he directs his instructions to the twelve whom he has chosen to be a “light” unto the people. Just as Jesus is the “light of the world,” the Perfect Exemplar, he is admonishing these twelve to lead, serve, teach, and testify just as he would. As they follow him, they can then become “lights” unto the people, even as Jesus is. Their words and deeds thus become his. With this backdrop, the Savior begins his doctrinal teaching to the Twelve concerning the position of the Nephites and Lamanites in the house of Israel and of his ministry to the “other sheep.”

15–20. Jesus performed only the works and taught only the doctrines that his Father commanded him (see John 5:19–20). In our record of his mortal ministry among the Jews we have no mention of his teaching them concerning the remnants of the house of Israel that had been dispersed throughout the nations of the earth—including the Book of Mormon peoples. He only was allowed to speak fragmentarily of “other sheep” that must be gathered to “one fold” by the “one shepherd” (see John 10:11–18).

Perhaps he wanted to teach them greater things but was constrained by the Father. The reason that the Father did not command Jesus to teach more explicitly and extensively was the Jews' "stiffneckedness and unbelief" and "because of their iniquity." It appears from this account that even if the Lord had taught more, they would not have understood it. This is a sober warning. "As far as we degenerate from God," the Prophet Joseph said, "we descend to the devil and lose knowledge, and without knowledge we cannot be saved" (*Teachings*, p. 217). We learn from the example of the Jews, cited here by Jesus, that the Lord stands ready to reveal to us greater doctrines and additional scriptures, but only as we seek such from the Lord, live righteously, and fully embrace that which has already been revealed.

21-24. The American Israelites—the people of the Nephite nation and the other seed of Lehi—are here definitely identified as one group of the "other sheep" of which Jesus had spoken in Jerusalem. Lacking the greater understanding that comes via the Spirit, the Jewish audience had assumed that he was speaking of some subsequent conversion of the Gentiles. Even modern Bible scholars, lacking both insight from the Spirit and understanding from the restored gospel, have concluded similarly.

The Savior's teaching at Bountiful serves as 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). These verses clearly establish the Lehites as a branch of the "other sheep" and provide additional illumination concerning the work of gathering the scattered remnants of Israel. Jesus is also preparing his Nephite disciples to receive additional instruction about his ministry and the future gathering of even "other sheep" (see 3 Nephi 16:1-5; 18:31; 21:1-29).

23. I should not manifest myself unto them save it were by the Holy Ghost] Neither the mortal nor the resurrected Christ manifested himself to the Gentiles to teach them, convert them, and gather them into his kingdom. It was Peter's vision (see Acts 10) that opened the proselyting work among the Gentiles. It was Peter, Paul, and the other disciples who took the gospel to the Gentiles. The reality of Christ's resurrection and the truthfulness of his gospel were not established among Gentiles by his ministry or appearance, but rather "that on the Gentiles also was poured out the gift of the Holy Ghost" (Acts 10:45).

The Lost Tribes of Israel

3 Nephi 16:1-3

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.

1-3. In 721 B.C. the ten northern tribes of Israel were taken captive into Assyria. From there they were led into the lands of the north and were thereafter lost from the annals of history. They have thus come to be known as the lost ten tribes. Much discussion and extended speculation have taken place as to their whereabouts and the manner in which they will return and be gathered home to the lands of their inheritance. It is common for Latter-day Saints, for example, to cite numerous legends or reminiscences of persons who supposedly heard Joseph Smith state that these Israelites are in the center of the earth, on a knob attached to the earth, on the North Star, or on another planet. We shall focus in our discussion of this subject upon what the Book of Mormon teaches on the matter.

In one of his concluding testimonies in the Book of Mormon, Mormon said: "I write unto all the ends of the earth; yea, unto you, twelve tribes of Israel" (Mormon 3:18). If words mean what they say and Mormon knew whereof he spoke, the twelve tribes of Israel were then scattered from one end of the earth to the other and but waiting for the message of the Book of Mormon that they might be gathered. When the ten tribes return, among the sacred treasures that they will have with them will be the Book of Mormon (see 2 Nephi 29:13). Because he wrote so eloquently on this subject, we here quote extensively from Elder Bruce R. McConkie:

"Our friend Mormon, as he nears the end of his divinely appointed work, that of preserving the everlasting word as it was had among the Nephites, says: 'I write unto you, Gentiles, and also unto you, house of Israel, when the work shall commence, that ye shall be about to prepare to return to the land of your inheritance.' Then, as though this salutation was not sufficient, and lest any should be confused as to the people to whom the Book of Mormon shall go, Mormon wrote: 'Yea, behold, I write unto all the ends of the earth; yea, unto you, [the] twelve tribes of Israel.' *The Book of Mormon is written to the twelve tribes of Israel.* And this includes the lost Ten Tribes. For that matter, the New Testament is addressed 'to the twelve tribes which are scattered abroad.' (James 1:1.)

"And these things doth the Spirit manifest unto me; therefore I write unto you all"—all the house of Israel. Why? 'That ye may believe the gospel of Jesus Christ, which ye shall have among you; and also that the Jews, the covenant people of the Lord, shall have other witness besides him whom they saw and heard, that Jesus,

whom they slew, was the very Christ and the very God. And I would that I could persuade all ye ends of the earth to repent and prepare to stand before the judgment-seat of Christ.' (Mormon 3:17-22.) That is to say, all Israel, the Lamanites and the Ten Tribes included, shall be gathered if and when they believe the Book of Mormon. The Ten Tribes shall return after they accept the Book of Mormon; then they shall come to Ephraim to receive their blessings, the blessings of the house of the Lord, the blessings that make them heirs of the covenant God made with their father Abraham.

"But, says one, are they not in a body somewhere in the land of the north?" Answer: They are not; they are scattered in all nations [see 1 Nephi 22:4]. The north countries of their habitation are all the countries north of their Palestinian home, north of Assyria from whence they escaped, north of the prophets who attempted to describe their habitat. And for that matter, they shall also come from the south and the east and the west and the ends of the earth [see 3 Nephi 20:13; Isaiah 43:5-6; Zechariah 2:6]. Such is the prophetic word.

"But, says another, did not Jesus visit them after he ministered among the Nephites?" Answer: Of course he did, in one or many places as suited his purposes. He assembled them together in exactly the same way he gathered the Nephites in the land Bountiful so that they too could hear his voice and feel the prints of the nails in his hands and in his feet. Of this there can be no question. And we suppose that he also called twelve apostles and established his kingdom among them even as he did in Jerusalem and in the Americas. Why should he deal any differently with one branch of Israel than with another?

"Query: What happened to the Ten Tribes after the visit of the Savior to them near the end of the thirty-fourth year following his birth?" Answer: The same thing that happened to the Nephites. There was righteousness for a season, and then there was apostasy and wickedness. Be it remembered that darkness was destined to cover the earth—all of it—before the day of the restoration, and that the restored gospel was to go to every nation and kindred and tongue and people upon the face of the whole earth, including the Ten Tribes of Israel. . . .

"And, finally, says yet another, will they not come with their prophets and seers?" Answer: There is no other way they or any people can be gathered. Of course they will be led by their prophets, prophets who are subject to and receive instructions from, and prophets who report their labors to the one man on earth who holds and exercises all of the keys of the kingdom in their fulness. Did not Paul say that 'the spirits of the prophets are subject to the prophets,' and that 'God is not the author of confusion'? (1 Corinthians 14:32-33.) The Lord's house is a house of order; it has only one head at one time; Christ is not divided. In

this day when the head of the Church can communicate with all men on earth, there is no longer any need for one kingdom in Jerusalem and another in Bountiful and others in whatever place or places the Ten Tribes were when Jesus visited them. This is the promised day when there shall be one God, one Shepherd, one prophet, one gospel, one church, and one kingdom for all the earth." (*Millennial Messiah*, pp. 215-17, italics in original.)

In speaking of the return of the lost tribes, a modern revelation attests: "He [Christ] 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 now we note the millennial setting for this gathering: "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." (D&C 133:23-26.) As to the prophets among the ten tribes in our day, Elder McConkie has written: "Their prophets are members of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. They are stake presidents and bishops and quorum presidents who are appointed to guide and direct the destinies of their stakes and wards and quorums." (*Millennial Messiah*, p. 326.) That is, the ten tribes shall be gathered into the fold in the same way as all others: missionaries shall search them out, they shall hear the message of the Restoration through the Book of Mormon, shall be baptized and receive the gift of the Holy Ghost, and shall thereafter locate themselves in the quorums and wards and stakes where the Saints congregate.

We frequently hear that when the ten tribes return they will bring their scriptures with them. This idea, though not found specifically in scripture, is generally inferred from Nephi's prophecy: "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; and the lost tribes of Israel shall have the words of the Nephites and the Jews" (2 Nephi 29:13). "Will they not bring their scriptures with them?" Elder McConkie asked. "Probably not; at least there is no such promise. Yes, we and they will have their scriptures; and those scriptures will tell of the visit of the Risen Lord among their forebears. How they shall be brought to light is not known. It may be in much the same way the Book of Mormon was revealed to the world. And once again it will be by or under the direction of the President of the Church, for he holds the keys of the mysteries of the kingdom and of the things that are sealed and hidden up." (*New Witness*, p. 521.)

In summary, to those who argue that the ten tribes are presently together in one large body—totally organized and empowered as members of the Church—we might consider the following:

1. It is an established doctrine of the Church, one easily sustained by each of the standard works, that there was a universal apostasy after the mortal ministry of Christ. That such an apostasy embraced the ten tribes is evident in the Allegory of Zenos (see Jacob 5:29-49).

2. It is an equally well-established doctrine that in the last days there would be a universal restoration of the gospel. That is, the gospel restored to the earth through the Prophet Joseph Smith is the gospel that is destined to go to those of every nation, kindred, tongue, and people. There is no justification to suppose that every nation, kindred, tongue, and people does not include the ten tribes. Indeed, if the ten tribes were together in a body in 1830 with their prophets, why the necessity of a Joseph Smith and the return of a host of ancient prophets with their keys and authority to him? Surely if all these things were already on the earth the Lord would not ignore them and start from scratch with some other people.

3. The keys of the gathering of Israel and the leading of the ten tribes from the land of the north—a phrase which seems to mean, more generally, from their scattered condition (see Zechariah 2:6)—were given to the President of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. Keys are the right of presidency, the directing power. They imply responsibility. How could the prophet claim to preside over a people and an event unknown to him? This would be akin to calling a man to preside over some foreign mission but (a) refusing to tell him where the mission was located or (b) allowing him any contact with the people. According to the analogy, all he would be afforded would be an invitation to the mission reunion. Truly, “It shall not be given to any one to go forth to preach my gospel, or to build up my church, except he be ordained by some one who has authority, and it is known to the church that he has authority and has been regularly ordained by the heads of the church” (D&C 42:11).

1. I have other sheep] Here the Savior broadens our understanding of his statement in Jerusalem regarding his “other sheep”: they consist of the Nephites, the ten tribes, and possibly other branches of Israel of which we have no knowledge.

The Fulness of the Gentiles to Come In

3 Nephi 16:4–20

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.

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.

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.

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.

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—

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.

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.

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.

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.

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.

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.

17. And then the words of the prophet Isaiah shall be fulfilled, which say:

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.

19. Break forth into joy, sing together, ye waste places of Jerusalem; for the Lord hath comforted his people, he hath redeemed Jerusalem.

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.

4. If the people in the Old World did not inquire of the Lord concerning the Lord's "other sheep," both Nephites and ten tribes—and we have no evidence that they ever did—then the Book of Mormon would stand eventually as a sacred record of the fact that he did visit them. The Book of Mormon and the gospel message would be restored through the Gentiles—lineal Israelites but cultural Gentiles, the Latter-day Saints (see 1 *Nephi* 22:7; D&C 109:60)—and then brought to Israel (Lamanites and Jews) in the last days.

4. The fulness of the Gentiles] In the days of Jesus and his apostles the gospel went first to the Jews and then (under the direction of Peter and Paul) to the Gentiles. In this final dispensation the gospel was restored through "Gentiles" in a Gentile nation and will eventually go primarily to Israel (Lamanites and Jews). The era in which the gospel goes to the nations of the Gentiles is called "the times of the Gentiles." The era when, as we shall see shortly, the Gentile nations sin against the gospel and refuse its powers and blessings, is known as "the fulness of the Gentiles." This is not a single moment; it will instead be a period of time. To some degree we are today in a period of transition: the gospel is going forth to the Gentile nations, but at the same time wickedness is increasing and more of the children of men are sinning against the light of the gospel.

5. The covenant which the Father hath made unto . . .

the house of Israel] We know that it was Jehovah, who is Christ himself, that made covenant with Israel. All that he did, however, was done under the direction of the Father. “The Father sent the prophets; they represented him, and they spoke his word. When Jesus quoted the Old Testament prophets to the Nephites [see 3 Nephi 21:14; 24:1], he attributed their words to the Father. Though the revelations came from the Son, yet in the ultimate sense the truths taught were those of the Father.” (Bruce R. McConkie, “Our Relationship with the Lord,” address delivered at Brigham Young University, 2 March 1982; cited in *Doctrines of the Restoration*, pp. 63–64.)

6–7. This seems to be a specific commendation of the Saints in America—the Gentiles who receive the gospel and live worthy of its privileges.

7. Saith the Father] See commentary on verse 5.

8–9. The Lord has blessed the Gentiles in the last days because of their reception of the gospel. His judgments, on the other hand, have been poured out upon the Israelites—the Lamanites and the Jews. They have been scattered, smitten, and hated.

10–15. This is a sober warning, a warning directed fairly specifically to the Gentiles in America, including the members of the Church. At that point in time when pride, deceit, hypocrisy, priestcraft, whoredoms, secret abominations, and murder proliferate in America—and to some degree even among the Latter-day Saints—then the Lord’s judgments will be poured out upon the land. That the Saints will be involved in the abominations of the land is frighteningly evident in the Savior’s careful use of language. He states that 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, italics added). One cannot *return* to a place where he has not been; this seems to be a reference to a return to the faith. In addition, the Master warns that those who sin against the light “shall be as *salt that hath lost its savor*” (verse 15, italics added). A modern revelation specifies clearly that it is only those who have received the covenant gospel who can become the salt of the earth (D&C 101:39–40). Perhaps this is what the Lord meant when he spoke through Joseph Smith in 1837: “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, italics added.) “God will have a humble people,” President Ezra Taft Benson

warned. “Either we can choose to be humble or we can be compelled to be humble.” (CR, April 1989, p. 6.)

10. I will bring the fulness of my gospel from among them] In a modern revelation the Lord repeated his prophecy made to his Apostles about the destruction of Jerusalem in A.D. 70. “And when that day shall come, shall a remnant [of Israel, the Jews] be scattered among all nations; but they shall be gathered again; but they shall remain [in their scattered condition] until the times of the Gentiles be fulfilled. . . . And when the times of the Gentiles is come in [that is, speaking in retrospect, when the restoration of the gospel takes place], a light shall break forth among them that sit in darkness, and it shall be the fulness of my gospel; but they receive it not.” That is, there are many in the dispensation of the fulness of times who refuse the glories and wonders of the Lord’s new and everlasting covenant. “For they perceive not the light, and they turn their hearts from me because of the precepts of men. And in that generation shall the times of the Gentiles be fulfilled.” (D&C 45:24, 25, 28–30.) In the ultimate sense, it appears that the fulness of the Gentiles—the time when the gospel goes on a preferential basis to Jews and Lamanites—is millennial. “When will the Lord take the gospel from the unbelieving Gentiles? It will be when the fulness of the Gentiles is come in, when he remembers the covenant made with his own people, when the hour for millennial glory has arrived.” (Bruce R. McConkie, *Millennial Messiah*, p. 241.)

15. I will suffer my people, O house of Israel, that they shall go through among them, and shall tread them down] This is a theme, a recurring theme, in the Savior’s teachings to his American Hebrews (see 3 Nephi 20:16; 21:12) and one to which Mormon later refers (Mormon 5:24). There has been much discussion concerning its meaning. Many Latter-day Saints conclude that it refers to a type of Lamanite uprising, a rebellion by Lamanites (identified in this interpretation as “a remnant of Jacob”—see 3 Nephi 20:16; 21:12; Mormon 5:24) against the “Gentiles” in America. We have chosen to take another approach to these passages.

It is interesting that in 3 Nephi 21 the Master quotes a prophecy from Micah 5:8–14, an oracle which uses language similar to that above. According to this account the rending of the Gentiles, this metaphor of a lion among the sheep, takes place in a day when such things as witchcrafts, soothsayers, idolatry, immorality, priestcrafts, lying, and deceit are all destroyed and done away. When will such things be done away? Clearly, after the Lord comes and the millennial day has begun. It would seem that the image of the remnant of Israel rending its Gentile enemies is symbolic of Israel’s ultimate victory over its foes, a victory which comes when the Savior returns and the wicked are destroyed.

“Except for a few who are the humble followers of Christ, the Gentiles will not repent. They will revel in their abominations and sin against the restored gospel, and they will be burned by the brightness of our Lord’s coming while the righteous—here called the remnant of Jacob—shall abide the day. And then, in the prophetic imagery, it will be as though the remnant of Israel overthrew their enemies as a young lion among the flocks of sheep.” (Bruce R. McConkie, *Millennial Messiah*, p. 248; see also p. 242; *Mortal Messiah* 4:334–35.)

16. See 3 Nephi 15:13; 2 Nephi 1:5.

18–20. These prophetic words, from Isaiah 52:8–10, will be fulfilled after the Lord Jesus 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, meaning the victory of our Lord over the forces of evil and corruption. And then the earth shall rest (see Moses 7:60–64).

The Savior Commands the People to Prepare for Additional Instruction

3 Nephi 17:1–4

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.

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.

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.

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.

1–4. During this first day of the Savior’s ministry among the Nephites the people present had experienced almost indescribable spiritual experiences and had received extensive gospel instruction on a wide array of doctrinal topics. No doubt it had been an emotionally draining and mentally tiring experience to the point of being overwhelming. Jesus perceived that they were in a weakened condition—both mentally and physically. In his wisdom and mercy he gave them time to ponder upon the things they had received, to refresh themselves, and prepare to receive additional instructions the next day. President Harold B. Lee adapted these words to our day when, at the close of a general conference, he

said: "God be with you. I have the same feeling as perhaps the Master had when he bid goodbye to the Nephites. He said he perceived that they were weak, but if they would go to their homes and ponder what he said, he would come again and instruct them on other occasions. So likewise, you cannot absorb all that you have heard and that we have talked about, but go to your homes now and remember what you can, and get the spirit of what has been done and said, and when you come again, or we come to you, we will try to help you further with your problems." (CR, October 1972, p. 177.)

3. Go ye unto your homes, and ponder upon the things which I have said] Two important points can be drawn from this statement. First, the Savior is placing a proper emphasis on the family and home for gospel instruction and spiritual experience. King Benjamin, when he instructed his people, also had the people organized "every man according to his family" (Mosiah 2:5). They were taught as families, counseled together as families, pondered and prayed as families. The most important gospel instruction and enduring spiritual impressions occur within homes. "The family is the basic unit of the kingdom of God on earth," declared President Spencer W. Kimball. "The Church can be no healthier than its families. . . . It is the duty of parents to so teach by example and precept that the child will fill the measure of his creation and find his way back to the glories of exaltation. Wise parents will see to it that their teaching is orthodox, character-building, and faith-promoting. . . . It is the responsibility of the parents to teach their children. The Sunday School, the Primary, the MIA and other organizations of the Church play a secondary role." (*The Teachings of Spencer W. Kimball*, pp. 331-32.)

Second, the Lord is teaching them the importance of pondering as an essential element in acquiring spiritual knowledge. The things of God are not understood through hearing or reading alone. True gospel instruction occurs only as the spirit of revelation teaches and testifies of the truths presented (see D&C 9:7-9; 42:14; 50:17-25). "Man must take time to meditate," President Ezra Taft Benson has taught, "to sweep the cobwebs from his mind, so that he might get a more firm grip on the truth and spend less time chasing phantoms and dallying in projects of lesser worth. . . . Take time to meditate. Ponder the meaning of the work in which you are engaged. The Lord has counseled, 'Let the solemnities of eternity rest upon your minds' (D&C 43:34). You cannot do that when your minds are preoccupied with the worries and cares of the world." (*The Teachings of Ezra Taft Benson*, p. 390.) Pondering opens the mind to intellectual insights and understanding and opens the heart to spiritual promptings and assurances. Hearing and reading alone could be compared to panning for gold in a small stream—

finding occasional fragments of gold dust and nuggets; whereas, when coupled with serious pondering and prayerful pleading with the Lord for spiritual understanding, our efforts become like the heavy excavation that uncovers a mountainside full of gold veins of gospel understanding.

4. I go unto the Father] The record does not tell us why he returns to the Father. Presumably he returned to report of his ministry among the Nephites and to receive any instructions that the Father would have him deliver when he came again (see 3 Nephi 18:35–39).

4. Show myself unto the lost tribes of Israel] See commentary on 3 Nephi 16:1–3.

Jesus Heals the Sick

3 Nephi 17:5–12

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.

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.

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.

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.

5–12. Perhaps no chapter in holy writ can compare with this in illustrating the godly attributes possessed by the Savior—tenderness, love, compassion, mercy, and even the display of emotion

(see also verse 21). It becomes easy to think of the resurrected Lord only in such terms as power, omniscience, and glory. This passage graphically reminds us, as Paul declared, that “we have not an high priest which cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities” (Hebrews 4:15). Our love and adoration for the Savior and our commitment to submit wholly to him and follow him with “full purpose of heart” (2 Nephi 31:13) are enhanced when we understand not only who he is but also what he is like.

This account includes a most touching example of Jesus’ tender love and compassion for all “that [were] afflicted in any manner.” The mercy he extended and the spiritual blessing he bestowed upon them also serve as a foreshadowing of his millennial ministry, when he will come in glory “with healing in his wings” (see Malachi 4:2) to prepare for the ultimate triumph of the plan of salvation. In Christ, through his fulfillment of the “infinite and eternal sacrifice,” all death, pain, disease, sicknesses, deformities, and handicaps will be done away with and these “old things shall pass away,” leaving physically “new creatures” with bodies and minds renewed in a glorious resurrection (see Boyd K. Packer, “The Moving of the Water,” *Ensign*, May 1991, pp. 7–9).

6. My bowels are filled with compassion towards you]

The risen Redeemer was filled with compassion and empathy for those who suffered from all manner of physical and emotional ailments, as well as those who suffered spiritually, because he knew what they felt; he had experienced it. His compassion and mercy had been thoroughly perfected in Gethsemane and on Golgotha as he partook of the “bitter cup.” His feelings for and healings of the afflicted at Bountiful were a fulfillment of Alma’s messianic prophecy. “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 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, italics added; see also commentary on Alma 7:11–13.)

8. Your faith is sufficient that I should heal you] One of the gifts of the Spirit is “faith to be healed” (D&C 46:19). Healings of a physical nature and also healings of the spirit—forgiveness of sin—come to people as gifts of the grace of God as they exercise faith in the Lord Jesus Christ (see Matthew 9:22; see also Enos 1:12).

10. They . . . did worship him; and . . . did kiss his feet, insomuch that they did bathe his feet with their tears] As a result of the miraculous healings that had been performed, the

people were overcome with feelings of gratitude and spiritual wonder. Tears of joy freely flowed and worshipful praises of love and adoration were poured out upon the Savior (compare 3 Nephi 11:19). Most of us will not, in mortality, experience events such as these, but these attitudes of worship and gratitude and love for the Lord can be experienced and maintained in our mortal life. Worshipping the Lord is more than just feelings. It is much more than mere sermon and song. True worship requires proper inward attitudes and outward actions, as well as spiritual feelings. “To worship the Lord is to follow after him (2 Nephi 31:10; 3 Nephi 27:21; Matthew 4:19), to seek his face (D&C 93:1; 130:3), to believe his doctrine, and to think his thoughts” declared Elder Bruce R. McConkie. “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*, p. 371.)

The Prototype of Perfect Prayer

3 Nephi 17:13–20

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.

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.

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.

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.

14. Jesus groaned within himself] The Savior's compassion and love for the people, as evidenced by his healing of the sick, also produced a feeling within him much different than the joy previously seen. In direct contrast to the spiritual blessings that were being poured out upon the righteous, Jesus' compassion was turned to the wicked of the house of Israel, who would know no such joy and blessings (compare 3 Nephi 10:1–11). Jesus' spiritual groaning and the troubling feelings he demonstrated in prayer to his Father are as much an evidence of his divine concern and compassion as is the account of his healing and blessing the righteous. This godly concern for both the righteous and the wicked help us to see in him a merciful, loving God who "inviteth them all to come unto him and partake of his goodness; and he denieth none that come unto him, black and white, bond and free, male and female; and he remembereth the heathen; and all are alike unto God, both Jew and Gentile" (2 Nephi 26:33).

15–20. Mormon records that Jesus' prayer was so remarkable that words can neither record the essence of the Savior's prayer nor capture the spiritual feelings that entered into the hearts of the people as they became witnesses of perfect prayer. The reason that words cannot describe such prayers is not that they are secret, but rather that mortal language cannot adequately capture the language of the Spirit. "In the pure and perfect and proper sense, no one can speak or pray in the name of Christ unless he speaks or prays by the power of the Holy Ghost," Elder Bruce R. McConkie wrote. "It is within our capability, as the Lord's people, to do this because 'we have the mind of Christ' (1 Corinthians 2:16)" (*New Witness*, p. 383). The kind of perfect communication that the Savior exemplified among the Nephites is born of the Spirit—it is the divine standard we should seek to meet with our own prayers (see 3 Nephi 19:16–36; see also Robert L. Millet and Joseph Fielding McConkie, *In His Holy Name*, pp. 54–57).

Angels Attend and Fire Encircles the Little Children

3 Nephi 17:21–25

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.

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 encir-

led about with fire; and the angels did minister unto them.

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.

21. He wept] We do not have a God who is without passions. Even the great creator of heavens and earth can be filled with emotions—both happiness and sadness; touched to tears by spiritual things, and overcome with love for his people.

21. He took their little children, one by one, and blessed them, and prayed unto the Father for them] Jesus called forth and blessed the Nephite children just as he had done previously during his mortal ministry in the Old World. His love for little children is not only evidence of his divine compassion but was and is also symbolic of the requirements of the gospel. The Savior reminds us that, in order to partake of his greatest blessing, even eternal life, we must “be converted, and become as little children” (Matthew 18:3). The tender mercies extended by the Savior and his blessings of the little children serve also as a symbolic teaching that through the atonement of Jesus Christ we are able to put off the natural man and become as little children (see Mosiah 3:19)—literally born again as the spiritual sons and daughters of Jesus Christ (see Mosiah 5:7; 27:25; see also *Commentary* 2:173).

24. They were encircled about with fire; and the angels did minister unto them] One of the most touching episodes in the Book of Mormon is the result of the Savior’s blessing of the little children. This chapter certifies that religion is more than doctrine, more than theology, more even than selfless service. Religion is a thing of the heart. Religion is lived. And religion is felt. Being encircled about with fire is a tangible symbol of the outpouring of the Holy Spirit (compare Nephi and Lehi’s experience in Helaman 5:23–49).

25. They were in number about two thousand and five hundred souls] Paul said that after the resurrection of Christ in Jerusalem, he was seen by “Cephas, then of the twelve: after that, he was seen of above five hundred brethren at once; of whom the greater part remain unto this present, but some are fallen asleep. After that, he was seen of James; then all of the apostles. And last of all he was seen of me also, as of one born out of due time.” (1 Corinthians 15:5–8.) Hundreds of men, women, and children, on

both continents, became special witnesses of the world's greatest miracle—the resurrection of Christ. The testimonies of these twenty-five hundred literally stand as “another testament of Jesus Christ.”

The Sacrament of the Lord's Supper Is Instituted and Explained

3 Nephi 18:1–14

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.

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 remem-

ber me ye shall have my Spirit to be with you.

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.

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.

1-14. Just as he did with his disciples at the Last Supper, in Jerusalem, Jesus introduced to the Nephite disciples that ordinance we know as the sacrament of the Lord's Supper. He previously had taught them that the law of Moses was fulfilled and that "old things had passed away" (see 3 Nephi 15:2-5). Now he was instructing them concerning a new ordinance to replace animal sacrifice. Just as sacrificial ordinances were rich with spiritual symbolism, so too were the sacramental emblems symbolic of the atoning sacrifice of Christ, both body and blood. One symbolic ordinance (the sacrifice of animals) looked *forward* in anticipation of the fulfillment of the Atonement, and the other (the sacrament) looked *back* in remembrance of the suffering of the Son. Elder Bruce R. McConkie taught: "As sacrifice was thus to cease with the occurrence of the great event toward which it pointed, there must needs be a new ordinance to replace it, an ordinance which also would center the attention of the saints on the infinite and eternal atonement. And so Jesus . . . initiated the sacrament of the Lord's Supper. Sacrifice stopped and sacrament started. It was the end of the old era, the beginning of the new. Sacrifice looked forward to the shed blood and bruised flesh of the Lamb of God. The sacrament was to be in remembrance of his spilt blood and broken flesh, the emblems, bread and wine, typifying such as completely as had the shedding of the blood of animals in their days." (*Doctrinal New Testament Commentary* 1:719-20.)

This new ordinance, instituted in both the Old and New worlds, was more than just a symbolic teaching methodology to remind the people of Christ. It was in very deed a covenant with a promise. Partaking of the sacrament, Jesus taught, "doth witness unto the Father that ye are willing to do that which I have commanded you" (verse 10; also for a more in-depth discussion of the symbolism and covenants associated with the sacrament see *New Witness*, pp. 293-302; 245-46). Faithfulness to that covenant brings the fulfillment of the Lord's promise that "ye shall have my Spirit to be with you" (verse 11). Jesus added an additional promise of spiritual security when he said, "And if ye shall always do these things blessed are ye, for ye are built upon my rock" (verse 12; compare 3 Nephi 11:32-40; 14:24-27; see also Helaman 5:12).

The symbols of bread and wine are not only symbols of the broken flesh and spilt blood of the Redeemer but are also symbols

of sustenance. By partaking worthily of the sacrament of the Lord's Supper we not only covenant to remember the Savior's sacrifice but also demonstrate our yearning—"hungering and thirsting" for spiritual sustenance. "I have always looked upon this blessed privilege as the means of spiritual growth," Elder Melvin J. Ballard taught, "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 hungry. If we should repair to a banquet where the finest of earth's providing may be had, without hunger, without appetite, the food would not be tempting, nor do us any good. If we repair to the sacrament table, we must come hungering and thirsting after righteousness, for spiritual growth." ("The Sacramental Covenant," *Improvement Era*, October 1919, pp. 1025–31.)

Jesus' command to "always observe" this sacramental ordinance (see verses 6, 11) must not be seen as a selfish desire to receive recognition as we "always remember him," neither should it be viewed merely as an essential ordinance of salvation, but as a merciful, spiritual blessing—a constant reminder of his love for us and his desire to protect us from the destructive designs of the devil. Having his Spirit to be with us is as much a protection as it is guidance and direction. Elder Melvin J. Ballard added this valuable 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.")

5. 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] The ordinance of the sacrament of the Lord's Supper must be done under the direction of the proper priesthood authority. Merely breaking the bread, reciting the prayers, and partaking of the ordinances—even if done by someone who holds the priesthood—does not mean it is a valid

sacramental ordinance. Authority or permission to perform this sacred rite can only be given by the one who holds the keys of the priesthood. On a ward level, this means that only the bishop has the right and authority to grant permission for the sacrament to be administered. Through his keys of priesthood authority, priesthood holders are thus empowered to perform this important ordinance and make its emblems available to members of the ward.

6. This shall ye always observe to do] The Savior is here stating that the sacrament is the standing law or ordinance for the Church whereby the covenants of baptism are renewed. It appears that the word *always* means “until the end of mortal time.” We know from the scripture that the sacrament will continue to be performed in the Church even at the Savior’s second coming and perhaps through the Millennium (see D&C 27:5–14; see also Bruce R. McConkie, *Millennial Messiah*, pp. 586–87).

7. It shall be a testimony unto the Father that ye do always remember me] The covenant to “always remember him” involves much more than just pondering on his mission and sacrifice during sacrament meeting or mentally recounting events from his life. These things are important, but “always remembering him” implies motion more than memory—actions of service to our fellowman and obedience to the Lord. In the context of the sacramental covenant, the word *remember* is linked to the word *follow*. Fulfilling our covenant to always remember the Lord necessitates following his example and keeping his commandments. (For an excellent discussion of what fully remembering Christ means see Dallin H. Oaks, “Always Remember Him,” *Ensign*, May 1988, pp. 29–32.)

7. Ye shall have my Spirit to be with you] The Lord’s promise to those who worthily partake of the sacrament is the constant companionship of the Holy Spirit. Having the Spirit in our lives produces myriad spiritual blessings: The Spirit helps us recall and recognize truth (see John 14:26), conveys to us all manner of spiritual gifts (see 1 Corinthians 12:1–11; D&C 46:13–26), guides us in our prayers (D&C 46:30), teaches us eternal truths (Moroni 10:5), brings peace and joy to the soul (Galatians 5:22), opens our minds to revelation (Alma 5:46; 1 Nephi 10:19), shows and tells us all things that we should do (2 Nephi 32:3, 5; D&C 11:12), strengthens the body, mind, and spirit (Romans 8:26; D&C 84:33) and many, many other things.

We sometimes forget, however, that the sacrament is the renewal of the covenant of baptism and, like baptism, has associated with it the significant blessing of the remission of sins (see JST, Matthew 26:24–25). The Holy Ghost is a sanctifier, and always having the Spirit with us ensures a forgiveness of sin (see 3 Nephi 27:20). “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?” Elder John H. Groberg asked. “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, p. 50.)

“Watch and Pray Always Lest Ye Enter into Temptation”

3 Nephi 18:15–21

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.

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.

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:

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.

21. Pray in your families unto the Father, always in my name, that your wives and your children may be blessed.

15–21. After instituting the ordinance of the sacrament and instructing the disciples concerning it, Jesus turned his attention to teaching the multitude about the protective power of prayer.

15. Ye must watch and pray always] As important as prayer is, its protective and guiding influence is diminished unless it is coupled with vigilance, with “watching.” The doctrinal meaning of the word “watch,” in the context of praying always in order to resist temptations, implies more than observation. It means being on guard, being spiritually aware. Some erroneously believe that as long as they “say their prayers” God will “not suffer [them] to be tempted above that [they] are able” (see 1 Corinthians 10:13). Certainly this was not the intent of Paul’s words. Adding the words of Alma to those of Paul helps us to better understand why watching must accompany praying. “And now, my brethren,” Alma said, “I wish from the inmost part of my heart, yea, with great anxiety even unto pain, that ye would hearken unto my words, and cast off your sins, and not procrastinate the day of your repentance; but that ye would humble yourselves before the Lord, and call on his holy name, *and watch and pray continually*, that ye

may not be tempted above that which ye can bear, and thus be led by the Holy Spirit, becoming humble, meek, submissive, patient, full of love and all long-suffering; having faith on the Lord; having a hope that ye shall receive eternal life; having the love of God always in your hearts" (Alma 13:27–29, italics added).

One cannot reasonably pray for strength to resist temptation and then carelessly and recklessly flirt with evil. Just as we are saved by the grace of God only "after all we can do" (see 2 Nephi 25:23), our faith and prayers are efficacious only after "all we can do" in watching our thoughts, words, and deeds (see Mosiah 4:30), lest by our own negligence we fall into transgression. If we fail to "watch and pray continually" we can indeed "be tempted above that which [we] can bear." We must constantly be *watchful* as well as *prayerful* to ensure that our thoughts, words, and deeds stay in the "spiritual safe zone." Just as the Savior promised protection to the Nephites, his promise is likewise conveyed to us today through the scriptures and living prophets who testify that if we are diligently watchful and prayerful, we "will be given the strength to shun any temptation" (Ezra Taft Benson, *The Teachings of Ezra Taft Benson*, p. 435).

16. Behold I am the light; I have set an example for you]

Compare verse 24. Jesus Christ is our exemplar in all things, and as such is also our example in prayer. "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). Following the Savior's example of prayer requires that we should seek to pray by the power of the Spirit in the same manner as he prayed (see 3 Nephi 17:15–17). Having steadfast faith in Christ and living lives of Christ-like actions allows us to think as he thinks, act as he acts, speak as he speaks, and thus pray as he prayed.

18. For Satan desireth to have you]

Compare Luke 22:31. The Savior's statement here must be taken as literal. This desire of Satan's is the very reason why Jesus, like all of the prophets, constantly commands us to "pray always." In the premortal world Lucifer sought to destroy agency and thwart the Father's plan of salvation. His destructive designs continue now on earth. President Wilford Woodruff taught: "[Lucifer] has great influence over the children of men; he labors continually to destroy the works of God in heaven, and he had to be cast out. He is here, mighty among the children of men. There is a vast number of fallen spirits, cast out with him, here on earth. They do not die and disappear; they have not bodies only as they enter the tabernacles of men. They have not organized bodies, and are not to be seen with the sight of the eye. But there are many evil spirits among us, and they labor to overthrow the church and kingdom of God. . . .

"Do you suppose these devils are around us without trying to

do something? . . . I say . . . we have got a mighty warfare to wage with these spirits. We cannot escape it. What will they do to you? They will try to make us do anything and everything that is not right." (*The Discourses of Wilford Woodruff*, pp. 238–40.)

Given this graphic view of Satan's evil intentions and his hatred for the children of men, it is no wonder that the Lord repeatedly reminds us to "watch and pray always" (see Luke 21:36; Alma 13:28; D&C 10:5).

20. Whatsoever ye shall ask . . . which is right] Being in tune with the Spirit enables one to know that which is right and that which may be appropriately asked of the Father. When our desires and deeds are in harmony with God's will, we have the promise that all our petitions before the Father will be granted according to our desires. To Nephi the Lord said, "All things shall be done unto thee according to thy word, for thou shalt not ask that which is contrary to my will" (Helaman 10:5). "Perfect prayers are always answered," declared Elder Bruce R. McConkie. "Proper petitions are always granted. The Lord never rejects a prayer uttered by the power of the Spirit, or denies a petition sought in the name of Christ, that accords with the divine will." (*New Witness*, p. 384; see also D&C 50:29–30.) Mormon later quoted this statement of the Savior's in slightly different form: "Whatsoever thing ye shall ask the Father in my name, *which is good*, in faith believing that ye shall receive, behold, it shall be done unto you" (Moroni 7:26, italics added).

21. Pray in your families] There are numerous passages in the standard works about the responsibilities of parents toward their families. Virtually all of these focus on the obligation of parents to instruct their children in righteousness, and the children's responsibility to hearken to their parents. This verse is the only reference in all of canonized scripture that directly speaks of the commandment and blessing of family prayer. Jesus' command to "pray in your families" was followed with the instruction as to why family prayer is so essential—"that your wives and your children may be blessed." President Gordon B. Hinckley specified how wives, children, and families are blessed through family prayer: "I feel satisfied that there is no adequate substitute for the morning and evening practice of kneeling together—father, mother, and children. This, more than soft carpets, more than lovely draperies, more than cleverly balanced color schemes, is the thing that will make for better and more beautiful homes. . . . What miracles would happen in the lives of the children of the world if they would lay aside their own selfishness and lose themselves in the service of others. The seed from which this sheltering and fruitful tree may grow is best planted and nurtured in the daily supplications of the family.

"I know of no better way to inculcate love for country than for

parents to pray before their children for the land in which they live, invoking the blessings of the Almighty upon it that it may be preserved in liberty and peace. I know of no better way to build within the hearts of our children a much-needed respect for authority than remembering in the daily supplications of the family the leaders of our respective countries who carry the burdens of government. . . .

“I know of nothing that will so much help to ease family tensions, that in a subtle way will bring about the respect for parents which leads to obedience, that will affect the spirit of repentance which will largely erase the blight of broken homes, than will praying together, confessing weaknesses together before the Lord, and invoking the blessings of the Lord upon the home and those who dwell there. . . .

“Can we make our homes more beautiful? Yes, through addressing ourselves as families to the Source of all true beauty. Can we strengthen society and make it a better place in which to live? Yes, by strengthening the virtue of our family life through kneeling together and supplicating the Almighty in the name of His Beloved Son.

“This practice, a return to family worship, spreading across the land and over the earth, would in a generation largely lift the blight that is destroying us. It would restore integrity, mutual respect, and a spirit of thankfulness in the hearts of people.” (“The Blessings of Family Prayer,” *Ensign*, February 1991, pp. 2–5.)

The Church Is to Meet Together Often and to Invite All to Come unto Christ

3 Nephi 18:22–25

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;

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.

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.

22–25. After establishing a “new” Church, and giving them the teachings and ordinances of a “higher righteousness,” Jesus now commands the multitude to meet together often to teach and edify one another. They were to forbid none from coming and partaking of the blessings of the Church. We, like they, are under commandment to help influence all to come unto Christ through our prayers, our examples, and our specific invitations to hear the gospel word. Failing to extend the hand of fellowship to our brothers and sisters—regardless of their differences from us—is antithetical to the spirit of the gospel of Jesus Christ and will repel the Spirit both institutionally and individually.

The Savior’s commandment to the Nephites to “not forbid any man from coming unto you when ye shall meet together” has special application to us in the Church today. While we may not verbally “forbid” others—members and nonmembers alike—from our fellowship in the Church, they may feel “forbidden” by reason of our attitudes and our actions. Elder M. Russell Ballard observed: “I believe we members do not have the option to extend the hand of fellowship only to relatives, close friends, certain Church members, and those selected nonmembers who express an interest in the Church. Limiting or withholding our fellowship seems to me to be contrary to the gospel of Jesus Christ. . . . We might ask ourselves how the newcomers in our wards would be treated if we were the only ones they ever met. Every member of the Church should foster the attributes of warmth, sincerity, and love for the newcomers. . . .

“Brothers and sisters, we members must help with the conversion process by making our wards and branches friendly places, with no exclusivity, where all people feel welcome and comfortable. . . . My message is urgent because we need to retain in full fellowship many more of the new converts and return to activity many more of the less active. I urge you to increase the spirit of friendship and pure Christian fellowship in your neighborhoods. A new convert or recently activated member should feel the warmth of being wanted and being welcomed into full fellowship of the Church. Members and leaders of the Church should nurture and love them as Jesus would.” (“The Hand of Fellowship,” *Ensign*, November 1988, pp. 28–29.)

24. I am the light which ye shall hold up] In the Sermon on the Mount Jesus taught his disciples: “Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven” (Matthew 5:16; see also 3 Nephi 12:16). To the Nephites he declared that he is the light which we are to hold up—the light of the world. Only through him can we become a “light of the world” (see Matthew 5:14; see also 3 Nephi 12:14). There is both an *individual* and an *institutional* application

of this passage. First, individually, we hold up Christ as the light of the world in our lives as we take his name upon us, have his image engraven in our countenances by personifying his teachings and by receiving his Spirit. Second, as an institution the Church is commanded to hold Christ up to the world as the light that illuminates our way and gives life and meaning to all that we do. In all our ministering and meetings he should be our focal point and the object of our attention and our adoration. Others who observe our institutional efforts must be able to perceive that in the *institutional* Church, as well as in our *individual* lives, “we talk of Christ, we rejoice in Christ, we preach of Christ, we prophesy of Christ” (2 Nephi 25:26). Reflecting the light of the world in the light of our lives and our ministry, we can invite all to come unto Christ and thereby see good works that are centered in Christ. We would hope they will then be moved to glorify the Father.

25. Whosoever breaketh this commandment suffereth himself to be led into temptation] This phrase may have two meanings, both of which are appropriate. In the context of the passage, Jesus has commanded his Nephite listeners to pray for and fellowship others, and “not forbid any man from coming unto [the Church].” Jesus could be saying that those who break that commandment will be led into temptation by virtue of their own pride and self-righteousness (see the example of the Zoramites, Alma 31). Pride and selfishness always lead to the breaking of other commandments.

A possible second meaning of this phrase could refer to the Savior’s commandment “that ye should come unto me, that ye might feel and see.” Those who refuse the Savior’s invitation and break his commandment to come unto him, and will not hold him up as their light, are inevitably led into temptation and fall to transgression. Both meanings represent true doctrine. It is clear that the Lord is reminding us that breaking our covenant to “always remember him” and/or to “succor those who stand in need of [our] succor” will leave us devoid of the Spirit and open to the “wiles of the devil.” Blessings always follow obedience, and disobedience always results in condemnation (see D&C 130:20–21).

The Twelve Instructed to Judge Worthiness to Partake of the Sacrament and Empowered to Confer the Holy Ghost

3 Nephi 18:26–39

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:

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.

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.

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.

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.

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.

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.

28–29. Compare 1 Corinthians 11:23–30. It is important to note that, in these verses, Jesus is speaking to the Apostles (see verse 26), those who have been commissioned and authorized to administer the sacrament. He is not speaking to the multitude. Forbidding someone from partaking of the sacrament on the grounds of personal unworthiness is the responsibility of the “judge in Israel” who holds the keys of the priesthood which direct priesthood ordinances. It is not the prerogative of members of the congregation to forbid anyone from partaking of the sacrament. If

they are aware of unworthiness, they may discuss it with the bishop or other appropriate priesthood leader, but it remains the right of the priesthood leader, through the spirit of discernment, to allow or disallow someone the blessing of the sacrament.

“See that ye do all things in worthiness” (Mormon 9:29), Moroni counseled. Partaking of the sacrament of the Lord’s Supper unworthily denies one of the promised blessings that attend worthy participation in that ordinance. Without the Spirit one is halted and damned in regard to spiritual progress. What, then, constitutes worthiness to partake of the sacrament? “If we desire to improve (which is to repent) and are not under priesthood restriction, then, in my opinion, we are worthy,” taught Elder John H. Groberg. “If, however, we have no desire to improve, if we have no intention of following the guidance of the Spirit, we must ask: Are we worthy to partake, or are we making a mockery of the very purpose of the sacrament, which is to act as a catalyst for personal repentance and improvement? If we remember the Savior and all he has done and will do for us, we will improve our actions and thus come closer to him, which keeps us on the road to eternal life. If, however, we refuse to repent and improve, if we do not remember and keep his commandments, then we have stopped our growth, and that is damnation to our souls. The sacrament is an intensely personal experience, and we are the ones who knowingly are worthy or otherwise.” (CR, April 1989, p. 50.)

30–32. These verses instruct the Lord’s authorized servants concerning how transgressors should be dealt with in the kingdom of God. Unworthiness that may or may not result in formal church discipline (i.e., probation, disfellowshipping, or excommunication) does not necessitate being “cast out” of the congregation. The Lord commands that priesthood leaders and members should extend greater concern, love, and service to the transgressors, pray for them more fervently, and minister to them patiently, “for ye know not but what they will return and repent.”

31. If he repent not he shall not be numbered among my people, that he may not destroy my people] Transgressors who will not repent or who pose a serious threat, physical or spiritual, to the Church are “cut off from the Church”—meaning excommunicated (see Mosiah 26:31–32; Alma 1:24; 5:57–58; 6:3–6; Moroni 6:7; D&C 20:83). 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.

32. For unto such shall ye continue to minister] Even after someone is cut off from the blessings of the Church it is the obligation of priesthood leaders to continue in their efforts to minister unto such; there is perhaps then an even greater obligation to

care for and minister to them. Untiring efforts in seeking to bring the lost sheep back to the fold will not go unrewarded by the Lord (see Matthew 18:12–14).

34. Blessed are ye if ye have no disputations among you] See commentary on 3 Nephi 11:28–30.

35. It is expedient that I should go unto the Father for your sakes] In order to more perfectly fulfill his mission to the Nephites, it was necessary for Jesus to return to his Father. The record does not say why, or what he received from the Father. See commentary on 3 Nephi 17:3–4.

36. He touched with his hand the disciples whom he had chosen] It appears from verse 37 that the touching here referred to is a laying on of hands—a setting apart or ordination.

37–38. As a result of the fulfillment of the law and as part of the establishment of a new dispensation and new Church, the Savior ordains and sets apart his disciples and gives them authority to confer the gift of the Holy Ghost and set in order the new organization. The words spoken by Christ to the Twelve—which were not heard by the multitude—were preserved (see Moroni 2). See commentary on 3 Nephi 11:21–22; 12:1.

39. He ascended again into heaven] Day One of the Savior's visit to his American Hebrews has now come to an end. Regarding his ascension, compare Acts 1:8–11.

The Twelve Prepare the Multitude for Continued Teaching from Jesus

3 Nephi 19:1–8

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 exceed-

ingly 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.

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.

5. And behold, the multitude was so great that they did cause that they should be separated into twelve bodies.

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.

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.

1–8. After Jesus had completed the first day of his teaching the Nephites he returned to the Father, and many “did labor exceedingly” all night that those who were not present the first day would be able to be in attendance “on the morrow in the place where Jesus should show himself unto the multitude.” In these verses, we also receive the names of Jesus’ twelve disciples (Apostles). Many more people than the original twenty-five hundred were present for the second day of Christ’s Nephite ministry. The multitude was organized into twelve groups. While this is not explicitly stated, it appears that it was so organized as to allow each member of the Twelve to preside over and teach a group so that each person present could hear and understand. They were taught to pray to the Father in the name of Jesus in preparation for receiving additional instruction.

4. Nephi and his brother whom he had raised from the dead] See 3 Nephi 17:19.

8. They had ministered those same words which Jesus had spoken—nothing varying] The Nephite Apostles taught the multitude, presumably particularly those who had not been present for the Savior’s previous appearance, those things they had learned from Jesus earlier. They did not editorialize or give private interpretation, but as the Savior had commanded, taught only that gospel he had delivered (see commentary on 3 Nephi 11:39–40).

Nephite Apostles Are Baptized and Receive the Holy Ghost

3 Nephi 19:9–15

9. And they did pray for that which they most desired; and they desired that the Holy Ghost should be given unto them.

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.

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;

9–15. The record testifies that the greatest thing for which the disciples prayed was that they could receive the Holy Ghost and experience in their own lives what had been demonstrated by the Savior. They understood that this reception of the Holy Ghost was imperative for their apostolic ministry—to give them power that would attend their words and works. After Nephi was baptized and had baptized the other disciples in fulfillment of the Lord’s charge (see 3 Nephi 11:18–22), the Holy Ghost was poured out upon them in a remarkable pentecostal manner with fire and the ministration of heavenly beings (compare Acts 2:1–4; 3 Nephi 17:24). The cleansing, sanctifying power of the Holy Ghost not only spiritually prepared these disciples for their subsequent ministry to the people but also transfigured them so that they could endure the presence of glorified, heavenly beings. While the disciples were thus being attended by angels, Jesus reappeared and began to teach the multitude.

12. He baptized all those whom Jesus had chosen] See *Doctrines of Salvation* 2:336.

14. They were encircled about as if it were by fire] Compare Helaman 5:23–24, 43–45; 3 Nephi 17:24.

The Savior’s Prayer Cannot Be Written or Uttered by Man

3 Nephi 19:16–34

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

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.

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.

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.

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.

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.

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.

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.

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.

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.

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.

31. And it came to pass that he went again a little way off and prayed unto the Father;

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.

18. And they did pray unto Jesus] The Savior had previously instructed the Nephites concerning the proper language of

prayer (see 3 Nephi 13:9). They knew that they should pray “unto the Father, in my name” (see 3 Nephi 18:23), yet under the influence of the Spirit they prayed to Jesus “calling him their Lord and their God.” He was and is both Redeemer and God. In reverential worship they directed their prayers to the Savior, and he did not stop them nor correct them. It appears that, in this case, it was appropriate because a resurrected God stood in their very presence (see verse 22). Elder Bruce R. McConkie has written: “Jesus was present before them as the symbol of the Father. Seeing him, it was as though they saw the Father; praying to him, it was as though they prayed to the Father. It was a special and unique situation that as far as we know has taken place only once on earth during all the long ages of the Lord’s hand-dealings with his children.” (*Promised Messiah*, p. 561.)

19–23. While all the multitude was engaged in earnest prayer, the Savior separated himself and also prayed to the Father in behalf of the Nephites. He expressed gratitude for their faith and the spiritual manifestations that had been poured out upon them, and prayed that they might be one with God (compare the Savior’s high priestly intercessory prayer in John 17).

24. They did not multiply many words] The Lord hears and answers prayers because of faith and the sincere desires of the heart, not because of the length of the prayer or the eloquence of the words.

24. For it was given unto them what they should pray] True prayer is a gift of the Spirit. When our attitudes and actions are in harmony with the mind and will of God, the Holy Ghost inspires us as we pray and guides our words (see commentary on 3 Nephi 17:15–20; 18:20). When the Saints pray in the Spirit, they find their prayers given to them from above (D&C 46:30; 50:30); they find their words reaching beyond their thoughts, their hearts open to people and principles and ideas that they had not considered previously. This kind of prayer, prayer directed and motivated by the power of the Holy Ghost, is a revelatory experience; because our hearts have begun to tell our minds things they did not know before, we learn something from what is uttered.

24. They were filled with desire] Faith and spiritual desire leads one to yearn to commune with God. Sincere prayer yields further desire to know God and to live a life that is pleasing to him. Faith in the Lord Jesus Christ gives life and power to personal desire and moves one to action. Prayer is vocalized faith, and when accompanied by the Spirit it fills the soul with increased love for God and desire to serve him and keep his commandments.

25. The light of his countenance did shine upon them] There are two ways in which the Lord’s countenance did “shine upon them”—one literal and the other symbolic. From the context

of this verse, we can see that there was a literal transfiguration of the disciples in that they were filled with light and their countenances shone with light like that of the Savior. They were so filled with the Spirit that they shone with a literal light and glory (compare Exodus 34:29; Daniel 3:22–27; Matthew 17:2; Helaman 5:23).

In a more symbolic way, we experience the countenance of the Lord shining upon us, like the Nephites, when we feel of the Savior's perfect love for us, his compassion, and his approbation. Though we may not literally, in this life, *see* the smiling face of God, we can nonetheless *feel* the smile and joy of the Lord as we please him through service and obedience.

25. There could be nothing upon earth so white as the whiteness thereof] Compare to 1 Nephi 8:11; 12:10–11; D&C 20:6.

28. Purified . . . because of their faith] The disciples were filled with the Holy Ghost and cleansed from all sin because of their faith in the Lord Jesus Christ (compare 1 Nephi 12:8–11; Enos 1:8; Moroni 10:32–33; *Commentary* 1:86–87).

29. I pray not for the world, but for those whom thou hast given me out of the world, because of their faith] The Saints are called to live *in* the world, though they are counseled to be not *of* the world. They cannot make a difference in a wicked world—cannot be the salt of the earth or the light of the world—if they seclude themselves from the world. The blessings of the gospel cannot be obtained by the wicked and the worldly. The Savior's promises are bestowed upon those who come out from the world through faith, repentance, and obedience to all gospel laws and ordinances.

32–34. Mormon again records that the beauty of the Savior's inspired prayers cannot be captured by mortal words but can be "heard" by hearts that have been opened by the Spirit and understood by minds and spirits that are quickened by the power of the Holy Ghost. (Compare 3 Nephi 17:16–17; D&C 8:2–3; Joseph Smith—History 1:12.)

Miracles Performed Because of Great Faith

3 Nephi 19:35–36

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.

35–36. As great as were the miracles performed by Jesus among the Jews during his mortal ministry, they could not compare with the marvelous things seen, heard, and experienced by the Nephites. The great miracles and spiritual manifestations to which the Nephites were witnesses came as a result of their faith. Where there is greater faith there are greater miracles and spiritual outpourings (see commentary on Mormon 9:15–19; Mark 6:5).

Jesus Miraculously Provides the Sacramental Elements

3 Nephi 20:1–9

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.

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.

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;

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.

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.

1–9. Our Lord again blesses bread and wine as a sacramental ordinance for his Nephite followers—this time, Mormon adds, providing them in miraculous fashion (compare Matthew 14:13–22; 15:32–38; John 6:5–14). And once again the Spirit is poured out upon these people, as it is on all who in this ordinance gratefully ponder upon the wondrous gift of the body and blood of the beloved Messiah.

1. They should not cease to pray in their hearts] See Alma 34:27.

8. See 1 Corinthians 11:23–30.

The Fulfillment of God's Covenant with Israel

3 Nephi 20:10–22

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—

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.

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.

14. And the Father hath commanded me that I should give unto you this land, for your inheritance.

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—

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.

17. Thy hand shall be lifted up upon thine adversaries, and all thine enemies shall be cut off.

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.

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.

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.

11. The words of Isaiah should be fulfilled] See 3 Nephi 16:16–20; Isaiah 52:8–10.

11. Therefore search them] See commentary on 3 Nephi 23:1–3.

13. This is a broad statement describing Israelites in general who have been scattered throughout the world (see also commentary on 3 Nephi 21:23). They shall come from the north, south, east, and west. How is it that they shall be gathered? By coming to “the knowledge of the Lord their God, who hath redeemed them.” The gathering of Israel, as we have sought to demonstrate in this work, is first spiritual (to Christ, his gospel, and his true Church) and second temporal (to the lands of their inheritance, to the wards and stakes where the Saints congregate). Salvation is not in a place, but in a person, the person of Christ. As the gathering is accelerated (particularly in the Millennium), we would expect to find many scriptural records coming forth. And this is what the holy word affirms. To those of the last days who bristle and spurn at the Book of Mormon, the Savior said: “Wherefore, because that ye have a Bible ye need not suppose that it contains all my words; neither need ye suppose that I have not caused more to be written. For I command all men, both in the east and in the west, and in the north, and in the south, and in the islands of the sea, that they shall write the words which I speak unto them; for out of the books which shall be written I will judge the world, every man according to their works, according to that which is written.” (2 Nephi 29:10–11, italics added.) Elder Neal A. Maxwell has taught: “One of the unique features of the living Church of Jesus Christ is its ever-expanding body of fundamental spiritual knowledge about man’s identity and purpose. . . . Lost books are among the treasures yet to come forth. . . . Thus, 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, pp. 69–70.)

14. See 3 Nephi 15:13.

15–20. See commentary on 3 Nephi 16:10–15.

17. All thine enemies shall be cut off] Again, we suggest that the context for this unusual phenomenon appears to be millennial. When, at what point in time, will all the enemies of Israel be cut off or destroyed? Surely it shall be when the Savior returns to reign as the Second David, the King of Israel. See 3 Nephi 21:13.

18. Without question, the greater work of gathering is ahead. Though multi-millions shall yet embrace the religion of Jesus Christ, the religion of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob—all before the end of the world or destruction of the wicked—the gathering of Israel during the thousand years of peace will be of a magnitude that is difficult for us in our present state to conceive.

19. I will make thy horn iron, and I will make thy hoofs brass] These are symbolic expressions which are meant to typify might and power, the power of Christ and his destroying angels to cleanse the earth of all wicked persons and all wickedness, the

might to “beat in pieces” those persons who have rejected the greater light of the gospel and gloried in their perversity.

20. The sword of my justice . . . shall fall upon . . . all the nations of the Gentiles] We see from this verse that God’s justice will not be limited to some sort of vigilante group of Lamanites attacking America. Rather, the sword of justice, wielded by the Almighty, shall fall upon the wayward and rebellious *of all nations*. The Lord explained that until the coming of the Son of Man in glory “there will be foolish virgins among the wise; and at that hour [that is, at the time of the Second Advent] 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). “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).

22. New Jerusalem] The New Jerusalem is a center place, a center city which shall be built up and established as the headquarters of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. Its location will be Independence, Jackson County, Missouri (see D&C 57:3). “We believe . . . that Zion (the New Jerusalem) will be built upon the American continent” (Articles of Faith 1:10). “Zion, the New Jerusalem, on American soil! And we hasten to add, so also shall there be Zions in all lands and New Jerusalems in the mountains of the Lord in all the earth. But the American Zion shall be the capital city, the source whence the law shall go forth to govern all the earth. It shall be the city of the Great King. His throne shall be there, and from there he shall reign gloriously over all the earth.” (Bruce R. McConkie, *Millennial Messiah*, pp. 301–2.)

22. I will be in the midst of you] See commentary on 3 Nephi 21:25.

Jesus Testifies of Himself

3 Nephi 20:23–24

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.

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.

23–24. Jesus here chooses to quote from the Apostle Peter’s words in Acts 3:22–24, or perhaps he is referring to another text

(more complete than that found in our present Old Testament, possibly contained on the brass plates).

23. Jehovah spake through Moses: “I will raise them up a Prophet from among their brethren, like unto thee [Moses], 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 18:18–19.) The Apostle Peter, presumably reflecting the language of the Septuagint (the Greek translation of the Hebrew Old Testament), quoted the messianic prophecy: “A prophet shall the Lord your God raise up unto you of your brethren, like unto me [Moses]; him shall ye hear in all things whatsoever he shall say unto you. And it shall come to pass, that every soul, which will not hear that prophet, shall be destroyed from among the people.” (Acts 3:22–23; see also Joseph Smith—History 1:40.) Compare commentary on 3 Nephi 21:11.

24. To the household of Cornelius, Peter said of Christ: “To him give all the prophets witness, that through his name whosoever believeth in him shall receive remission of sins” (Acts 10:43). As Jacob, brother of Nephi, testified, “None of the prophets have written, nor prophesied, save they have spoken concerning this Christ” (Jacob 7:11; see also Mosiah 13:33).

24. All the prophets from Samuel] This seems to be a reference to Samuel, son of Elkanah and Hannah (see 1 Samuel 1), one of the greatest of Old Testament oracles.

The Gathering of Israel Fulfills the Abrahamic Covenant

3 Nephi 20:25–46

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.

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—

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.

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.

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.

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.

32. Then shall their watchmen lift up their voice, and with the voice together shall they sing; for they shall see eye to eye.

33. Then will the Father gather them together again, 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.

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.

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.

37. Shake thyself from the dust; arise, sit down, O Jerusalem; loose thyself from the bands of thy neck, O captive daughter of Zion.

38. For thus saith the Lord: Ye

have sold yourselves for naught, and ye shall be redeemed without money.

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.

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!

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.

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.

43. Behold, my servant shall deal prudently; he shall be exalted and extolled and be very high.

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—

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.

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.

25. Ye are the children of the prophets] This is the Savior's testimony, his sure word, that the Lehites are pure descendants of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, are heirs of the blessings of the prophets, who also descend from the patriarchs.

25. Ye are of the house of Israel] Jesus' statement here, as with patriarchal declaration of lineage in general, is just what it purports to be—a literal statement about blood descent from the ancient patriarchs. It is neither metaphorical nor mythical. It is true.

25. The covenant which the Father made with your fathers] The gospel covenant, the new and everlasting covenant, has been in existence from the days of Adam. Its rights and privileges and responsibilities continued from Adam through the antediluvian patriarchs—Seth, Enos, Cainan, Mahalaleel, Jared, Enoch, Methuselah, Lamech, and Noah. From Noah the blessings of the gospel continued—albeit through periods of apostasy and restoration—through ten generations until the days of Abraham. God renewed his covenant, the gospel covenant, with Abraham. Because Abraham was a restorer; because he was a dispensation head; because more scriptural information regarding the terms and conditions of the covenant are given in God's dealings with Abraham than elsewhere in holy writ; and because Abraham received the covenant and lived worthy of its consummate privileges, even exaltation and godhood—because of these things we have come to call the covenant which God makes with his people the Abrahamic covenant. In that covenant God promises Abraham four things: (1) the gospel; (2) the priesthood and its ministry; (3) eternal life and the continuation of the family unit; and (4) a land inheritance (see Genesis 12:1–3; 13:14–17; 15:1–5; JST, Genesis 17:1–2; Abraham 2:8–11).

26. The call to repentance—whether from the Savior himself or one of his humble servants—is a call to be loyal to the royal within us, a call to be true to who we really are. Abraham's posterity are heirs to rich and transcendent blessings, but they cannot make a difference in the world—cannot be the leaven to the loaf—if they do not live the teachings of the Master, if they do not follow the examples of their righteous ancestors.

27. A vital part of the realization of the promises made to Abraham is the spread of the gospel, through missionary efforts, to all parts of the world. In our day as people, including "Israelite Gentiles" and even pure Gentiles, hear the message of the Restoration, as they receive, by the power of the Holy Ghost, the witness of its truthfulness, as they gather into the Church and kingdom of God, the Lord's covenant with the ancient fathers is being brought to pass.

27–28. This appears to be a specific reference to the scattering

of the Lamanites, the Lord's covenant people, at the hands of the American settlers. Nephi wrote: "After all the house of Israel have been scattered and confounded, . . . the Lord God will raise up a mighty nation among the Gentiles, yea, even upon the face of this land; and by them shall our seed be scattered. And after our seed is scattered the Lord God will proceed to do a marvelous work among the Gentiles, which shall be of great worth unto our seed . . . unto the making known of the covenants of the Father of heaven unto Abraham, saying: In thy seed shall all the kindreds of the earth be blessed." (1 Nephi 22:7–9.)

29–31. These verses pertain to the ultimate gathering of the Jews, who are also the Lord's covenant people, a gathering which shall not take place on a grand scale until the Savior's second coming (see Zechariah 12:9–10; 13:6; 14:1–4; D&C 45:48–53). "When the Savior visits Jerusalem," President Brigham Young observed, "and the Jews look upon him, and see the wounds in his hands and in his side and in his feet, they will then know that they have persecuted and put to death the true Messiah, and then they will acknowledge him, but not till then. They have confounded his first and second coming, expecting his first coming to be as a mighty prince instead of as a servant. They will go back by and by to Jerusalem and own their Lord and Master." (*JD* 11:279.)

"The Jews 'shall begin to believe in Christ' [2 Nephi 30:7] before he comes the second time. Some of them will accept the gospel and forsake the traditions of their fathers; a few will find in Jesus the fulfillment of their ancient Messianic hopes; but their nation as a whole, their people as the distinct body that they now are in all nations, the Jews as a unit shall not, at that time, accept the word of truth. But a beginning will be made; a foundation will be laid; and then Christ will come and usher in the millennial year of his redeemed." (Bruce R. McConkie, *Millennial Messiah*, pp. 228–29.) As to the gathering of the Jews to the land of Israel since the end of the nineteenth century, Elder McConkie has written: "Judah will gather to old Jerusalem in due course; of this, there is no doubt. But this gathering will consist of accepting Christ, joining the Church, and receiving anew the Abrahamic covenant as it is administered in holy places. The present assembling of people of Jewish ancestry into the Palestinian nation of Israel is not the scriptural gathering of Israel or of Judah. It may be prelude thereto, and some of the people so assembled may in due course be gathered into the true church and kingdom of God on earth, and they may then assist in building the temple that is destined to grace Jerusalem's soil. But a political gathering is not a spiritual gathering, and the Lord's kingdom is not of this world." (*New Witness*, pp. 520–21; see also pp. 511, 564–65; *Millennial Messiah*, p. 229.)

31. They shall believe in me, that I am Jesus Christ, the Son of God] It is not just that some Jews will begin to believe that Jesus was a good man, or a talented teacher, or even a great prophet. They will come to know, by the power of the Holy Ghost, that Jesus of Nazareth was and is the promised Messiah, the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, the Savior and Redeemer of all mankind.

33. With repetitive emphasis the Savior declares that people will gather to Christ and his gospel first, and then to the lands of their inheritance (see also 2 Nephi 6:11; 10:7; 3 Nephi 5:26).

34–38. In verses 32, 34–38 Jesus quotes from what we know as Isaiah 52, interspersing occasionally the name of the Father for the LORD (see commentary on 3 Nephi 16:5), showing that the latter-day gathering of Israel represents the glorious fulfillment of God’s word through the prophets concerning the destiny of his chosen people.

35. The Father hath made bare his holy arm in the eyes of all the nations] That is, the Lord has come to earth again; he has demonstrated his power, has cleansed the earth of sin; he has brought to pass that which no mortal institution could have produced—the gathering of the children of Jacob.

35. The Father and I are one] See commentary on 3 Nephi 28:10.

36. Put on thy strength, O Zion] Jehovah here “had reference to those whom God should call in the last days, who should hold the power of priesthood to bring again Zion, and the redemption of Israel [that is, the First Presidency of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints]; and to put on her strength is to put on the authority of the priesthood, which she, Zion, has a right to by lineage [see D&C 52:2; 86:8–10]; also to return to that power which she had lost” (D&C 113:8; see also Bruce R. McConkie, *New Witness*, p. 572).

36. There shall no more come into thee the uncircumcised and the unclean] Zion is a society of the pure in heart (D&C 97:21); those who dwell in Zion—at times both incident to and following the Second Coming—will be persons who love the Lord and strive to keep his commandments.

37. Loose thyself from the bands of thy neck] “The scattered remnants are exhorted to return to the Lord from whence they have fallen; which if they do, the promise of the Lord is that he will speak to them, or give them revelation. . . . The bands of her neck are the curses of God upon her, or the remnants of Israel in their scattered condition among the Gentiles.” (D&C 113:10.)

38. Israel’s preferred status is an “election of grace.” In that great day of gathering, the Millennium, men and women “shall be filled with the knowledge of the Lord, and shall see eye to eye, and

shall lift up their voice, and with the voice together sing this new song, saying: 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" (D&C 84:98-99).

39. My people shall know my name] Because the Millennium will be the day of the Second Comforter, all people shall "know the Lord"—shall know his gospel, shall know his name and speak by its authority (see Jeremiah 31:31-34; *Teachings*, pp. 149-50).

40-45. The Redeemer now returns to his quotation of what we know as Isaiah 52, again stressing that the gathering of Israel in the future will be the realization of the promises made to the fathers.

40. See *Commentary* 2:236-37.

41. Compare D&C 133:5.

The Coming Forth of the Book of Mormon Is a Sign of the Father's Work

3 Nephi 21:1-7

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;

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;

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;

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;

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;

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 bap-

tized in my name and know of the true points of my doctrine, that they may be numbered among my people, O house of Israel;

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.

1-7. The message of these seven verses is simple but direct and vital. The coming forth of the Book of Mormon signals the beginning of the Father's work—the work of the gathering of Israel—in the last days. In this sense the Book of Mormon is itself one of the signs of the times. The Savior here teaches that when the time comes that the Book of Mormon is brought to the remnants of Israel, such as the Lamanites, then they, the Lamanites, will know that the prophesied gathering is already under way.

2-3. Through the instrumentality of Joseph Smith, the Gentiles of the last days, those of Israelite descent who live in the nations of the Gentiles, shall learn of the lives and labors and ministries of the Nephite and Jaredite civilizations. Then the Gentiles, the Latter-day Saints, shall take the Book of Mormon and the message of the Restoration to the natural branches of Israel, the Lamanites and the Jews.

4. Set up as a free people by the power of the Father] America was born of God. She came to be because of divine intervention of the Almighty (see 1 Nephi 13:15-19).

6. The Gentiles . . . may repent and come unto me and be baptized in my name] The gospel message comes to those in the great Gentile nation of America. Those who accept it repent of their sins, receive the ordinances of salvation, and come to know "the true points of [Christ's] doctrine."

6. That they may be numbered among my people, O house of Israel] Compare 1 Nephi 14:2. How can this be? Virtually all of those who come into the restored Church are already of the blood of Israel; their patriarchal blessings so attest. Lineal descent, however, is only part of being counted worthy of the blessings of Israel (see Romans 9:6; 3 Nephi 30:2). Righteousness—which includes coming unto Christ and entering into covenant with him—is absolutely necessary before a person secures his own place in the house of Israel. Nephi taught that "as many of the Gentiles as will repent are the covenant people of the Lord; and as many of the Jews [or any other group which traces its lineage to Jacob] 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, italics added). We do not become covenant people until we enter the covenant gospel through receiving Christ, the mediator of that covenant.

Joseph Smith and the Great and Marvelous Work

3 Nephi 21:8–11

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.

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.

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.

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.

8. Kings shall shut their mouths] The work of the Restoration is in reality great and marvelous. It is, to those who take the time to view it properly and ponder its significance, breathtaking. The great ones of the earth shall yet rise up and acknowledge Joseph Smith and Mormonism as a preeminent blessing to the world. A number of prominent persons over the years have made such acknowledgments. 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, pp. 376–77.) It is reported that Count Leo Tolstoy, in speaking of the Mormons, said: "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 des-

tinged to become the greatest power the world has ever known.” (Thomas J. Yates, *Improvement Era*, February 1939, p. 94.)

9. See Habakkuk 1:5.

10. The life of my servant shall be in my hand] The Lord maintained a special watchcare over his great latter-day seer, Joseph Smith. The prayers of the ancients were in his behalf (Mormon 8:25). “Thy people shall never be turned against thee by the testimony of traitors,” the voice of the Lord whispered to Joseph in Liberty Jail. “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.)

10. They shall not hurt him, although he shall be marred because of them] Though cruel and wicked men would murder the head of this final dispensation, yet the work which he would set in motion, the marvelous work and a wonder—The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints—would roll forward to eventually fill the whole earth.

11. It is fascinating to notice how the Lord honors his servants. What was and is true of his own word—that those who reject it shall be cut off from among the people of the covenant—is also true of his servants. That is, to reject the words of Joseph Smith, the preeminent revealer of Christ in this final age of the earth’s history, is the same as rejecting the words of Christ himself. By extension, to reject the words of those prophets and seers who succeeded the Prophet Joseph is to qualify for like condemnation (see D&C 1:14).

The Unrepentant Gentiles to Be Destroyed

3 Nephi 21:12–21

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.

13. Their hand shall be lifted up upon their adversaries, and all their enemies shall be cut off.

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;

16. And I will cut off witchcrafts out of thy land, and thou shalt have no more soothsayers;

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.

12–21. See commentary on 3 Nephi 16:10–15.

13. All their enemies shall be cut off] See 3 Nephi 20:17, 20.

Establishment of the New Jerusalem

3 Nephi 21:22–29

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;

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.

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.

19. And it shall come to pass that all lyings, and deceivings, and envyings, and strifes, and priestcrafts, and whoredoms, shall be done away.

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.

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.

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.

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.

22. Numbered among . . . the remnant of Jacob] Much confusion ensues among some Latter-day Saints because of a narrow reading of certain passages in the Book of Mormon. The phrase “remnant of Jacob” is not confined wholly to the descendants of Lehi, nor should we limit the Lord or the prophetic word to that interpretation. The remnant of Jacob refers to all the house of Israel (see *Doctrines of Salvation* 2:247–51; *The Teachings of Spencer W. Kimball*, p. 600). See 1 Nephi 15:17, 20; 3 Nephi 29:8; Mormon 5:14 for examples of how the prophets seek to broaden our scope of the prophetic picture.

23. President Joseph Fielding Smith explained: “I think this [3 Nephi 21:23] is the stumbling block. This has been interpreted to mean that the remnant of Jacob are those of the descendants of Lehi, but there is nothing in the passage as I read it which should convey this thought. Remember that all through the Lord has been speaking of the remnant of Jacob or Israel, and of the great promises made to the gentiles who are on *this land* and in *all other lands*, if they will only come into the Church and be numbered with the house of Israel. Their privileges would be to assist in building the New Jerusalem, and if they refuse, then shall the punishments come upon them.

“I take it we, the members of the Church, most of us of the tribe of Ephraim, are of the remnant of Jacob. We know it to be the fact that the Lord called upon the descendants of *Ephraim to commence his work* in the earth in these last days. We know further that he has said that he set Ephraim, according to the promises of his birthright, at the head. Ephraim receives the ‘*richer blessings*,’ these blessings being those of presidency or *direction*. *The keys are with Ephraim*. It is Ephraim who is to be endowed with *power to bless and give to the other tribes, including the Lamanites, their blessings*. All the other tribes of Jacob, including the Lamanites, are to be crowned with glory in Zion *by the hands of Ephraim*.

“Now do the scriptures teach that Ephraim, after doing all of this is to abdicate, or relinquish his place, and give it to the Lamanites and then receive orders from this branch of the ‘remnant of Jacob’ in the building of the New Jerusalem? This certainly is inconsistent with the whole plan and with all that the Lord has revealed in the Doctrine and Covenants in relation to the establishment of Zion and the building of the New Jerusalem. . . .

“That the remnants of Joseph, found among the descendants of Lehi, will have *part* in this great work is certainly consistent, and the great work of this restoration, the building of the temple and

the City of Zion, or New Jerusalem, will fall to the lot of the descendants of Joseph, but it is *Ephraim* who *will stand at the head and direct the work.*" (*Doctrines of Salvation* 2:250–51, italics in original.)

23. The New Jerusalem] See commentary on 3 Nephi 20:22. Enoch beheld in vision a day when "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." The Lord adds by way of consolation, "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).

25. When the Lord Jesus returns in the clouds of heaven, 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; things on this orb shall be transfigured, lifted spiritually to a higher plane; the paradisiacal or terrestrial glory which existed in the days of Eden's splendor shall return. Jesus shall reign personally on the earth and will minister to his flock. More specifically, "Christ and the resurrected Saints will reign over the earth during the thousand years. They will not probably dwell upon the earth, but will visit it when they please, or when it is necessary to govern it." (*Teachings*, p. 268.)

26. And then shall the work of the Father commence at that day] This is a millennial setting. It is a setting in which wickedness and crime and vengeance are no longer on earth. It is an era when goodness and decency and integrity are the order of the day. In this setting, in this day, the work of the Father—the work of the gathering of Israel—shall commence. Commence? Has not the work of gathering, the manner in which individuals are baptized, confirmed, ordained, endowed, and sealed been in full operation since the days of Joseph Smith? Yes, the work of the Father shall *commence* in the great millennial day, in the sense that its magnitude shall be infinitely greater than anything we can even identify with today. All that has gone on in the past will seem to pale into insignificance when missionary work goes forward during the thousand years (compare 2 Nephi 30:7–15).

Jehovah spake through Jeremiah: "Behold, the days come, saith the Lord, that 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: and I will bring them again into their land that I gave unto their fathers." And then the Master described the manner in which missionaries would search out the people: "Behold, I will send for many fishers, saith the Lord, and they shall fish them; and after will I send for many hunters, and they shall hunt them from every mountain, and from every hill, and out of the holes of the rocks." (Jeremiah 16:14–16.)

26. At that day shall the work of the Father commence among . . . the tribes which have been lost] We have seen earlier through a modern revelation that the setting for the great work of the gathering, particularly of the ten lost tribes, is millennial (see D&C 133:23–34). Elder Bruce R. McConkie has written: "We do not say that occasional blood descendants of Reuben or Naphtali or others of the other tribal heads shall not return to their Palestinian Zion, or assemble in an American Zion, or find their way into the stakes of Zion in all nations, all before the Second Coming of Christ. Some shall no doubt return to Canaan as true believers and members of the true Church, with the intent and purpose of fulfilling the scriptures and building up the ancient cities of Israel. This may well happen in some small measure, and to it there can be no objection. Great movements have small beginnings, and floods that sweep forth from bursting dams are first forecast when small rivulets trickle from the pent-up reservoirs. But 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*, p. 323; see also *New Witness*, p. 521.)

27–28. Here is the summation of it all: Men and women gather first to Christ the Lord, accept his gospel, call upon the Father in his name, partake of the sanctifying powers of his atoning blood, and in process of time become perfect in him. Second, those who gather to Christ also gather to where the people of Christ congregate, to the lands of their inheritance. For some it is the United States. For millions it will be in such diverse places of gathering as Korea, Brazil, Germany, New Zealand, or ten thousand like places. For the time being, Latter-day Saints are asked to remain where they are, in those nations where they hold citizenship. In this manner the tent of Zion is expanded and strengthened as more and more stakes are driven into the earth. "The revealed word relative to the gathering to Independence and its environs will come through the prophet of God on earth. When it does come—with the consequent return of the saints to that Zion which shall not be moved out of its place—that call will not be for the saints in

general to assemble there. The return to Jackson County will be by delegates, as it were. Those whose services are needed there will assemble as appointed. The rest of Israel will remain in their appointed places." (Bruce R. McConkie, *Millennial Messiah*, p. 294.)

29. The final great gathering of Israel will be a systematic, organized effort on the part of the Church and kingdom of God. It is the work of the Lord Jehovah, and he will supervise it.

The Savior Quotes Isaiah on the Gathering of Israel

3 Nephi 22:1–17

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.

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;

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.

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.

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.

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.

7. For a small moment have I forsaken thee, but with great mercies will I gather thee.

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.

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.

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.

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.

12. And I will make thy windows of agates, and thy gates of carbuncles, and all thy borders of pleasant stones.

13. And all thy children shall be taught of the Lord; and great shall be the peace of thy children.

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.

15. Behold, they shall surely gather together against thee, not by me; whosoever shall gather together against thee shall fall for thy sake.

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.

1. Here the Lord quotes Isaiah, speaking of a great day of rejoicing in the future, a time when the scattered remnants of Israel will be gathered home to their Lord and to the lands of their inheritance, an era when those who have come into the faith from their scattered condition will outnumber those Israelites who had already found their way into the true Church.

1. O barren] Scattered Israel, those who for generations have lived without the light of the gospel, who have not been fruitful in the faith of their fathers. These are also identified in this passage as “the children of the desolate.”

1. The children of the married wife] The members of the Church.

2–3. The command here is to spread out, to make room for those who are to be gathered home. “For Zion must increase in beauty, and in holiness; her borders must be enlarged; her stakes must be strengthened; yea, verily I say unto you, Zion must arise and put on her beautiful garments” (D&C 82:14; compare Isaiah 33:20).

4. Scattered Israel’s unfaithfulness—her failure to forsake the ways of Babylon and receive the covenants of Zion—shall be forgiven; Israel’s God will remember her and the promises he made to her. The reproach of her youth, her spiritual sterility, shall be forgotten.

5–6. The Bridegroom, the Lord of Hosts, has returned to receive his bride, repentant Israel. The wanderings of Israel over the generations, her tendencies toward unfaithfulness, her inclination to go whoring after other gods (see Exodus 34:15–16), will be a thing of the past.

7–8. Jehovah explained: “Zion hath said: The Lord hath forsaken me, and my Lord hath forgotten me—but he will show that he hath not. For can a woman forget her sucking child, that she should not have compassion on the son of her womb? Yea, they may forget, yet will I not forget thee, O house of Israel. Behold, I have graven thee upon the palms of my hands.” (1 Nephi 21:14–16; Isaiah 49:14–16.)

9. Just as Jehovah swore with Enoch and Noah that he would never again destroy the earth by flood (Moses 7:50-51; JST, Genesis 9:19-25), so that same God swore that he would not forget his chosen people, that they should be the children of his bosom.

11-12. Zion, the city of God, the holy commonwealth that all of the ancient worthies sought for and but few found, will be built under God's direction. It will be adorned with the treasures of this earth—gold and silver and precious stones (compare Revelation 21:18-21)—as a monument to Jesus Christ, the King of Zion (see Moses 7:53).

13. **All thy children shall be taught of the Lord** Zion shall begin to be built before the time of Christ's second coming in glory. The Saints who are gathered in all nations shall live for a season in love and peace (despite the degenerative condition of the world) prior to the Millennium. Because of the goodness of those who have given themselves fully to the Lord and his cause, their meetings shall be pentecostal outpourings: the Spirit of God shall truly burn like a fire in their hearts. Prophecy and revelation and healings and angelic ministrations shall abound, for the faith of the Saints shall have rent the damning veil of unbelief and opened the heavens to the gifts and wonders enjoyed by the former-day Saints. And these spiritual experiences shall be multiplied immeasurably after the glorious return of the Master. When wickedness and enmity shall have been removed from this earth, there will be no end to the truths to be taught, the miracles to be performed, the outpourings to be enjoyed. Truly in that day "all thy children shall be taught of the Lord." All men and women who choose to do so shall grow in spiritual graces to the point where they are prepared to inherit that glory and power which is enjoyed by God their Father. In that day "the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the Lord, as the waters cover the sea" (2 Nephi 21:9; Isaiah 11:9).

14-17. Israel's pains, her travails, her persecutions by enemies shall come to an end. Those who oppose the chosen people shall be destroyed at the time of the Second Coming, and the posterity of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, the flock of the Lord Jehovah, shall be protected and guided by their Eternal Shepherd.

The Savior Proclaims: "Great Are the Words of Isaiah"

3 Nephi 23:1-3

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.

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.

3. And all things that he spake

have been and shall be, even according to the words which he spake.

1-3. A discussion on why the Nephites quoted Isaiah so extensively and, in addition, some keys to understanding Isaiah may be found in *Commentary* 1:273-77.

1. Ye ought to search these things] The Savior has just quoted Isaiah 54, so he is commanding us to search the writings of Isaiah. Elder Bruce R. McConkie wrote: "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?" ("Ten Keys to Understanding Isaiah," *Ensign*, October 1973, p. 78.)

1. Great are the words of Isaiah] It is one thing for the prophets or the Saints to quote the Lord—such is appropriate and necessary. It is quite another for the Lord to quote someone and then to command the Saints to search that prophet's writings! What greater recommendation could there be for us to begin a life-long search and study of Isaiah?

2. The great prophet Isaiah spoke on a multitude of subjects, but two in particular accent his oracles: the Messiah, and the destiny of Israel. Isaiah spoke at great length about the scattering of Israel, how the people of Israel had forsaken the religion of their fathers and thus been forsaken by the Master; and about the gathering of Israel, how in a future day Israel would return to the faith of Israel's youth and once again embrace the religion of Jehovah.

2. It must needs be that he must speak also to the Gentiles] An angel explained to Nephi that the Bible "is a record which is like unto the engravings which are upon the plates of brass, save there are not so many; nevertheless, *they contain the covenants of the Lord, which he hath made unto the house of Israel; wherefore, they are of great worth unto the Gentiles*" (1 Nephi 13:23, italics added). This can be viewed from at least a couple of perspectives. If we speak of Gentiles as pure Gentiles, meaning those who are not descended from the twelve tribes of Israel, then the prophetic oracles of Isaiah are of worth to the Gentiles because many of the

Gentiles will receive the gospel, be adopted into the house of Israel, and thereafter enjoy fellowship with the Saints. Their destiny is thus the same as those who had been born into Israel or who had been members of the Church previously.

If we speak of the Gentiles as those who are of Israel (either members of the Church or nonmembers) who live outside the land of Israel, that is, those who are Israelite by descent but Gentile by culture, then again the destiny of the Gentiles is inextricably tied to that of Israel. The gospel comes first to the Gentiles in the last days, and from them it goes to the Lamanites and the Jews. Thus members of the Church (“Gentiles” by Nephi’s classification—1 Nephi 13:3; 22:7; see also D&C 109:60) read the holy scriptures, particularly the writings of Isaiah, find meaning and direction, and come to identify clearly with his prophetic pronouncements regarding the house of Israel. In short, Isaiah’s words, though directed primarily to Israel, are of everlasting worth to all people, Jew and Gentile alike.

3. All things that he spake have been and shall be] Here the Savior essentially says to the Nephites: “You can trust Isaiah. Many of the things of which he prophesied have already taken place; many more shall yet come to pass. His word is true (Jacob 4:13; D&C 93:24) and faithful.” Jesus may also have intended to convey the idea that Isaiah’s words have dual or multiple fulfillment. “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.” (*Commentary* 1:282.)

Jesus Commands the Nephites to Add Missing Parts to Their Scriptural Records

3 Nephi 23:4–13

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.

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.

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.

7. And it came to pass that he said unto Nephi: Bring forth the record which ye have kept.

8. And when Nephi had brought forth the records, and laid them before him, he cast his eyes upon them and said:

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.

6–13. Samuel the Lamanite had described many signs which would attend the birth and the death of Christ. Among those that would come to pass at the time of his death was that many of the faithful who had died—from the days of Adam to the meridian of time—would rise from the grave at the time that Jesus did (see Helaman 14:25–26). That is, Samuel spoke of the initiation of the first resurrection. These things did indeed come to pass. Of the events in the Old World, Matthew recorded: “And the graves were opened; and many bodies of the saints which slept arose, and came out of the graves after his resurrection, and went into the holy city, and appeared unto many” (Matthew 27:52–53). The same miraculous events took place in the New World but, for some reason, the Nephites had failed to record them. Under direction from the Savior, Nephi now added this important information to the records. Presumably this was added to the large plates. Either Nephi recorded only the general statement or Mormon, the prophet-abridger of the large plates, chose not to include in his record the details of the resurrection of the American Saints.

Jesus Expounds All the Scriptures in One

3 Nephi 23:14

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.

14. Later, after the Messiah had quoted two chapters from the prophet Malachi (Malachi 3, 4; 3 Nephi 24, 25), he said: “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. 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; 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. . . . 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 26:2–4, 6.)

In one sense, to say that Jesus “expounded all scriptures in one” may mean that our Lord taught the people 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. Such a panoramic vision might not be unlike what was vouchsafed to Enoch (Moses 7), Moses (Moses 1), Nephi (1 Nephi 13–14), the brother of Jared (Ether 3), or Joseph Smith (D&C 76). Of his own experience in vision, Joseph Smith said: “Nothing could be more pleasing to the Saints upon the order of the Kingdom of the Lord, than the light which burst upon the world through the . . . vision [D&C 76]. Every law, every commandment, every promise, every truth, and every point touching the destiny of man, from Genesis to Revelation, where the purity of the Scriptures remains unsullied by the folly of men, go to show the perfection of the theory (of different degrees of glory in the future life) and witness the fact that the document is a transcript from the records of the eternal world.” (*Teachings*, p. 11.) On a later occasion, the Prophet 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” (*Teachings*, p. 305).

Expounding all the scriptures in one, which truly only the Master, the author of scripture could do, would also demonstrate clearly and unquestionably that all things bear witness of Christ, things in heaven and on earth, things past, things present, and things to come (see Moses 6:63). Such an experience would verify the testimony of the prophets that “none of the prophets have written, nor prophesied, save they have spoken concerning this Christ” (Jacob 7:11; see also Mosiah 13:33; 3 Nephi 20:24). All things before Christ pointed forward to his day and to the centrality of his majestic ministry. All things since his mortal experience point back to his entrance into the world as the meridian or central point in time, as well as toward that future day when he shall come with ten thousand times ten thousand of his angels to reign

as King of kings and Lord of lords. As the risen Lord walked on the road to Emmaus with two disciples, they failed to discern who it was that had joined them. He asked about their conversation. They then spoke concerning “Jesus of Nazareth, which was a prophet mighty in deed and word before God and all the people: and how the chief priests and our rulers delivered him to be condemned to death, and have crucified him. But we trusted that it had been he which should have redeemed Israel: and beside all this, to day is the third day since these things were done. Yea, and certain women also of our company made us astonished, which were early at the sepulchre; and when they found not his body, they came, saying, they had also seen a vision of angels, which said that he was alive. And certain of them which were with us went to the sepulchre, and found it even so as the women had said: but him they saw not. Then [Jesus] said unto them, O fools, and slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have spoken: ought not Christ to have suffered these things, and to enter into his glory? And *beginning at Moses and all the prophets, he expounded unto them in all the scriptures the things concerning himself.*” (Luke 24:19–27, italics added.)

Jesus Quotes the Father’s Words to Malachi

3 Nephi 24:1–18

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.

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.

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.

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.

6. For I am the Lord, I change

not; therefore ye sons of Jacob are not consumed.

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?

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 de-

lightsome land, saith the Lord of Hosts.

13. Your words have been stout against me, saith the Lord. Yet ye say: What have we spoken against thee?

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.

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.

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.

18. Then shall ye return and discern between the righteous and the wicked, between him that serveth God and him that serveth him not.

1. He commanded them that they should write the words which the Father had given unto Malachi] The Nephite records would not have included the teachings of the prophet Malachi. The prophecies of Malachi were given approximately 430 B.C., almost two centuries after Lehi left Jerusalem. These prophecies were considered so significant that the Father commanded that they be included in the Nephite scriptures. Inclusion of these words in the Book of Mormon serve as an additional witness of the truthfulness of the words of the prophets—"proving to the world that the holy scriptures are true, and that God does inspire men and call them to his holy work" (D&C 20:11). Just as the Savior, during his ministry among the Nephites, quoted from Isaiah and Malachi, so did Moroni quote from them as he counseled Joseph Smith concerning the work of the Restoration (see Joseph Smith—History 1:36–40). This demonstrates the significance of these prophecies about the work of the last days in prepa-

ration for the Savior's second coming. (For a more extensive discussion of Malachi's teachings in the Book of Mormon the reader should refer to Kent P. Jackson, "Teaching from the Words of the Prophets," in *Studies in Scripture* 8:196–207.)

1. I will send my messenger, and he shall prepare the way before me] This passage has multiple applications, as seen in its New Testament usage in reference to the forerunner mission of John the Baptist (see Matthew 11:10; Mark 1:2; JST, Matthew 17:10–14). It is clear, however, that Malachi is speaking specifically of the Second Coming, which would mean that one or more messengers (besides John the Baptist) is being referred to in this prophecy.

The scriptures are silent concerning the specific identity of the messenger of whom Malachi spoke. It is possible that Malachi was speaking collectively of the many messengers whom the Lord would send to prepare the earth for his second coming. These heavenly messengers would include Moses, Elias, Elijah (see D&C 110:11–16), John the Baptist, Peter, James, John (Joseph Smith—History 1:68–74), Michael, Gabriel, Raphael (D&C 128:21), and perhaps many others. In addition to heavenly messengers, Malachi may have been referring to mortal ministrants who would also be commissioned to lay the foundation of the Church and prepare the way for the Second Coming. Chief among these latter-day mortal messengers would be the Prophet Joseph Smith (D&C 1:17–30; see also Joseph Fielding Smith, *Doctrines of Salvation* 3:10–12).

It may also be that Malachi was referring to the restored gospel as the messenger that would prepare the way before the Lord in addition to mortal messengers, for the Lord declared through the Prophet Joseph Smith: "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, italics added).

3. He shall purify the sons of Levi . . . that they may offer unto the Lord an offering in righteousness] Prior to the Second Coming those descendants of Levi who are converted and purified by the gospel of Jesus Christ will participate in the "restoration of all things" by once again offering sacrifice (see D&C 13; 84:31; commentary on Alma 34:10 and on 3 Nephi 9:19).

5. I will be a swift witness] Indeed, the Lord is one who knows all things, including the thoughts and intents of all men and women (D&C 6:16). He will return in glory, pronounce a righteous judgment upon the ungodly, and cleanse the earth by fire.

7. Return unto me and I will return unto you] Malachi warns the wicked who continue to blatantly disregard the Lord's commands and who physically or spiritually stone the prophets,

and pleads with them to return unto the Lord. Distance from the Lord and his infinite goodness is self-imposed through wickedness; obedience causes the distance to narrow. He stands at the door (see Revelation 3:20), ever ready to enter; he stands ready to welcome us into his tender loving watchcare, but we must come unto him in faith and righteousness.

8-12. To Latter-day Saints this is one of the most familiar statements of the ancient prophet Malachi. It is significant to note that his teaching on the law of tithing was included in the Lord's recitation to the Nephites. We do not know whether the Nephites, prior to the coming of Jesus among them, lived a law of tithing in addition to the Mosaic sacrificial requirements, nor is it revealed how this passage was applied by them after the fulfillment of the law. Is it perhaps reasonable to assume that with the fulfillment of the law of Moses tithing became as much a part of their keeping of the eternal law of sacrifice as it is for us today—"a standing law unto them forever" (see D&C 119:3-4)? If such is the case, then the Lord's promise, cited by Malachi, concerning the "windows of heaven" was as relevant then as now.

13-17. Here the Lord contrasts those who think it is vanity and foolishness to serve God with those who have "feared the Lord" with their faith and obedience. The names of the righteous are recorded in the Lord's "book of remembrance," which is the Lamb's Book of Life (see Alma 5:57-58; D&C 76:68; 88:2; 132:19). They become the "jewels" of the Lord (see D&C 101:3) in that they inherit the kingdom of God, which is like a "pearl of great price" (see Matthew 13:44-46). In the fervent heat of the Second Coming (see D&C 101:25) the counterfeit jewels of the wicked will be melted away as so much dross, and the genuine jewels, who are the righteous, will shine forth with great glory for all the world to see.

The Coming of Elijah the Prophet

3 Nephi 25:1-6

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.

2. But unto you that fear my name, shall the Son of Righteous-

ness arise with healing in his wings; and ye shall go forth and grow up as calves in the stall.

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.

4. Remember ye the law of Moses, my servant, which I com-

manded unto him in Horeb for all Israel, with the statutes and judgments.

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.

1. All that do wickedly, shall be stubble] In preparation for the millennial reign of the King of kings and the ultimate celestialization of this world, all wickedness will be removed from the earth (see D&C 29:9; 64:24; 133:14). It is also 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 1 Nephi 22:14–19; see also commentary on 1 Nephi 22:15).

1. It shall leave them neither root nor branch] If there were no means whereby the keys of the priesthood could be operative—specifically the sealing power (see commentary on verses 5–6)—then the people of the earth, totally unprepared for the Second Advent, would be left without root (ancestry) and branch (posterity); that is, the family order would not have been established on earth.

2–3. The words of Malachi were particularly relevant to Jesus’ Nephite listeners, inasmuch as they had just come through a similar sequence of events—the destruction of the wicked (see 3 Nephi 9:3–12), the preservation of the “more righteous part” (see 3 Nephi 9:13), and the marvelous appearance of the Savior, who literally came with “healing in his wings” (3 Nephi 17:6–10). Using that as a backdrop, the Savior quoted Malachi’s prophecy concerning the last days and the Second Coming. The image of “healing in his wings” is the promise afforded the righteous in direct contrast to the curse that awaits the wicked, which he had previously cited.

2. Son of Righteousness] In the King James version of the Bible, this is translated as “sun of righteousness.” That the King James translators recognized this to be an allusion to the Lord is made clear by their use of the capital letter in *Sun*. Doctrinally and linguistically there is really no difference between the two different versions—they mean exactly the same thing.

2. Healing in his wings] That is, power in his extremities, the power that came from his having had nails driven through his hands and feet. In short, the Son of Righteousness came with the power of the Atonement.

2. Ye shall go forth and grow up as calves in the stall] The people of the Lord will be gathered to Christ and then to the lands of their inheritance during the great restoration of Israel in the Millennium.

3. Ye shall tread down the wicked] See commentary on 3 Nephi 16:10–15.

4. Remember ye the law of Moses] Upon a cursory reading of this verse one may wonder why Jesus is quoting this part of Malachi's prophecy in light of the fact that the law of Moses was fulfilled in Christ. The answer could possibly be that the Lord (and Malachi) were not referring to the Mosaic code and carnal commandments but rather to a different law that was given to Moses in Horeb—a higher law, even the fulness of the gospel that, because of Israel's rebelliousness and stiffneckedness, they never were able to fully receive (see JST, Exodus 34:1–2; D&C 84:23–25; *Teachings*, p. 323). If this is in fact the case, this reference is particularly relevant to both the Nephites and the latter-day Church. This seems to be the correct interpretation in light of the verses that follow and the essential role of Elijah in their having the fulness of gospel blessings.

5. I will send you Elijah the prophet] When Moroni appeared to Joseph Smith he quoted Malachi 4:5–6, but with significantly different wording from the way it appears in either the Bible or the Book of Mormon versions (see Joseph Smith—History 1:38–39; see also D&C 2). Moroni's version adds important doctrinal insights into this prophecy. For whatever reason Moroni changed the words, it is clear that the mission of Elijah is significant to the restoration of the everlasting gospel and that understanding that mission is essential to understanding and appreciating the fulness of the gospel. The Prophet Joseph taught extensively concerning Malachi's prophecy and the critical mission of Elijah. "Elijah was the last prophet that held the keys of the Priesthood, and who will, before the last dispensation, restore the authority and deliver the keys of the 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 is given, the ordinances could not be administered in righteousness." (*Teachings*, p. 172.) The fulfillment of this prophecy occurred on April 3, 1836, in the Kirtland Temple, when Elijah appeared to Joseph Smith and Oliver Cowdery and restored these keys to the earth in this final dispensation (see D&C 110:13–16).

6. And he shall turn the heart of the fathers to the children, and the heart of the children to their fathers] Moroni used the phrase "plant in the hearts of the children the promises made to the fathers." The Prophet Joseph clarified this by saying that the words *turn* or *plant* could be translated as *bind* or *seal*. "But what is the object of this important mission? or how is it to be fulfilled? The keys are to be delivered, the spirit of Elijah is to come, the Gospel to be established, the Saints of God gathered, Zion built

up, and the Saints to come up as saviors on Mount Zion. But how are they to become saviors on Mount Zion? By building their temples, erecting their baptismal fonts, and going forth and receiving all the ordinances, baptisms, confirmations, washings, anointings, ordinations, and sealing powers upon their heads, in behalf of all their progenitors who are dead, and redeem them that they may come forth in the first resurrection and be exalted to thrones of glory with them; and herein is the chain that binds the hearts of the fathers to the children, and the children to the fathers, which fulfills the mission of Elijah." (*Teachings*, p. 330.)

Elder Bruce R. McConkie further taught: "Elijah brought back the sealing power so that marriages and other ordinances that are bound on earth shall be eternally sealed in the heavens. Those married by this authority are husband and wife in this life, and they so remain in the life to come, if they are true and faithful in all things. . . . One of the grandest concepts in the whole plan of salvation is that these same blessings, given to worthy mortals whenever the fulness of the gospel is on earth, are also available to all those who have died without a knowledge of the gospel but who would have received it with all their hearts had it been offered to them while they dwelt in the flesh. This is what is involved in the promise that the Lord would reveal unto us 'the Priesthood, by the hand of Elijah the prophet, before the coming of the great and dreadful day of the Lord.' By restoring the sealing keys, Elijah revealed the greatest use to which the priesthood may be put by mortals on earth." (*New Witness*, p. 508.)

Generally speaking, then, we are prone to think of the coming of Elijah as essential to the great genealogical (family history) work which results in temple work for the dead. But there is more, as Elder McConkie (above) suggested, and this pertains to the living. In Moroni's words, because Elijah came, the hearts of the children (we who now live in mortality) turn to the fathers (Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob—see D&C 27:10; 98:32). That is to say, because Elijah came to earth and restored the keys of sealing and also the fulness of the blessings of the priesthood, there comes into our hearts a desire to have all of the blessings of the ancient fathers—the blessings of the gospel, the priesthood, and eternal life (Abraham 2:8–11). There is only one place on earth wherein those blessings may be obtained, and that is in temples of the Lord, through the ordinance of celestial marriage. We then want the same for our children. And, by extension, we want all of those same blessings for our more immediate fathers, and thus the need for genealogical research and temple work for the dead.

Though there is no direct mention of celestial marriage in the Book of Mormon, it is inconceivable that such blessings were not available to the people who were worthy of them (see commentary

on 4 Nephi 1:11). We would assume, also, that inasmuch as the fulness of the gospel (and the fulness of gospel ordinances) was had by the Nephites, baptisms for the dead were practiced, just as they were in the Old World (see 1 Corinthians 15:29). The record is, however, silent on the matter.

6. Lest I come and smite the earth with a curse] Moroni used the following language: “If it were not so [if Elijah had not come], the whole earth would be utterly wasted at [Christ’s] coming.” Why would this be the case? “Because the earth would not have accomplished its foreordained purposes, to establish on its face a family system patterned after the order of heaven. If there were no binding and sealing powers whereby families could be cemented forever, then the earth would never ‘answer the end of its creation’ (D&C 49:16). It would be wasted and cursed, for all men would be forever without root or branch.” (Robert L. Millet and Joseph Fielding McConkie, *The Life Beyond*, pp. 97–98.)

Christ Continues to Teach and Minister to the Multitude

3 Nephi 26:1–13

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.

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.

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;

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.

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.

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.

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.

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.

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.

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.

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.

1–7. Jesus informed the Nephite audience that the Father had commanded him to give them those prophecies that were not contained in their scriptures “that they should be given unto future generations.” Using the words of Isaiah and Malachi as his preface, the Savior then proceeded to expound “all things” to the people—from the beginning through the winding-up scenes of the world’s mortal existence. Mormon included an abridged account or a “lesser part” of Jesus’ teachings, which we have in the Book of Mormon. The Savior’s teachings were so extensive that “a hundredth part” of them could not even be recorded in the Book of Mormon (compare Words of Mormon 1:5; 3 Nephi 5:8–11). This statement of Mormon’s reminds us that what we have is merely an abridgment of many volumes of records kept throughout Nephite history.

4. Judged of their works] John the Revelator saw mankind “judged out of those things which were written in the books, according to their works” (see Revelation 20:12–13). While there may be many books—both earthly and heavenly in nature—involved in the judgment process, the Book of Mormon seems to emphasize the primacy of specific books as standards of judgment. The Lord told Nephi that out of the books He commanded that men should write—in other words, the scriptures—“I will judge the world, every man according to their works, according to that which is written” (see 2 Nephi 29:11–14). This and other passages testify of the relationship between the scriptures and the works of each person. We are judged by our works, “according to that which is written,” by measuring how well our lives—our thoughts, words, and deeds—correspond to those principles, laws, and ordinances that the Lord has revealed in the scriptures. Thus the scriptures become the standard of judgment of which all mankind will be “judged according to their works.”

Even though there are perhaps billions of people who have never been exposed to or given the opportunity to learn from the scriptures in mortality, in the spirit world they all will be taught the “everlasting gospel” as contained in the holy scriptures. Hence all people will have full opportunity to learn of and either accept or reject the laws, principles, ordinances, and commandments that the Lord has revealed to man and commanded to be written in the books. It is in this ultimate sense that the scriptures become the books out of which mankind will be judged, both here and hereafter, “according to their works.” Ultimately all people—their deeds, desires, thoughts, actions, and so forth—will be judged or balanced against the standards that are recorded in the scriptures—the “standard works.”

5. If they be good, to the resurrection of everlasting life]

Jesus spoke of two resurrections, both among the Nephites and also among the Jews (compare John 5:25–29). The first resurrection began with his resurrection and will continue throughout the Millennium until all celestial and terrestrial persons are resurrected (see D&C 29:13; 43:18; 76:50–70; 88:97–98). Even within this first resurrection there is a sequence. Some refer to this as “the morning of the first resurrection” and “the afternoon” of the same. The scriptures speak in terms of trumps being sounded that call forth the resurrected celestial Saints, and then another trump being sounded that calls forth those of a terrestrial nature (D&C 88:94–99).

At the end of the Millennium, the last or second resurrection—the resurrection of damnation (see D&C 88:100–101)—begins, encompassing those who inherit a telestial glory (see D&C 76:81–112). This culminates with the resurrection of the sons of perdition, who “remain filthy still” (see D&C 88:102; Alma 12:17–18; see also *Millennial Messiah*, chapter 51).

8–11. Mormon informs us that he had been going to include in his record all of the marvelous teachings the Savior gave to the multitude that are recorded in the larger library of Nephite records known as the large plates of Nephi, but that he was forbidden of the Lord. “I will try the faith of my people,” the Lord said. This is not some cruel game that God plays with mankind. It is, rather, an act of love and mercy for us. For our own sake—our spiritual development and salvation—the Savior expects us to develop faith and righteousness by trusting in and following the teachings of the portions of his word that he has already revealed—as in our standard works and in the words of prophets and Apostles of our dispensation. He desires us to study, ponder, pray about, and heed those teachings we have so that we will desire more and be spiritually prepared to have “greater things” manifest to us.

Without such spiritual readiness for these “greater things” we

would be under great condemnation because we could not abide that which he has already revealed. “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,” Elder Neal A. Maxwell declared. “However, we must first feast worthily upon that which we already have!” (CR, October 1986, p. 70.) The Savior, like Mormon, desires that we may learn from and rejoice in those exquisite teachings that he gave to the Nephites, but he also knows that receiving something without effort will mean nothing. Only as we are prepared and “hungering and thirsting” after those words, having gleaned all we can from what we have, will those things be revealed and we too will be able to bask in their radiating light. “For I [God] will give unto the faithful line upon line, precept upon precept; and I will try you and prove you herewith” (D&C 98:12).

13. That is, the Savior seems to have ministered to them on a regular basis for three days, and then visited them from time to time as need and circumstance warranted.

Mouths of Nephite Children Are Opened and They Testify of Marvelous Things

3 Nephi 26:14–16

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.

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—

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.

14–16. After teaching and expounding to the multitude the great doctrines of the kingdom, Jesus ministered to and blessed the children. So great was the spiritual outpouring, and so great his love and compassion for the little children, that “he did loose their tongues” and they uttered marvelous things that Mormon

described as “even greater than [Jesus] had revealed unto the people.” One can scarcely imagine such deeply spiritual and profound things being uttered by little children. We are left to conjecture about their messages. Was the veil parted to allow them to speak of life in the first estate? Did they discourse upon life among the Gods in a celestial environment? Did they reveal doctrinal mysteries which today’s world could not receive? Such an event epitomizes that of which the prophet Joel prophesied, albeit of a later time: “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.)

16. The things which they did utter were forbidden that there should not any man write them] This was such a sacred manifestation, the content of these inspired utterances were of such a nature, that mortal language could not adequately capture the true meaning and intent. In this sense, things of the Spirit are “unspeakable” (compare 3 Nephi 17:15–18).

The Twelve Nephite Apostles Minister to the Church

3 Nephi 26:17–21

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.

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.

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.

17–21. Using the priesthood authority they had received and following the example of the Master, the Nephite Apostles (and others) went forth ministering to the Church, setting it in order, and performing the essential ordinances for those who were being converted. This period of time was marked with great spiritual manifestations and remarkable peace and harmony among the Church of Christ.

17. To baptize and to teach as many as did come] We usually speak of the conversion process in terms of teaching and then baptizing. This is a correct part of the sequence, but it also appears that here the teaching properly continued even after the ordinances had been performed. One of the primary missions of the

Church is the “perfecting of the Saints.” This mission is carried out through continual instruction, fellowshiping, and ministering to those who have already been taught and baptized. Some truths are only grasped and appreciated after the conferral of the gift of the Holy Ghost.

18. Many of them saw and heard unspeakable things, which were not lawful to be written] Compare Helaman 5:44; 3 Nephi 26:9–11; 28:13.

19. And they taught, and did minister one to another] It was not just the twelve disciples who did the ministering and teaching. It is the responsibility and blessing given to each member of the Church to “teach one another the doctrine of the kingdom” (see D&C 88:77–80). We learn and are edified not just from being taught but also from having to study, ponder, pray, prepare, and teach one another. We are strengthened and fellowshiped not just from being served and succored but also from serving and ministering to the needs of one another. The spiritual blessings of the gospel transform lives as much from being shared as from being received.

19. They had all things common among them, every man dealing justly, one with another] This phrase speaks as much of the righteousness and attitudes of these Nephite Saints as it does of any temporal, financial practice. They were filled with and motivated by that Spirit which “leadeth to do good—yea, to do justly, to walk humbly, to judge righteously” (D&C 11:12). Having “all things common” under some form of consecration means little in and of itself, and will always fail, unless the attitudes of “dealing justly” and of adhering to principles of righteousness underlie the temporal implementation of the law of consecration. Because of the spiritual manifestations they had experienced, because their hearts had been cleansed by the power of the Holy Ghost, the practice of having all things in common—being united, as was the city of Enoch, in the bonds of consecration and stewardship—became a natural byproduct. Because they were filled with the pure love of Christ and had saintly compassion for their fellowmen, because they honestly sought for what was best for each person, “every man seeking the interest of his neighbor, and doing all things with an eye single to the glory of God” (D&C 82:19; compare Jacob 2:16–19; Mosiah 18:18–29; Alma 1:27–30; 16:16), they lived in peace and harmony. These attitudes and attributes, and the temporal blessings that flowed therefrom, thus became the foundation for the Zion society and prosperity that later prevailed (see 4 Nephi 1:2–3, 13–18).

21. They . . . were called the Church of Christ] Another word for church could be *fold* or even *family*. By taking the name of Christ upon us (see Mosiah 5:8) through his gospel and ordinances

(see 3 Nephi 11:32–38) we come into the “fold of God” (see Mosiah 18:8), and by the power of the Holy Ghost we are born again and become members of his family (see Mosiah 5:7). All of these requirements ensure membership in the earthly Church of Christ, but when coupled with continued faithfulness and valiance in the testimony of Jesus, as well as with the ordinances of exaltation found in temples, we become members of the heavenly Church of Christ—the Church of the Firstborn (see D&C 76:54; see also 84:34).

Jesus Instructs the Nephite Twelve on the Name of the Church

3 Nephi 27:1–12

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.

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.

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;

6. And whoso taketh upon him my name, and endureth to the end, the same shall be saved at the last day.

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.

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.

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;

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.

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.

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.

1–4. Many of the great revelations in the scriptures came as a result of questions prophets have pondered in regard to difficult issues. Those recorded in this chapter, one of the most significant in 3 Nephi, came in that way. The Twelve were seeking the answer from the Lord as to what the new Church he had established among them should be called. There had been disputations among the people concerning this matter. We do not know the specific nature of these disputations, but we can assume that they were serious enough that the disciples were deeply troubled by the matter and had come before the Lord in “mighty prayer and fasting” to petition him for clarification. As they had wrestled with the issue, pondered deeply upon it, and come to no resolution of the problem, they then were spiritually prepared to turn to the Lord for guidance and direction beyond their own reasoning. This is the process by which revelation comes (see D&C 9:8–9).

4–5. It appears that the Savior was somewhat surprised that there should even be any questions concerning this matter. He taught them that there would be no disputations among the Church members if they but understood the scriptures. In the modern Church too we often find members disputing over Church practices, programs, and even doctrines. Such murmuring and contention could be eliminated by a deeper understanding of the scriptures and of the eternal principles of the gospel that underlie those Church practices. Just as the Savior taught the disciples that the answer to their questions was found in the scriptures, so too have heavenly messengers appeared in our dispensation in response to prophetic pleadings and ponderings and have recited scriptures that open mortal understanding.

President Harold B. Lee often taught and exemplified that the scriptures can provide answers to all of life’s difficult questions. “I say that we need to teach our people to find their answers in the scriptures,” President Lee declared. “If only each of us would be wise enough to say that we aren’t able to answer any question unless we can find a doctrinal answer in the scriptures! And if we hear someone teaching something that is contrary to what is in the scriptures, each of us may know whether the things spoken are false—it is as simple as that. But the unfortunate thing is that so many of us are not reading the scriptures. We do not know what is in them, and therefore we speculate about the things that we ought to have found in the scriptures themselves. I think that

therein is one of our biggest dangers of today." ("Find the Answers in the Scriptures," *Ensign*, December 1972, p. 3.)

5. Ye must take upon you the name of Christ] See Mosiah 5:8; commentary on 3 Nephi 26:21.

6. Whoso taketh upon him my name, and endureth to the end, the same shall be saved at the last day] See 2 Nephi 31:10–20; *Commentary* 1:365–68; Alma 32:13; see also commentary on 3 Nephi 15:9; D&C 14:7.

7–8. The Lord had previously taught the people, both personally and by his prophets, that they should do all things in his name (see Moses 1:17; 5:8; 2 Nephi 25:19; see also Robert L. Millet and Joseph Fielding McConkie, *In His Holy Name*, pp. 36–47). With that as the foundation, Jesus now taught that it is not only reasonable but imperative that the Church be called after him. If it be called after a man, then it is a man's church, but there is no salvation in a man's church or in mortal works (see Russell M. Nelson, "'Thus Shall My Church Be Called,'" *Ensign*, May 1990, pp. 16–18).

The name is only one of the attributes of which Jesus spoke concerning his "only true and living church upon the face of the whole earth" (D&C 1:30). There are many churches that have the name of Jesus Christ or a derivative in their official title, but that alone does not mean they are the kingdom of God on earth. The Savior said that it becomes his Church "if it be called in my name" and also is "built upon my gospel." The name alone is insufficient. The true church of Jesus Christ will undoubtedly bear his holy name, but it also must be built upon, preach, and practice his gospel as he has conveyed it to the earth both through his prophets and through his own personal ministry. These verses concerning the name of the Church serve as a preface to Jesus' subsequent teachings about the gospel upon which the Church must be built.

9–12. The true Church of Jesus Christ is built upon the true gospel, and as a result will bring forth good fruits (compare Matthew 7:20). Gifts of the Spirit and the blessings of authorized priesthood ministrations are poured out by God upon the Church as a blessing to the Saints and as sign of his acceptance of it. A church that is not built upon the Lord's true gospel may have temporary success, produce some good works, and possess some spiritual fruits, given through the grace of God to bless his children and to lead them to the truths and salvation that are available only through his true church and kingdom. Ultimately, however, those churches and organizations that are not built upon Christ's gospel and are without his authorization and approval—that however well intentioned are in doctrinal error—overthrown by the power of God. There is but one way to the Father, and that is through Christ and his gospel. The works of the wicked and the labors of

man are not acceptable to God outside of the parameters of the gospel because “a man being evil cannot do that which is good; for if he offereth a gift, or prayeth unto God . . . and not with real intent of heart . . . it profiteth him nothing, for God receiveth none such” (Moroni 7:6, 9).

11. They have joy in their works for a season] Compare D&C 22:2–3. God allows even the wicked to take temporary pleasure in their works of wickedness and their worldly life-styles, but he knows that ultimately wickedness cannot and will not produce lasting happiness and eternal joy. Some may experience a degree of happiness in following worldly standards because their level of understanding and behavior harmonizes with those standards. But as their understanding of the ideals of Christlike living is increased—as it will be for all mankind as they are taught the gospel in this life or the next—and when all knees bow in sacred deference to Christ, the discrepancy between their mortal behavior and the gospel ideals will be so great as to destroy their mortal, short-lived pleasure in their wicked works (see Job 2:5; Helaman 13:36–38; Mormon 2:13). A fulness of joy—lasting eternal happiness—can be obtained only through obedience to those principles of the gospel that leads “the man of Christ in a strait and narrow course across that everlasting gulf of misery” (Helaman 3:29) to that eternal life which yields the light of God’s full joy (see D&C 93:33–34; 138:15–17).

Jesus Teaches of His Mission and Atonement and Explains the Gospel

3 Nephi 27:13–22

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.

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—

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.

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.

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.

20. Now this is the command-

ment: 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.

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;

22. Therefore, if ye do these things blessed are ye, for ye shall be lifted up at the last day.

13–15. In these verses we receive one of the most significant contributions to our understanding of what constitutes the gospel of Jesus Christ. Earlier the Lord had declared those principles that comprise his gospel (see 3 Nephi 11:32–39). These verses, however, give life and meaning to those principles. The gospel is truly the life, mission, teachings, atoning sacrifice, death, and resurrection of Christ (compare to D&C 76:40–42). The “good news” and “glad tidings” of the gospel are found in Christ—in his atonement—not just in his teachings. 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. . . . It is the foundation upon which all truth rests, and all things grow out of it and come because of it. Indeed, the atonement is the gospel.” (*Mormon Doctrine*, p. 60.)

The principles of the gospel—those things which allow us to partake of the powers of the atoning sacrifice—perhaps elucidated here in 3 Nephi 27 more than in any other passage of scripture, include faith, repentance, baptism, the reception of the Holy Ghost, enduring to the end, resurrection, and eternal judgment (see *Teachings*, p. 149).

14. That I might draw all men unto me] If Jesus had not met the demands of justice and provided mercy through his atonement, the principles of faith, repentance, baptism, and so forth, would have had no power to draw us to him and back to the Father. Because he has fulfilled the Father’s will, Christ has the power to draw us—to entice or invite us—to those principles and powers that enable us to return to the Father. Eternal life is not imposed upon us against our will but is held out to us as a spiritual enticement and blessing. We accept the Atonement and obtain the

blessing of eternal life only through our own agency. We are drawn unto Christ, not dragged.

14. Even so should men be lifted up by the Father, to stand before me, to be judged of their works] Through the atonement of Jesus Christ, the effects of the fall of Adam are swallowed up in victory. Because Jesus was “lifted up” upon the cross and resurrected by the power of God, all mankind will be “lifted up”—resurrected and brought back into the presence of God to be judged of their works. The “lifting up” of all mankind, spoken of here and also in verse 15, refers to the unconditional and universal redemption from the Fall; in this sense, all men and women are delivered, at least temporarily, from spiritual death, inasmuch as they will be brought before God to be judged (see commentary on Helaman 14:15–18).

15. For this cause have I been lifted up] It is obvious from the context of verses 14 and 15 that the meaning of Jesus’ being “lifted up” is the image of him being crucified and “lifted up” on the cross. It may be, however, that it involves more than this. In order to fulfill the Atonement and “draw all men” unto him, it was requisite that he be “lifted up” as a light to the world—that his example and teachings might draw men to him, and he be lifted up into heaven as a glorified God who has fulfilled the commandment given him of the Father. Each of these images—his perfect example, his death on the cross, and his glorified ascension into heaven—helps us to see how his being lifted up brings us to him and lifts us up, not only to eternal life in the world to come but to a more abundant life in this mortal sphere (see John 10:10).

16–22. In these verses the Savior reiterates those principles and ordinances of the gospel with which we must comply in order to fully embrace and benefit from the Atonement; namely, faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, repentance, baptism by water and by the Spirit, enduring to the end, resurrection, and eternal judgment. Without observing these vital elements of the gospel one cannot be held guiltless and will not be found spiritually spotless before the Lord. “Viewed from our mortal position,” wrote Elder Bruce R. McConkie, “the gospel is all that is required to take us back to the Eternal Presence, there to be crowned with glory and honor, immortality and eternal life. To gain these greatest of all rewards, two things are required. The first is the atonement by which all men are raised in immortality, with those who believe and obey ascending also unto eternal life. This atoning sacrifice was the work of our Blessed Lord, and he has done his work. The second requisite is obedience on our part to the laws and ordinances of the gospel. Thus the gospel is, in effect, the atonement. But the gospel is also all of the laws, principles, doctrines, rites, ordinances, acts, powers, authorities, and keys needed to save and exalt fallen man in the

highest heaven hereafter." (*New Witness*, p. 134.)

17. He that endureth not unto the end, the same is he that is also hewn down and cast into the fire] In this context, those who do not endure to the end are those who do not continually exercise faith in the name of Christ, who refuse to obey his commandments, and who will not demonstrate their love for their fellowmen through service, compassion, and forgiveness. The eternal life-producing endurance requires an enduring change of heart and life that comes only through the Atonement. Without such, a person can neither endure to the end nor attain exaltation in our Father's kingdom (see 2 Nephi 31:20).

19. No unclean thing can enter into his kingdom] See 1 Nephi 15:34; Alma 7:21; 11:37; 40:26; Helaman 8:25.

19. Nothing entereth into his rest save it be those who have washed their garments in my blood] The "rest of the Lord" to which Jesus is referring in this verse undoubtedly is ultimate exaltation in the presence of God (see D&C 84:24), but other definitions of the phrase "rest of the Lord" would likewise apply. The rest of the Lord could be the earthly peace and spiritual rest from the tumult and turmoil of the soul. The righteous, meaning those whose garments have been made white in Christ's blood, also enter the rest of the Lord at death when they enter paradise (see Alma 40:12; 60:13). The cleansing power of the Atonement also enables a person to enter into the personal presence of the Savior, which too is the rest of the Lord (see JST, Exodus 34:1–2; D&C 67:10; 88:68).

It is interesting to note the symbols used here by the Savior to teach the sanctifying, cleansing power of the infinite and eternal sacrifice of the Lamb of God. How do sin-stained garments become pure white when immersed in the blood of Christ? Mortal blood is a staining agent itself, but somehow, spiritually speaking, the blood spilled by a God in our behalf becomes the only true cleansing agent. We cannot cleanse our sin-stained lives by mere washing in the strong detergent of self-discipline. It requires a celestial cleanser, one which we cannot purchase for ourselves but is purchased for us by the grace of God—the blood of Christ.

20. That ye may be sanctified by the reception of the Holy Ghost] Sanctification is the process by which the Saints of God are cleansed from the effects of sin, spiritually renewed, and prepared to enter into the presence of God. The Atonement makes this process possible, and the Holy Ghost is the vehicle or means by which it is fulfilled. The Spirit is the means by which human hearts are made pure before God, whereby dross and iniquity are burned out of the soul as if by fire, and by which the Lord can come to live in us (see Alma 13:10–12; Helaman 3:35; Galatians 2:20).

21. That which ye have seen me do even that shall ye

do] Being one with Christ through faith and righteousness inevitably leads to oneness in action—thinking his thoughts, speaking his words, performing his works. Submission to God and “yielding our hearts” to him will bring this kind of obedience. Doing the works of Christ does not necessarily mean that we will perform those miracles or utter those prophecies that are so great that they cannot be recorded (see 3 Nephi 17:16–17), but it means that we can live our lives so that we can enjoy the companionship of the Spirit, participate in miracles as and when appropriate, and teach with power and authority in his service. Becoming Christlike in thought and deed does not occur suddenly or miraculously but is a continual process. “There is no one greater thing that man can do and then do no more and obtain salvation,” taught Elder B. H. Roberts. “It is by resisting a temptation today, overcoming a weakness tomorrow, forsaking evil associations the next day, and thus day by day, month after month, year after year, pruning, restraining and weeding out that which is evil in the disposition, that the character is purged of its imperfections. . . .

“Nor is it enough that one get rid of evil. He must do good. . . . He must cultivate noble sentiments by performing noble deeds—not great ones, necessarily, for opportunity to do what the world esteems great things comes but seldom to men in the ordinary walks of life; but noble deeds may be done every day; and every such deed performed with an eye single to the glory of God, draws one that much nearer into harmony with Deity.” (*The Gospel and Man’s Relationship to Deity*, pp. 197–98.)

Out of the Books Shall Men Be Judged

3 Nephi 27:23–33

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.

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.

26. And behold, all things are written by the Father; therefore out of the books which shall be

written shall the world be judged.

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.

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.

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.

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.

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.

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.

23–27. The Savior gives the Nephites the commandment to record all of the teachings and spiritual experiences associated with his ministry among them (except those things he had previously forbidden to be recorded). This record-keeping commandment was not given merely so that a historical account of this great event could be preserved, but in order to judge the world out of the scriptures that he commanded to be written (see 2 Nephi 29:11–14; see also commentary on 3 Nephi 26:4).

26. All things are written by the Father] Mankind is judged out of the books that the Father has caused to be written—both earthly and heavenly records. We do not know precisely what role the various types of records kept on earth or in heaven will play in the final judgment. As we have already discussed, the scriptures are the primary book or standard of judgment against which we are judged “according to our works.” What record has the Father caused to be written that contains our works? Some have the mistaken notion that we are followed around by some guardian angel with a large notebook who diligently keeps track of all our deeds. We often view it as some type of spiritual ledger, with our assets of righteousness in one column and our liabilities of wickedness in the other. In reality, the record of our deeds which the Father has caused to be written is kept within our own souls. “My understanding of the thing is that God has made each man a register within himself,” taught President John Taylor, “and each man can read his own register, so far as he enjoys his perfect faculties. . . .

“The spirit lives where the record of his deeds is kept—that does not die—man cannot kill it; there is no decay associated with

it, and it still retains in all its vividness the remembrance of that which transpired before the separation by death of the body and the ever-living spirit. . . . 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. . . . That record will stare him in the face, he tells the story himself, and bears witness against himself. . . . When we get into the eternal world, into the presence of God our Heavenly Father, his eye can penetrate every one of us, and our own record of our lives here shall develop all.” (JD 11:77–79.)

Elder Bruce R. McConkie also confirmed this view when he wrote: “The book of life is the record of the acts of men as such record is written in their own bodies. It is the record engraven on the very bones, sinews, and flesh of the mortal body. That is, every thought, word, and deed has an effect on the human body; all these leave their marks, marks which can be read by Him who is Eternal as easily as the words in a book can be read.

“By obedience to telestial law men obtain telestial bodies; terrestrial law leads to terrestrial bodies; and conformity to celestial law—because this law includes the sanctifying power of the Holy Ghost—results in the creation of a body which is clean, pure, and spotless, a celestial body. . . . Men’s bodies will show what law they have lived.” (*Mormon Doctrine*, p. 97; see also 1 Corinthians 15:40–42; Alma 11:43; 12:14.)

This record of our deeds, kept within our own souls, will not only show what we have done, but what we are. Appearing as we really are—our lives in comparison to the words the Father commanded to be recorded in the scriptures—will provide the means by which the Father can judge us out of the books “according to our works.”

27. Ye shall be judges of this people] See commentary on 3 Nephi 14:1–5. The Nephite Twelve along with Jesus’ original Twelve, probably coupled with all who have held keys of the priesthood, will be involved in judging the righteous of the house of Israel. As “judges in Israel” they will be voices of advocacy for those who have lived the gospel, borne the cross of Christ in their daily lives, and endured in faith to the end. “The reality is that there will be a whole hierarchy of judges who, under Christ, shall judge the righteous,” wrote Elder Bruce R. McConkie. “He alone shall issue the decrees of damnation for the wicked.” (*Millennial Messiah*, p. 520; see also Matthew 19:28; Revelation 20:4; D&C 29:12.) How these Nephite Twelve and all the others will be involved in the judging of the righteous has not been fully revealed.

27. Even as I am] See commentary on 3 Nephi 12:48. The specific context for this phrase is the matter of judgment: the Lord

is directing the Twelve to judge as he would judge. By extension, of course, the doctrine is perfectly appropriate that we should be even as he is. He is our guide. He is our model. He is our exemplar. True Saints of God settle for nothing less as a standard for their teachings or their actions. He is, as Joseph Smith taught, the prototype of a saved being (Lectures on Faith 7:16).

30–33. Closing his ministry among them, Jesus speaks of the joy that he has in the righteousness of the Nephites and declares that of those there present—“this generation”—none would fall away from the gospel truths he has given them. He then proceeds to prophesy of a fourth generation that will fall away into apostasy (see 4 Nephi 1). He closes his teaching with a caution to be watchful and to continue in the path that they have entered—a narrow, less travelled road in contrast to the broad highway of wickedness that leads to destruction.

32. Even as was the son of perdition] The question frequently arises regarding the eternal status of Judas Iscariot. Was he a son of perdition as we understand that title? President Joseph F. Smith observed: “Now, if Judas really had known God’s power, and had partaken thereof, and did actually ‘deny the truth’ and ‘defy’ that power, ‘having denied the Holy Ghost after he had received it,’ and also ‘denied the Only Begotten,’ after God had ‘revealed him’ unto him, then there can be no doubt that he ‘will die the second death.’”

“That Judas did partake of all this knowledge—that these great truths had been revealed to him—that he had received the Holy Spirit by the gift of God, and was therefore qualified to commit the unpardonable sin, is not at all clear to me. To my mind it strongly appears that not one of the disciples possessed sufficient light, knowledge nor wisdom, at the time of the crucifixion, for either exaltation or condemnation; for it was afterward that their minds were opened to understand the scriptures, and that they were endowed with power from on high; without which they were only children in knowledge, in comparison to what they afterwards become under the influence of the Spirit.” (*Gospel Doctrine*, p. 433, see also p. 20.) Elder Bruce R. McConkie has likewise written: “Jesus’ ministry where the Twelve are concerned has succeeded. He has cared for the spiritual well-being of the souls entrusted to him. Only Judas has been lost; and even he, though a son or follower of Satan, who is perdition, as we have heretofore seen, is probably not a son of perdition in the sense of eternal damnation.” (*Mortal Messiah* 4:112–13; see also pp. 198, 202.)

32. They will sell me for silver and for gold] This is a strong image connoting idolatry—the worship of man-made gods in lieu of the God of Israel. These trample under their feet the things of God and go “whoring” (see Exodus 34:15–16) after other

things of the world that cannot satisfy the spiritual hunger within the soul and does not produce the fulness of joy of which the Savior just spoke. In a literal sense Judas sold Christ for thirty pieces of silver, but in a spiritual sense we “sell” Christ and betray him any time the things of the world are more important to us than the things of God.

33. Enter ye in at the strait gate] See commentary on 3 Nephi 14:13–14.

33. Until the night cometh, wherein no man can work] See commentary on Alma 34:33.

Three Nephite Apostles Are Translated

3 Nephi 28:1–40

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?

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.

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.

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.

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.

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;

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.

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.

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;

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.

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.

17. And now, whether they were mortal or immortal, from the day of their transfiguration, I know not;

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.

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.

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.

26. But behold, I have seen them, and they have ministered unto me.

27. And behold they will be among the Gentiles, and the Gentiles shall know them not.

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.

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.

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?

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—

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, inasmuch 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.

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.

1-10. As the resurrected Savior ministered to his Apostles in Galilee, he intimated to Simon Peter that eventually he would suffer death at the hands of enemies. "Then Peter, turning about, seeth the disciple whom Jesus loved [John]. . . . Peter seeing him

saith to Jesus, Lord, and what shall this man do? Jesus saith unto him, If I will that he tarry till I come, what is that to thee? follow thou me. Then went this saying abroad among the brethren, that that disciple should not die: yet Jesus said not unto him, He shall not die; but, If I will that he tarry till I come, what is that to thee?" (John 21:20-23.) So states our New Testament account. It is an account which has been misunderstood and, especially because of what many believe to be a disclaimer in the passage ("yet Jesus said not unto him, He shall not die"), largely ignored. The belief that John's ministry would continue has been relegated to legend and folktale.

It is to a modern revelation that we turn to learn what really became of John the Apostle, known also as the Beloved and the Revelator. In April of 1829 Joseph Smith and Oliver Cowdery were discussing the mission of John: whether he had died or been allowed to live on. Through the Urim and Thummim the Prophet saw a translated version of a record made by John and hidden up. The restored knowledge is as follows:

"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 desiredst 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.)

John the Beloved and the Three Nephites were translated. They were allowed to live on, to minister on earth, to continue their apostolic duties among the children of men until their Lord returned in glory at the time of his second coming. In speaking of Enoch, the antediluvian prophet-patriarch who also had been translated some three thousand years before Christ, Joseph Smith said: "Now this Enoch God reserved unto Himself, that he should not die at that time, and appointed unto him a ministry unto ter-

restrial bodies, of whom there has been but little revealed. He is reserved also unto the presidency of a dispensation, and more shall be said of him and terrestrial bodies in another treatise. He is a ministering angel, to minister to those who shall be heirs of salvation. . . . Many have supposed that the doctrine of translation was a doctrine whereby men were taken immediately into the presence of God and into an eternal fullness, but this is a mistaken idea. Their place of habitation is that of the terrestrial order, and a place prepared for such characters He held in reserve to be ministering angels unto many planets, and who as yet have not entered into so great a fullness as those who are resurrected from the dead. ‘Others were tortured, not accepting deliverance, that they might obtain a better resurrection.’ (See Hebrews 11:35.)

“Now it was evident that there was a better resurrection, or else God would not have revealed it unto Paul. Wherein then, can it be said a better resurrection. This distinction is made between the doctrine of the actual resurrection and translation: translation obtains deliverance from the tortures and sufferings of the body, but their existence will prolong as to the labors and toils of the ministry, before they can enter into so great a rest and glory.” (*Teachings*, pp. 170–71.)

Elder Bruce R. McConkie has written: “Some mortals have been translated. In this state they are not subject to sorrow [except for the sins of the world—3 Nephi 28:9] or to disease or to death. No longer does blood (the life-giving element of our present mortality) flow in their veins. Procreation ceases. If they then had children, their offspring would then be denied a mortal probation, which all worthy spirits must receive in due course. They have power to move and live in both a mortal and an unseen sphere. All translated beings undergo another change in their bodies when they gain full immortality. This change is the equivalent of a resurrection. . . . Millennial man will live in a state akin to translation. His body will be changed so that it is no longer subject to disease or death as we know it, although he will be changed in the twinkling of an eye to full immortality when he is a hundred years of age.” (*Millennial Messiah*, p. 644.)

2. That we may speedily come unto thee in thy kingdom] The nine Nephite Apostles desired the same thing as Peter had desired: to come speedily into the Lord’s kingdom. Perhaps what they are requesting is the blessing of being resurrected soon after mortal death and taken into celestial glory with their Lord.

3. The significance, if any, of the specified age at which the nine would die—seventy-two years—is unknown.

5. They sorrowed in their hearts] Why would they sorrow? Did they worry that perhaps their request might be perceived by the Master as selfish or self-serving? Did they feel that perhaps

they were asking too much? Did they worry that perhaps they—choosing to continue their work rather than come directly to the presence and glory of Jesus, as the nine had desired—might offend or hurt the Master’s feelings?

7. Ye shall never taste of death] All men and women die. No person, not even a translated being, is given immunity from death. Joseph Smith taught that “translated bodies cannot enter into rest until they have undergone a change equivalent to death” (*Teachings*, p. 191). The righteous, which would include translated beings, though they face death, do not *taste* death. Paul taught that “the sting of death is sin” (1 Corinthians 15:56). “Thou shalt live together in love,” Christ counseled his Latter-day Saints, “inasmuch that thou shalt weep for the loss of them that die, and more especially for those that have not hope of a glorious resurrection. And it shall come to pass that *those that die in me shall not taste of death, for it shall be sweet unto them.*” (D&C 42:45–46, italics added.) For translated beings death is *postponed* in order that they can continue their ministries.

8. It would appear that all persons who were translated before the resurrection of Christ—Enoch and his city, Melchizedek and his city, Elijah, Moses, Alma the Younger, Nephi, and so forth—were resurrected at the time of Christ’s resurrection (see D&C 133:54–55; see also *Mormon Doctrine*, pp. 807–8). Persons who were translated after the time of Christ’s resurrection will minister in their terrestrial state until the Second Advent. At that time they will be changed in the twinkling of an eye, transformed instantaneously from their mortal (still subject to death) terrestrial condition to a resurrected fully immortal condition.

10. For this cause ye shall have fulness of joy] That is, because of their desires, because of their additional ministry, because their hearts were completely riveted on the gospel cause, because their eye was single to his glory, they would eventually, in the resurrection, have fulness of joy in that day when they would sit down in the kingdom of the Father. A fulness of joy comes not in this life (D&C 101:36) but in the resurrection, where body and spirit are joined inseparably (D&C 93:33; 138:17).

10. Ye shall be even as I am, and I am even as the Father] “If you keep my commandments,” the Savior stated in a modern revelation, “you shall receive of his [the Father’s] fulness, and be glorified in me as I am in the Father” (D&C 93:20).

10. The Father and I are one] See 3 Nephi 1:27, 36. “Without question, Elohim and Jehovah—though separate as personages—are one: one in mind, one in purpose, one in glory. Indeed, they are infinitely more one than they are separate. This has properly been referred to as the greatest teaching device ever devised in

all eternity (see *Promised Messiah*, p. 131). The whole plan of salvation centers in our learning to be one with Christ as he is one with the Father. The doctrine of oneness is the doctrine of salvation.” (*Commentary* 2:230.)

11. The Holy Ghost beareth record of the Father and me] See 2 Nephi 31:18; 3 Nephi 11:36; Moses 6:66.

12. He touched every one of them with his finger save it were the three] Though it is unclear why the Lord touched the nine (but did not touch the three who were to tarry), or what might have been involved in doing this, the action at least illustrates that the two groups would have differing ministries.

13–15. The three were caught up into heaven (that is, the three and not the nine, see verse 36) and saw and heard unspeakable things. We wonder if perhaps they saw something akin to what Paul beheld: “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 offered the following fascinating observation regarding this experience of the Three Nephites: “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.)

15. It did seem unto them like a transfiguration] Indeed, it was a transfiguration. 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). Transfiguration is a special change in appearance and nature, a change brought about by the powers of the Spirit. One who is translated is always transfigured, but a person may be transfigured without being translated.

15. They were changed from this body of flesh into an immortal state] It may have seemed so to the three, but in fact they were yet mortal, still subject eventually to that final change, that ultimate change from mortality to immortality which will take place when Christ returns (see verse 8).

17. Mormon later inquired of the Lord and learned by revelation more about the Three Nephites (see verses 37–40).

18. This verse teaches an important principle, one that was made known early in this final dispensation: “The thing which will be of the most worth unto you will be to declare repentance unto this people, that you may bring souls unto me, that you may rest with them in the kingdom of my Father” (D&C 15:6; 16:6). The primary responsibility of the Three Nephites is missionary work, the gathering of Israel into the true church and fold of God (see verses 23, 29).

19–22. It will be a marvelous thing one day to behold these scenes in their entirety. Mormon simply summarizes what they experienced by way of persecution to illustrate their power over wild beasts, over nature and the elements, and over the assaults of evil men.

19. See 4 Nephi 1:30–33.

21. See 4 Nephi 1:32; compare Daniel 3:25.

22. See 4 Nephi 1:33; compare Daniel 6:16–27.

23. **They were converted unto the Lord]** See 4 Nephi 1:2.

25. The names of the Twelve are given earlier (3 Nephi 19:4), but Mormon was forbidden to reveal the names of the three translated beings.

26. Moroni, in writing years later of the wickedness of his day, said: “And there are none that do know the true God save it be the disciples of Jesus, who did tarry in the land until the wickedness of the people was so great that the Lord would not suffer them to remain with the people; and whether they be upon the face of the land no man knoweth. But behold, my father and I have seen them, and they have ministered unto us.” (Mormon 8:10–11.)

27–33. Theirs is the power of God, power to appear and disappear as need arises. They will go where they can be of service, will preach and minister and prepare souls for the blessings of salvation, be it among the Jews, the Gentiles, or the scattered branches of Israel.

34. Compare D&C 1:37–38; 21:5.

37–39. See commentary on verses 1–10.

40. **In this state they were to remain until the judgment day of Christ]** More specifically, they shall remain in their terrestrially translated state until the coming of Jesus Christ in glory (see verse 8), that great and terrible day known as “the end of the world,” wherein the wicked are judged worthy of destruction (Joseph Smith—Matthew 1:4, 31).

Coming Forth of the Book of Mormon a Sign That Latter-day Gathering Has Begun

3 Nephi 29:1-2

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.

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.

1-2. See commentary on 3 Nephi 21:1-7.

Woe unto Those Who Spurn at the Doings of the Lord

3 Nephi 29:3-9

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.

5. Wo unto him that spurneth at the doings of the Lord; yea, 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!

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!

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.

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.

3. It matters precious little what people of the world may think of the Lord's promises regarding the glorious destiny of the house

of Israel. Skepticism or disbelief cannot disannul the Abrahamic covenant. God has sworn and will not repent. His word is sure. On it we may rely with absolute faith.

4. The Book of Mormon is serious business. It cannot simply be dismissed with a nod of the head or a flip of the hand. It is God Almighty's testimony. He is its author, and those who spurn at its messages—be they on faith or atonement or gathering—do so at the peril of their eternal souls. Salvation itself is at stake.

5. **Wo unto him that shall deny the Christ]** Moroni soberly testified of the plight of those who reject Christ and of the distant but definite moment of confrontation with truth: "And now, I speak . . . concerning those who do not believe in Christ. Behold, will ye believe in the day of your visitation—behold, when the Lord shall come, yea, even that great day when the earth shall be rolled together as a scroll, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat, yea, in that great day when ye shall be brought to stand before the Lamb of God—then will ye say that there is no God?" (Mormon 9:1–2.)

6–7. "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; compare Moroni 7:35–38; 2 Nephi 28:29–30).

7. **The son of perdition]** See commentary on 3 Nephi 27:32.

8. See commentary on verse 3.

9. One is moved by the similarity in language to a profound truth whispered by Deity to the Prophet Joseph Smith 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.)

Latter-day Gentiles Commanded to Come unto Christ

3 Nephi 30:1–2

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.

1–2. Mormon, as an authorized servant of Jesus Christ, presents to the Gentiles of the latter days the words and warning of his Master. It is a call to repentance, a call to forsake the sins of the world (compare 3 Nephi 16:10) and embrace the religion of Jesus Christ, who is God over all. It is a call to be baptized, to receive the sanctifying powers of the Holy Ghost, and to be numbered among those who are truly of the house of Israel, those who receive and abide by the terms and conditions of the new and everlasting covenant.

2. Murders] See commentary on Alma 39:5–6. See also Alma 24:10, 16; *New Witness*, p. 231.

The Fourth Book of Nephi

In the first editions of the Book of Mormon, both Third Nephi and Fourth Nephi (as they are now called) were entitled The Book of Nephi. In 1879, when the First Presidency authorized Elder Orson Pratt to prepare a new edition, he called these books the Book of Third Nephi and the Book of Fourth Nephi to help distinguish one from the other. They have retained these titles.

Although 4 Nephi contains only forty-nine verses and is only four pages long, it spans approximately 285 years of Nephite history. It can be characterized—borrowing from the words of Charles Dickens—as a tale of two civilizations. It begins as the record of one unified Nephite nation, recounting “the best of times”—a golden era of a righteous, Zion-like people who had been made “partakers of the heavenly gift” and of whom Mormon said “there could not be a happier people.” This age of righteousness lasted for about 170 years, until around A.D. 200, and was a testimony to the impact of the visit of Christ on the Nephite people.

Then, over a period of about one hundred years, this same Zion society descended to “the worst of times.” They became wicked to the point that the dearth of righteous men apparently caused Ammaron (no doubt under inspiration) to choose a ten-year-old boy, Mormon, to be the future keeper of the sacred records, leaving them hidden for about fourteen years until he should be old enough to receive them.

These Nephites of around A.D. 300 thus experienced the same symptoms of spiritual decline that had beset their ancestors before the visit of Christ—pride, greed, dissension, doctrinal apostasy, persecution of humble believers, rejection of the prophets, division into “-ites,” the building up and sustaining of the secret oaths and combinations of Gadianton, and finally war and continual bloodshed. While many of their forefathers, especially the Lamanites, were wicked because of the traditions of their fathers or because of slothfulness or the seductions of the world, these Nephites *and*

Lamanites were even more wicked because they had wilfully rebelled against God. Collectively, they had once enjoyed a greater portion of God's light than any other civilization on earth (except for the city of Enoch). Presumably none now living had been on earth at the time of the visit of Christ, but they had been taught of it by their parents or grandparents and had basked in the legacy of that great event. They had known the truth and now hated it. Only those who had climbed so high could fall so low. Thus, to those of us who have enjoyed a greater light, these few verses set forth a witness to the principle taught by Alma: "And thus we can plainly discern, that after a people have been once enlightened by the Spirit of God, and have had great knowledge of things pertaining to righteousness, and then have fallen away into sin and transgression, they become more hardened, and thus their state becomes worse than though they had never known these things" (Alma 24:30).

Zion Is Established Among the Nephites

4 Nephi 1:1–19

1. And it came to pass that the thirty and fourth year passed away, and also the thirty and fifth, and behold the disciples of Jesus had formed a church of Christ in all the lands round about. And as many as did come unto them, and did truly repent of their sins, were baptized in the name of Jesus; and they did also receive the Holy Ghost.

2. And it came to pass in the thirty and sixth year, the people were all converted unto the Lord, upon all the face of the land, both Nephites and Lamanites, and there were no contentions and disputations among them, and every man did deal justly one with another.

3. And they had all things common among them; therefore there were not rich and poor, bond and free, but they were all made free, and partakers of the heavenly gift.

4. And it came to pass that the thirty and seventh year passed

away also, and there still continued to be peace in the land.

5. And there were great and marvelous works wrought by the disciples of Jesus, insomuch that they did heal the sick, and raise the dead, and cause the lame to walk, and the blind to receive their sight, and the deaf to hear; and all manner of miracles did they work among the children of men; and in nothing did they work miracles save it were in the name of Jesus.

6. And thus did the thirty and eighth year pass away, and also the thirty and ninth, and forty and first, and the forty and second, yea, even until forty and nine years had passed away, and also the fifty and first, and the fifty and second; yea, and even until fifty and nine years had passed away.

7. And the Lord did prosper them exceedingly in the land; yea, insomuch that they did build cities again where there had been cities burned.

8. Yea, even that great city Zarahemla did they cause to be built again.

9. But there were many cities which had been sunk, and waters came up in the stead thereof; therefore these cities could not be renewed.

10. And now, behold, it came to pass that the people of Nephi did wax strong, and did multiply exceedingly fast, and became an exceedingly fair and delightsome people.

11. And they were married, and given in marriage, and were blessed according to the multitude of the promises which the Lord had made unto them.

12. And they did not walk any more after the performances and ordinances of the law of Moses; but they did walk after the commandments which they had received from their Lord and their God, continuing in fasting and prayer, and in meeting together oft both to pray and to hear the word of the Lord.

13. And it came to pass that there was no contention among all the people, in all the land; but there were mighty miracles wrought among the disciples of Jesus.

14. And it came to pass that the seventy and first year passed away, and also the seventy and second year, yea, and in fine, till the seventy and ninth year had passed away; yea, even an hundred years had passed away, and

the disciples of Jesus, whom he had chosen, had all gone to the paradise of God, save it were the three who should tarry; and there were other disciples ordained in their stead; and also many of that generation had passed away.

15. And it came to pass that there was no contention in the land, because of the love of God which did dwell in the hearts of the people.

16. And there were no envyings, nor strifes, nor tumults, nor whoredoms, nor lyings, nor murders, nor any manner of lasciviousness; and surely there could not be a happier people among all the people who had been created by the hand of God.

17. There were no robbers, nor murderers, neither were there Lamanites, nor any manner of -ites; but they were in one, the children of Christ, and heirs to the kingdom of God.

18. And how blessed were they! For the Lord did bless them in all their doings; yea, even they were blessed and prospered until an hundred and ten years had passed away; and the first generation from Christ had passed away, and there was no contention in all the land.

19. And it came to pass that Nephi, he that kept this last record, (and he kept it upon the plates of Nephi) died, and his son Amos kept it in his stead; and he kept it upon the plates of Nephi also.

1. The disciples of Jesus had formed a church of Christ]

That is, the followers of our Lord had spread the message of the gospel—the glad tidings of deliverance and redemption—to all parts of the land. Further, the Church of Jesus Christ was built up and established in those areas so that the gospel could be properly administered.

2. The people were all converted unto the Lord] Here is

the crux of the matter, the foundation for spiritual success—the people were first and foremost converted to Christ the Lord. Their trust was in him. Their reliance was upon him. Their hope was in him and his merits. Programs and procedures and policies—even inspired and God-given ones—can have efficacy, virtue, and force, can be of saving value, only to the degree that they are centered and grounded in the atoning mission and message of Jesus the Christ.

2. Every man did deal justly one with another] Of the Nephites who had been visited by the Savior, Mormon wrote: “And they taught, and did minister one to another; and they had all things common among them, every man dealing justly, one with another” (3 Nephi 26:19). To Hyrum Smith the Lord stated in our dispensation: “And now, verily, verily, I say unto thee, put your trust in that Spirit which leadeth to do good—yea, to do justly, to walk humbly, to judge righteously; and this is my Spirit” (D&C 11:12).

3. They had all things common] See commentary on 3 Nephi 26:19.

3. They were all made free, and partakers of the heavenly gift] Men and women are made free in Christ (see John 8:32; D&C 88:86; 98:8). The renovating and transforming powers of the Spirit—channelled to man through the gospel—lighten burdens and liberate captive souls. Those who are freed from the fetters of sin and ignorance, who break the bands of unrighteous traditions, are in a position to enjoy in abundance the heavenly gift, the signs and wonders and marvels of the Holy Ghost. “Blessed are they who shall seek to bring forth my Zion at that day, for they shall have the gift and the power of the Holy Ghost” (1 Nephi 13:37; compare D&C 6:6; 11:6; 12:6; 14:6).

5. In nothing did they work miracles save it were in the name of Jesus] “We are the servants of the Lord, who is our Master, and he has commanded us to labor in his fields—plowing, sowing, cultivating, and harvesting. That is, we are the *agents* of the Lord, who is our *eternal principal*, and he has empowered us to represent him and do the things he would do if he were personally present. When we do all things in his name in righteousness, it means that we put ourselves in his place and stead, that we think and speak and act as he would in the same situation. It means we live our lives as though we were the one whose blessed name we bear. Our acts become his acts—they are done in his name.” (Robert L. Millet and Joseph Fielding McConkie, *In His Holy Name*, p. 36.)

7. The Lord did prosper them] We do not prosper ourselves; we do not, as the humanist affirms, pull ourselves up by our own bootstraps. It is true that we must work and labor and

strive to do our best. We must do our part. But whenever we obtain blessings, whenever we are prospered, it is because God Almighty has elected to give us those blessings. (Indeed, we are indebted to him for every breath we take—see Mosiah 2:21.) Those who acknowledge his hand in all things (see D&C 59:21), who in gratitude and humility offer “credit where it is due,” tend to avoid the perils of the prosperity cycle.

7. Where there had been cities burned] See 3 Nephi 8.

10. An exceedingly fair and delightful people] See 1 Nephi 13:15; 2 Nephi 5:21.

11. This verse seems to be a veiled reference to the righteous Nephites’ entering into and enjoying the blessings and consummate privileges of the new and everlasting covenant of marriage. While this is not explicitly stated, it seems only reasonable to conclude that the Savior had delivered the fulness of the keys of the Holy Priesthood to this righteous and favored people; that he had seen to it that the powers to bind on earth and seal in heaven were made available to this remnant of Jacob; that he had made them partakers of “the promises made to the fathers,” those supernal promises made to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob—the promises of the gospel, the priesthood, and of eternal life, promises received only in holy temples (see D&C 2; 110; Abraham 2:8–11). For a detailed statement on this matter, see commentary on 3 Nephi 25:5–6.

12. The law of Moses had been fulfilled. The ancient types—animal sacrifices, brazen serpents, and liahonas—all stood as glorious prophecies of the coming of the Great One. The redeeming and resurrected Jesus stood as their fulfillment.

12. Continuing in fasting and prayer] “I give unto you a commandment,” the Savior stated in 1832, “that ye shall continue in prayer and fasting from this time forth” (D&C 88:76). Though the Saints of the Most High are counseled to employ the law of the fast to break the heavy burdens of sin and sickness and personal struggles (see Isaiah 58); though the people of the Lord are encouraged to fast and pray for deeper spirituality; though the household of faith fast and pray often for those who know not God or who have strayed from the path of peace (Alma 6:6; Moroni 6:5)—despite the importance of this counsel it is not to be taken to extremes. We can continue in the spirit of fasting and prayer without overstepping the bounds of reason and thereby threatening our physical health or even becoming so excessive in our zeal as to become gospel hobbyists (see *Gospel Doctrine*, pp. 116–17, 122). Indeed, the Saints can “continue in fasting and prayer” in the sense that they hunger and thirst after righteousness (see D&C 59:13).

14. The disciples of Jesus . . . had all gone to the paradise of God] That is, the nine Nephite Apostles who had, like Peter, desired to come quickly into the kingdom of Christ, had arrived at

the age of seventy-two, had died, and had gone on to their glory (see 3 Nephi 28:3; D&C 7).

14. There were other disciples ordained in their stead] There are principles of priesthood government which allow the kingdom of God on earth to be perpetuated beyond the death of Apostles; we would suppose that the principles of apostolic succession were thus in effect among the Nephites, as they were among the Christians in Jerusalem (see Acts 1:15–26) and as they are in the Church today.

15. Those filled with charity, the pure love of Christ (see Moroni 7:47), seek to build and lift people and lighten the burdens of others. They are other-centered and other-focused. Having largely risen above the pettiness of attainments and station and public applause, they glory in the accomplishments of their fellows and mourn with those who have cause to mourn (see *Teachings*, pp. 147, 174, 240). See a more detailed discussion of charity in Moroni 7:44–48.

16. Surely there could not be a happier people] Compare the situation in Alma 50:23.

17. They were in one, the children of Christ, and heirs to the kingdom of God] The children of Christ are those who have come out of the world, who have left the loneliness and estrangement of a fallen creation and entered the realm of divine experience. They have forsaken the orphanage of spiritual alienation and been received into the family and household of the Lord Jesus Christ. They have left the ranks of the nameless and taken upon them the blessed name of Jesus Christ. They are Christians. Through their Master they become in time joint heirs to all that the Father has.

Pride Brings the Nephite Golden Age to an End

4 Nephi 1:20–49

20. And he kept it eighty and four years, and there was still peace in the land, save it were a small part of the people who had revolted from the church and taken upon them the name of Lamanites; therefore there began to be Lamanites again in the land.

21. And it came to pass that Amos died also, (and it was an hundred and ninety and four years from the coming of Christ) and his son Amos kept the record in his stead; and he also kept it

upon the plates of Nephi; and it was also written in the book of Nephi, which is this book.

22. And it came to pass that two hundred years had passed away; and the second generation had all passed away save it were a few.

23. And now I, Mormon, would that ye should know that the people had multiplied, insomuch that they were spread upon all the face of the land, and that they had become exceedingly rich, because of their prosperity in Christ.

24. And now, in this two hundred and first year there began to be among them those who were lifted up in pride, such as the wearing of costly apparel, and all manner of fine pearls, and of the fine things of the world.

25. And from that time forth they did have their goods and their substance no more common among them.

26. And they began to be divided into classes; and they began to build up churches unto themselves to get gain, and began to deny the true church of Christ.

27. And it came to pass that when two hundred and ten years had passed away there were many churches in the land; yea, there were many churches which professed to know the Christ, and yet they did deny the more parts of his gospel, insomuch that they did receive all manner of wickedness, and did administer that which was sacred unto him to whom it had been forbidden because of unworthiness.

28. And this church did multiply exceedingly because of iniquity, and because of the power of Satan who did get hold upon their hearts.

29. And again, there was another church which denied the Christ; and they did persecute the true church of Christ, because of their humility and their belief in Christ; and they did despise them because of the many miracles which were wrought among them.

30. Therefore they did exercise power and authority over the disciples of Jesus who did tarry with them, and they did cast them into prison; but by the power of the word of God, which was in them, the prisons were rent in twain, and they went forth doing mighty

miracles among them.

31. Nevertheless, and notwithstanding all these miracles, the people did harden their hearts, and did seek to kill them, even as the Jews at Jerusalem sought to kill Jesus, according to his word.

32. And they did cast them into furnaces of fire, and they came forth receiving no harm.

33. And they also cast them into dens of wild beasts, and they did play with the wild beasts even as a child with a lamb; and they did come forth from among them, receiving no harm.

34. Nevertheless, the people did harden their hearts, for they were led by many priests and false prophets to build up many churches, and to do all manner of iniquity. And they did smite upon the people of Jesus; but the people of Jesus did not smite again. And thus they did dwindle in unbelief and wickedness, from year to year, even until two hundred and thirty years had passed away.

35. And now it came to pass in this year, yea, in the two hundred and thirty and first year, there was a great division among the people.

36. And it came to pass that in this year there arose a people who were called the Nephites, and they were true believers in Christ; and among them there were those who were called by the Lamanites—Jacobites, and Josephites, and Zoramites;

37. Therefore the true believers in Christ, and the true worshipers of Christ, (among whom were the three disciples of Jesus who should tarry) were called Nephites, and Jacobites, and Josephites, and Zoramites.

38. And it came to pass that they who rejected the gospel were called Lamanites, and Lemuelites, and Ishmaelites; and they did not

dwindle in unbelief, but they did wilfully rebel against the gospel of Christ; and they did teach their children that they should not believe, even as their fathers, from the beginning, did dwindle.

39. And it was because of the wickedness and abomination of their fathers, even as it was in the beginning. And they were taught to hate the children of God, even as the Lamanites were taught to hate the children of Nephi from the beginning.

40. And it came to pass that two hundred and forty and four years had passed away, and thus were the affairs of the people. And the more wicked part of the people did wax strong, and became exceedingly more numerous than were the people of God.

41. And they did still continue to build up churches unto themselves, and adorn them with all manner of precious things. And thus did two hundred and fifty years pass away, and also two hundred and sixty years.

42. And it came to pass that the wicked part of the people began again to build up the secret oaths and combinations of Gadianton.

43. And also the people who were called the people of Nephi began to be proud in their hearts, because of their exceeding riches, and become vain like unto their brethren, the Lamanites.

44. And from this time the disciples began to sorrow for the sins

of the world.

45. And it came to pass that when three hundred years had passed away, both the people of Nephi and the Lamanites had become exceedingly wicked one like unto another.

46. And it came to pass that the robbers of Gadianton did spread over all the face of the land; and there were none that were righteous save it were the disciples of Jesus. And gold and silver did they lay up in store in abundance, and did traffic in all manner of traffic.

47. And it came to pass that after three hundred and five years had passed away, (and the people did still remain in wickedness) Amos died; and his brother, Ammaron, did keep the record in his stead.

48. And it came to pass that when three hundred and twenty years had passed away, Ammaron, being constrained by the Holy Ghost, did hide up the records which were sacred—yea, even all the sacred records which had been handed down from generation to generation, which were sacred—even until the three hundred and twentieth year from the coming of Christ.

49. And he did hide them up unto the Lord, that they might come again unto the remnant of the house of Jacob, according to the prophecies and the promises of the Lord. And thus is the end of the record of Ammaron.

20. Taken upon them the name of Lamanites] Why would it matter to a people what they were called? Why would it be so important for them to be called Lamanites? Why would a group choose to forsake the transcendent privileges of unity in order to be designated by this or that name? The answer is simple: pride. A desire to be different. A yearning to be acknowledged. A fear of being overlooked. A craving for public notice. The righteous feel no need for attention, no desire to be praised, no inclination to

demand recognition. The prideful demand their rights, even when they are wrong. The prideful feel that they must do things their way, even when that way is the wrong way. The prideful insist that they must pursue their own path, even when the road they take is wide and broad and leads to destruction.

21. The plates of Nephi] The prophets and kings and record-keepers etched their doings and their impressions upon the large plates of Nephi (spoken of here as the “plates of Nephi”), which plates were later abridged by Mormon in his writings that we now have as the Book of Mormon.

23–26. The awful demon of pride—manifest here in clothing and jewelry and indifference to the needs of others—proved to be the death knell to the Nephite Zion. Once a people begin to focus on themselves they are no longer in a position to focus on the needs of others. The laws of consecration and stewardship can operate only among a pure people, among a people who seek the interest of their neighbors and do all things with an eye single to the glory of God (see D&C 82:19). In the absence of the proper motives, classes and cliques and castes soon arise.

26. They began to build up churches unto themselves to get gain] For the Lord’s denunciation and judgment upon such see D&C 10:56.

27. No doubt these false churches did many wicked deeds, things which would horrify and offend the spiritually sensitive. Perhaps it was in an effort to epitomize their sins that Mormon elucidated one abomination in particular—the administration of the sacrament of the Lord’s Supper to the unworthy (see 3 Nephi 18:28).

29–33. Wickedness cannot tolerate righteousness. And so it was that the impure sought desperately to remove the disciples of Jesus—meaning, specifically, the three translated Nephite Apostles. Inasmuch as their bodies had been changed, such that they were not subject to pain or death or the minions of Satan, these disciples stood in majestic confidence while others sought to eradicate them. For those with eyes to see, they stood as physical evidence of the power of God over the puny efforts of man. Compare 3 Nephi 28:19–22.

31. Notwithstanding all these miracles, the people did harden their hearts] Faith does not come through signs, but rather signs follow those that believe (D&C 63:7–12).

34. And they did smite upon the people of Jesus; but the people of Jesus did not smite again] In so doing, the people of the true church were following the guidance of their Lord and King (see 3 Nephi 12:39; compare Alma 1:22–24).

35. There was a great division among the people] How fitting and how terribly prophetic and symbolic this is! The great

Millennium—the thousand-year reign of our Lord and Savior which lies ahead—will eventually be brought to a close because of the rise of those who begin to deny their God, those who deny and defy that which is of God (see D&C 29:22; compare Jacob 5:77). Interestingly enough, President George Q. Cannon suggested that the Millennium will come to a close partly because men and women will begin to depart from the principles of consecration and stewardship (see *JD* 16:120).

36. See Jacob 1:13; Mormon 1:8–9; D&C 3:16–18.

38. They did not dwindle in unbelief] This was no gradual decline, no unfortunate slippage of the unwary. This was sin against light, choosing to forsake the truth and deny the revelations of God with an unholy enthusiasm and zeal born of Satan, the father of all lies and deceit.

42–43. It was surely only a matter of time before sin and perversion had matured to the point where the adherents of evil deeds could join hands with Beelzebub to efficiently perpetuate wickedness through secret combinations. And, sad to say, it was only a matter of time before the pressure to succumb was so great that many of the faithful yielded to the enticements and pleasures of the worldly.

44. See 3 Nephi 28:9.

46. There were none that were righteous save it were the disciples of Jesus] We would tend to read this phrase in a broad sense and suppose here that “disciples of Jesus” referred to the three Nephite Apostles plus some others who continued to hold fast to the rod of iron. For one thing, Ammaron, the brother of Amos, appears to have been a man who valued the things of righteousness (he was “constrained by the Holy Ghost”—verse 48) in that he devoted the time and effort to see to the care of the Nephite records and thereafter transfer them to Mormon. We would also suppose the father of Mormon to have been a faithful saint. Certainly Mormon was.

48. Ammaron . . . did hide up the records] See Mormon 1:3.

The Book of Mormon

It is difficult to know whether at this point Mormon has finished the task of abridging all of the records of his ancestors. We can only imagine how overwhelming such a project must have been, considering the awkward manner in which the Nephites had to write and the difficulty of making metallic plates on which to write. At any rate, now he is ready to begin his own record and write the final haunting chapter in the saga of the Nephite nation. Adding his own account is extremely important because it serves as an epilogue and final witness to the rest of his abridgment. By carefully recounting the final, hideous death struggles of his people he verifies the awful and agonizing truth of the words of the holy prophets whose prophecies he has carefully and thoughtfully recorded. His account bears witness of the hopeless, hell-like state of a people who once knew an almost celestial existence and then, a generation or so later, rejected God in totality. In giving such an account he also warns us of the literal nature of the great and terrible promise pronounced upon those who have the gospel of Jesus Christ—serve him and prosper, reject him and be damned.

Mormon's account of the morbid state of his people is tragic, almost horrifying. Their sickening and barbaric behavior, however, was the consequence of an even greater tragedy—their loss of hope for salvation. Mormon sadly observed that “the day of grace was passed with them, both temporally and spiritually.” In Mormon's record we get a glimpse of what life without a hope in Christ would be like.

If we read between the lines, we also come to know that Mormon was an incredible man. Not only was he entrusted with the responsibility of the plates and called to lead the Nephite armies at tender ages, but Mormon profoundly loved and cared about his unbelievably degenerate Nephite people. Even after he felt compelled to resign as their leader because of their refusal to repent, his compassion for them drew him back to help them, knowing he

would lead them to their inevitable demise and probably die with them. Mormon was surrounded by gross iniquity and sorrow throughout his life, yet he remained as strong and valiant in righteousness as his people were depraved in their wickedness. When in his epistles he wrote to his son Moroni of faith, hope, and charity (Moroni 7), he knew whereof he spoke.

In an incredibly sad turn of events Mormon is killed, and Moroni, whose entire family is now dead, is left to finish up his father's work while hiding from the Lamanites. Mormon, in the final words of his own record, had born testimony to the descendants of those whom he knew would probably kill him and his family. (These same murderous Lamanites were now seeking the life of his son.) Rather than writing words of bitterness, he had invited them to believe in Christ, repent, and be saved. Moroni picks up the record by directing his testimony also to the only audience left to receive it—those of the latter days. Moroni knows this audience well because he has seen them in a vision. He adds his witness and warning to that of his father, for he sees that the inhabitants who are on earth at the time of the coming forth of the book he is now finishing will be beset with the same temptations that destroyed his people. He seems especially concerned with those who will deny the existence of God and say that miracles have ceased, and he exhorts us convincingly, "Doubt not, but be believing."

Although Moroni, in his humility, seems very concerned about mistakes or faults or imperfections in his record, he continually bears witness of its divine origin and of his trust in the Lord in bringing it forth. Perhaps in viewing the latter-day scenes he feels overwhelmed with the responsibility laid upon him, for he has realized the eternal impact this book will have in the lives of those who accept it and also the terrible consequences it will have in the lives of those who scorn or reject it.

Ammaron Prepares Mormon to Receive the Sacred Records

Mormon 1:1-7

1. And now I, Mormon, make a record of the things which I have both seen and heard, and call it the Book of Mormon.

2. And about the time that Ammaron hid up the records unto the Lord, he came unto me, (I being about ten years of age, and I began to be learned somewhat after the manner of the learning

of my people) and Ammaron said unto me: I perceive that thou art a sober child, and art quick to observe;

3. Therefore, when ye are about twenty and four years old I would that ye should remember the things that ye have observed concerning this people; and when ye are of that age go to the land

Antum, unto a hill which shall be called Shim; and there have I deposited unto the Lord all the sacred engravings concerning this people.

4. And behold, ye shall take the plates of Nephi unto yourself, and the remainder shall ye leave in the place where they are; and ye shall engrave on the plates of Nephi all the things that ye have observed concerning this people.

5. And I, Mormon, being a descendant of Nephi, (and my

father's name was Mormon) I remembered the things which Ammaron commanded me.

6. And it came to pass that I, being eleven years old, was carried by my father into the land southward, even to the land of Zarahemla.

7. The whole face of the land had become covered with buildings, and the people were as numerous almost, as it were the sand of the sea.

1–7. The prophet Ammaron, whose account of the decline of the Nephites we read near the end of 4 Nephi, was commanded of the Lord to hide away the sacred records to preserve them (see 4 Nephi 1:47–49). This same Ammaron was inspired of the Lord to call an exceptional young man, who had been prepared with spiritual experiences, to become the caretaker of the plates. Ammaron instructed Mormon to take the plates of Nephi when he became twenty-four years of age and record on them the things he observed among the people. He was to record not only the historical events but also the workings of the Lord among the people (compare Alma 37:2; 3 Nephi 26:6–8).

2. Thou art a sober child] It should not be thought that Mormon was somber; rather, he was sober—meaning that he was thoughtful and serious-minded, mature beyond his chronological age. Undoubtedly Mormon's soberness was as much spiritual as emotional. The things of the Lord were important to him even at such an early age, as evidenced by the visitation of the Lord to him (see verse 15).

2. Quick to observe] As a prophet-historian it was imperative that Mormon be observant. This phrase perhaps also implies that he was not only observant and possessed of a good memory but also insightful, perceptive in recognizing what should be recorded to warn and bless the latter-day readers.

Bloodshed Among the Warring Nephites and Lamanites

Mormon 1:8–12

8. And it came to pass in this year there began to be a war between the Nephites, who consisted of the Nephites and the Jacobites and the Josephites and the

Zoramites; and this war was between the Nephites, and the Lamanites and the Lemuelites and the Ishmaelites.

9. Now the Lamanites and the

Lemuelites and the Ishmaelites were called Lamanites, and the two parties were Nephites and Lamanites.

10. And it came to pass that the war began to be among them in the borders of Zarahemla, by the waters of Sidon.

11. And it came to pass that the Nephites had gathered together a great number of men, even to exceed the number of thirty thou-

sand. And it came to pass that they did have in this same year a number of battles, in which the Nephites did beat the Lamanites and did slay many of them.

12. And it came to pass that the Lamanites withdrew their design, and there was peace settled in the land; and peace did remain for the space of about four years, that there was no bloodshed.

8–12. With only a brief, four-year period of peace, there was terrible bloodshed among the Nephites and Lamanites as a result of numerous battles.

8. Nephites and the Jacobites and the Josephites and the Zoramites] During the Savior's visit and in the Zion society on the American continent that followed, there were not "any manner of -ites, but they were in one" (4 Nephi 1:17). As pride and wickedness crept into this society a "great division" took place which separated the people again into Nephite and Lamanite camps (see 4 Nephi 1:35–37). The division and conflicts here spoken of by Mormon are an extension of that earlier great division.

Spiritual Darkness Results from Nephite Wickedness

Mormon 1:13–19

13. But wickedness did prevail upon the face of the whole land, insomuch that the Lord did take away his beloved disciples, and the work of miracles and of healing did cease because of the iniquity of the people.

14. And there were no gifts from the Lord, and the Holy Ghost did not come upon any, because of their wickedness and unbelief.

15. And I, being fifteen years of age and being somewhat of a sober mind, therefore I was visited of the Lord, and tasted and knew of the goodness of Jesus.

16. And I did endeavor to preach unto this people, but my mouth was shut, and I was forbidden that I should preach unto

them; for behold they had wilfully rebelled against their God; and the beloved disciples were taken away out of the land, because of their iniquity.

17. But I did remain among them, but I was forbidden to preach unto them, because of the hardness of their hearts; and because of the hardness of their hearts the land was cursed for their sake.

18. And these Gadianton robbers, who were among the Lamanites, did infest the land, insomuch that the inhabitants thereof began to hide up their treasures in the earth; and they became slippery, because the Lord had cursed the land, that they

could not hold them, nor retain them again.

19. And it came to pass that there were sorceries, and witchcrafts, and magics; and the

power of the evil one was wrought upon all the face of the land, even unto the fulfilling of all the words of Abinadi, and also Samuel the Lamanite.

13–19. Mormon describes the awful consequences to nations and individuals when wickedness prevails over righteousness. Gifts of the Spirit, revelations, the mercies of the Lord as evidenced by miracles, prophesying, and the power of preachings are driven away when men love darkness over light.

13. The Lord did take away his beloved disciples] Because of the extreme, reprobate conditions of the people, the Lord withdrew the three translated Nephite disciples from among them. This was done because they 1) were holy and sanctified, a condition so completely incompatible with the wickedness of the Nephites that they could not remain; and 2) they could not fulfill their mission to bring souls unto Christ (see 3 Nephi 28:9) and preach the gospel (see 3 Nephi 28:23) because the Nephites, through their wickedness, had closed their ears and hardened their hearts to such a ministry.

14. There were no gifts from the Lord] In the previous verse Mormon tells us that miracles and healings ceased among the people. In addition, the gifts of the Spirit, including visions and revelations, stopped because the people exercised no faith unto repentance and as a result cut themselves off from the companionship of the Holy Ghost (see commentary on Mormon 9:7–8).

15. I was visited of the Lord, and tasted and knew of the goodness of Jesus] Even though he was just a young man of fifteen years, Mormon was filled with faith and his life was one of righteousness to the point that he was privileged to see the resurrected Christ. At some point too he was privileged to see and know the three translated Nephites (see Mormon 8:11). Perhaps even greater than these visitations, Mormon knew the “goodness of Jesus” by personally experiencing the blessing of the Atonement—through faith in Christ he was born again and, being filled with the Spirit, had iniquity burned, as it were, from his soul. This spiritual transformation from the natural man who is an enemy of God to a “new creature in Christ” is the application of “the goodness of Jesus” we also should seek to know.

16. I was forbidden that I should preach unto them] During his mortal ministry, Jesus taught his disciples, “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” (Matthew 7:6). What the disciples, both ancient and modern, are allowed by the Spirit to teach is determined by the spiritual readiness of the listeners. The Lord has cautioned against

presenting more than the listeners are prepared to hear and heed. Mormon was forbidden to preach the gospel not only because of the people's spiritual unpreparedness but also perhaps because the hardness of their hearts would have prompted them to "turn again and rend" Mormon. They were not neutral nor passive when it came to hearing the truths of the gospel. They were wilfully rebellious and were spiritually trampling under foot the prophets of God, the words of God—even the very God of Israel himself (see 1 Nephi 19:7; D&C 3:13, 15). When men's hearts become so hardened with the scar tissue of sin that they are "past feeling" (see 1 Nephi 17:45), even the preaching of the word—which can be "more powerful . . . than the sword" (see Alma 31:5)—cannot pierce them to their souls.

17. The land was cursed for their sake] After the Fall, the Lord declared unto Adam: "Cursed is the ground for thy sake" (Genesis 3:17; see also Moses 4:23). It is clear from other scriptural commentary (see Moses 5:10–11), that this original "cursing" of the land, as a result of the Fall, was a beneficial act that provided for the growth and development of Adam and Eve and their posterity, as well as allowing for the full operation of the plan of salvation. In contrast to this usage of the phrase "for their sake," Mormon uses the phrase not to illustrate any beneficial aspects but rather to point out another terrible consequence of the wickedness of his people. The definition of "sake" in an 1830 dictionary or some other contemporary edition would include "on account of." This definition seems to fit better with Mormon's intent and is consistent with other Book of Mormon passages that use similar language. The land was "cursed" not for the blessing or benefit of the Nephites in any way, but rather "on account of" their great wickedness. See 2 Nephi 1:7; Alma 45:10–16; Ether 2:8–12.

18–19. The Spirit of the Lord was repelled by the abominations of the Nephites, and in its place the spirit of the devil prevailed, as evidenced by witchcrafts and sorceries. Due to the greed and avarice of the wicked Nephites and as a result of their total disregard for others, the land and treasures they hid in it became "slippery" (see Helaman 13:16–23). The "slippery" earth did not necessarily swallow up treasures in some mystical or magical way, but rather such treasures disappeared through the thievery and dishonesty of the Gadiantons and others with similar motives (see Mormon 2:10). Not only could they not hold and retain their earthly treasures because they were being stolen by others, but also they could not retain them in an eternal sense. Hearts so set on the transitory things of the world will be broken with a stark realization that the only real and lasting treasures are the riches of eternity (see Matthew 6:20; D&C 11:7; 19:38). All of this wickedness and the resultant curses and consequences were not only

prophesied by Abinadi and Samuel but also were observed to some degree among their own peoples.

Mormon Leads the Nephite Armies

Mormon 2:1–9

1. And it came to pass in that same year there began to be a war again between the Nephites and the Lamanites. And notwithstanding I being young, was large in stature; therefore the people of Nephi appointed me that I should be their leader, or the leader of their armies.

2. Therefore it came to pass that in my sixteenth year I did go forth at the head of an army of the Nephites, against the Lamanites; therefore three hundred and twenty and six years had passed away.

3. And it came to pass that in the three hundred and twenty and seventh year the Lamanites did come upon us with exceedingly great power, insomuch that they did frighten my armies; therefore they would not fight, and they began to retreat towards the north countries.

4. And it came to pass that we did come to the city of Angola, and we did take possession of the city, and make preparations to defend ourselves against the Lamanites. And it came to pass that we did fortify the city with our might; but notwithstanding all our fortifications the Lamanites did come upon us and did drive us out of the city.

5. And they did also drive us forth out of the land of David.

6. And we marched forth and came to the land of Joshua, which was in the borders west by the seashore.

7. And it came to pass that we did gather in our people as fast as it were possible, that we might get them together in one body.

8. But behold, the land was filled with robbers and with Lamanites; and notwithstanding the great destruction which hung over my people, they did not repent of their evil doings; therefore there was blood and carnage spread throughout all the face of the land, both on the part of the Nephites and also on the part of the Lamanites; and it was one complete revolution throughout all the face of the land.

9. And now, the Lamanites had a king, and his name was Aaron; and he came against us with an army of forty and four thousand. And behold, I withstood him with forty and two thousand. And it came to pass that I beat him with my army that he fled before me. And behold, all this was done, and three hundred and thirty years had passed away.

1. Notwithstanding I being young, was large in stature; therefore the people of Nephi appointed me that I should be their leader] Mormon, like his ancestor Nephi, was a large man physically and also was of a spiritual stature that was unique

and impressive, especially for a teenager. Perhaps Mormon, like King Saul, was immediately looked to as a leader because of his impressive physical prowess. Undoubtedly the other characteristics of spirituality and maturity, when coupled with his size, increased his stature among his peers. It could also be that he was a priesthood leader at a young age and as a result people turned to him for leadership in both temporal and spiritual matters. President Joseph Fielding Smith observed: “We may . . . conclude that Mormon received the priesthood at a very tender age. He was only ten years old when Ammaron counseled him and placed in him the wonderful trust as guardian of the sacred plates. Moreover, when he was fifteen years of age he had a visitation by the Lord and ‘. . . tasted and knew of the goodness of Jesus.’” (*Answers to Gospel Questions* 2:9–10.) It appears that Mormon was appointed to lead the Nephite armies into battle against the Lamanites not so much because of his physical stature but more likely because he was indeed a remarkable leader in many aspects of his life. We are left only to surmise all of the reasons why Mormon was thrust into weighty responsibilities while so young. The record does not detail all of the greatness and unique qualifications of Mormon. Mormon the record keeper was also modest and humble.

2–9. The entire land was embroiled in “one complete revolution” because of bloody conflicts with the Lamanites as well as the havoc caused by the Gadianton robbers. The resulting bloodshed, chaos, and carnage was extensive, yet it still did not prompt the people to repent of their wickedness and turn to the Lord for protection and peace.

The Nephites Experience the Sorrowing of the Damned

Mormon 2:10–16

10. And it came to pass that the Nephites began to repent of their iniquity, and began to cry even as had been prophesied by Samuel the prophet; for behold no man could keep that which was his own, for the thieves, and the robbers, and the murderers, and the magic art, and the witchcraft which was in the land.

11. Thus there began to be a mourning and a lamentation in all the land because of these things, and more especially among the people of Nephi.

12. And it came to pass that when I, Mormon, saw their lamentation and their mourning and their sorrow before the Lord, my heart did begin to rejoice within me, knowing the mercies and the long-suffering of the Lord, therefore supposing that he would be merciful unto them that they would again become a righteous people.

13. But behold this my joy was vain, for their sorrowing was not unto repentance, because of the goodness of God; but it was rather

the sorrowing of the damned, because the Lord would not always suffer them to take happiness in sin.

14. And they did not come unto Jesus with broken hearts and contrite spirits, but they did curse God, and wish to die. Nevertheless they would struggle with the sword for their lives.

15. And it came to pass that my sorrow did return unto me again, and I saw that the day of grace was passed with them, both temporally and spiritually; for I saw

thousands of them hewn down in open rebellion against their God, and heaped up as dung upon the face of the land. And thus three hundred and forty and four years had passed away.

16. And it came to pass that in the three hundred and forty and fifth year the Nephites did begin to flee before the Lamanites; and they were pursued until they came even to the land of Jashon, before it was possible to stop them in their retreat.

10–12. Mormon records that his people “began to repent.” As seen in subsequent verses, they were not penitent at all. Mormon supposed that their mourning, lamentations, and deep sorrow were evidence of a desire to turn from their evil doings and come in faith to the Lord, who could deliver them both spiritually and temporally. This preliminary observation caused Mormon to rejoice in hopes that the Nephites “would again become a righteous people.” This hope, however, was in vain.

13. Their sorrowing was not unto repentance] The Apostle Paul spoke of a “godly sorrow [which] *worketh repentance*.” In contrast to this kind of sorrowing that leads one to repentance, “the sorrow of the world *worketh death*.” (2 Corinthians 7:10, italics added.) The tears the Nephites shed did not flow from hearts that were broken and spirits that were contrite. Their sorrow stemmed not from faith in Christ but rather from a hopelessness and despair which “cometh because of iniquity” (Moroni 10:22). Mormon characterized this awful feeling that was without the “fruits meet for repentance” as the “sorrowing of the damned.” This tragic account of the spiritual state of Mormon’s people pointedly demonstrates that sorrow, regret, and remorse do not necessarily signify repentance. Many, like Mormon’s people, may be remorseful for past actions, sorrowful for circumstances and consequences that have befallen them, and mournful about their present pains and problems, yet they do nothing to change behavior or come unto Christ and comply with the merciful provisions of his gospel.

Elder Orson Pratt eloquently differentiated between the “sorrowing of the damned” and the “godly sorrow which *worketh repentance*”: “There are different kinds of sorrow. Thieves, robbers, murderers, adulterers, etc., are frequently sorrowful because they have been detected in the crimes they have committed. They are not sorrowful because they have sinned against God, or because they have injured others; but they are sorry because their crimes

have been exposed, or that they have been prevented from a realization of the happiness which they anticipated. This is the sorrow of the world; and it is of the same nature as the sorrowing of the evil spirits in hell: they are sorry when they fail to accomplish their malicious designs against God and His people. This kind of sorrow worketh death.

“Others have a species of sorrow arising through fear. They are convinced that they have, in numerous instances, violated the law of God, and they greatly fear the consequences in the great judgment day; but yet they feel no disposition to reform. . . .

“But the sorrow that is acceptable in the sight of God is that which leads to true repentance, or reformation of conduct; it is that sorrow which arises not only through fear of punishment, but through a proper sense of the evil consequences of sin; it is that sorrow which arises from a knowledge of our own unworthiness, and from a contrast of our own degraded and fallen condition with the mercy, goodness, and holiness of God. We are sorry that we should ever have condescended to do evil. We are sorry that we should ever have rendered ourselves so unworthy before God; we are sorry at the weakness of our own fallen nature. This kind of sorrow will lead us to obey every commandment of God; it will make us humble and childlike in our dispositions; it will impart unto us meekness and lowliness of mind; it will cause our hearts to be broken and our spirits to be contrite; it will cause us to watch, with great carefulness, every word, thought, and deed; it will call up our past dealings with mankind, and we will feel most anxious to make restitution to all whom we may have, in any way, injured. . . . These, and many other good things, are the results of Godly sorrow for sin. This is repentance not in word, but in deed: this is the sorrow with which the heavens are pleased.” (“True Repentance,” in *Orson Pratt: Writings of an Apostle*, pp. 30–31; for a more extensive discussion of the sorrow for sins that yields true repentance see Brent L. Top, *Though Your Sins Be As Scarlet*, pp. 43–65.)

13. The Lord would not always suffer them to take happiness in sin] Wickedness may produce fleeting moments of pleasure or happiness, but there ultimately comes a day of reckoning wherein sin-produced pleasure will be replaced with shame and sorrow (see Job 20:5; 3 Nephi 27:11). Living a life in opposition to God and his ways is contrary to the very nature of happiness and will always end in misery and unhappiness (see Alma 41:10–11; 42:15–16).

14. They did curse God, and wish to die] This attitude of the wicked and unrepentant stands in direct opposition to that of those whose hearts are broken, whose spirits are contrite, and whose lives are filled with faith and hope in Christ. To the spiritually dead there is no desire to endure to the end, but instead a wish

to die and supposedly end all their pain. They “curse God”—blaming him for their woes rather than looking to God for life and pressing forward with “steadfastness in Christ” (2 Nephi 31:20). Such a despondency is the antithesis of the faith and hope that fills the lives of the righteous who faithfully endure to the end.

15. The day of grace was passed] “One of the greatest principles of the gospel of Jesus Christ is the principle of repentance,” said President Harold B. Lee. “However, if one has sinned so seriously and becomes habitually a sinner, the spirit of repentance leaves, and he may or may not be able to repent.” (*Church News*, March 3, 1973, p. 4.) Amulek had previously warned against procrastinating the day of repentance. His great sermon teaches of a “night of darkness” wherein additional labor (that is, faith, repentance, ordinances, etc.) is not forthcoming because the Spirit of the Lord is withdrawn and Satan “doth seal you his” and “hath all power over you” (Alma 34:33–35; see *Commentary* 3:255–57).

The Apostle Paul also taught of a “sorer punishment” that is reserved for those “who hath trodden under foot the Son of God” and “hath done despite [that is, insult, contempt, hatred] unto the Spirit of grace” (see Hebrews 10:26–29). This is a type of spiritual death that can be experienced by a person in mortality who has sinned to the point at which he has no desire or power to avail himself of the grace of Christ. This appears to be the case with the Nephites. As a further warning to us in our day, Mormon has graphically described the wickedness and the physical and spiritual consequences that resulted. They had fallen beyond the grace of Christ temporally because they had no claim upon the blessings of the Lord—blessings of guidance, protection, peace, and so forth—due to their own disobedience (see D&C 130:20–21). Spiritually speaking, the day of grace had passed because they had cut themselves off from the Spirit of the Lord, and because of their wilful rebelliousness they could not and would not repent.

President Spencer W. Kimball characterized the passing of the day of grace as “the tragic point of no return”: “It is true that the great principle of repentance is always available, but for the wicked and rebellious there are serious reservations to this statement. For instance, sin is intensely habit-forming and sometimes moves men to the tragic point of no return. Without repentance there can be no forgiveness, and without forgiveness all the blessings of eternity hang in jeopardy. As the transgressor moves deeper and deeper in his sin, and the error is entrenched more deeply and the will to change is weakened, it becomes increasingly nearer hopeless and he skids down and down until either he does not want to climb back up or he has lost the power to do so.” (*The Miracle of Forgiveness*, p. 117.)

Mormon's Anguish over the Wickedness of His People

Mormon 2:17–29

17. And now, the city of Jashon was near the land where Ammaron had deposited the records unto the Lord, that they might not be destroyed. And behold I had gone according to the word of Ammaron, and taken the plates of Nephi, and did make a record according to the words of Ammaron.

18. And upon the plates of Nephi I did make a full account of all the wickedness and abominations; but upon these plates I did forbear to make a full account of their wickedness and abominations, for behold, a continual scene of wickedness and abominations has been before mine eyes ever since I have been sufficient to behold the ways of man.

19. And wo is me because of their wickedness; for my heart has been filled with sorrow because of their wickedness, all my days; nevertheless, I know that I shall be lifted up at the last day.

20. And it came to pass that in this year the people of Nephi again were hunted and driven. And it came to pass that we were driven forth until we had come northward to the land which was called Shem.

21. And it came to pass that we did fortify the city of Shem, and we did gather in our people as much as it were possible, that perhaps we might save them from destruction.

22. And it came to pass in the three hundred and forty and sixth year they began to come upon us again.

23. And it came to pass that I did speak unto my people, and did urge them with great energy, that they would stand boldly before

the Lamanites and fight for their wives, and their children, and their houses, and their homes.

24. And my words did arouse them somewhat to vigor, inso-much that they did not flee from before the Lamanites, but did stand with boldness against them.

25. And it came to pass that we did contend with an army of thirty thousand against an army of fifty thousand. And it came to pass that we did stand before them with such firmness that they did flee from before us.

26. And it came to pass that when they had fled we did pursue them with our armies, and did meet them again, and did beat them; nevertheless the strength of the Lord was not with us; yea, we were left to ourselves, that the Spirit of the Lord did not abide in us; therefore we had become weak like unto our brethren.

27. And my heart did sorrow because of this the great calamity of my people, because of their wickedness and their abominations. But behold, we did go forth against the Lamanites and the robbers of Gadianon, until we had again taken possession of the lands of our inheritance.

28. And the three hundred and forty and ninth year had passed away. And in the three hundred and fiftieth year we made a treaty with the Lamanites and the robbers of Gadianon, in which we did get the lands of our inheritance divided.

29. And the Lamanites did give unto us the land northward, yea, even to the narrow passage which led into the land southward. And we did give unto the Lamanites all the land southward.

17–29. In these verses we catch a glimpse of the anguish that Mormon must have felt as he observed the bloodshed and deaths among his people. He makes it clear to the latter-day reader that the decline and ultimate destruction of the Nephite society was “because of their wickedness and their abominations” (verse 27). As prophet-leader of the Nephite forces, Mormon exhorted and encouraged them as best he could. He was somewhat successful in rallying them to “stand boldly before the Lamanites and fight for their wives, and their children, and their houses, and their homes” (verse 23). His spiritual exhortations were not heeded, however, and his people were left without the Spirit of the Lord to strengthen and preserve them. One cannot fully comprehend the sorrow that pierced the loving heart of Mormon (see Mormon 3:12) as he hopelessly watched his brethren slaughtered, especially while they were steeped in sin.

19. I know that I shall be lifted up at the last day] Mormon records that he has from his earliest years observed a “continual scene of wickedness and abominations” among his brethren, the Nephites. We are left to feel for Mormon and the difficulty of his life and ministry, as he so often was a lone voice of reason and righteousness. We can only read between the lines and wonder how he could remain faithful and righteous under such adverse conditions, and how he could maintain a personal hope when he was so often filled with sorrow and discouragement at the sins of his society. Implicit in this statement is the special spiritual blessing Mormon had received, which was an anchor to his soul amidst the turmoil and troubles of his life. It seems clear that he had obtained the “more sure word of prophecy” (see D&C 131:5)—the sure knowledge that he was sealed up to eternal life. This is linked with his having received the Second Comforter, the presence of the Savior (see D&C 88:3–4, 67–68; Mormon 1:15). The Prophet Joseph Smith often urged the Saints “to go on and continue to call upon God until you make your calling and election sure for yourselves, by obtaining this more sure word of prophecy, and wait patiently for the promise until you obtain it” (*Teachings*, p. 299). One receives these blessings only after, as Joseph taught, “the Lord has thoroughly proved him, and finds that the man is determined to serve Him at all hazards” (*Teachings*, p. 150). The realization that these blessings were his most assuredly kept Mormon from becoming overcome with sorrow or debilitated with discouragement and also provided the spiritual strength he most needed to continue to succor and serve an unresponsive, unappreciative, hardened, and iniquitous people. (The Book of Mormon provides accounts of other recipients of these great blessings and spiritual assurances. See Enos 1:27; Mosiah 26:20; 3 Nephi 28:3.)

26. We had become weak like unto our brethren] By using his own people as an example, Mormon provides us with a

significant doctrinal teaching concerning the “strength of the Lord” that comes by the power of the Holy Ghost through personal righteousness. “I know, in the strength of the Lord thou canst do all things,” Lamoni testified (Alma 20:4). There is a real power, both physical and spiritual, that can come into the life of every man or woman who is filled with the Holy Ghost. That power constitutes the “strength of the Lord”—a divine, unlimited power. Without that strength and power we are left only with the limited mortal abilities of man. Mormon informs us that his people were without the Spirit. Having no claim upon the infinite powers and strengths of God, being cut off from the blessings of the Spirit, they were left to their own natural abilities, which were infinitely inferior to the “strength of the Lord.” Thus they were nothing special or unique; they were just like any other natural man. Ammon clearly understood the difference between the strength of the Lord and mortal man’s weakness. He testified: “I know that I am nothing; as to my strength I am weak; therefore I will not boast of myself, but I will boast of my God, for in his strength I can do all things” (Alma 26:12).

This important doctrinal message was also forcefully impressed upon the heart and soul of the young prophet Joseph Smith after the loss of the 116 manuscript pages of the Book of Mormon. To him the Lord declared: “For although a man may have many revelations, and have power to do many mighty works, yet if he boasts in his own strength, and sets at naught the counsels of God, and follows after the dictates of his own will and carnal desires, he must fall and incur the vengeance of a just God upon him.” The Lord further instructed Joseph to be faithful and repent of his sins, and then again warned: “Except thou do this, thou shalt be delivered up *and become as other men*” (see D&C 3:4, 11, italics added).

To ensure that we do not disqualify ourselves from having the strength of the Lord we must live our lives in such a way as not to repel the Spirit. By being faithful, obedient, penitent, and spiritually vigilant we can have the companionship of the Holy Ghost, which strengthens and protects in both physical and spiritual ways (see D&C 35:14; 84:33; 89:18–20; see also *Teachings*, p. 323).

Mormon Cries Repentance, but to No Avail

Mormon 3:1–16

1. And it came to pass that the Lamanites did not come to battle again until ten years more had passed away. And behold, I had employed my people, the Ne-

phites, in preparing their lands and their arms against the time of battle.

2. And it came to pass that the Lord did say unto me: Cry unto

this people—Repent ye, and come unto me, and be ye baptized, and build up again my church, and ye shall be spared.

3. And I did cry unto this people, but it was in vain; and they did not realize that it was the Lord that had spared them, and granted unto them a chance for repentance. And behold they did harden their hearts against the Lord their God.

4. And it came to pass that after this tenth year had passed away, making, in the whole, three hundred and sixty years from the coming of Christ, the king of the Lamanites sent an epistle unto me, which gave unto me to know that they were preparing to come again to battle against us.

5. And it came to pass that I did cause my people that they should gather themselves together at the land Desolation, to a city which was in the borders, by the narrow pass which led into the land southward.

6. And there we did place our armies, that we might stop the armies of the Lamanites, that they might not get possession of any of our lands; therefore we did fortify against them with all our force.

7. And it came to pass that in the three hundred and sixty and first year the Lamanites did come down to the city of Desolation to battle against us; and it came to pass that in that year we did beat them, insomuch that they did return to their own lands again.

8. And in the three hundred and sixty and second year they did come down again to battle. And we did beat them again, and did slay a great number of them, and their dead were cast into the sea.

9. And now, because of this great thing which my people, the

Nephites, had done, they began to boast in their own strength, and began to swear before the heavens that they would avenge themselves of the blood of their brethren who had been slain by their enemies.

10. And they did swear by the heavens, and also by the throne of God, that they would go up to battle against their enemies, and would cut them off from the face of the land.

11. And it came to pass that I, Mormon, did utterly refuse from this time forth to be a commander and a leader of this people, because of their wickedness and abomination.

12. Behold, I had led them, notwithstanding their wickedness I had led them many times to battle, and had loved them, according to the love of God which was in me, with all my heart; and my soul had been poured out in prayer unto my God all the day long for them; nevertheless, it was without faith, because of the hardness of their hearts.

13. And thrice have I delivered them out of the hands of their enemies, and they have repented not of their sins.

14. And when they had sworn by all that had been forbidden them by our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, that they would go up unto their enemies to battle, and avenge themselves of the blood of their brethren, behold the voice of the Lord came unto me, saying:

15. Vengeance is mine, and I will repay; and because this people repented not after I had delivered them, behold, they shall be cut off from the face of the earth.

16. And it came to pass that I utterly refused to go up against mine enemies; and I did even as the Lord had commanded me; and

I did stand as an idle witness to manifest unto the world the things which I saw and heard, ac-

ording to the manifestations of the Spirit which had testified of things to come.

1-3. Mormon was commanded of the Lord to once again call his people to repentance. His pleadings and prophesyings once again went unheeded. The people failed to recognize that the period of peace they had experienced had come to them not because of their military might but rather as a merciful blessing from God to give them an opportunity to repent.

4-9. As the Lamanites began again to attack the Nephites and seek to take possession of their lands, Mormon's armies rallied their forces and were able to repel the Lamanites and secure a significant military victory. Rather than recognizing the delivering hand of God and praising him for their victory, the Nephites, blinded by their wickedness, boasted in their own strength and gloried in their own works.

9. They began to boast in their own strength] Numerous scriptural passages warn of boasting in one's own strength (see Proverbs 25:14; Helaman 4:13; 3 Nephi 6:10; D&C 3:4, 13; 84:73; 105:24). Boasting is born of pride, which is antithetical to humility, gratitude, and dependence upon the Lord. Boasting elevates self at the expense of God. Such an act of pride is repulsive to the Spirit of the Lord. (For a more in-depth discussion of the spiritual dangers of boasting, see *Commentary* 3:348; see also Marvin J. Ashton, "Neither Boast of Faith Nor Mighty Works," *Ensign*, May 1990, pp. 65-67.)

10. They did swear by the heavens, and also by the throne of God] In the excitement and thrill surrounding their victory over the Lamanites, the Nephite armies not only boasted in their strength but also began to swear oaths of vengeance against the Lamanites. Mormon was utterly offended by such action because it was another evidence of their collective and individual spiritual emaciation. With this practice of oath-swearing they were blatantly disregarding the commandment of the resurrected Jesus to their ancestors (see verse 14; 3 Nephi 12:33-37). It was not just this act of disobedience that repulsed Mormon, and undoubtedly offended God, but that by using the name of Deity and swearing by the heavens they were profaning and blaspheming God's sacred name. How hypocritical and profane to trample under foot the commandments of God and the words of his holy prophets, through wilful rebellion, and then swear by sacred names and means to suit one's own carnal desires and wicked ambitions! This epitomizes one meaning of "take the name of God in vain."

11-16. Mormon had been long-suffering in his love for and leadership of his people. He had pleaded with them and pleaded

for them before the Lord. Not only had they refused to repent, but now they had compounded their sins by swearing to “go up to battle” against the Lamanites, that is, to fight an offensive (as opposed to a defensive) war, as a matter of vengeance, on Lamanite territory—something the Nephites had always avoided as being forbidden by God (see 3 Nephi 3:20–21). Mormon now recognized that all of his efforts had been to no avail. Three times he had preserved them in battle, yet they failed to recognize the workings of the divine in their behalf. Their wickedness, their boastings and blasphemies, their oaths of vengeance, their failure to acknowledge and depend on the strength of the Lord—given all these negatives, Mormon felt compelled to step down as their military leader and to leave them to their own strength. Thus he refused to again lead them into battle.

12. It was without faith] True faith requires some degree of evidence for the things which are true or are hoped for (see Hebrews 11:1; Alma 32:21). Mormon had prayed continually for his people. He had demonstrated great love for them and sorrowed in their sins and the bloodshed that prevailed. But his prayers in their behalf and his hopes for their repentance were “without faith,” because there was no evidence of the things for which he hoped; for while he continued to love them and hope for their reformation, it had been demonstrated to him time and time again, coupled with knowledge from the Spirit, that his beloved people had no desire to change, but rather desired to die physically (see Mormon 2:14) because they were already dead spiritually.

15. Vengeance is mine, and I will repay] The scriptures contain many statements from the Lord concerning vengeance and recompense being his (see Deuteronomy 32:35, 41; Romans 12:19; Mormon 8:20; D&C 29:17). Those enlivened by the Spirit of the Lord have no room in their hearts for hatred, bitterness, and the seeking of revenge against those who offend and harm them. When one understands and accepts the atonement of Jesus Christ there will be greater love, compassion, and forgiveness of others. The Nephites demonstrated their spiritual depravity by delighting in killing their enemies (see Mormon 4:11) and in bloodshed that stemmed not from justifiable defense of themselves but from the spirit of revenge. A vengeful, bitter, and unforgiving person who seeks to judge, condemn, and execute another cuts himself off from the blessings of inner peace and personal forgiveness and experiences a self-inflicted wound to the spirit that can canker and destroy the soul. It was also this bloodthirsty attitude of vengeance that caused Mormon to refuse to lead the Nephite armies.

16. I did stand as an idle witness] In characterizing himself as an idle witness, Mormon is not saying that he was indolent or inactive when it came to his prophetic responsibilities. Another

meaning of the word *idle* is “unused.” Mormon’s warnings and preachings were left “idle” or “unused” by his people. Even though they would not heed his teachings, he stood and stands as a witness to their being warned by the Lord and to their wilful rebellion.

16. To manifest unto the world] The Lord commanded Mormon to witness to the world all the things he had seen and heard and also all the prophecies and revelations that came by the power of the Holy Ghost. Not only was he a witness to his own people but his words and warnings, as contained in the Book of Mormon, serve also as witness and warning to us today. His account of the decline and ultimate destruction of Nephite civilization stands as a witness to people and institutions of the latter days. How we respond to this voice from the dust will determine not only whether Mormon will be an “idle”—an unused, unheeded—witness to us, but whether we can come unto Christ and, as Mormon experienced, taste and know of the goodness of Jesus.

Mormon’s Words to Go Forth to the Gentiles and the House of Israel

Mormon 3:17–22

17. Therefore I write unto you, Gentiles, and also unto you, house of Israel, when the work shall commence, that ye shall be about to prepare to return to the land of your inheritance;

18. Yea, behold, I write unto all the ends of the earth; yea, unto you, twelve tribes of Israel, who shall be judged according to your works by the twelve whom Jesus chose to be his disciples in the land of Jerusalem.

19. And I write also unto the remnant of this people, who shall also be judged by the twelve whom Jesus chose in this land; and they shall be judged by the other twelve whom Jesus chose in the land of Jerusalem.

20. And these things doth the Spirit manifest unto me; therefore

I write unto you all. And for this cause I write unto you, that ye may know that ye must all stand before the judgment-seat of Christ, yea, every soul who belongs to the whole human family of Adam; and ye must stand to be judged of your works, whether they be good or evil;

21. And also that ye may believe the gospel of Jesus Christ, which ye shall have among you; and also that the Jews, the covenant people of the Lord, shall have other witness besides him whom they saw and heard, that Jesus, whom they slew, was the very Christ and the very God.

22. And I would that I could persuade all ye ends of the earth to repent and prepare to stand before the judgment-seat of Christ.

17–22. Directing his words to the latter-day readers of his account, Mormon explains the purposes of his abridgment of the

Nephite records and his own spiritual writings. He clearly informs the reader that his intent in giving a historical account of his people is really two-fold: 1) to stand as a witness, when all mankind are brought before the judgment bar of Christ, that he has fulfilled the Lord's commandments and has taught and testified according to the promptings of the Spirit; and 2) to invite Jew, Gentile, and all of the house of Israel to come unto Christ, repent of their sins, and believe the gospel that they might thereby obtain salvation. From this testimony of Mormon it is clear that the Book of Mormon is not merely a record of a fallen people but also that it contains the fulness of the everlasting gospel and is directed to all people and all later generations. Verse 22 suggests that Mormon's desire, like Alma's, was to be like an angel who could speak with the trump of God and seek to persuade all to repent and come unto Christ (see Alma 29:1–3; see also *Commentary* 3:193–94).

17. When the work shall commence, that ye shall be about to prepare to return to the land of your inheritance] See commentary on 3 Nephi 21:26.

18–19. Elder Bruce R. McConkie wrote: “The reality is that there will be a whole hierarchy of judges who, under Christ, shall judge the righteous. He alone shall issue the decrees of damnation for the wicked.” (*Millennial Messiah*, p. 520.) Mormon is here describing the role of the Apostles chosen by Jesus in both the Old and New worlds in the judging process. It is clear from the scriptures that each has a somewhat different stewardship and constituency. (See 1 Nephi 12:8–10; D&C 29:12; see also *Commentary* 1:86.)

20. Ye must all stand before the judgment-seat of Christ] Christ's atonement redeems mankind from both spiritual and temporal deaths. Just as the resurrection is universal and unconditional, so also is the overcoming of spiritual death—the exclusion from God's presence that came to all through the Fall. Samuel, the Lamanite prophet, taught that Christ's death and resurrection “bringeth to pass the resurrection, and redeemeth all mankind from the first death—that spiritual death; for all mankind, by the fall of Adam being cut off from the presence of the Lord, are considered as dead both as to things temporal and to things spiritual. But behold the resurrection of Christ redeemeth mankind, yea, even all mankind, and bringeth them back into the presence of the Lord.” (Helaman 14:16–17.) All are brought back into God's presence to be judged of the Savior. Only those whose garments have been made white in the blood of the Lamb through faith in his name and by obedience to his laws and ordinances will thereafter be able to remain in the presence of God, living in eternal life.

21. That the Jews, the covenant people of the Lord, shall have other witness] The title page of the Book of Mormon states that it is “written to the Lamanites, who are a remnant of the

house of Israel; and also to Jew and Gentile” for the purpose of convincing them that Jesus is the Christ. The “other witness” to the Jews of which Mormon speaks is none other than the Book of Mormon—“Another Testament of Jesus Christ.”

Greater Wickedness Than Ever Before Prevails Among Nephites

Mormon 4:1–23

1. And now it came to pass that in the three hundred and sixty and third year the Nephites did go up with their armies to battle against the Lamanites, out of the land Desolation.

2. And it came to pass that the armies of the Nephites were driven back again to the land of Desolation. And while they were yet weary, a fresh army of the Lamanites did come upon them; and they had a sore battle, inso-much that the Lamanites did take possession of the city Desolation, and did slay many of the Nephites, and did take many prisoners.

3. And the remainder did flee and join the inhabitants of the city Teancum. Now the city Teancum lay in the borders by the seashore; and it was also near the city Desolation.

4. And it was because the armies of the Nephites went up unto the Lamanites that they began to be smitten; for were it not for that, the Lamanites could have had no power over them.

5. But, behold, the judgments of God will overtake the wicked; and it is by the wicked that the wicked are punished; for it is the wicked that stir up the hearts of the children of men unto bloodshed.

6. And it came to pass that the Lamanites did make preparations to come against the city Teancum.

7. And it came to pass in the three hundred and sixty and fourth year the Lamanites did come against the city Teancum, that they might take possession of the city Teancum also.

8. And it came to pass that they were repulsed and driven back by the Nephites. And when the Nephites saw that they had driven the Lamanites they did again boast of their own strength; and they went forth in their own might, and took possession again of the city Desolation.

9. And now all these things had been done, and there had been thousands slain on both sides, both the Nephites and the Lamanites.

10. And it came to pass that the three hundred and sixty and sixth year had passed away, and the Lamanites came again upon the Nephites to battle; and yet the Nephites repented not of the evil they had done, but persisted in their wickedness continually.

11. And it is impossible for the tongue to describe, or for man to write a perfect description of the horrible scene of the blood and carnage which was among the people, both of the Nephites and of the Lamanites; and every heart was hardened, so that they delighted in the shedding of blood continually.

12. And there never had been so

great wickedness among all the children of Lehi, nor even among all the house of Israel, according to the words of the Lord, as was among this people.

13. And it came to pass that the Lamanites did take possession of the city Desolation, and this because their number did exceed the number of the Nephites.

14. And they did also march forward against the city Teancum, and did drive the inhabitants forth out of her, and did take many prisoners both women and children, and did offer them up as sacrifices unto their idol gods.

15. And it came to pass that in the three hundred and sixty and seventh year, the Nephites being angry because the Lamanites had sacrificed their women and their children, that they did go against the Lamanites with exceedingly great anger, insomuch that they did beat again the Lamanites, and drive them out of their lands.

16. And the Lamanites did not come again against the Nephites until the three hundred and seventy and fifth year.

17. And in this year they did come down against the Nephites with all their powers; and they were not numbered because of the greatness of their number.

18. And from this time forth did the Nephites gain no power over the Lamanites, but began to be swept off by them even as a dew before the sun.

19. And it came to pass that the Lamanites did come down against the city Desolation; and there was an exceedingly sore battle fought in the land Desolation, in the which they did beat the Nephites.

20. And they fled again from before them, and they came to the city Boaz; and there they did stand against the Lamanites with exceeding boldness, insomuch that the Lamanites did not beat them until they had come again the second time.

21. And when they had come the second time, the Nephites were driven and slaughtered with an exceedingly great slaughter; their women and their children were again sacrificed unto idols.

22. And it came to pass that the Nephites did again flee from before them, taking all the inhabitants with them, both in towns and villages.

23. And now I, Mormon, seeing that the Lamanites were about to overthrow the land, therefore I did go to the hill Shim, and did take up all the records which Ammaron had hid up unto the Lord.

1–12. The Nephite descent into the depths of wickedness surpassed even the power of Mormon’s words to describe the awfulness of their condition. There was so much bloodshed and carnage among the warring Nephites and Lamanites that it could not adequately be recorded in Mormon’s sacred record. Despite all of this tribulation, the Nephites still would not repent and turn to the Lord.

5. It is by the wicked that the wicked are punished] “Often, very often, we are punished as much by our sins as we are for our sins,” Elder Boyd K. Packer has written (*Teach Ye Diligently*, p. 262). As was the case with the Nephites, so often is it the case that God does not have to personally curse, condemn, or punish

the wicked; their actions and associations produce natural consequences that in and of themselves become severe punishments. Many of the destructions, plagues, and atrocities that come upon the world are a direct result of the wickedness of man. C. S. Lewis insightfully observed: "The possibility of pain is inherent in the very existence of a world where souls can meet. When souls become wicked they will certainly use this possibility to hurt one another; and this, perhaps, accounts for four-fifths of the suffering of men. It is men, not God, who have produced racks, whips, prisons, slavery, guns, bayonets, and bombs; it is by human avarice or human stupidity, not by the churlishness of nature, that we have poverty and overwork." (*The Problem of Pain*, p. 89.)

11. They delighted in the shedding of blood continually] Wickedness repels the Spirit in one's life. Devoid of the Spirit, one's love and respect for God and others diminish and begin to "wax cold." Those who have no conscience or regard of others view human life with no special reverence but rather as being expendable as deemed necessary. The most extreme and abominable result of love waxing cold is that not only can one shed innocent blood without repulsion but also can actually receive pleasure in doing it. This was the case with the Nephites, and Mormon's account serves as a warning to us of the wickedness that will prevail in the last days, when men's hearts fail them and the love of many shall wax cold. Delighting in bloodshed epitomizes the awful depths to which a person or society can fall when they are spiritually "past feeling" (1 Nephi 17:45).

13-23. As the Lamanites marched against the Nephites they took Nephite women and children as prisoners, and these they sacrificed to their pagan gods. This so angered the Nephites that they attacked the Lamanites ferociously and were able to drive the enemy out of their lands. This was their last victory. They would never again have power to defeat the Lamanites. It seems probable that Mormon's people, who themselves delighted in bloodshed, whose wickedness could not be described, were angry that Nephite bodies were being sacrificed rather than being repulsed by Lamanite human sacrifice. It is also a sad commentary that even given the abominable Lamanite practice of human sacrifice to pagan gods and other atrocities, Mormon admits that the Lamanites were still no more wicked than some of his people (see Moroni 9:7-10).

23. I did go to the hill Shim, and did take up all the records] As the Lamanites extended their occupation of Nephite lands, amidst all the bloodshed and probably at great personal risk Mormon protected the records Ammaron had entrusted to him. He recognized as his top priority the preservation of the records, in order that they might come forth in the last days.

Mormon Again Leads the Nephites into Battle, but Is Without Hope for Their Success

Mormon 5:1–8

1. And it came to pass that I did go forth among the Nephites, and did repent of the oath which I had made that I would no more assist them; and they gave me command again of their armies, for they looked upon me as though I could deliver them from their afflictions.

2. But behold, I was without hope, for I knew the judgments of the Lord which should come upon them; for they repented not of their iniquities, but did struggle for their lives without calling upon that Being who created them.

3. And it came to pass that the Lamanites did come against us as we had fled to the city of Jordan; but behold, they were driven back that they did not take the city at that time.

4. And it came to pass that they came against us again, and we did maintain the city. And there were also other cities which were maintained by Nephites, which strongholds did cut them off that they could not get into the country which lay before us, to destroy the inhabitants of our land.

5. And it came to pass that whatsoever lands we had passed

by, and the inhabitants thereof were not gathered in, were destroyed by the Lamanites, and their towns, and villages, and cities were burned with fire; and thus three hundred and seventy and nine years passed away.

6. And it came to pass that in the three hundred and eightieth year the Lamanites did come again against us to battle, and we did stand against them boldly; but it was all in vain, for so great were their numbers that they did tread the people of the Nephites under their feet.

7. And it came to pass that we did again take to flight, and those whose flight was swifter than the Lamanites' did escape, and those whose flight did not exceed the Lamanites' were swept down and destroyed.

8. And now behold, I, Mormon, do not desire to harrow up the souls of men in casting before them such an awful scene of blood and carnage as was laid before mine eyes; but I, knowing that these things must surely be made known, and that all things which are hid must be revealed upon the house-tops—

1–8. Because of their gross wickedness, Mormon had previously refused to lead the Nephite armies any longer (see Mormon 3:11–13). Now, however, with compassion for his people, he relented and again took up the command of their armies. For the Nephites, it was their last hope; but Mormon was without hope for them. Not only could Mormon see that their efforts were futile but also he was well aware of the prophecies as to the final fate of his people (see 1 Nephi 12; Helaman 13:8–10). Their destruction was sure because of their failure to repent. Mormon and his record stand as witness of their downfall.

8. All things which are hid must be revealed upon the house-tops] Mormon tells us he purposely did not record all the detail of the “blood and carnage” of those terrible years, this in order to prevent the latter-day reader from having an unnecessary and soul-troubling view of it all. His statement that all things “must be revealed” has a dual meaning. Several scriptural passages testify that at the Judgment all deeds, words, thoughts, and intents of the heart—both righteous and wicked—will be revealed, will be shouted from the housetops, as it were, for all to know (see Matthew 10:26–27; D&C 1:3; 88:108–10). Undoubtedly Mormon had this doctrinal concept in mind as he spoke of the wickedness of his own civilization, but examining the context of this statement leads one to believe that Mormon may have also been referring to another, more specific, way in which the fuller record of the Nephites would be revealed. In the next several verses we read of the knowledge of his people that will come forth because of his record. Throughout his record Mormon speaks of other records or accounts, even another set of plates, that contain additional information and a “more history part” of the peoples (see 2 Nephi 4:14). Being familiar with the prophecies of those holy men who had preceded him, Mormon was probably also referring to the coming forth of those records that were sealed. As this record which is “sealed by the power of God” comes to light in the last days, all the workings of God will be revealed, and the deeds and destructions of the Nephites and the Lamanites which Mormon could not describe will indeed “be revealed upon the house-tops” (see 2 Nephi 27:10–11; see also *Commentary* 1:316–18).

Mormon’s Record to Come Forth to Invite All to Come unto Christ

Mormon 5:9–24

9. And also that a knowledge of these things must come unto the remnant of these people, and also unto the Gentiles, who the Lord hath said should scatter this people, and this people should be counted as naught among them—therefore I write a small abridgment, daring not to give a full account of the things which I have seen, because of the commandment which I have received, and also that ye might not have too great sorrow because of the

wickedness of this people.

10. And now behold, this I speak unto their seed, and also to the Gentiles who have care for the house of Israel, that realize and know from whence their blessings come.

11. For I know that such will sorrow for the calamity of the house of Israel; yea, they will sorrow for the destruction of this people; they will sorrow that this people had not repented that they might have been clasped in the

arms of Jesus.

12. Now these things are written unto the remnant of the house of Jacob; and they are written after this manner, because it is known of God that wickedness will not bring them forth unto them; and they are to be hid up unto the Lord that they may come forth in his own due time.

13. And this is the commandment which I have received; and behold, they shall come forth according to the commandment of the Lord, when he shall see fit, in his wisdom.

14. And behold, they shall go unto the unbelieving of the Jews; and for this intent shall they go—that they may be persuaded that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of the living God; that the Father may bring about, through his most Beloved, his great and eternal purpose, in restoring the Jews, or all the house of Israel, to the land of their inheritance, which the Lord their God hath given them, unto the fulfilling of his covenant;

15. And also that the seed of this people may more fully believe his gospel, which shall go forth unto them from the Gentiles; for this people shall be scattered, and shall become a dark, a filthy, and a loathsome people, beyond the description of that which ever hath been amongst us, yea, even that which hath been among the Lamanites, and this because of their unbelief and idolatry.

16. For behold, the Spirit of the Lord hath already ceased to strive with their fathers; and they are without Christ and God in the world; and they are driven about as chaff before the wind.

17. They were once a delightful people, and they had Christ for their shepherd; yea, they were led even by God the Father.

18. But now, behold, they are led about by Satan, even as chaff is driven before the wind, or as a vessel is tossed about upon the waves, without sail or anchor, or without anything wherewith to steer her; and even as she is, so are they.

19. And behold, the Lord hath reserved their blessings, which they might have received in the land, for the Gentiles who shall possess the land.

20. But behold, it shall come to pass that they shall be driven and scattered by the Gentiles; and after they have been driven and scattered by the Gentiles, behold, then will the Lord remember the covenant which he made unto Abraham and unto all the house of Israel.

21. And also the Lord will remember the prayers of the righteous, which have been put up unto him for them.

22. And then, O ye Gentiles, how can ye stand before the power of God, except ye shall repent and turn from your evil ways?

23. Know ye not that ye are in the hands of God? Know ye not that he hath all power, and at his great command the earth shall be rolled together as a scroll?

24. Therefore, repent ye, and humble yourselves before him, lest he shall come out in justice against you—lest a remnant of the seed of Jacob shall go forth among you as a lion, and tear you in pieces, and there is none to deliver.

9–13. It is Mormon's intent that the "knowledge of these things" as contained in his "small abridgment" which we have in the Book of Mormon should come forth to the remnant of the

seed of Lehi so that they could know whereby the blessings of the Lord can be obtained. It was also his hope that the sorrow that would come to this remnant as they learn of the destruction of their ancestors would lead them to repentance and the mercy of Jesus. To the Gentiles, who would bring forth this record and minister to the remnants of Lehi's people, Mormon also wrote desiring that his record would also benefit and bless them. Mormon had complete confidence that the Lord would preserve his abridgment and bring it forth in the Lord's own due time, by his own righteous means, to achieve his own purposes (see Enos 1:16; *Commentary* 2:100).

14. They shall go unto the unbelieving of the Jews] Mormon also directs his words to the Jews who do not believe that Jesus is the Christ but still wait for their Messiah. One of the primary purposes of the Book of Mormon and the latter-day restoration is to persuade the Jews that Jesus is the Christ and that as Messiah he will indeed fulfill his covenant with them and return them to their lands of inheritance. The Book of Mormon testifies that prior to the Second Coming the Jews will *begin* to believe in Jesus, and this will be as a result of their acceptance of Mormon's record and their recognition of God's latter-day work (see 2 Nephi 30:7–8; see also *Commentary* 1:356).

15–20. Mormon, like Nephi before him, knew and prophesied that the Book of Mormon would come forth to the remnants of the Nephites and the Lamanites by the hand of the Gentiles (see 1 Nephi 13:20–29, 35–39). The fulness of the gospel, as contained in the Book of Mormon and in the message of the Restoration, would come forth to the Lamanites, who would have fallen into a state of spiritual decline to the point that they would wander without spiritual direction, being led by Satan and false traditions. Even though they would be persecuted and driven by the Gentiles, the Lamanites would be gathered again to the covenant of Abraham (see also 2 Nephi 30:1–6).

16. The Spirit of the Lord hath already ceased to strive with their fathers] President Harold B. Lee commented on this phrase in the April 1956 general conference: "Mormon described some people, his people, from whom the Spirit of the Lord had departed, and when I read that . . . , it seems clear to me that what he was talking about was not merely the inability to have the companionship of or the gift of the Holy Ghost, but he was talking of that light of truth to which every one born into the world is entitled and which will never cease to strive with the individual unless he loses it through his own sinning" (CR, April 1956, p. 108).

16. They are without Christ and God in the world] When a person has sinned to the point that this light of Christ, the Spirit of God, ceases to strive with him, the "spark of divine" that is in-

herent in every man is gone and the link to divinity is broken—leaving the person without Christ and God in their lives. If the light of Christ, which persuades men to do good, to believe in Christ and to know good from evil (see Moroni 7:16–18), is taken away due to wickedness, that person becomes spiritual chaff, blown in any direction by the tempests of Satan.

21. The Lord will remember the prayers of the righteous] Speaking specifically of the record that will be preserved to come forth for the Lord’s righteous purposes, it is clear that the prayers of the righteous that the Lord will remember will be those of the prophets who preceded Mormon and who had fervently prayed that their records would be preserved (see Enos 1:12–18; also *Commentary 2:100–101*).

22–24. Mormon ends this chapter with a warning and an exhortation to the Gentiles. In order for them to be the instrument in the hands of the Lord to bring forth this record to the remnant of Lehi’s seed, they must repent and turn to the Lord. The objectives of the Book of Mormon and of the latter-day work of gathering and spreading the message of the Restoration can only be realized upon principles of righteousness.

24. Lest a remnant of the seed of Jacob shall go forth among you as a lion] See commentary on 3 Nephi 16:15.

The Last Battles in the Land of Cumorah

Mormon 6:1–15

1. And now I finish my record concerning the destruction of my people, the Nephites. And it came to pass that we did march forth before the Lamanites.

2. And I, Mormon, wrote an epistle unto the king of the Lamanites, and desired of him that he would grant unto us that we might gather together our people unto the land of Cumorah, by a hill which was called Cumorah, and there we could give them battle.

3. And it came to pass that the king of the Lamanites did grant unto me the thing which I desired.

4. And it came to pass that we did march forth to the land of Cumorah, and we did pitch our tents

round about the hill Cumorah; and it was in a land of many waters, rivers, and fountains; and here we had hope to gain advantage over the Lamanites.

5. And when three hundred and eighty and four years had passed away, we had gathered in all the remainder of our people unto the land Cumorah.

6. And it came to pass that when we had gathered in all our people in one to the land of Cumorah, behold I, Mormon, began to be old; and knowing it to be the last struggle of my people, and having been commanded of the Lord that I should not suffer the records which had been handed down by our fathers, which were

sacred, to fall into the hands of the Lamanites, (for the Lamanites would destroy them) therefore I made this record out of the plates of Nephi, and hid up in the hill Cumorah all the records which had been entrusted to me by the hand of the Lord, save it were these few plates which I gave unto my son Moroni.

7. And it came to pass that my people, with their wives and their children, did now behold the armies of the Lamanites marching towards them; and with that awful fear of death which fills the breasts of all the wicked, did they await to receive them.

8. And it came to pass that they came to battle against us, and every soul was filled with terror because of the greatness of their numbers.

9. And it came to pass that they did fall upon my people with the sword, and with the bow, and with the arrow, and with the ax, and with all manner of weapons of war.

10. And it came to pass that my men were hewn down, yea, even my ten thousand who were with me, and I fell wounded in the midst; and they passed by me that they did not put an end to my life.

11. And when they had gone through and hewn down all my people save it were twenty and four of us, (among whom was my son Moroni) and we having sur-

vived the dead of our people, did behold on the morrow, when the Lamanites had returned unto their camps, from the top of the hill Cumorah, the ten thousand of my people who were hewn down, being led in the front by me.

12. And we also beheld the ten thousand of my people who were led by my son Moroni.

13. And behold, the ten thousand of Gidgiddonah had fallen, and he also in the midst.

14. And Lamah had fallen with his ten thousand; and Gilgal had fallen with his ten thousand; and Limhah had fallen with his ten thousand; and Jeneum had fallen with his ten thousand; and Cumenihah, and Moronihah, and Antionum, and Shiblom, and Shem, and Josh, had fallen with their ten thousand each.

15. And it came to pass that there were ten more who did fall by the sword, with their ten thousand each; yea, even all my people, save it were those twenty and four who were with me, and also a few who had escaped into the south countries, and a few who had deserted over unto the Lamanites, had fallen; and their flesh, and bones, and blood lay upon the face of the earth, being left by the hands of those who slew them to molder upon the land, and to crumble and to return to their mother earth.

1–15. Describing the final scenes of the battles between the Nephites and the Lamanites, Mormon writes of the gathering at the land of Cumorah and of his preserving the records and hiding them up in the hill of Cumorah and delivering certain plates to his son Moroni (see Moroni 9:24). Tens and hundreds of thousands of his people have fallen in the battles surrounding Cumorah. A wounded Mormon and twenty-four others, including Moroni, are all that are left of the Nephite nation.

7. That awful fear of death which fills the breasts of all

the wicked] The Spirit of the Lord that fills the hearts of the righteous brings comfort, peace, and hope of a glorious resurrection to those who face death. “Those that die in me,” declared the Lord, “shall not taste of death, for it shall be sweet unto them” (D&C 42:46). In contrast, the wicked have no such hope or peace, and as a result face the prospects of death with trepidation, unease, even fear. It is for this reason that the Lord in this dispensation urged us to “weep for the loss of them that die, and more especially those that have not hope of a glorious resurrection. . . . And they that die not in me, wo unto them, for their death is bitter.” (D&C 42:45, 47.)

Mormon’s Lamentation: “How Could Ye Have Rejected That Jesus?”

Mormon 6:16–22

16. And my soul was rent with anguish, because of the slain of my people, and I cried:

17. O ye fair ones, how could ye have departed from the ways of the Lord! O ye fair ones, how could ye have rejected that Jesus, who stood with open arms to receive you!

18. Behold, if ye had not done this, ye would not have fallen. But behold, ye are fallen, and I mourn your loss.

19. O ye fair sons and daughters, ye fathers and mothers, ye husbands and wives, ye fair ones, how is it that ye could have fallen!

20. But behold, ye are gone, and my sorrows cannot bring your return.

21. And the day soon cometh that your mortal must put on immortality, and these bodies which are now moldering in corruption must soon become incorruptible bodies; and then ye must stand before the judgment-seat of Christ, to be judged according to your works; and if it so be that ye are righteous, then are ye blessed with your fathers who have gone before you.

22. O that ye had repented before this great destruction had come upon you. But behold, ye are gone, and the Father, yea, the Eternal Father of heaven, knoweth your state; and he doeth with you according to his justice and mercy.

16–22. There is perhaps no more poignant passage in all of holy writ than these verses penned by Mormon in anguish of soul at seeing his nation end in such a wretched state of wickedness after a lifetime of watching them go steadily from bad to worse and being unable to persuade them to repent. One would have to experience such a life in order to fully imagine the feelings that welled in Mormon’s heart as he looked upon the thousands of decaying bodies. “How is it that you could have fallen?” is Mormon’s question. It was not a question of military might or lack of it. He

was soberly searching for the cause of their wilful rebellion against God and their unwillingness to accept the atonement of Christ. Mormon's heart-sick cry "O that ye had repented before this great destruction" is something that modern society also could take as a plea—a plea for us to learn from the pitiful plight of the Nephites by hearkening to the Savior's merciful invitation and thereby preparing to stand righteously before the judgment seat of Christ.

Mormon's Final Counsel to Latter-day Israel

Mormon 7:1–10

1. And now, behold, I would speak somewhat unto the remnant of this people who are spared, if it so be that God may give unto them my words, that they may know of the things of their fathers; yea, I speak unto you, ye remnant of the house of Israel; and these are the words which I speak:

2. Know ye that ye are of the house of Israel.

3. Know ye that ye must come unto repentance, or ye cannot be saved.

4. Know ye that ye must lay down your weapons of war, and delight no more in the shedding of blood, and take them not again, save it be that God shall command you.

5. Know ye that ye must come to the knowledge of your fathers, and repent of all your sins and iniquities, and believe in Jesus Christ, that he is the Son of God, and that he was slain by the Jews, and by the power of the Father he hath risen again, whereby he hath gained the victory over the grave; and also in him is the sting of death swallowed up.

6. And he bringeth to pass the resurrection of the dead, whereby man must be raised to stand before his judgment-seat.

7. And he hath brought to pass the redemption of the world, whereby he that is found guiltless

before him at the judgment day hath it given unto him to dwell in the presence of God in his kingdom, to sing ceaseless praises with the choirs above, unto the Father, and unto the Son, and unto the Holy Ghost, which are one God, in a state of happiness which hath no end.

8. Therefore repent, and be baptized in the name of Jesus, and lay hold upon the gospel of Christ, which shall be set before you, not only in this record but also in the record which shall come unto the Gentiles from the Jews, which record shall come from the Gentiles unto you.

9. For behold, this is written for the intent that ye may believe that; and if ye believe that ye will believe this also; and if ye believe this ye will know concerning your fathers, and also the marvelous works which were wrought by the power of God among them.

10. And ye will also know that ye are a remnant of the seed of Jacob; therefore ye are numbered among the people of the first covenant; and if it so be that ye believe in Christ, and are baptized, first with water, then with fire and with the Holy Ghost, following the example of our Savior, according to that which he hath commanded us, it shall be well with you in the day of judgment. Amen.

1–10. Like the title page of the Book of Mormon, this chapter serves as a sort of summary statement, a comprehensive picture of what matters to the Nephite prophet-writers. So far as we can tell, this chapter would represent Mormon's final offering, his last counsel to the people of the last days, a message which is brief but all-encompassing. It distills into ten short verses what will surely prove to be timely and timeless directives, pertinent warnings for the people of the last days.

1. Ye remnant of the house of Israel] Though Mormon is addressing specifically the descendants of Lehi, his message and warning are applicable and appropriate to all Israel, all of those who constitute a remnant of Jacob.

2. Know ye that ye are of the house of Israel] We sense a particular problem among many Latter-day Saints as this century draws to a close and as we draw nearer to the time when the Holy One of Israel will return to reign over his covenant people. There is evidenced frequently among young and old a lack of covenant consciousness, not necessarily in regard to covenants and ordinances required for salvation but rather in a lack of feeling appropriate kinship and identity with ancient Israel and with the fathers—Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob—and of understanding and carrying out the responsibilities we have inherited from them.

In our democratic and egalitarian society, in a time when equality and brotherhood are all-important, perhaps we are losing a feel for what it means to be a covenant people, what it means to be a chosen people. Too many even among the Latter-day Saints cry out that such sentiments are parochial and primitive, that they lead to exclusivism and racism. Others contend that to emphasize Israel's chosen status is to denigrate and degrade others not designated as Israel.

Careful and prayerful study of the scriptures—especially the Old Testament and the Book of Mormon—will not only bring people to understand in their minds the origin and destiny of the descendants of Jacob but will also cause them to know in their hearts what it means to come to earth through a chosen lineage and what God would have them do to be a light to the world, particularly to so many who sit in spiritual darkness. The words of the Lord to ancient Israel should be received by modern Israel with sobriety and humility, but they must be received and believed if we are to realize our potential to become a holy people and a royal priesthood. Jehovah spoke millennia ago of "Israel, whom I have chosen" (Isaiah 44:1) and assured the Israelites that "you only have I known of all the families of the earth" (Amos 3:2; see also Isaiah 45:4).

And yet coming to this earth through a peculiar lineage involves much more than boasting of a blessing: it entails bearing a burden. "Once we know who we are," Elder Russell M. Nelson

said, “and the royal lineage of which we are a part, our actions and directions in life will be more appropriate to our inheritance” (“Thanks for the Covenant,” 1988–89 *BYU Devotional and Fireside Speeches*, p. 59). Years ago a wise man wrote of the burdens of chosenness and of why God had selected a particular people as his own: “A man will rise and demand, ‘By what right does God choose one race or people above another?’ I like that form of the question. It is much better than asking by what right God degrades one people beneath another, although that is implied. God’s grading is always upward. If He raises up a nation, it is that other nations may be raised up through its ministry. If He exalts a great man, an apostle of liberty or science or faith, it is that He might raise a degraded people to a better condition. The divine selection is not [alone] a prize, a compliment paid to the man or the race—it is a burden imposed. To appoint a Chosen people is not a pandering to the racial vanity of a ‘superior people,’ it is a yoke bound upon the necks of those who are chosen for a special service.” In short, “the Lord hath made [Israel] great for what He is going to make [Israel] do.” (W. J. Cameron, “Is There a Chosen People?” in James H. Anderson, *God’s Covenant Race*, pp. 300–302.)

3. Know ye that ye must come unto repentance] Every soul—every man, woman, and child who has arrived at the years or the state of accountability—has need of repentance. “For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God” (Romans 3:23). “Then opened [Jesus] their understanding, that they might understand the scriptures, and said unto them, Thus it is written, and thus it behooved Christ to suffer, and to rise from the dead the third day: and that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in his name among all nations” (Luke 24:45–47). Joseph Smith spoke of the universal need for repentance, certifying that “if there was sin among men, repentance was as necessary at one time or age of the world as another—and . . . other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ” (*Teachings*, p. 265).

4. Know ye that ye must lay down your weapons of war] War is never the solution to men’s problems. Though it may be necessary to protect one’s family and rights (see commentary on Alma 43–62), its side effects and after effects are devastating. The Saints are called to “renounce war and proclaim peace” (D&C 98:16), even the peace that can come only through gospel living. President Spencer W. Kimball wrote of the buildup of military might as a form of national and international idolatry: “In spite of our delight in defining ourselves as modern, and our tendency to think we possess a sophistication that no people in the past ever had—in spite of these things, we are, on the whole, an idolatrous people—a condition most repugnant to the Lord.

“We are a warlike people, easily distracted from our assignment of preparing for the coming of the Lord. When enemies rise up, we commit vast resources to the fabrication of gods of stone and steel—ships, planes, missiles, fortifications—and depend on them for protection and deliverance. When threatened we become antienemy instead of pro-kingdom of God; we train a man in the art of war and call him a patriot, thus, in the manner of Satan’s counterfeit of true patriotism, perverting the Savior’s teaching. . . .

“What are we to fear when the Lord is with us? Can we not take the Lord at his word and exercise a particle of faith in him? Our assignment is affirmative: to forsake the things of the world as ends in themselves; to leave off idolatry and press forward in faith; to carry the gospel to our enemies, that they might no longer be our enemies.

“We must leave off the worship of modern-day idols and a reliance on the ‘arm of flesh,’ for the Lord has said to all the world in our day, ‘I will not spare any that remain in Babylon’ (D&C 64:24).” (“The False Gods We Worship,” *Ensign*, June 1976, p. 6.)

4. Delight no more in the shedding of blood] See Alma 48:11; 55:19.

5. Ye must come to the knowledge of your fathers] On the one hand, this means that Israel of the last days must come to know of their ancient fathers—Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob—and know of the covenant God made with them and their posterity. That is, they must regain a covenant consciousness, retie themselves to the former-day Saints. On the other hand, they are being counseled to gain the *knowledge* that was had by the ancients—the knowledge about Christ the Savior, the knowledge of his gospel. Nephi prophesied that at that day his and his brothers’ descendants (and this of course applied generally to latter-day Israel) would come to know “that they are of the house of Israel, and that they are the covenant people of the Lord; and then shall they know and come to the knowledge of their forefathers, and also to the knowledge of the gospel of their Redeemer, which was ministered unto their fathers by him; wherefore, they shall come to the knowledge of their Redeemer and the very points of his doctrine, that they may know how to come unto him and be saved” (1 Nephi 15:14).

5. By the power of the Father he hath risen again] See 2 Nephi 2:8; Mosiah 15:8.

5. In him is the sting of death swallowed up] See Mosiah 16:7; Isaiah 25:8; Hosea 13:14; 1 Corinthians 15:55.

6. See 2 Nephi 9:22; Helaman 14:15–18.

7. He that is found guiltless before him at the judgment day] Men and women can never be guiltless as a result of their own deeds. All of us sin. All offend the Spirit. All experience

spiritual death. It is through the atonement of our Lord and Savior, as a result of their trust in his mercy and grace, that people are made clean, are justified—certified to be innocent, exonerated, declared righteous, pronounced guiltless.

7. Hath it given unto him to dwell in the presence of God] “Salvation, which is exaltation, which is eternal life, is free. It is not something for which we can barter, nor something which may be purchased with money. Nor in the strictest sense is it something which may be *earned*. More correctly, salvation is a gift, a gift most precious, something gloriously transcendent which may only be *inherited*.” (Robert L. Millet, *By Grace Are We Saved*, p. 7, italics in original.) “If thou wilt do good,” the Lord explained to Oliver Cowdery, “yea, and hold out faithful to the end, thou shalt be saved in the kingdom of God, which is the greatest of all the gifts of God; for there is no gift greater than the gift of salvation” (D&C 6:13). To David Whitmer that same Lord affirmed: “If you keep my commandments and endure to the end you shall have eternal life, which gift is the greatest of all the gifts of God” (D&C 14:7).

7. Which are one God] See 2 Nephi 31:21; Alma 11:44; 3 Nephi 11:36; commentary on 3 Nephi 11:27; commentary on 3 Nephi 28:10.

7. A state of happiness which hath no end] See Mosiah 2:41.

8. Be baptized in the name of Jesus] See 3 Nephi 11:23–27; commentary on Alma 11:44.

8. The record which shall come unto the Gentiles from the Jews] Mormon here speaks of the Bible as another scriptural record which shall contain the gospel of Jesus Christ.

9. This is written for the intent that ye may believe that] Compare Mormon 3:21. That is, the Book of Mormon is written for the intent of “proving to the world that the holy scriptures”—the Holy Bible—“are true” (D&C 20:11). It is not the reverse. The Bible has not been given primarily to bear witness of the Book of Mormon. Rather, in a day when men and women all over the earth have come to doubt the historicity and question the value of the doctrinal messages of the Bible, the Lord has seen fit to bring forth a companion volume of holy writ, the stick of Ephraim, which bears witness of the essential truthfulness of the stick of Judah (see Ezekiel 37:15–19).

9. If ye believe that ye will believe this also] Nephi wrote: “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, italics added.) That is to say, a true Christian, one who is open to the revelations of the Spirit, one who loves the Lord and seeks earnestly to know his mind and will, will recognize and acknowledge the Spirit which illuminates the pages of the Book of Mormon to be the Spirit of God, the same Spirit which breathes life and meaning into the pages of the Bible.

10. Ye are a remnant of the seed of Jacob] See commentary on verse 2; commentary on 3 Nephi 21:22.

10. The people of the first covenant] Presumably Mormon is here speaking of the chosen people, the elect, those who have been true to the gospel covenant and are thus entitled to the supernal blessings associated therewith. They are to become joint heirs, coinheritors with Jesus Christ to all that the Father has; that is to say, they receive the blessings reserved for the Firstborn and thus qualify for membership in the Church of the Firstborn (compare 2 Nephi 1:28).

10. Baptized, first with water, then with fire and with the Holy Ghost] See *Commentary* 1:366.

Moroni Remains to Relate a Dire Tale

Mormon 8:1–13

1. Behold I, Moroni, do finish the record of my father, Mormon. Behold, I have but few things to write, which things I have been commanded by my father.

2. And now it came to pass that after the great and tremendous battle at Cumorah, behold, the Nephites who had escaped into the country southward were hunted by the Lamanites, until they were all destroyed.

3. And my father also was killed by them, and I even remain alone to write the sad tale of the destruction of my people. But behold, they are gone, and I fulfil the commandment of my father. And whether they will slay me, I know not.

4. Therefore I will write and hide up the records in the earth; and whither I go it mattereth not.

5. Behold, my father hath made this record, and he hath

written the intent thereof. And behold, I would write it also if I had room upon the plates, but I have not; and ore I have none, for I am alone. My father hath been slain in battle, and all my kinsfolk, and I have not friends nor whither to go; and how long the Lord will suffer that I may live I know not.

6. Behold, four hundred years have passed away since the coming of our Lord and Savior.

7. And behold, the Lamanites have hunted my people, the Nephites, down from city to city and from place to place, even until they are no more; and great has been their fall; yea, great and marvelous is the destruction of my people, the Nephites.

8. And behold, it is the hand of the Lord which hath done it. And behold also, the Lamanites are at war one with another; and the whole face of this land is one

continual round of murder and bloodshed; and no one knoweth the end of the war.

9. And now, behold, I say no more concerning them, for there are none save it be the Lamanites and robbers that do exist upon the face of the land.

10. And there are none that do know the true God save it be the disciples of Jesus, who did tarry in the land until the wickedness of the people was so great that the Lord would not suffer them to remain with the people; and whether they be upon the face of

the land no man knoweth.

11. But behold, my father and I have seen them, and they have ministered unto us.

12. And whoso receiveth this record, and shall not condemn it because of the imperfections which are in it, the same shall know of greater things than these. Behold, I am Moroni; and were it possible, I would make all things known unto you.

13. Behold, I make an end of speaking concerning this people. I am the son of Mormon, and my father was a descendant of Nephi.

1–13. These verses are both pathetic and heart-rending. In them we get a glimpse into the soul of a great man, Moroni, but also become privy to some of the most tender and painful moments and reflections of his life. He has witnessed fratricide on a grand scale. He has seen the decimation of the Nephites, has anguished over the fall of a major civilization. He is alone. He is without hope in mortal matters but still full of that hope which burns brightly in the bosom of one who knows in whom he trusts.

1. I, Moroni, do finish the record of my father] Moroni continues (Mormon 8–9) the abridgment of the large plates of Nephi which his father, Mormon, had written. In addition, Moroni will contribute his own abridgment of the twenty-four gold plates, the Jaredite record (the book of Ether), and will add some of his own teachings and counsel (the book of Moroni).

1. Which things I have been commanded by my father] We suppose that what follows in this and the subsequent chapter are teachings and prophecies which Mormon felt should be delivered to a latter-day people.

2. See Mormon 6:15.

5. He hath written the intent thereof] Though Moroni indicates here that he has no room to provide the reader with his own statement as to the purpose of the Nephite-Jaredite record, he does so masterfully on the title page of the Book of Mormon. On that page we find some of the most comprehensive and expansive language anywhere in the book, language evidencing divine perspective granted after a careful study of over one thousand years of sacred history.

5. How long the Lord will suffer that I may live I know not] Indeed, one of the tragic and poignant realities is that Moroni will wander in the land for at least twenty-one more lonely years (see Mormon 8:6; Moroni 10:1).

8. It is the hand of the Lord which hath done it] Moroni recognizes and here points out that the demise of the Nephite nation is directly tied to their sin against light, their personal and national apostasy. They had offended their God to the point at which his mercy was withdrawn. They have now reaped the whirlwind of his wrath.

10. We cannot tell from the text whether Moroni here speaks of things as they really are—that there are literally no believers besides himself left in the land—or whether at a time of discouragement and despair he yields (quite naturally) to a moment of hyperbole.

11. It would seem that Mormon and Moroni, because of their unyielding faithfulness, enjoyed at least the occasional association of the translated Nephites (see 3 Nephi 28:26).

12. Those who exercise their faith and thereby enjoy the gift of belief—who open themselves to the word and will of the Lord revealed to them to that point—prepare themselves for even greater revelation. Those who, for example, read and search and study the present Book of Mormon, who pray and ponder upon and teach its timeless lessons, will one day be privileged to receive even greater revelations and truths (see 3 Nephi 26:8–9).

12. Shall not condemn it] See verse 17; Mormon 9:31.

12. Were it possible, I would make all things known unto you] Moroni was a prophet. He had read the account of the brother of Jared about the marvelous scenes the Savior had shown him, even the end from the beginning, which is contained in the sealed portion of the Book of Mormon (see Ether 3, 4). It would seem, however, that he was under the same charge and restriction as his father in regard to making these things known (see 3 Nephi 26:8–11).

13. My father was a descendant of Nephi] See 3 Nephi 5:20.

Joseph Smith to Bring Forth a Record of Infinite Worth

Mormon 8:14–25

14. And I am the same who hideth up this record unto the Lord; the plates thereof are of no worth, because of the commandment of the Lord. For he truly saith that no one shall have them to get gain; but the record thereof is of great worth; and whoso shall bring it to light, him will the Lord bless.

15. For none can have power to bring it to light save it be given him of God; for God wills that it shall be done with an eye single to his glory, or the welfare of the ancient and long dispersed covenant people of the Lord.

16. And blessed be he that shall bring this thing to light; for it shall

be brought out of darkness unto light, according to the word of God; yea, it shall be brought out of the earth, and it shall shine forth out of darkness, and come unto the knowledge of the people; and it shall be done by the power of God.

17. And if there be faults they be the faults of a man. But behold, we know no fault; nevertheless God knoweth all things; therefore, he that condemneth, let him be aware lest he shall be in danger of hell fire.

18. And he that saith: Show unto me, or ye shall be smitten—let him beware lest he commandeth that which is forbidden of the Lord.

19. For behold, the same that judgeth rashly shall be judged rashly again; for according to his works shall his wages be; therefore, he that smiteth shall be smitten again, of the Lord.

20. Behold what the scripture says—man shall not smite, neither shall he judge; for judgment is mine, saith the Lord, and vengeance is mine also, and I will repay.

21. And he that shall breathe out wrath and strifes against the work of the Lord, and against the covenant people of the Lord who are the house of Israel, and shall

say: We will destroy the work of the Lord, and the Lord will not remember his covenant which he hath made unto the house of Israel—the same is in danger to be hewn down and cast into the fire;

22. For the eternal purposes of the Lord shall roll on, until all his promises shall be fulfilled.

23. Search the prophecies of Isaiah. Behold, I cannot write them. Yea, behold I say unto you, that those saints who have gone before me, who have possessed this land, shall cry, yea, even from the dust will they cry unto the Lord; and as the Lord liveth he will remember the covenant which he hath made with them.

24. And he knoweth their prayers, that they were in behalf of their brethren. And he knoweth their faith, for in his name could they remove mountains; and in his name could they cause the earth to shake; and by the power of his word did they cause prisons to tumble to the earth; yea, even the fiery furnace could not harm them, neither wild beasts nor poisonous serpents, because of the power of his word.

25. And behold, their prayers were also in behalf of him that the Lord should suffer to bring these things forth.

14. In regard to the things of this mortal sphere, as measured in terms of dollars, cents, or senines, the plates of the Book of Mormon are of little worth. But in regard to eternal things, as pertaining to God and his plan for the salvation of mankind, the message of the Book of Mormon is a vital and indispensable (and thus priceless) matter. Today a person's salvation itself is at stake in whether he accepts or rejects that message.

15. Ammon explained to King Limhi: "I can assuredly tell thee, O king, of a man that can translate the [Jaredite] records; for he has wherewith that he can look, and translate all records that are of ancient date; and it is a gift from God. And the things are called

interpreters, and *no man can look in them except he be commanded, lest he should look to that he ought not and he should perish.* And whosoever is commanded to look in them, the same is called seer.” (Mosiah 8:13, italics added.)

16. Blessed be he that shall bring this thing to light] In the strictest sense this refers to Joseph Smith. (See commentary on verse 25.) In a broader sense it refers to President Ezra Taft Benson, who has done as much as anyone in this dispensation to promote serious reading and reflection and study of the Book of Mormon. Further, it refers to missionaries and other Church members who preach from and bear witness of the Book of Mormon to those in the world who desperately need its light and life.

16. It shall be brought out of darkness unto light] This is meant both literally and figuratively. As Moroni says, “it [the Book of Mormon] shall be brought out of the earth.” In another sense, the golden plates came forth from a day of darkness—Nephite and Lamanite apostasy—to a day of darkness, the continuing apostasy of the nineteenth century. But the Book of Mormon would be one of the means by which light would begin to shine brightly among a people who had been wandering in sin and darkness. It would help to prepare for an eventual day of glorious light, the Millennium.

17. Lest he shall be in danger of hell fire] That is, let that person who criticizes or condemns the Book of Mormon be fully aware that he thereby condemns that which God approves and sanctions. By so doing he brings himself under God’s condemnation. (See Ether 12:23–27; D&C 20:13.)

18. Such persons (like Professor Charles Anthon—see Joseph Smith–History 1:63–65) are in effect sign-seekers and come under divine censure (see D&C 63:11; compare 2 Nephi 27:15–20).

19. See 3 Nephi 14:2; Moroni 7:14.

20. Vengeance is mine also, and I will repay] See Isaiah 35:4; Romans 12:19.

21–22. Who is man to suppose that he can prevent God from blessing and endowing with knowledge the covenant people (see D&C 121:33)? How narrow-minded must one be to suppose that he or she can prevent the Lord Omnipotent from bringing to pass his eternal purposes, particularly in regard to his faithful followers? “The works, and the designs, and the purposes of God cannot be frustrated, neither can they come to naught. For God doth not walk in crooked paths, neither doth he turn to the right hand nor to the left, neither doth he vary from that which he hath said, therefore his paths are straight, and his course is one eternal round. Remember, remember that it is not the work of God that is frustrated, but the work of men.” (D&C 3:1–3.)

23. Search the prophecies of Isaiah] See also 2 Nephi 11:2;

3 Nephi 20:11; 23:1. Specifically, Moroni is asking his readers to search Isaiah to discover or have reaffirmed the eternal decree that the Holy One of Israel can never forget his people Israel or the covenants he has made with them (see, for example, Isaiah 49:14–15; 1 Nephi 21:14–15).

23. Even from the dust will they cry] See *Commentary* 1:306.

23. As the Lord liveth he will remember the covenant] Moroni here affirms by oath that God will not forget or desert his chosen.

24. Their prayers . . . were in behalf of their brethren] The Lord explained in a modern revelation that the Book of Mormon contains “all those parts of my gospel which my holy prophets, yea, and also my disciples, desired in their prayers should come forth unto this people. And I said unto them, that it should be granted unto them according to their faith in their prayers; yea, and this was their faith—that my gospel, which I gave unto them that they might preach in their days, might come unto their brethren the Lamanites, and also all that had become Lamanites because of their dissensions. Now, this is not all—their faith in their prayers was that this gospel should be made known also, if it were possible that other nations should possess this land; and thus they did leave a blessing upon this land in their prayers, that whosoever should believe in this gospel in this land might have eternal life; yea, that it might be free unto all of whatever nation, kindred, tongue, or people they may be.” (D&C 10:46–51.)

25. Their prayers were also in behalf of him that the Lord should suffer to bring these things forth] The ancients prayed for Joseph Smith. They knew of him. They were aware of his noble and vital mission in the earth. They looked to the time of the coming of the “choice seer” of the Lord (2 Nephi 3), the days when this servant of the Lord would be instrumental in bringing forth the great and marvelous work of the last days (3 Nephi 21:8–11). “So great was his assigned mission, with reference to the ‘restitution of all things’ (Acts 3:21),” Elder Bruce R. McConkie wrote, “that holy prophets spoke of him, by name, thousands of years before his mortal birth. (2 Nephi 3.) And as to the mighty work to be started by him—there are as many prophecies foretelling it as there are about any other single subject, not even excepting the host of prophetic utterances about our Lord and his redemptive sacrifice.” (*Mormon Doctrine*, p. 396.)

The Restoration to Come in a Day of Wickedness and Pollution

Mormon 8:26–41

26. And no one need say they shall not come, for they surely shall, for the Lord hath spoken it; for out of the earth shall they come, by the hand of the Lord, and none can stay it; and it shall come in a day when it shall be said that miracles are done away; and it shall come even as if one should speak from the dead.

27. And it shall come in a day when the blood of saints shall cry unto the Lord, because of secret combinations and the works of darkness.

28. Yea, it shall come in a day when the power of God shall be denied, and churches become defiled and be lifted up in the pride of their hearts; yea, even in a day when leaders of churches and teachers shall rise in the pride of their hearts, even to the envying of them who belong to their churches.

29. Yea, it shall come in a day when there shall be heard of fires, and tempests, and vapors of smoke in foreign lands;

30. And there shall also be heard of wars, rumors of wars, and earthquakes in divers places.

31. Yea, it shall come in a day when there shall be great pollutions upon the face of the earth; there shall be murders, and robbing, and lying, and deceivings, and whoredoms, and all manner of abominations; when there shall be many who will say, Do this, or do that, and it mattereth not, for the Lord will uphold such at the last day. But wo unto such, for they are in the gall of bitterness and in the bonds of iniquity.

32. Yea, it shall come in a day

when there shall be churches built up that shall say: Come unto me, and for your money you shall be forgiven of your sins.

33. O ye wicked and perverse and stiffnecked people, why have ye built up churches unto yourselves to get gain? Why have ye transfigured the holy word of God, that ye might bring damnation upon your souls? Behold, look ye unto the revelations of God; for behold, the time cometh at that day when all these things must be fulfilled.

34. Behold, the Lord hath shown unto me great and marvelous things concerning that which must shortly come, at that day when these things shall come forth among you.

35. Behold, I speak unto you as if ye were present, and yet ye are not. But behold, Jesus Christ hath shown you unto me, and I know your doing.

36. And I know that ye do walk in the pride of your hearts; and there are none save a few only who do not lift themselves up in the pride of their hearts, unto the wearing of very fine apparel, unto envying, and strifes, and malice, and persecutions, and all manner of iniquities; and your churches, yea, even every one, have become polluted because of the pride of your hearts.

37. For behold, ye do love money, and your substance, and your fine apparel, and the adorning of your churches, more than ye love the poor and the needy, the sick and the afflicted.

38. O ye pollutions, ye hypocrites, ye teachers, who sell

yourselves for that which will canker, why have ye polluted the holy church of God? Why are ye ashamed to take upon you the name of Christ? Why do ye not think that greater is the value of an endless happiness than that misery which never dies—because of the praise of the world?

39. Why do ye adorn yourselves with that which hath no life, and yet suffer the hungry, and the needy, and the naked, and the sick and the afflicted to pass by you, and notice them not?

40. Yea, why do ye build up

your secret abominations to get gain, and cause that widows should mourn before the Lord, and also orphans to mourn before the Lord, and also the blood of their fathers and their husbands to cry unto the Lord from the ground, for vengeance upon your heads?

41. Behold, the sword of vengeance hangeth over you; and the time soon cometh that he avengeth the blood of the saints upon you, for he will not suffer their cries any longer.

26. In a day when it shall be said that miracles are done away] See *Commentary* 1:329–31.

27. The blood of saints shall cry unto the Lord] “Too many noble and great ones have lived and preached and taught; too many have sacrificed their comforts, their homes, their families, and their own lives; too many have laid their all on the altar—too many have given their lives to the kingdom of God for the wicked and unbelieving to defile the earth. Who with impunity can defile that which the almighty God has made? God will not be mocked, nor will his plan for the salvation of men and the celestialization of the earth be foiled by those with carnal cares and diabolical desires. Truth will prevail. Righteousness will reign. The cry of the blood of the Saints and prophets from all ages ascends to the ears of the Lord of Sabaoth for justice to be rendered, for wrongs to be righted, and for evil to be abolished.” (*Commentary* 1:333–34.)

28. Even to the envying of them who belong to their churches] That is, the Restoration (and specifically the Book of Mormon) shall come to pass in a day when church ministers and teachers shall be envious of the money and prestige and position of their congregants and when many professing divine call and thus divine authority will function with impure hearts and impure motives.

29–30. The days of Restoration—that period between the opening of the heavens and the millennial era—would be a time of war among nations, a time of hatred and enmity, as well as a time of natural disaster. It would be a time when the testimony of the Almighty against wickedness would be heard and seen in the form of thunderings, lightnings, tempests, earthquakes, and floods (see D&C 43:22–25; 88:89–90).

31. Great pollutions upon the face of the earth] Moroni appears to be using the word *pollutions* to describe the nefarious

deeds and ways of the wicked, the same as the Apostle Peter did (see 2 Peter 2:20). He writes this in the context of “murders, and robbing, and lying, and deceivings, and whoredoms, and all manner of abominations.” Those who live in our own day see this scenario acted out daily all over the world. They also should have an especial appreciation for this warning, for it stands as a literal reminder of what happens to the surface of the earth on which we dwell when men and women are careless and thoughtless about their stewardship to dress and care for the earth and all things which abide on its surface.

31. Do this, or do that, and it mattereth not] See 2 Nephi 28:8.

31. They are in the gall of bitterness and in the bonds of iniquity] That is, they shall, following the time of mortal death, find themselves in hell, the realm of the wicked in the postmortal spirit world (compare Alma 36:18).

32. Forgiveness of sin comes from God. It is a sacred matter, predicated upon the sincere repentance of the individual and the omniscience of Almighty God. It is consummate folly to attempt to tamper with those things that are reserved for the wisdom, justice, and mercy of God. It was, in fact, such practices that pained and infuriated Martin Luther and gave him the desire and the courage to play a significant role in the Protestant Reformation, which in turn laid the foundation for the restoration of the fulness of the gospel.

33. Why have ye transfigured the holy word of God?] In the Church we normally use the word *transfiguration* to refer to being lifted spiritually to a higher plane for a period of time. Here the word has negative connotations, implying changing the appearance or substance of the scriptures.

35. Compare Mormon 9:30. President Ezra Taft Benson has reminded us that the Book of Mormon “was written for our day. The Nephites never had the book; neither did the Lamanites of ancient times. It was meant for us. Mormon wrote near the end of the Nephite civilization. Under the inspiration of God, who sees all things from the beginning, he abridged centuries of records, choosing the stories, speeches, and events that would be most helpful to us. Each of the major writers of the Book of Mormon testified that he wrote for future generations [see 2 Nephi 25:21; Jacob 1:3; Enos 1:15–16; Jarom 1:2; Mormon 7:1; 8:34–35]. . . . If they saw our day, and chose those things which would be of greatest worth to us, is not that how we should study the Book of Mormon? We should constantly ask ourselves, ‘Why did the Lord inspire Mormon (or Moroni or Alma) to include that in his record? What lesson can I learn from that to help me live in this day and age?’” (*A Witness and a Warning*, pp. 19–20.)

36–38. Moroni sees in vision that pride will have afflicted the

people of the last days and thereby entered the churches. Like the great and abominable church of old which persecuted the Saints, reveled in immorality and immodesty, and thus defiled the name of religion (see 1 Nephi 13:5-9), the people of the last days will be similarly consumed.

36. A few only] See *Commentary* 1:335-37.

37-39. This prophecy is a solemn warning, not just to the Christian world in general but also to the Latter-day Saints, particularly those in the United States (see commentary on 3 Nephi 16:10-15). The Saints of God need to labor day and night to retain purity of heart and thus propriety in their dealings with God and with one another. Zion can only be established among a people who are pure in heart, a people who search out the poor and needy, who see to those needs, and who focus their attention, their loyalties, and their time on people and on things which have eternal relevance and worth.

41. See commentary on verse 27.

A Warning to Those Who Reject Christ

Mormon 9:1-6

1. And now, I speak also concerning those who do not believe in Christ.

2. Behold, will ye believe in the day of your visitation—behold, when the Lord shall come, yea, even that great day when the earth shall be rolled together as a scroll, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat, yea, in that great day when ye shall be brought to stand before the Lamb of God—then will ye say that there is no God?

3. Then will ye longer deny the Christ, or can ye behold the Lamb of God? Do ye suppose that ye shall dwell with him under a consciousness of your guilt? Do ye suppose that ye could be happy to dwell with that holy Being, when your souls are racked with a consciousness of guilt that ye have

ever abused his laws?

4. Behold, I say unto you that ye would be more miserable to dwell with a holy and just God, under a consciousness of your filthiness before him, than ye would to dwell with the damned souls in hell.

5. For behold, when ye shall be brought to see your nakedness before God, and also the glory of God, and the holiness of Jesus Christ, it will kindle a flame of unquenchable fire upon you.

6. O then ye unbelieving, turn ye unto the Lord; cry mightily unto the Father in the name of Jesus, that perhaps ye may be found spotless, pure, fair, and white, having been cleansed by the blood of the Lamb, at that great and last day.

1-6. Moroni here speaks harsh but necessary words. He reminds those who reject the Messiah and his gospel that the day

will come, as surely as night follows the day, when they shall see and feel and know the error and folly of their ways. In that day when they cannot stand, they will be forced to kneel and acknowledge that Jesus is the Christ, the Lord and ruler of all things.

2. The day of your visitation] That is, the day when the Lord visits the earth, to rule and reign for a thousand years. In another sense, it will be the day of visitation with each of us at the time of our death, if we do not live to behold in the flesh the great and dreadful day of his coming, as though we had lived to see that coming. Then we shall be either lifted up and quickened by his transforming glory or suffer with others who have spurned his message and scoffed at his sufferings and death.

2. The elements shall melt with fervent heat] See 3 Nephi 26:3; D&C 101:25. The glory of the Lord when he comes to all the world will be such that only those who are of a terrestrial or celestial nature will be able to abide his coming and thereby be capable of remaining on the millennial (terrestrialized) earth. The bodies of those who are telestial or lower will be consumed in the fires of his glory and their spirits sent immediately to hell in the spirit world. There they will remain until the time of the second resurrection at the end of the Millennium. President Joseph Fielding Smith wrote: "Now, when Christ comes, we will get a new heaven and a new earth and all of these corruptible things will be removed. They will be consumed by fire; and somebody said, 'Brother Smith, do you mean to say that it is going to be literal fire?' I said, 'Oh, no, it will not be literal fire any more than it was literal water that covered the earth in the flood.'" (*The Signs of the Times*, p. 41.)

2. In that great day when ye shall be brought to stand before the Lamb of God] This is referring to the Day of Judgment, the time when every soul shall, for a limited period at least, be redeemed from spiritual death and thereby allowed to stand in the presence of the Holy One of Israel to be judged (see *Commentary* 3:412–14).

3–4. To dwell with God if one were unworthy and thus incapable of doing so would be to be subjected not to the blessings of heaven but rather to the cursings of hell. In that day when all pretense and sham will have been removed, when facade and appearances will have been stripped away, when we shall see as we are seen and know as we are known—in that day we shall be pleased to dwell with those whose lives were like our own. Those who on earth sneered at righteousness will then find no comfort in a place of righteousness; those whose hearts yearned for the things of the Spirit will then receive the same, even a fulness (see D&C 88:21–24, 29–32).

3. When your souls are racked with a consciousness of guilt] Compare Alma's experience in Alma 36:12–16.

5. Your nakedness before God] See *Commentary* 1:243.

5. A flame of unquenchable fire] Joseph Smith taught that the inner torment of disappointment in the mind of man, the pangs of conscience in the face of wilful sin, is as a lake of fire and brimstone (see *Teachings*, p. 357).

6. Moroni's plea is that all people—including those who have to that point rejected Christ—come unto Christ now, in the light of day, partake of his goodness and grace, be cleansed by his atoning blood, and come to know the sweet joy of his redemption; all this that the final day of judgment may be glorious and great rather than awful and terrible.

A Warning for Those Who Reject the Revelations and Gifts of God

Mormon 9:7–30

7. 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;

8. 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.

9. For do we not read that God is the same yesterday, today, and forever, and in him there is no variableness neither shadow of changing?

10. And now, if ye have imagined up unto yourselves a god who doth vary, and in whom there is shadow of changing, then have ye imagined up unto yourselves a god who is not a God of miracles.

11. But behold, I will show unto you a God of miracles, even the God of Abraham, and the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob; and it is that same God who created the heavens and the earth, and all things that in them are.

12. Behold, he created Adam, and by Adam came the fall of

man. And because of the fall of man came Jesus Christ, even the Father and the Son; and because of Jesus Christ came the redemption of man.

13. And because of the redemption of man, which came by Jesus Christ, they are brought back into the presence of the Lord; yea, this is wherein all men are redeemed, because the death of Christ bringeth to pass the resurrection, which bringeth to pass a redemption from an endless sleep, from which sleep all men shall be awakened by the power of God when the trump shall sound; and they shall come forth, both small and great, and all shall stand before his bar, being redeemed and loosed from this eternal band of death, which death is a temporal death.

14. And then cometh the judgment of the Holy One upon them; and then cometh the time that he that is filthy shall be filthy still; and he that is righteous shall be righteous still; he that is happy shall be happy still; and he that is unhappy shall be unhappy still.

15. And now, O all ye that have imagined up unto yourselves a

god who can do no miracles, I would ask of you, have all these things passed, of which I have spoken? Has the end come yet? Behold I say unto you, Nay; and God has not ceased to be a God of miracles.

16. Behold, are not the things that God hath wrought marvelous in our eyes? Yea, and who can comprehend the marvelous works of God?

17. Who shall say that it was not a miracle that by his word the heaven and the earth should be; and by the power of his word man was created of the dust of the earth; and by the power of his word have miracles been wrought?

18. And who shall say that Jesus Christ did not do many mighty miracles? And there were many mighty miracles wrought by the hands of the apostles.

19. 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.

20. 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.

21. Behold, I say unto you that whoso believeth in Christ, doubting nothing, whatsoever he shall ask the Father in the name of Christ it shall be granted him; and this promise is unto all, even unto the ends of the earth.

22. For behold, thus said Jesus Christ, the Son of God, unto his disciples who should tarry, yea, and also to all his disciples, in the

hearing of the multitude: Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature;

23. And he that believeth and is baptized shall be saved, but he that believeth not shall be damned;

24. And these signs shall follow them that believe—in my name shall they cast out devils; they shall speak with new tongues; they shall take up serpents; and if they drink any deadly thing it shall not hurt them; they shall lay hands on the sick and they shall recover;

25. And whosoever shall believe in my name, doubting nothing, unto him will I confirm all my words, even unto the ends of the earth.

26. And now, behold, who can stand against the works of the Lord? Who can deny his sayings? Who will rise up against the almighty power of the Lord? Who will despise the works of the Lord? Who will despise the children of Christ? Behold, all ye who are despisers of the works of the Lord, for ye shall wonder and perish.

27. O then despise not, and wonder not, but hearken unto the words of the Lord, and ask the Father in the name of Jesus for what things soever ye shall stand in need. Doubt not, but be believing, and begin as in times of old, and come unto the Lord with all your heart, and work out your own salvation with fear and trembling before him.

28. Be wise in the days of your probation; strip yourselves of all uncleanness; ask not, that ye may consume it on your lusts, but ask with a firmness unshaken, that ye will yield to no temptation, but that ye will serve the true and living God.

29. See that ye are not baptized

unworthily; see that ye partake not of the sacrament of Christ unworthily; but see that ye do all things in worthiness, and do it in the name of Jesus Christ, the Son of the living God; and if ye do this,

and endure to the end, ye will in nowise be cast out.

30. Behold, I speak unto you as though I spake from the dead; for I know that ye shall have my words.

7–8. Whoever rejects the revelations and gifts of God—the miracles and signs and wonders—does so in either absolute ignorance of the holy scriptures or in absolute rebellion and defiance against the order of things in the Lord’s kingdom. If there is a God, and if he is a possessor of all knowledge and all power, and if we are his children, then it is inconceivable that he would not want to reveal himself and manifest his power among his offspring. If such things are no more, if they have in some way been done away, then it is because of the lack of faith on the part of those on earth (see Mormon 1:14; Moroni 7:37; 10:19, 24).

9. Though it is true that policies and procedures and programs associated with the true Church may vary over time, though it is true that the kingdom of God on earth is based upon revelation adapted to the circumstances in which the children of that kingdom are placed (see *Teachings*, pp. 255–56), yet God does not change, and neither do his ordinances and covenants. Though it is true that the revelation given to Enoch was not sufficient to educate Noah in the building of an ark, yet what is constant and everlastingly consistent is revelation itself, the very fact that God did indeed manifest himself to Noah. As Nephi was taught, God is forever the same in the sense that he manifests and reveals himself to those who exercise faith in his Son (see 1 Nephi 10:17–19).

12–13. Jacob explained: “For as death hath passed upon all men, to fulfil the merciful plan of the great Creator, there must needs be a power of resurrection, and the resurrection must needs come unto man by reason of the fall; and the fall came by reason of transgression; and because man became fallen they were cut off from the presence of the Lord. Wherefore, it must needs be an infinite atonement.” (2 Nephi 9:6–7; see also Moses 6:59.) The Book of Mormon attests that Adam, Eve, Eden, and the Fall are real and true and actual. They are neither myth nor metaphor, but rather are central features in the plan of life and salvation.

12–14. If ever we needed to illustrate the fact that the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob is indeed a God of miracles, we need only point toward the plan of salvation itself. The Creation, the Fall, and the Atonement—the three pillars of eternity—are God-ordained and God-inspired. They are gifts of grace to God’s children on earth.

12. The Father and the Son] See *Commentary* 2:225–30.

13. This is wherein all men are redeemed] See *Commentary* 3:412–14. There is, in other words, a sense in which all people, Saints and sons of perdition alike, are redeemed from death. All who have taken a physical body shall be raised in the resurrection, shall stand before God to be judged of their works. They thereby are redeemed from spiritual death, the separation of the sinner from the Holy One.

13. A redemption from an endless sleep] The spirit body is eternal and cannot die. Even if there had been no resurrection from the dead—in which case, as Jacob reminds us, all would have become devils and angels to the devil (see 2 Nephi 9:8–9)—even then the spirits of men and women, so far as we now know, would have forever remained alive. Moroni seems to be speaking here in figurative language. There is no sleep at the time of death, nor would the spirits of mankind have remained literally in “an endless sleep.” Had there been no atoning sacrifice and thus no resurrection from the dead, the physical body would have slept, that is, remained in the grave. This is the same sense as that in which Paul speaks of Jesus becoming the “firstfruits of them that slept” (1 Corinthians 15:20), that is, the first to overcome death and come forth from the grave.

13. All shall stand before his bar] “The reality is that there will be a whole hierarchy of judges who, under Christ, shall judge the righteous. He [Christ] alone shall issue the decrees of damnation for the wicked.” (Bruce R. McConkie, *Millennial Messiah*, p. 520; see also *Promised Messiah*, pp. 215–16; D&C 29:12.)

14. He that is filthy shall be filthy still] This is a specific reference to the sons of perdition (see 2 Nephi 9:16; D&C 88:35, 102; *Commentary* 1:244–45).

18. The Lord Jesus is not only the source of power by which miracles are wrought but he is also our exemplar in regard to their righteous use and manifestation, as are his Apostles, both in the Old and the New worlds.

19. He would cease to be God] As we have shown previously (see *Commentary* 3:315), God cannot cease to be God. It is utterly and absolutely impossible for him to do so. And Moroni knows this. He is arguing toward the absurd, toward the impossible, to make his point. It is as though Moroni were saying, “It is as ridiculous to suppose that revelations and signs and miracles have ceased as it is to suppose that God could cease to be God!”

20. Compare Mark 6:5; Moroni 7:37; 10:19, 24.

21. See 3 Nephi 18:20; Moroni 7:26.

22–24. Moroni is presumably quoting here from words spoken by our Lord to the Nephites during his American ministry. They are not to be found in our present text, Mormon’s abridgment of the plates of Nephi, though we do have a record of the Master

speaking such words on the Eastern Hemisphere (see Mark 16:15–18). Mormon himself explained: “And now there cannot be written in this book even a hundredth part of the things which Jesus did truly teach unto the people; but behold the [unabridged, large] plates of Nephi do contain the more part of the things which he taught the people” (3 Nephi 26:6–7). This is an important part of Moroni’s argument—the words of the Lord himself decree in unmistakable language that signs and wonders always follow the faithful believers.

25. See commentary on Ether 12:6.

27. Work out your own salvation with fear and trembling before him] In the truest sense, we cannot work out our own salvation. We cannot save ourselves any more than we can create ourselves. Creation and redemption are the works of a God; they are not within our own mortal domain. The works we perform—receiving the ordinances of salvation, operating and functioning in the Church and kingdom, performing deeds of service and acts of Christian kindness—in the ultimate sense cannot save us. They are necessary but insufficient. On the other hand, when we have been changed and renewed through the Holy Ghost, when our hearts have been remade through the merits and mercy of our Lord and Savior, then the works of righteousness flow from a regenerate soul. Our works are then his works. They are motivated and empowered by him. The Apostle Paul wrote: “Wherefore, my beloved . . . work out your own salvation with fear and trembling.” And now note how and from whence such works arise: “For *it is God which worketh in you* both to will and to do of his good pleasure.” (Philippians 2:12–13, italics added.)

28. Ask not, that ye may consume it on your lusts] That is, we are to be cautious in regard to what we pray for. If we seek for and cultivate the spirit of inspiration our prayers will be directed and guided thereby, and we will find ourselves asking only for those things which the Lord would desire to grant us. James explained that often our prayers are not answered because we pray after the wrong things (see James 4:3).

29. This is Moroni’s plea that the Saints of God perform the ordinances of salvation in worthiness, in order that the powers of God—channelled to us through those ordinances—may be fully and completely received. In fact, we are instructed to do all such things in the name of Jesus Christ (Moses 5:8).

30. Truly Moroni saw our day and was aware that pride and wickedness would afflict many in the latter-day Church. See commentary on Mormon 8:35.

Means Prepared by God to Translate the Book of Mormon

Mormon 9:31–37

31. Condemn me not because of mine imperfection, neither my father, because of his imperfection, neither them who have written before him; but rather give thanks unto God that he hath made manifest unto you our imperfections, that ye may learn to be more wise than we have been.

32. And now, behold, 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.

33. And if our plates had been sufficiently large we should have written in Hebrew; but the Hebrew hath been altered by us also; and if we could have written in Hebrew, behold, ye would have had no imperfection in our record.

34. But the Lord knoweth the things which we have written, and also that none other people

knoweth our language; and because that none other people knoweth our language, therefore he hath prepared means for the interpretation thereof.

35. And these things are written that we may rid our garments of the blood of our brethren, who have dwindled in unbelief.

36. And behold, these things which we have desired concerning our brethren, yea, even their restoration to the knowledge of Christ, are according to the prayers of all the saints who have dwelt in the land.

37. And may the Lord Jesus Christ grant that their prayers may be answered according to their faith; and may God the Father remember the covenant which he hath made with the house of Israel; and may he bless them forever, through faith on the name of Jesus Christ. Amen.

31. See Mormon 8:12.

32–33. Regarding the nature of the language in which the plates were written (etched), as well as the manner of translation, see *Commentary* 1:19–20; see also 1 Nephi 1:2; Mosiah 1:4.

32. Reformed Egyptian] The plates may have been recorded in a type of shorthand Egyptian.

32. Handed down and altered by us, according to our manner of speech] Indeed, the written word reflects the spoken language, which always changes with time.

34. It is as if Moroni catches himself, realizes that it is unnecessary to fret over the particularity of the Nephite language, and admits that all of this really does not matter very much anyway: God has provided a means—through the Urim and Thummim and by the power of the Holy Ghost—that the sacred volume known as the Book of Mormon will be translated. Indeed, the only true translation of a sacred record is obtained by sacred means—by the gift and power of God. Elder James E. Talmage wrote: “There will

be, there can be, no absolutely reliable translation of . . . scriptures unless it be effected through the gift of translation, as one of the endowments of the Holy Ghost. The translator must have the spirit of the prophet if he would render in another tongue the prophet's words; and human wisdom alone leads not to that possession." (*The Articles of Faith*, p. 237.)

35. Rid our garments of the blood of our brethren] See 2 Nephi 9:44; *Commentary* 1:261–62.

36. Their restoration to the knowledge of Christ] The people of Israel must first be gathered to the truth—to the message of Jesus Christ and him crucified, resurrected, and glorified. They are gathered to the true points of his doctrine and to his true church; they are then gathered to the lands of their inheritance (see 1 Nephi 15:14; 2 Nephi 9:1–2; 30:5).

37. May God the Father remember the covenant which he hath made with the house of Israel] See commentary on 3 Nephi 16:5.

The Book of Ether

In adding the book of Ether to the Book of Mormon, Moroni was probably following instructions from his father. In the book of Mosiah, as Mormon was giving an account of the discovery and translation of the twenty-four gold plates upon which this record was engraved, he had inserted this comment: "And this account shall be written hereafter; for behold, it is expedient that all people should know the things which are written in this account" (Mosiah 28:19). Since this abridgment was made by Moroni, we can assume that Mormon was unable to work on the Jaredite record and had directed his son to do so. It is not clear from the Book of Mormon account whether Moroni translated the twenty-four plates and made his abridgment from that translation or whether he abridged the translation of the twenty-four plates that King Mosiah made around 90 B.C. not long after they were found by the people of Limhi.

The book of Ether covers about fifteen hundred years of Jaredite history, but Moroni wrote that he could not include even a "hundredth part" of their doings. He does, however, include enough detailed information to make it clear that the book of Ether is intended to serve as a second witness of yet another society whose experience parallels that of the Nephites. Both groups were brought to the same promised land by the hand of the Lord. Both were commanded to keep records. Both prospered when righteous, were cursed when wicked, and were destroyed when beyond repentance. Both rejected the prophets and discovered when it was everlastingly too late that those prophets' predictions of destruction were literally being fulfilled. Indeed, the description of the final stages of the destruction of both groups is sickeningly similar. More important, the experiences of both civilizations bear testimony to the reality of Jesus Christ, his merciful atonement, and his long-suffering towards God's children on earth. As with the Nephite account, the book of Ether is a second, unmistakable

witness and warning to those of us in the latter days who enjoy the gospel light, and especially to those who live in the “land choice above all others,” that we have a sacred obligation to preserve our nation and our church through righteousness.

In addition, the book of Ether contains many significant doctrinal contributions. From the appearance of the premortal Christ to the brother of Jared we gain priceless understanding about the nature of God and the exercise of faith. Through his commentary Moroni provides great insight into the principles of faith and hope, which expands our understanding of these most basic doctrines far beyond what we have available in the Old and the New Testaments. Two other important contributions are Moroni’s prophecy of the three witnesses to the Book of Mormon and Ether’s prophecy of the New Jerusalem, both of which must have been instrumental in leading Joseph Smith to inquire about and act upon them.

Upon reaching the end of his abridgment of the record of the Jaredites, Moroni must have felt a strong kinship with the prophet Ether. Both were the lone righteous survivors of their civilizations. Both had been rejected and hunted by their people. Neither knew what would become of him. However, neither seemed to worry too much about his fate because each bore unshakable testimony that at last he would triumph over his current tragic circumstances, as will all who are true and faithful followers of the Lord Jesus Christ.

The Genealogy of Ether

Ether 1:1–33

1. And now I, Moroni, proceed to give an account of those ancient inhabitants who were destroyed by the hand of the Lord upon the face of this north country.

2. And I take mine account from the twenty and four plates which were found by the people of Limhi, which is called the Book of Ether.

3. And as I suppose that the first part of this record, which speaks concerning the creation of the world, and also of Adam, and an account from that time even to the great tower, and whatsoever things transpired among the children of men until that time, is had among the Jews—

4. Therefore I do not write

those things which transpired from the days of Adam until that time; but they are had upon the plates; and whoso findeth them, the same will have power that he may get the full account.

5. But behold, I give not the full account, but a part of the account I give, from the tower down until they were destroyed.

6. And on this wise do I give the account. He that wrote this record was Ether, and he was a descendant of Coriantor.

7. Coriantor was the son of Moron.

8. And Moron was the son of Ethem.

9. And Ethem was the son of Ahah.

10. And Ahah was the son of Seth.

11. And Seth was the son of Shiblon.

12. And Shiblon was the son of Com.

13. And Com was the son of Coriantum.

14. And Coriantum was the son of Amnigaddah.

15. And Amnigaddah was the son of Aaron.

16. And Aaron was a descendant of Heth, who was the son of Hearthom.

17. And Hearthom was the son of Lib.

18. And Lib was the son of Kish.

19. And Kish was the son of Corom.

20. And Corom was the son of Levi.

21. And Levi was the son of Kim.

22. And Kim was the son of Morianton.

23. And Morianton was a descendant of Riplakish.

24. And Riplakish was the son of Shez.

25. And Shez was the son of Heth.

26. And Heth was the son of Com.

27. And Com was the son of Coriantum.

28. And Coriantum was the son of Emer.

29. And Emer was the son of Omer.

30. And Omer was the son of Shule.

31. And Shule was the son of Kib.

32. And Kib was the son of Orihah, who was the son of Jared;

33. Which Jared came forth with his brother and their families, with some others and their families, from the great tower, at the time the Lord confounded the language of the people, and swore in his wrath that they should be scattered upon all the face of the earth; and according to the word of the Lord the people were scattered.

1–5. Moroni explains that he is abridging the record called the book of Ether contained on the twenty-four gold plates that were discovered by the people of Limhi (see Mosiah 8:5–19; Alma 37:21–31), and that his abridgment does not contain a full account. The full account included important information concerning the Creation, and happenings among the people from Adam down to the time of the Tower of Babel. We note Moroni's recognition that a record of these things "is had among the Jews" (the Bible). Undoubtedly Moroni was also familiar with Nephi's prophecies that the record of the Jews would have many "plain and precious things" removed from it (see 1 Nephi 13:26–29). Hence the person who would bring Moroni's record to light in the last days would also "have power that he may get the full account" of those things on the plates of Ether.

This statement may have reference at least in part to the sealed portion of the plates delivered to the Prophet Joseph. These "plain and precious" things—the full account of the Creation and the history of God's dealings with his children from Adam to the Tower of Babel—surely will be among those "many great and important things" that will yet be revealed (see 2 Nephi 27:11; 3 Nephi

26:8–10; Ether 4:4–7; Articles of Faith 1:9). The Lord has promised that as we prepare ourselves spiritually, both as a Church and as individuals, important things that have been “sealed” or hidden from the world will be revealed to us (see Alma 12:9–11). Elder Neal A. Maxwell stated: “Just as there will be many more Church members, . . . there will also be many more nourishing and inspiring scriptures. However, we must first feast worthily upon that which we already have.” (Conference Report, October 1986, p. 70.)

6–33. It may be that Moroni is not giving, nor did he necessarily intend to give, a complete genealogy of Ether. This would possibly explain why he uses “son of” in some cases and “descendant of” in others. It may be that, to save space, he is merely illustrating the several generations that span from Jared and his brother, at the time of Babel, to Ether, the last of the Jaredite prophets.

33. The time the Lord confounded the language of the people] See Genesis 11:6–9; see also Omni 1:22.

The Lord Promises to Lead the Brother of Jared and His Family to a Choice Land

Ether 1:34–43

34. And the brother of Jared being a large and mighty man, and a man highly favored of the Lord, Jared, his brother, said unto him: Cry unto the Lord, that he will not confound us that we may not understand our words.

35. And it came to pass that the brother of Jared did cry unto the Lord, and the Lord had compassion upon Jared; therefore he did not confound the language of Jared; and Jared and his brother were not confounded.

36. Then Jared said unto his brother: Cry again unto the Lord, and it may be that he will turn away his anger from them who are our friends, that he confound not their language.

37. And it came to pass that the brother of Jared did cry unto the Lord, and the Lord had compassion upon their friends and their

families also, that they were not confounded.

38. And it came to pass that Jared spake again unto his brother, saying: Go and inquire of the Lord whether he will drive us out of the land, and if he will drive us out of the land, cry unto him whither we shall go. And who knoweth but the Lord will carry us forth into a land which is choice above all the earth? And if it so be, let us be faithful unto the Lord, that we may receive it for our inheritance.

39. And it came to pass that the brother of Jared did cry unto the Lord according to that which had been spoken by the mouth of Jared.

40. And it came to pass that the Lord did hear the brother of Jared, and had compassion upon him, and said unto him:

41. Go to and gather together thy flocks, both male and female, of every kind; and also of the seed of the earth of every kind; and thy families; and also Jared thy brother and his family; and also thy friends and their families, and the friends of Jared and their families.

42. And when thou hast done this thou shalt go at the head of them down into the valley which is northward. And there will I meet thee, and I will go before

thee into a land which is choice above all the lands of the earth.

43. And there will I bless thee and thy seed, and raise up unto me of thy seed, and of the seed of thy brother, and they who shall go with thee, a great nation. And there shall be none greater than the nation which I will raise up unto me of thy seed, upon all the face of the earth. And thus I will do unto thee because this long time ye have cried unto me.

34. The brother of Jared] Moroni nowhere gives us the name of Jared's brother, but consistently refers to him as "the brother of Jared." From the account it is clear that he is "highly favored of the Lord" and is the spiritual leader of Jared's people. Why is his name not recorded in the Book of Mormon? Daniel H. Ludlow has suggested three possible reasons: 1) the brother of Jared himself may, out of modesty, have purposely omitted his name from the record in similar manner as did John in recording his Gospel; 2) the final writer on the record or plates of Ether, a descendant of Jared (see Ether 1:6, 32), perhaps emphasized the name of his progenitor; or 3) Moroni may have found the name too difficult to translate adequately into the Nephite language (see *A Companion to Your Study of the Book of Mormon*, p. 310).

The name of the brother of Jared was revealed to the prophet Joseph Smith. Elder George Reynolds recounted: "While residing in Kirtland Elder Reynolds Cahoon had a son born to him. One day when President Joseph Smith was passing his door he called the Prophet in and asked him to bless and name the baby. Joseph did so and gave the boy the name of Mahonri Moriancumer. When he had finished the blessing he laid the child on the bed, and turning to Elder Cahoon he said, the name I have given your son is the name of the brother of Jared; the Lord has just shown [or revealed] it to me. Elder William F. Cahoon, who was standing near, heard the Prophet make this statement to his father; and this was the first time the name of the brother of Jared was known in the Church in this dispensation." (*"Jaredites," Juvenile Instructor* 27:282.)

34-37. Looking to the brother of Jared as their spiritual leader and spokesman, Jared and his family encouraged him to petition the Lord to secure the promise that their language would not be confounded. Because of the faith of the brother of Jared, the Lord honored his request. The scriptures do not fully explain what is

meant when Moroni records that the Lord “did not confound the language of Jared.” We are left to speculate whether that meant they retained their previous language (presumably the Adamic language) or whether their and their friends’ language was changed but that they then all spoke the same language and were therefore not “confounded.” (See also Joseph Fielding Smith, *The Way to Perfection*, p. 69.)

38-43. While the people were being “scattered upon all the face of the earth” (verse 33; see also Genesis 11:8), Jared prevailed upon his brother to once again in faith seek a blessing from the Lord. Their desire was that, if they had to leave their present homeland, they be led to a choice land of inheritance.

42. “The Book of Mormon informs us that the whole of America, both North and South, is a choice land above all other lands, in other words—Zion,” declared President Joseph Fielding Smith (*Doctrines of Salvation* 3:73). Nephi also was promised “a land which is choice above all other lands” (1 Nephi 2:20). Numerous other Book of Mormon passages refer to America as this choice land to which the Lord would lead certain chosen or covenant peoples (see 1 Nephi 10:13; 2 Nephi 1:5-6; 10:19; also *Commentary* 1:183-87).

43. Thus will I do unto thee because this long time ye have cried unto me] The Lord answers prayers because of continued faith and obedience. Supplication of the Lord is much more than mere asking. It requires faith, pondering, and a life of righteousness, as exemplified here by the brother of Jared and seen elsewhere in the Book of Mormon, such as in the case of Enos (see Enos 1:4). President Spencer W. Kimball eloquently spoke of the effort, both spiritual and mental, that is required to receive answers to our prayers: “Great decisions must be made by most of us. The Lord has provided a way for these answers. If the question is which school, what occupation, where to live, whom to marry, or such other vital questions, you should do all that is possible to solve it. Too often, like Oliver Cowdery [see D&C 9:7-9], we want our answers without effort. . . .

“The Lord does answer our prayers, but sometimes we are not responsive enough to know when and how they are answered. We want the ‘writing on the wall’ or an angel to speak or a heavenly voice. . . .

“There must be works with faith. How futile it would be to ask the Lord to give us knowledge, but the Lord will help us to acquire knowledge, to study constructively, to think clearly, and to retain things we have learned. . . .

“Do you get answers to your prayers? If not, perhaps you did not pay the price. Do you offer a few trite words and worn-out phrases, or do you talk intimately to the Lord? Do you pray occa-

sionally when you should be praying regularly, often, constantly? Do you offer pennies to pay heavy debts when you should give dollars to erase that obligation? When you pray, do you just speak, or do you also listen? Your Savior said, 'Behold, I stand at the door, and knock: if any man hear my voice, and open the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with me.' (Revelation 3:20.) . . . The Lord stands knocking. He never retreats. But he will never force himself upon us. If we ever move apart, it is we who move and not the Lord. And should we ever fail to get an answer to our prayers, we must look into our lives for a reason." ("Prayer," *New Era*, March 1978, pp. 16-17.)

Jaredites Prepare for Their Journey to the Promised Land

Ether 2:1-13

1. And it came to pass that Jared and his brother, and their families, and also the friends of Jared and his brother and their families, went down into the valley which was northward, (and the name of the valley was Nimrod, being called after the mighty hunter) with their flocks which they had gathered together, male and female, of every kind.

2. And they did also lay snares and catch fowls of the air; and they did also prepare a vessel, in which they did carry with them the fish of the waters.

3. And they did also carry with them deseret, which, by interpretation, is a honey bee; and thus they did carry with them swarms of bees, and all manner of that which was upon the face of the land, seeds of every kind.

4. And it came to pass that when they had come down into the valley of Nimrod the Lord came down and talked with the brother of Jared; and he was in a cloud, and the brother of Jared saw him not.

5. And it came to pass that the Lord commanded them that they

should go forth into the wilderness, yea, into that quarter where there never had man been. And it came to pass that the Lord did go before them, and did talk with them as he stood in a cloud, and gave directions whither they should travel.

6. And it came to pass that they did travel in the wilderness, and did build barges, in which they did cross many waters, being directed continually by the hand of the Lord.

7. And the Lord would not suffer that they should stop beyond the sea in the wilderness, but he would that they should come forth even unto the land of promise, which was choice above all other lands, which the Lord God had preserved for a righteous people.

8. And he had sworn in his wrath unto the brother of Jared, that whoso should possess this land of promise, from that time henceforth and forever, should serve him, the true and only God, or they should be swept off when the fulness of his wrath should come upon them.

9. And now, we can behold the decrees of God concerning this land, that it is a land of promise; and whatsoever nation shall possess it shall serve God, or they shall be swept off when the fulness of his wrath shall come upon them. And the fulness of his wrath cometh upon them when they are ripened in iniquity.

10. For behold, this is a land which is choice above all other lands; wherefore he that doth possess it shall serve God or shall be swept off; for it is the everlasting decree of God. And it is not until the fulness of iniquity among the children of the land, that they are swept off.

11. And this cometh unto you, O ye Gentiles, that ye may know the decrees of God—that ye may repent, and not continue in your iniquities until the fulness come,

that ye may not bring down the fulness of the wrath of God upon you as the inhabitants of the land have hitherto done.

12. Behold, this is a choice land, and whatsoever nation shall possess it shall be free from bondage, and from captivity, and from all other nations under heaven, if they will but serve the God of the land, who is Jesus Christ, who hath been manifested by the things which we have written.

13. And now I proceed with my record; for behold, it came to pass that the Lord did bring Jared and his brethren forth even to that great sea which divideth the lands. And as they came to the sea they pitched their tents; and they called the name of the place Moriancumer; and they dwelt in tents, and dwelt in tents upon the sea-shore for the space of four years.

1–3. Fulfilling the commandment of the Lord (see Ether 1:41), the families of Jared, his brother, and their friends made preparation for the long journey to their new land of inheritance. Thus they gathered different kinds of fowls, fish, seeds, and domestic flocks, also swarms of bees for honey production and crop pollenization. Special arrangements were made to take fresh fish with them. These preparations were not only designed to sustain them during the journey; with males and females from their flocks they could perpetuate those flocks, and their supplies of seeds would ensure the planting of crops when they arrived at their destination.

3. Deseret, which, by interpretation, is a honey bee] This word and its accompanying symbols and meanings are familiar to Latter-day Saints. This verse, however, is the only place where the word is found in the Book of Mormon. No doubt it is a Jaredite word that Mormon has translated for our benefit. This word and the idea of the Jaredites taking bees with them on their journey is of special interest as an external evidence of the truthfulness of the Book of Mormon.

4. The Lord came down and talked with the brother of Jared; and he was in a cloud] Just as Jehovah appeared to and conversed with Moses and led the children of Israel in the wilderness in a cloud by day and in a pillar of fire at night (see Exodus

13:21; Numbers 11:25; 12:5), so did he lead the Jaredites as they were in the wilderness. From this cloud of glory the Lord directed them and gave them directions for their journey. The image of a cloud associated with the Lord's appearance is not unique to his dealings with ancient peoples. In this dispensation the Lord also spoke of a cloud of glory, one that will surround him when he again returns to earth and appears to man (see D&C 34:7).

7-12. The Lord preserved the American continent as a "choice land" to which he could lead a righteous people where they could prosper in a land of freedom (see 1 Nephi 17:38). To the brother of Jared and the band of people who journeyed with him, the Lord promised a land of inheritance that was "choice above all other lands." This promise to the Jaredites, as well as to Lehi and his seed, is conditional. Freedom from bondage and captivity is assured by the Lord, but only on principles of righteousness. Only a righteous people can possess and prosper in this promised land. A wicked people—who will not "serve him, the true and only God"—will eventually be "swept off" from the face of the earth.

The entire Book of Mormon, as an account of the Jaredites, Mulekites, and Nephites, stands as a living testimony of the truthfulness of these conditional promises and prophecies. Because of what he sees with his own people's destruction and reads of the Jaredites, Moroni speaks plainly to us of the last days. His words echo the warning of the Lord that inhabitants of this promised land will be protected and preserved from bondage only "if they will but serve the God of the land." President Joseph Fielding Smith testified of this prophecy: "These passages of scripture from the Book of Mormon are true; this nation is not exempt, and the people, if they continue to pursue the course of evil and ungodliness that they are now treading, shall eventually be punished. If they continue to disregard the warning voice of the Lord, deny their Redeemer, turn from his gospel unto fables and false theories, and rebel against all that he has through his servants in this day declared for the salvation of man; and if they increase in the practice of iniquity, I want to say to you, that if they do these things, the judgments of the Lord will come upon this land, and this nation will not be saved; we will not be spared from war, from famine, from pestilence and finally from destruction, as a nation.

"Therefore, I call upon the people, not only Latter-day Saints but to all throughout the whole land, to repent of their sins and to accept the Lord Jesus Christ, who is our Redeemer and the God of this land. Turn from your evil ways, repent of your sins and receive the fulness of the gospel through the waters of baptism and obedience, that the judgments which shall be poured out upon the ungodly may pass you by." (*Doctrines of Salvation* 3:321-22.)

President Ezra Taft Benson has likewise testified of the

conditional promises of preservation of America: “‘Righteousness exalteth a nation’ (Proverbs 14:34). This is the key to understanding our heritage and this is the key to maintaining it. The foundations of America are spiritual. That must never be forgotten nor doubted. . . .

“There are some in this land, among whom I count myself, whose faith it is that this land is reserved only for a righteous people, and we remain here as tenants only as we remain in the favor of the Lord, for He is the landlord as far as this earth is concerned. If we are to remain under heaven’s benign protection and care, we must return to those principles which have brought us our peace, liberty, and prosperity. Our problems today are essentially problems of the Spirit.

“The solution is not more wealth, more food, more technology, more government, or instruments of destruction—the solution is personal and national reformation. In short, it is to bring our national character ahead of our technological and material advances. Repentance is the sovereign remedy to our problems.” (*The Teachings of Ezra Taft Benson*, pp. 569, 580.)

The Lord Chastens the Brother of Jared and Instructs Him on Building Barges

Ether 2:14–25

14. And it came to pass at the end of four years that the Lord came again unto the brother of Jared, and stood in a cloud and talked with him. And for the space of three hours did the Lord talk with the brother of Jared, and chastened him because he remembered not to call upon the name of the Lord.

15. And the brother of Jared repented of the evil which he had done, and did call upon the name of the Lord for his brethren who were with him. And the Lord said unto him: I will forgive thee and thy brethren of their sins; but thou shalt not sin any more, for ye shall remember that my Spirit will not always strive with man; wherefore, if ye will sin until ye are fully ripe ye shall be cut off

from the presence of the Lord. And these are my thoughts upon the land which I shall give you for your inheritance; for it shall be a land choice above all other lands.

16. And the Lord said: Go to work and build, after the manner of barges which ye have hitherto built. And it came to pass that the brother of Jared did go to work, and also his brethren, and built barges after the manner which they had built, according to the instructions of the Lord. And they were small, and they were light upon the water, even like unto the lightness of a fowl upon the water.

17. And they were built after a manner that they were exceedingly tight, even that they would hold water like unto a dish; and

the bottom thereof was tight like unto a dish; and the sides thereof were tight like unto a dish; and the ends thereof were peaked; and the top thereof was tight like unto a dish; and the length thereof was the length of a tree; and the door thereof, when it was shut, was tight like unto a dish.

18. And it came to pass that the brother of Jared cried unto the Lord, saying: O Lord, I have performed the work which thou hast commanded me, and I have made the barges according as thou hast directed me.

19. And behold, O Lord, in them there is no light; whither shall we steer? And also we shall perish, for in them we cannot breathe, save it is the air which is in them; therefore we shall perish.

20. And the Lord said unto the brother of Jared: Behold, thou shalt make a hole in the top, and also in the bottom; and when thou shalt suffer for air thou shalt unstop the hole and receive air. And if it be so that the water come in upon thee, behold, ye shall stop the hole, that ye may not perish in the flood.

21. And it came to pass that the brother of Jared did so, according as the Lord had commanded.

22. And he cried again unto the

Lord saying: O Lord, behold I have done even as thou hast commanded me; and I have prepared the vessels for my people, and behold there is no light in them. Behold, O Lord, wilt thou suffer that we shall cross this great water in darkness?

23. And the Lord said unto the brother of Jared: What will ye that I should do that ye may have light in your vessels? For behold, ye cannot have windows, for they will be dashed in pieces; neither shall ye take fire with you, for ye shall not go by the light of fire.

24. For behold, ye shall be as a whale in the midst of the sea; for the mountain waves shall dash upon you. Nevertheless, I will bring you up again out of the depths of the sea; for the winds have gone forth out of my mouth, and also the rains and the floods have I sent forth.

25. And behold, I prepare you against these things; for ye cannot cross this great deep save I prepare you against the waves of the sea, and the winds which have gone forth, and the floods which shall come. Therefore what will ye that I should prepare for you that ye may have light when ye are swallowed up in the depths of the sea?

14. And chastened him because he remembered not to call upon the name of the Lord] It seems highly unlikely that a man of the spiritual stature of the brother of Jared—one who had received marvelous manifestations and had previously exercised great faith in the Lord—would suddenly cease praying to his Maker. It may be that what this verse is saying to us is that Mahonri Moriancumer was chastened by the Lord because he had not fully followed and implemented the counsels of the Lord previously received. It may be that in the relative comfort of the seashore he had allowed his prayers to become less fervent, more casual and routine. He may have been calling upon the Lord in word, but not in faith and deed. Verse 13 perhaps suggests this:

they “dwelt in tents upon the seashore for the space of four years.” The Lord had taught them and prepared them, but it appears that they had tarried too long, for which the brother of Jared was chastened. (Compare Alma 37:42.)

The messages and applications of this episode for us today may be twofold: 1) that “calling upon the Lord” is much more than merely “saying prayers.” President Spencer W. Kimball taught that “we would not ask a Church leader for advice, then disregard it. We must never ask the Lord for blessings, then ignore the answer.” (“Prayer,” p. 19.) “Calling upon the Lord” requires not only frequency and fervency of prayer but also action—commitment to do what the Lord commands and to implement his counsel promptly.

2) From the Lord’s chastening the brother of Jared we see also the danger of pausing too long in one place when we need to be moving onward, forward, and upward. Perhaps it was fear of the long ocean journey, complacency created by the comforts of the seashore, or the natural tendency to want to be “commanded in all things” that caused them to delay their journey. Whatever the reason, the Lord desired them, as he desires us, to “press forward.” Perhaps the Lord was chastening the brother of Jared in much the same way as President Spencer W. Kimball chastened and prodded the Church. “We have paused on some plateaus long enough,” he declared. “Let us resume our journey forward and upward. Let us quietly put an end to our reluctance to reach out to others—whether in our own families, wards, or neighborhoods. We have been diverted, at times, from fundamentals on which we must now focus in order to move forward as a person or as a people.” (CR, April 1979, p. 114.)

15. I will forgive thee . . . but thou shalt not sin any more] Confession and forsaking sin are the indicators of true repentance (see D&C 58:42–43). This concept of forsaking is often misunderstood to mean that one merely stops committing the particular sin of which he is repenting. The ceasing of one designated sin at a time is necessary and is certainly one element of forsaking, but to view the scriptural concept of forsaking sin only by this narrow and compartmentalized definition may rob us of a complete perspective of the true nature of repentance. It is the broader view of repentance that the Lord is teaching the brother of Jared by commanding him not to sin anymore. Attempting to give up one specific sin while clinging tenaciously to others can be characterized as “fragmentary forsaking,” which is antithetical to the forsaking required of the Lord for one to be totally forgiven. President Spencer W. Kimball taught: “That transgressor is not fully repentant who neglects his tithing, misses his meetings, breaks the Sabbath, fails in his family prayers, does not sustain the authorities of the Church, breaks the Word of Wisdom, does not love the Lord

nor his fellowmen. A reforming adulterer who drinks or curses is not repentant. The repenting burglar who has sex play is not ready for forgiveness. God cannot forgive unless the transgressor shows a true repentance which spreads to all areas of his life." (*The Miracle of Forgiveness*, p. 203.)

King Lamoni's father reflected the proper perspective of forsaking as an element of genuine repentance when he declared: "I will give away *all my sins* to know thee . . . and be saved at the last day" (Alma 22:18, italics added). His forsaking of sin was not selective; it was total surrender. When the Savior says "Go thy way and sin no more," as in John 8:11, it is this total forsaking of which he speaks, not selective or fragmented forsaking of sin. True repentance that yields forgiveness requires, as President Joseph F. Smith stated, "a discontinuance of all evil practices and deeds, a thorough reformation of life, a vital change from evil to good, from vice to virtue, from darkness to light" (*Gospel Doctrine*, p. 100; see also "Though Your Sins Be As Scarlet," pp. 67–84).

15. If ye will sin until ye are fully ripe] See Alma 34:32–34; Mormon 5:16–18; Moroni 8:28; also commentary on Mormon 2:15 and Mormon 5:16.

16–25. In these verses we read of the Lord's instructions to the brother of Jared concerning the manner in which the barges should be built that would carry them across the ocean. What is doctrinally significant about these verses is not so much the content of the Lord's instructions concerning the shape of the barges, the means whereby oxygen was made available, or the lighting of the interior, but rather the process whereby the brother of Jared came to acquire this important information. "What will ye that I should do . . . ?" was the Lord's response to the brother of Jared's prayerful petitions that outlined the group's predicament and their special needs. Implicit in the Lord's question is the Lord's expectation—he expects Moriancumer, and expects each of us as well, to use his intellect and his common sense as he seeks solutions to his problems. Oliver Cowdery learned this lesson the hard way, when the Lord told him that he could not translate because he had erroneously assumed that He would grant him his desires merely for the asking. "Behold, you have not understood; you have supposed that I would give it unto you, *when you took no thought, save it was to ask me*. But, behold, I say unto you, that *you must study it out in your mind*; then you must ask me if it be right." (D&C 9:7–8, italics added.) It may be that we approach our prayers the way Oliver did. It may be that all too often when we are praying about our problems and our own unique needs the Father may be saying to us: "What will ye that I should do?" We may be forfeiting greater personal revelation and inspired instructions from the Lord because, expecting the Lord to do all the work, we give no serious

study or thought to the solutions but merely ask. Receiving revelation is often a strenuous endeavor that requires intellectual effort coupled with faith and spiritual yearning.

The Brother of Jared Acknowledges His Weakness and Calls upon the Lord

Ether 3:1-5

1. And it came to pass that the brother of Jared, (now the number of the vessels which had been prepared was eight) went forth unto the mount, which they called the mount Shelem, because of its exceeding height, and did molten out of a rock sixteen small stones; and they were white and clear, even as transparent glass; and he did carry them in his hands upon the top of the mount, and cried again unto the Lord, saying:

2. O Lord, thou hast said that we must be encompassed about by the floods. Now behold, O Lord, and do not be angry with thy servant because of his weakness before thee; for we know that thou art holy and dwellest in the heavens, and that we are unworthy before thee; because of the fall our natures have become evil continually; nevertheless, O Lord, thou hast given us a commandment that we must call upon thee, that from thee we may receive according to our desires.

3. Behold, O Lord, thou hast smitten us because of our iniquity, and hast driven us forth, and for these many years we have been in the wilderness; nevertheless, thou hast been merciful unto us. O Lord, look upon me in pity, and turn away thine anger from this thy people, and suffer not that they shall go forth across this raging deep in darkness; but behold these things which I have molten out of the rock.

4. And I know, O Lord, that thou hast all power, and can do whatsoever thou wilt for the benefit of man; therefore touch these stones, O Lord, with thy finger, and prepare them that they may shine forth in darkness; and they shall shine forth unto us in the vessels which we have prepared, that we may have light while we shall cross the sea.

5. Behold, O Lord, thou canst do this. We know that thou art able to show forth great power, which looks small unto the understanding of men.

2. Because of the fall our natures have become evil continually] This is a doctrine that we are too prone to shy away from, to hide from, to shun. But it is true. It is vital. It is central to the gospel of Jesus Christ. Indeed, if we do not believe in and accept and teach properly the doctrine of the Fall, we cannot, worlds without end, teach properly the doctrine of atonement. To teach atonement without teaching fall is to relegate Jesus to no more than a guide, a great teacher, a coach, or an inspiring cheerleader.

Jesus Christ is the Redeemer, the Savior, the advocate between a fallen and unholy people and a Holy Man, even the exalted Man of Holiness. He came not just to teach or to encourage. He came on a search-and-rescue mission. Truly, because of the Fall our natures have become evil continually, and those natures (not merely our behavior) must be changed and renewed; we must be brought back from death, spiritual death, through the mercy and grace of one who has power over death. We must be reborn. It is noteworthy that these words were not spoken by Laman or Lemuel or one of the score of apostates or inactives in the Book of Mormon. They were spoken by the brother of Jared, a righteous man, but one who knew well his weakness, one who knew clearly his limitations, and, most important, one who knew the source of his strength. (For a detailed treatment of the Fall and its consequences for man, see Robert L. Millet, *Life in Christ*, chapters 3–4.)

2. Nevertheless, . . . thou hast given us a commandment that we must call upon thee] This word *nevertheless* is a critical word. To teach the Fall without holding out the hope of redemption through Christ is to approximate the concept of human depravity. It is to risk discouragement and despair without hope of delivery. It is the same word Nephi used. “O wretched man that I am,” he cried out. “*Nevertheless*,” he exulted, “*I know in whom I have trusted.*” (2 Nephi 4:17, 19, italics added.) It is only through calling upon God—as he has commanded us—that we may have deliverance from sin and experience peace here and hereafter.

2. We may receive according to our desires] See *Commentary* 3:305.

4. Touch these stones, O Lord] There are fascinating rabbinic legends to the effect that Noah enjoyed light in the ark because he carried with him divinely given shining stones. If such stories are true, then the brother of Jared was acting in harmony with the deeds of a prophet who was less than a century and a half removed from him. (See *An Approach to the Book of Mormon*, chapter 25.)

5. Great power, which looks small unto the understanding of men] That is, which men cannot comprehend or appreciate.

The Brother of Jared Penetrates the Veil and Communes with Christ

Ether 3:6–20

6. And it came to pass that when the brother of Jared had said these words, behold, the Lord

stretched forth his hand and touched the stones one by one with his finger. And the veil was

taken from off the eyes of the brother of Jared, and he saw the finger of the Lord; and it was as the finger of a man, like unto flesh and blood; and the brother of Jared fell down before the Lord, for he was struck with fear.

7. And the Lord saw that the brother of Jared had fallen to the earth; and the Lord said unto him: Arise, why hast thou fallen?

8. And he saith unto the Lord: I saw the finger of the Lord, and I feared lest he should smite me; for I knew not that the Lord had flesh and blood.

9. And the Lord said unto him: Because of thy faith thou hast seen that I shall take upon me flesh and blood; and never has man come before me with such exceeding faith as thou hast; for were it not so ye could not have seen my finger. Sawest thou more than this?

10. And he answered: Nay; Lord, show thyself unto me.

11. And the Lord said unto him: Believest thou the words which I shall speak?

12. And he answered: Yea, Lord, I know that thou speakest the truth, for thou art a God of truth, and canst not lie.

13. And when he had said these words, behold, the Lord showed himself unto him, and said: Because thou knowest these things ye are redeemed from the fall; therefore ye are brought back into my presence; therefore I show myself unto you.

14. Behold, I am he who was prepared from the foundation of the world to redeem my people. Behold, I am Jesus Christ. I am the Father and the Son. In me shall all mankind have life, and that eternally, even they who

shall believe on my name; and they shall become my sons and my daughters.

15. And never have I showed myself unto man whom I have created, for never has man believed in me as thou hast. Seest thou that ye are created after mine own image? Yea, even all men were created in the beginning after mine own image.

16. Behold, this body, which ye now behold, is the body of my spirit; and man have I created after the body of my spirit; and even as I appear unto thee to be in the spirit will I appear unto my people in the flesh.

17. And now, as I, Moroni, said I could not make a full account of these things which are written, therefore it sufficeth me to say that Jesus showed himself unto this man in the spirit, even after the manner and in the likeness of the same body even as he showed himself unto the Nephites.

18. And he ministered unto him even as he ministered unto the Nephites; and all this, that this man might know that he was God, because of the many great works which the Lord had showed unto him.

19. And because of the knowledge of this man he could not be kept from beholding within the veil; and he saw the finger of Jesus, which, when he saw, he fell with fear; for he knew that it was the finger of the Lord; and he had faith no longer, for he knew, nothing doubting.

20. Wherefore, having this perfect knowledge of God, he could not be kept from within the veil; therefore he saw Jesus; and he did minister unto him.

6-20. Here is recorded one of the great theophanies of all time. Because of his knowledge of and his trust in Jehovah, this man

was allowed, first of all, to have the veil which separates mortals from immortals parted in such a way as to behold the finger of the God of the patriarchs. Then, after exerting his faith and asserting his desire to see even more, he was allowed the consummate privilege of seeing the Lord and of communing with him on the promised basis. That is to say, the brother of Jared enjoyed the blessing of the Second Comforter, the personal presence and ministration of the Lord God himself (see John 14:18, 21, 23; *Teachings*, pp. 149–51). The faith of Moriancumer was powerfully childlike; his trust was absolute; his reliance on the Lord was complete. And thus the Lord trusted him.

6. It was as the finger of a man] A modern revelation explains that the spirit of man is in the likeness of his physical person (D&C 77:2). The experience here verifies that principle. The finger of Jehovah, a premortal being who would not take a physical body for more than two millennia from that time, resembled a physical finger, so much so that the brother of Jared supposed he was beholding the physical.

6. The brother of Jared fell down before the Lord, for he was struck with fear] Nothing was more well-established in the minds of the ancients than the necessity of holiness—the certain knowledge that unholy man would be unprepared and thus would be consumed in the presence of the God of glory (see JST, Exodus 33:20; D&C 67:10–13).

8. I knew not that the Lord had flesh and blood] Again, the prophet was astonished by the fact that the finger of the Lord appeared to be real—tangible and physical—when in fact he would not take a mortal body for some two thousand years.

9. I shall take upon me flesh and blood] See the statement by President Harold B. Lee in the commentary on verse 15.

11. Believest thou the words which I shall speak?] This question stands as a type of divine preassessment, an effort to know whether the brother of Jared is truly ready for what is about to take place (compare 1 Nephi 11:4–5).

12. Thou art a God of truth, and canst not lie] It is not just that God will not lie; he cannot. It is contrary to his divine nature. Nor can he be anything less than absolutely and infinitely knowledgeable, just, merciful, and kind. For the people of God to believe anything else is to place themselves in a precarious position in regard to their being able to exercise faith in God unto life and salvation (see *Lectures on Faith* 4).

13. Because thou knowest these things ye are redeemed from the fall] Because the brother of Jared knew there was a God, because he had a correct idea of the character, perfections, and attributes of God, and because he was willing to sacrifice anything to better know and serve that God, he gained the assurance that his course in life was pleasing to the heavens (see *Lectures on*

Faith 3:2–5). He acquired the quality and kind of faith which brings remission of sins, assures the redemption of souls from death and hell and endless torment, and eventually brings them into the presence of God. His faith was made perfect in and through Christ. It is not simply that the brother of Jared had intellectual understanding about divine things. He was not merely a bright theologian. Rather, he was a participant in the religion of Jesus Christ, that religion which enlightens the mind and sanctifies the soul.

14. I am he who was prepared from the foundation of the world] Joseph Smith said: “At the first organization in heaven we were all present, and saw the Savior chosen and appointed and the plan of salvation made, and we sanctioned it” (*Teachings*, p. 181). Jehovah was the chief proponent of the Eternal Father’s plan for the salvation of the human family. He was chosen and ordained to come to earth as Savior and Redeemer, while the amendatory offering of Lucifer was rejected by God (see Moses 4:1–4; Abraham 3:22–28).

14. I am Jesus Christ. I am the Father and the Son] See commentary on verse 15. See also *Commentary* 2:225–30.

14. In me shall all mankind have life, and that eternally] Jesus is the light and life of the world. By him all things act and move and have their being. By and through him worlds are formed, peopled, redeemed, and exalted. By him testimonies of the truth are planted, repentance and forgiveness made available, and peace of conscience bestowed. He came to bring the abundant life (see John 10:10).

14. They shall become my sons and my daughters] See *Commentary* 2:169–75.

15. Never have I showed myself unto man] This is a difficult statement. It is hard to fathom. It is particularly difficult to reconcile with what we know regarding God’s dealings with the ancient prophets. We know that all revelation since the fall of Adam has been by and through Jehovah, who is Jesus Christ, the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, the God of the fathers. Whenever Elohim our Heavenly Father did manifest himself it was to introduce and bear record of the Son (see Joseph Fielding Smith, *Doctrines of Salvation* 1:27; *Man: His Origin and Destiny*, pp. 304, 312; *Answers to Gospel Questions* 3:58). Thus it is that the Lord Jehovah—often speaking in the name of and on behalf of the Eternal Father (see *Commentary* 2:227–29)—appeared to and conversed with Adam, Seth, Enoch, Noah, and surely others of whom we have no specific record. Why, then, would Jehovah say: “Never have I showed myself unto man”? We are unaware of a final and conclusive answer anywhere in our literature, but we offer the following possibilities, principles which are not necessarily mutually exclusive and, for all

we know, may all serve as correct answers to the question at hand.

First, perhaps the Lord was speaking of the total and complete manner in which he revealed himself to the brother of Jared. President Joseph Fielding Smith explained: "I have always considered Ether 3:15 to mean that the Savior stood before the brother of Jared plainly, distinctly, and showed him his whole body and explained to him that he was a spirit. In his appearance to Adam and Enoch, he had not made himself manifest in such a familiar way. His appearance to earlier prophets had not been with that same fulness. . . . For the brother of Jared he removed the veil completely." (*Doctrines of Salvation* 1:37; see also Bruce R. McConkie, *Promised Messiah*, pp. 47, 599–600.)

Second, Sidney B. Sperry suggested that the Lord's statement may have to do with the principle that he does not reveal himself to men, (meaning "sons of men," unbelieving men); he only reveals himself to believers, to those who trust in and rely on him, who, like Moriancumer, become redeemed from the Fall (see *Answers to Book of Mormon Questions*, p. 49).

Third, Daniel H. Ludlow has written: "Another possible interpretation is that Jesus Christ . . . is essentially saying in Ether 3:15 that he has never *had* to show himself unto man before. This interpretation gains additional weight when considered in connection with the following verses: Ether 3:9, 19–20, 26. In these verses the Lord makes it very clear that the brother of Jared came before him with greater faith than any other man (Ether 3:9), that the brother of Jared 'could not be kept from within the veil' (Ether 3:20), and that the Lord 'could not withhold anything from him, for he knew that the Lord could show him all things' (Ether 3:26)." (*A Companion to Your Study of the Book of Mormon*, p. 318.)

Fourth, President Harold B. Lee suggested that the uniqueness of Moriancumer's experience lay in the fact that he saw the Lord Jesus as he would be, that is, he saw a vision of Christ as his body would be during his mortal ministry in some two thousand years. "He saw the finger of the Lord," President Lee observed, "as he touched each of those sixteen stones, and they were luminous. And then he was amazed because he said he saw not only the finger of a spiritual being, but his faith was so great that he saw the kind of a body that he would have when he came down to the earth. It was of flesh and blood—flesh, blood, and bones. And the Master said, 'No man has had this kind of faith.' " ("To Be on Speaking Terms with God," pp. 8–9.) Support for this interpretation may come from the Savior: "Because of thy faith thou hast seen that I shall take upon me flesh and blood" (verse 9). Also consider the following words of Moroni: "Jesus showed himself unto this man in the spirit, even after the manner and in the likeness of the same body even as he showed himself unto the Nephites. And

he ministered unto him even as he ministered unto the Nephites.” (Verses 17–18.)

Fifth, we might ponder upon another possibility. It may be that this is the first occasion in history—it seems to be the first, according to our present scriptural records—when Jehovah manifested himself as Jesus Christ, *the Son*. Before this time he had made himself known by speaking to such persons as Adam (Moses 6), Enoch (Moses 6–7), and Noah (Moses 8) in the language and person of the Father, by divine investiture of authority. In other words, this may be the first occasion wherein Jehovah introduced himself as Jesus the Son of God rather than speaking about himself in the third person, as he had done many times before.

Finally, perhaps the matter is simpler than we had supposed. Could it be that the pronouncement is a relative statement, that it pertains only to the Jaredites? That is, it may be that Jehovah was explaining, in essence, “Never before have I showed myself to anyone in your dispensation, the Jaredite dispensation.”

15. Man whom I have created] Here Jehovah speaks in broad terms and by divine investiture of authority. Jehovah was, under the direction and by appointment of the Father, the executive in the creation. He created all things on earth, except man. “When it came to placing man on earth, there was a change in Creators. That is, the Father himself became personally involved. All things were created by the Son, using the power delegated by the Father, except man. In the spirit and again in the flesh, man was created by the Father. There was no delegation of authority where the crowning creature of creation was concerned.” (Bruce R. McConkie, *Promised Messiah*, p. 62; see also *New Witness*, p. 63.)

19. Because of the knowledge of this man] Moroni later speaks of the *faith* of this man (see Ether 12:20–21).

19. He had faith no longer] From an eternal perspective, knowledge and faith are not antithetical, nor are they on opposite ends of a continuum. God possesses all knowledge and God possesses all faith. Indeed, it is by virtue of his faith, existing in him in perfection as a principle of power, that the worlds were made (see Hebrews 11:3; *Lectures on Faith* 1–2). Elder Bruce R. McConkie has written: “In the eternal sense, because faith is the power of God himself, it embraces within its fold a knowledge of all things. This measure of faith, the faith by which the worlds are and were created and which sustains and upholds all things, is found only among resurrected persons. It is the faith of saved beings. But mortals are in process, through faith, of gaining eternal salvation. Their faith is based on a knowledge of the truth, within the meaning of Alma’s statement that ‘faith is not to have a perfect knowledge of things,’ but that men have faith when they ‘hope for things which are not seen, which are true.’ In this sense faith is both preceded and supplanted by knowledge, and when any person gains a per-

fect knowledge on any given matter, then, as pertaining to that thing, he has faith no longer; or, rather, his faith is dormant; it has been supplanted by pure knowledge. . . . The brother of Jared stands out as a good illustration of how the knowledge of God is gained by faith, and also of how that perfect knowledge, from a mortal perspective, replaces faith.” (*New Witness*, pp. 209–10, 211.)

Brother of Jared Shown Things to Be Included in Sealed Portion of the Book of Mormon

Ether 3:21–28

21. And it came to pass that the Lord said unto the brother of Jared: Behold, thou shalt not suffer these things which ye have seen and heard to go forth unto the world, until the time cometh that I shall glorify my name in the flesh; wherefore, ye shall treasure up the things which ye have seen and heard, and show it to no man.

22. And behold, when ye shall come unto me, ye shall write them and shall seal them up, that no one can interpret them; for ye shall write them in a language that they cannot be read.

23. And behold, these two stones will I give unto thee, and ye shall seal them up also with the things which ye shall write.

24. For behold, the language which ye shall write I have confounded; wherefore I will cause in my own due time that these stones shall magnify to the eyes of men these things which ye shall write.

25. And when the Lord had said these words, he showed unto the brother of Jared all the inhabitants of the earth which had been, and also all that would be; and he withheld them not from his sight, even unto the ends of the earth.

26. For he had said unto him in times before, that if he would believe in him that he could show unto him all things—it should be shown unto him; therefore the Lord could not withhold anything from him, for he knew that the Lord could show him all things.

27. And the Lord said unto him: Write these things and seal them up; and I will show them in mine own due time unto the children of men.

28. And it came to pass that the Lord commanded him that he should seal up the two stones which he had received, and show them not, until the Lord should show them unto the children of men.

21. See Ether 4:1

22. **When ye shall come unto me]** Presumably this means something like, “Before you die, write these things and seal them up.”

22. **Ye shall write them in a language that they cannot be read]** Presumably Moriancumer was writing in Adamic, or the language of God (see *The Way to Perfection*, p. 69).

23–24. See Mosiah 28:13. These stones were eventually given

by the angel Moroni to the Prophet Joseph Smith (see D&C 17:1).

25–28. The brother of Jared was granted a panoramic vision, that vision which the scriptures tell us has been given to prophet-leaders of dispensations, a vision of things from the beginning to the end. This he was instructed to seal up; it constitutes or is included in what we know as the sealed portion of the Book of Mormon. This “sealed book” is described in Nephi’s record as containing “a revelation from God, from the beginning of the world to the ending thereof.” When it comes forth it will “reveal all things from the foundation of the world unto the end thereof.” (2 Nephi 27:7, 10.)

“When, during the Millennium [see 2 Nephi 27:11; Ether 4:7, 15], the sealed portion of the Book of Mormon is translated, it will give an account of life in preexistence; of the creation of all things; of the Fall and the Atonement and the Second Coming; of temple ordinances in their fulness; of the ministry and mission of translated beings; of life in the spirit world, in both paradise and hell; of the kingdoms of glory to be inhabited by resurrected beings, and many such things” (Bruce R. McConkie, *Doctrines of the Restoration*, p. 277).

25. All the inhabitants of the earth] Compare Moses 1:28; Abraham 3:12.

26. He had said unto him in times before] See verses 11–13.

27. I will show them in mine own due time] See 2 Nephi 27:11, 21; Ether 4:7, 15.

Moroni Seals Up the Record of the Brother of Jared

Ether 4:1–5

1. And the Lord commanded the brother of Jared to go down out of the mount from the presence of the Lord, and write the things which he had seen; and they were forbidden to come unto the children of men until after that he should be lifted up upon the cross; and for this cause did king Mosiah keep them, that they should not come unto the world until after Christ should show himself unto his people.

2. And after Christ truly had showed himself unto his people he commanded that they should

be made manifest.

3. And now, after that, they have all dwindled in unbelief; and there is none save it be the Lamanites, and they have rejected the gospel of Christ; therefore I am commanded that I should hide them up again in the earth.

4. Behold, I have written upon these plates the very things which the brother of Jared saw; and there never were greater things made manifest than those which were made manifest unto the brother of Jared.

5. Wherefore the Lord hath

commanded me to write them; and I have written them. And he commanded me that I should seal them up; and he also hath commanded that I should seal up the

interpretation thereof; wherefore I have sealed up the interpreters, according to the commandment of the Lord.

1. Until after that he should be lifted up] See Ether 3:21.

4. See commentary on Ether 3:25–28.

5. He commanded me that I should seal them up] See 2 Nephi 27:7, 11, 21–22.

Sealed Record to Come Forth in a Day of Faith and Righteousness

Ether 4:6–19

6. For the Lord said unto me: They shall not go forth unto the Gentiles until the day that they shall repent of their iniquity, and become clean before the Lord.

7. And in that day that they shall exercise faith in me, saith the Lord, even as the brother of Jared did, that they may become sanctified in me, then will I manifest unto them the things which the brother of Jared saw, even to the unfolding unto them all my revelations, saith Jesus Christ, the Son of God, the Father of the heavens and of the earth, and all things that in them are.

8. And he that will contend against the word of the Lord, let him be accursed; and he that shall deny these things, let him be accursed; for unto them will I show no greater things, saith Jesus Christ; for I am he who speaketh.

9. And at my command the heavens are opened and are shut; and at my word the earth shall shake; and at my command the inhabitants thereof shall pass away, even so as by fire.

10. And he that believeth not my words believeth not my disci-

ples; and if it so be that I do not speak, judge ye; for ye shall know that it is I that speaketh, at the last day.

11. But he that believeth these things which I have spoken, him will I visit with the manifestations of my Spirit, and he shall know and bear record. For because of my Spirit he shall know that these things are true; for it persuadeth men to do good.

12. And whatsoever thing persuadeth men to do good is of me; for good cometh of none save it be of me. I am the same that leadeth men to all good; he that will not believe my words will not believe me—that I am; and he that will not believe me will not believe the Father who sent me. For behold, I am the Father, I am the light, and the life, and the truth of the world.

13. Come unto me, O ye Gentiles, and I will show unto you the greater things, the knowledge which is hid up because of unbelief.

14. Come unto me, O ye house of Israel, and it shall be made manifest unto you how great

things the Father hath laid up for you, from the foundation of the world; and it hath not come unto you, because of unbelief.

15. Behold, when ye shall rend that veil of unbelief which doth cause you to remain in your awful state of wickedness, and hardness of heart, and blindness of mind, then shall the great and marvelous things which have been hid up from the foundation of the world from you—yea, when ye shall call upon the Father in my name, with a broken heart and a contrite spirit, then shall ye know that the Father hath remembered the covenant which he made unto your fathers, O house of Israel.

16. And then shall my revelations which I have caused to be written by my servant John be unfolded in the eyes of all the people. Remember, when ye see

these things, ye shall know that the time is at hand that they shall be made manifest in very deed.

17. Therefore, when ye shall receive this record ye may know that the work of the Father has commenced upon all the face of the land.

18. Therefore, repent all ye ends of the earth, and come unto me, and believe in my gospel, and be baptized in my name; for he that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned; and signs shall follow them that believe in my name.

19. And blessed is he that is found faithful unto my name at the last day, for he shall be lifted up to dwell in the kingdom prepared for him from the foundation of the world. And behold it is I that hath spoken it. Amen.

6–19. These verses represent a lengthy quotation from the Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ.

6–7. Moroni here speaks of a day of consummate righteousness, a day of faith, a day of universal good and brotherhood—surely the day we know as the Millennium. It is a day when the generality of the people exercise faith like Moriancumer, when the Saints possess power with their God sufficient to penetrate the veil and enjoy communion with holy beings. In that day, when the people of the Lord are living up to their privileges, when those who have come out of the world are basking in the glorious light of Christ the Lord, and when the covenant people have searched and studied and pondered and taught consistently from the scriptures they have been given—then, in that day, the Lord God will bestow new knowledge, vouchsafe new scriptures, confer new and sacred understanding that has been known by but few of the earth's inhabitants. He will give to the faithful all that the brother of Jared received.

7. The Father of the heavens and of the earth] See *Commentary* 2:225–30. See also Mosiah 3:8; 16:15; Alma 11:39; 3 Nephi 9:15; D&C 14:9.

8. God reveals himself to the humble, to those who know their weakness and their limits, who gladly acknowledge them, and who earnestly open themselves to further light and knowledge from him who is eternal.

10. Ye shall know that it is I that speaketh, at the last day] See 2 Nephi 33:11; Ether 5:6; Moroni 10:27.

11. These things are true; for it persuadeth men to do good] See commentary on Moroni 7:12–16.

12. The Father who sent me. . . . I am the Father] See commentary on 3 Nephi 1:14.

13–14. The Almighty is ever eager to reveal himself, to dispense his truths and powers, to Jew and Gentile alike. He is no respecter of persons.

15. When men and women forsake the ways of the world and cleanse their hands and feet through the waters of regeneration, they then open themselves to the revelations of God. Among the sacred treasures to be made known to those who hunger and thirst after truth is their personal and familial identity, their lineage as pertaining to the house of Israel, their place in the plan of the Father. Nephi explained to his errant brethren: “And at that [latter] day shall the remnant of our seed know that they are of the house of Israel, and that they are the covenant people of the Lord; and then shall they know and come to the knowledge of their forefathers, and also the knowledge of the gospel of their Redeemer . . . ; wherefore, they shall come to the knowledge of their Redeemer and the very points of his doctrine, that they may know how to come unto him and be saved” (1 Nephi 15:14).

16. In that day the Most High will make known those things which have been hid from the generality of mankind for millennia; he will grant unto the pure in heart a knowledge of all that Adam and Enoch and Abraham and John the Revelator saw in panoramic vision. And that which Nephi saw, but which was to be written by John (see 1 Nephi 14:18–28), shall be shown forth.

17. One of the great signs of the Father’s work in the last days—the work of the gathering of Israel—is the coming forth of the Book of Mormon. In this sense the Book of Mormon is itself one of the signs of the times. See 3 Nephi 21:1–7; 29:1–2.

18. Signs shall follow them] See commentary on Mormon 9:22–24.

19. Faithful unto my name] Those who speak and act in the name of the Lord with dignity and propriety; who function in the faith of Jesus Christ and evidence respect and reverence toward the name that is above all other names; who through obedience and fidelity to that holy name manifest their Christianity—these shall come in eternity to bear the holy name everlastingly. Like the 144,000 high priests who have the name of God sealed upon their foreheads (see Revelation 14:1; D&C 77:11; 133:18), so shall the people of the Lord who have been true to the name of Christ be sealed everlastingly to him (see Mosiah 5:15). In addition, we are faithful to the name of Christ as we are faithful, loyal, supportive, and respectful to those called to speak in his holy name.

19. The kingdom prepared for him from the foundation of the world] Those who kept the statutes and commandments of God in their first estate, who were true and faithful to every trust in the premortal existence, were promised certain blessings, including thrones, principalities, and powers associated with eternal life and the everlasting continuation of the family—all on a conditional basis. When they come to earth, receive the gospel and its attendant covenants and ordinances, and live in such a manner as to merit the gifts and blessings of the Spirit, they qualify in time (either here or hereafter) to receive unconditionally what they had been promised before they came here. That is to say, their calling and election to eternal life—which had its origin in the first estate—is made sure.

Moroni Delivers Counsel to Joseph Smith

Ether 5:1–6

1. And now I, Moroni, have written the words which were commanded me, according to my memory; and I have told you the things which I have sealed up; therefore touch them not in order that ye may translate; for that thing is forbidden you, except by and by it shall be wisdom in God.

2. And behold, ye may be privileged that ye may show the plates unto those who shall assist to bring forth this work;

3. And unto three shall they be shown by the power of God; wherefore they shall know of a surety that these things are true.

4. And in the mouth of three witnesses shall these things be es-

tablished; and the testimony of three, and this work, in the which shall be shown forth the power of God and also his word, of which the Father, and the Son, and the Holy Ghost bear record—and all this shall stand as a testimony against the world at the last day.

5. And if it so be that they repent and come unto the Father in the name of Jesus, they shall be received into the kingdom of God.

6. And now, if I have no authority for these things, judge ye; for ye shall know that I have authority when ye shall see me, and we shall stand before God at the last day. Amen.

1. According to my memory] See discussion of Mosiah 17:4 in *Commentary* 2:249.

1. Touch them not in order that ye may translate] This appears to be a specific charge to Joseph Smith the modern seer and translator, a directive that he is not to touch or translate the sealed portion of the record. In speaking through Nephi, the Savior said, presumably to that same seer, “Touch not the things which are sealed, for I will bring them forth in mine own due time; for I will show unto the children of men that I am able to do mine own work” (2 Nephi 27:21).

2–3. Here Moroni instructs Joseph Smith concerning the calling of witnesses, chosen persons who will be, like the seer who brought forth the record, commissioned by God to bear solemn testimony of the truthfulness of the Book of Mormon. “Wherefore, by the words of three, God hath said, I will establish my word” (2 Nephi 11:3). Nephi had prophesied some 550 years before the coming of Christ: “Wherefore, at that day when the book shall be delivered unto the man of whom I have spoken [Joseph Smith], the book [specifically the plates] shall be hid from the eyes of the world, that the eyes of none shall behold it save it be that three witnesses shall behold it, by the power of God, besides him to whom the book shall be delivered; and they shall testify to the truth of the book and the things therein” (2 Nephi 27:12). Oliver Cowdery, David Whitmer, and Martin Harris were each moved upon by the Spirit with a desire to become the witnesses so named in the Book of Mormon and inquired of the Prophet accordingly. The Lord confirmed that assignment upon them, and thus their sacred witness is attached to every copy of the Book of Mormon (see D&C 17; “The Testimony of Three Witnesses”).

4. Not only would three chosen witnesses bear testimony of the book’s divine origin and the providential hand in the translation of the record, but also the Book of Mormon itself, called here “this work,” would attest (by the Spirit) of its own truthfulness. The Father, and the Son, and the Holy Ghost, which is one God—one in mind and thought and purpose and glory—will attest in great power to those who are earnest in their search for truth that this precious record is the mind and will and voice and word of God to man, is indeed holy scripture (D&C 68:3–4).

4. All this shall stand as a testimony against the world at the last day] Indeed, the Book of Mormon is not simply another book about religion. Salvation itself is at stake in anyone’s appraisal of it. By the book shall the world be judged (see 2 Nephi 25:18, 22; 29:11).

5. “Jesus saith unto [Thomas]: I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me” (John 14:6).

6. See Moroni 10:27; compare 2 Nephi 33:11.

The Jaredites Arrive in the Promised Land

Ether 6:1–12

1. And now I, Moroni, proceed to give the record of Jared and his brother.

2. For it came to pass after the Lord had prepared the stones which the brother of Jared had

carried up into the mount, the brother of Jared came down out of the mount, and he did put forth the stones into the vessels which were prepared, one in each end thereof; and behold, they did give

light unto the vessels.

3. And thus the Lord caused stones to shine in darkness, to give light unto men, women, and children, that they might not cross the great waters in darkness.

4. And it came to pass that when they had prepared all manner of food, that thereby they might subsist upon the water, and also food for their flocks and herds, and whatsoever beast or animal or fowl that they should carry with them—and it came to pass that when they had done all these things they got aboard of their vessels or barges, and set forth into the sea, commending themselves unto the Lord their God.

5. And it came to pass that the Lord God caused that there should be a furious wind blow upon the face of the waters, towards the promised land; and thus they were tossed upon the waves of the sea before the wind.

6. And it came to pass that they were many times buried in the depths of the sea, because of the mountain waves which broke upon them, and also the great and terrible tempests which were caused by the fierceness of the wind.

7. And it came to pass that when they were buried in the deep there was no water that could hurt them, their vessels being tight like unto a dish, and

also they were tight like unto the ark of Noah; therefore when they were encompassed about by many waters they did cry unto the Lord, and he did bring them forth again upon the top of the waters.

8. And it came to pass that the wind did never cease to blow towards the promised land while they were upon the waters; and thus they were driven forth before the wind.

9. And they did sing praises unto the Lord; yea, the brother of Jared did sing praises unto the Lord, and he did thank and praise the Lord all the day long; and when the night came, they did not cease to praise the Lord.

10. And thus they were driven forth; and no monster of the sea could break them, neither whale that could mar them; and they did have light continually, whether it was above the water or under the water.

11. And thus they were driven forth, three hundred and forty and four days upon the water.

12. And they did land upon the shore of the promised land. And when they had set their feet upon the shores of the promised land they bowed themselves down upon the face of the land, and did humble themselves before the Lord, and did shed tears of joy before the Lord, because of the multitude of his tender mercies over them.

1-12. After 344 days of being driven by the winds and the sea the Jaredites arrived in the promised land, on the American continent. They were preserved by the goodness of the Lord and by their preparations that were made in harmony with the inspired counsel of the Lord to the brother of Jared. There was continual light and air in the barges, just as the Lord had promised in response to that prophet's inspired request.

9. They did sing praises unto the Lord] One of the traits that enables one to endure almost any hardship is unshaken faith

in the Lord. Praising the Lord, whether it be by song or sermon or through prayers of gratitude, is an indicator of that trust and complete reliance upon the Lord. Singing such praises buoys the spirit and brings strength to weary souls and courage to fearful hearts. “For my soul delighteth in the song of the heart,” the Lord declared in our day, “yea, the song of the righteous is a prayer unto me, and it shall be answered with a blessing upon their heads” (D&C 25:12). Prayers of praise and gratitude, as well as petitions and pleadings for protection, are vocalized faith and are also a means whereby God’s children can “sing the song of redeeming love” (see Alma 5:26). Just as the Jaredites faced their uncertain and frightening journey with faith, prayers, and songs of praise, so too can we dispel the darkness of discouragement, be filled with courage to faithfully face uncertainty and opposition, and be spiritually strengthened to endure well whatever we are required to face on our sojourn in mortality.

12. Did shed tears of joy before the Lord, because of the multitude of his tender mercies over them] Recognizing the blessings of the Lord in one’s life brings a sense of gratitude and humility. As a person ponders the workings of the Lord in his life, he may be filled with a sense of awe and wonder and a feeling of overwhelming love for the Lord. When the heart is softened by gratitude and humility and the mind is quickened by a recognition of God’s hand, the Spirit of the Lord fills the soul with joy even to tears. President Ezra Taft Benson declared: “Spiritual promptings move us on occasion to great joy, sometimes to tears. . . . The Holy Ghost causes our feelings to be more tender. We feel more charitable and compassionate. We are calmer. We have a greater capacity to love.” (*Come Unto Christ*, p. 20.) The “tender mercies of the Lord” are manifested in our lives both in temporal and spiritual ways. We experience his tender mercy through his forgiveness of our sins and the transformation of our lives through his grace. We are protected and blessed in temporal ways by his ever-watchful loving-kindness and care. When we recognize and experience these temporal spiritual mercies of the Lord we are indeed filled with joy—a joy that, as Ammon declared, borders on “boasting” or “glorying” in the goodness of God (see Alma 26:12–16). “Blessed is the name of my God,” Ammon exulted, “who has been mindful of this people, who are a branch of the tree of Israel, and has been lost from its body in a strange land; yea, I say, blessed be the name of my God, who has been mindful of us, wanderers in a strange land. Now my brethren, we see that God is mindful of every people, whatsoever land they may be in; yea, he numbereth his people, and his bowels of mercy are over all the earth. Now this is my joy, and my great thanksgiving; yea, and I will give thanks unto my God forever.” (Alma 26:36–37.)

Orihah, Son of Jared, Appointed King of the Jaredites

Ether 6:13–30

13. And it came to pass that they went forth upon the face of the land, and began to till the earth.

14. And Jared had four sons; and they were called Jacom, and Gilgah, and Mahah, and Orihah.

15. And the brother of Jared also begat sons and daughters.

16. And the friends of Jared and his brother were in number about twenty and two souls; and they also begat sons and daughters before they came to the promised land; and therefore they began to be many.

17. And they were taught to walk humbly before the Lord; and they were also taught from on high.

18. And it came to pass that they began to spread upon the face of the land, and to multiply and to till the earth; and they did wax strong in the land.

19. And the brother of Jared began to be old, and saw that he must soon go down to the grave; wherefore he said unto Jared: Let us gather together our people that we may number them, that we may know of them what they will desire of us before we go down to our graves.

20. And accordingly the people were gathered together. Now the number of the sons and the daughters of the brother of Jared were twenty and two souls; and the number of sons and daughters of Jared were twelve, he having four sons.

21. And it came to pass that they did number their people; and after that they had numbered them, they did desire of them the things which they would that they should do before they went down

to their graves.

22. And it came to pass that the people desired of them that they should anoint one of their sons to be a king over them.

23. And now behold, this was grievous unto them. And the brother of Jared said unto them: Surely this thing leadeth into captivity.

24. But Jared said unto his brother: Suffer them that they may have a king. And therefore he said unto them: Choose ye out from among our sons a king, even whom ye will.

25. And it came to pass that they chose even the firstborn of the brother of Jared; and his name was Pagag. And it came to pass that he refused and would not be their king. And the people would that his father should constrain him, but his father would not; and he commanded them that they should constrain no man to be their king.

26. And it came to pass that they chose all the brothers of Pagag, and they would not.

27. And it came to pass that neither would the sons of Jared, even all save it were one; and Orihah was anointed to be king over the people.

28. And he began to reign, and the people began to prosper; and they became exceedingly rich.

29. And it came to pass that Jared died, and his brother also.

30. And it came to pass that Orihah did walk humbly before the Lord, and did remember how great things the Lord had done for his father, and also taught his people how great things the Lord had done for their fathers.

13–30. After their arrival at the promised land the sons and daughters of Jared, his brother, and their friends began to multiply in the land, wax strong, and prosper. In course of time, as many families developed, there arose a desire to organize themselves into a kingdom; and they requested of the patriarch fathers, Jared and Mahonri Moriancumer, that one of their sons be anointed king. Several of the sons that were asked refused in turn to serve as king, and their fathers would not compel them into such service. Finally, Orihah, son of Jared, agreed to be anointed king. He was a righteous, humble, and faithful leader, and under his reign the people prospered both spiritually and temporally.

17. They were also taught from on high] The instruction in gospel principles that is done in homes and in classes and quorums at church is an important part of the process of acquiring intelligence—light and truth. The transforming power of gospel teaching comes not from the intellect alone but by the power of the Holy Ghost. Earthly gospel instruction and learning prepares the heart and mind to be “taught from on high” by revelation. This type of divine instruction that endows us with heaven-sent knowledge and power requires, as President Harold B. Lee taught, “the bending of the whole soul through worthy living to become attuned to the Holy Spirit of the Lord, the calling up from the depths of one’s own mental searching, and the linking of our own efforts” with the teaching of the Spirit (“The Iron Rod,” *Ensign*, June 1971, p. 10; see also D&C 43:16; 75:27).

23. Surely this thing leadeth into captivity] When his children and posterity requested that a king be anointed, the brother of Jared resisted because he recognized the potential for abuse and wickedness under kingly rule. This inspired concern and resistance to the reign of kings was also voiced by Samuel the prophet (see 1 Samuel 8:6–22) in the Old World, and by Mosiah in the New World as he introduced the system of judges (see Mosiah 29:13–32; see also *Commentary* 2:318–19). The concerns of the brother of Jared were fully realized as subsequent kings turned from the ways of righteousness and led their people into abominable practices of idolatry and other forms of wickedness that contributed to their spiritual decline and their ultimate extinction as a civilization.

Moroni’s Abridgment Chronicles the Cycle of Jaredite Wickedness

Ether 7–11

In our discussion of chapters 7–11 of the book of Ether we shall depart somewhat from the format established in this work. A

verse-by-verse commentary does not seem appropriate or needed here.

The book of Ether is Moroni's abridgment of the Jaredite record, a saga of a people who may have existed for as long as two thousand years (from the time of the Tower of Babel in approximately 2200 B.C. to the time Coriantumr is found by the Mulekites, somewhere between 600 B.C. and 200 B.C.). Moroni chronicles at least thirty generations of people. The first six chapters focus sharply upon God's dealings with Jared, his brother, and their families. Within these six chapters are found doctrinal gems and precepts for living that are of great worth. Beginning with chapter 7 we are introduced to the cycle of wickedness and perversion into which a people find themselves repeatedly drawn and from which they are eventually released. Because we are reading an abridgment of what must have been a large record, the abridgment covering centuries in only a few verses, the cycle is almost dizzying. Thus, rather than seeking to study each verse or chapter on its own, for these five chapters we feel that it would be more worthwhile to show how the book of Ether stands as a second witness to several of the great lessons of life which are taught so forcefully in the Nephite record.

1. *The perils and results of the reigns of wicked kings.* Mosiah warned the people of the problems associated with a perverse and power-hungry monarch (see Mosiah 29:12–24). Even the brother of Jared had forewarned his people that the appointment of kings "leadeth into captivity." In chapters 7–11 we see this timeless lesson repeated again and again.

2. *The purpose, means of growth, and final end of a people who uphold secret combinations.* Earlier in the Book of Mormon we learned of the origin of secret combinations—that they began with Cain and Satan, that they are built up to get gain and achieve power, and that they eventually proved to be a major cause of the decline and fall of the Nephite nation (see Helaman 2, 6). In the book of Ether we learn that among the Jaredites these combinations were made up of people who "sought power to gain power, and to murder, and to plunder, and to lie, and to commit all manner of wickedness and whoredoms" (Ether 8:16). Further, our editor adds: "And now I, Moroni, do not write the manner of their oaths and combinations, for it hath been made known unto me that they are had among all people. . . . And they have caused the destruction of this people of whom I am now speaking [the Jaredites], and also the destruction of the people of Nephi. And whatsoever nation shall uphold such secret combinations, to get power and gain, until they shall spread over the nation, behold, they shall be destroyed; for the Lord will not suffer that the blood of his saints, which shall be shed by them, shall always cry unto him from the

ground for vengeance upon them and yet he avenge them not.” (Ether 8:20–22; see also verses 23–25.)

3. *America: a land choice above all other lands.* Lehi was told early in the Nephite saga that he would be led to a land of promise, a covenant land reserved for a people who entered into and kept the standards and statutes of the gospel covenant (see 2 Nephi 1:5). The Lehite colony were told that that land would be a land of liberty, a land free from kings and foreign oppressors, a land set apart by God and preserved by him from enemies, if the people remained true and faithful (see 2 Nephi 1:7; 10:11–12). Moroni teaches this same lesson in the context of the Jaredite story—that the land of promise will remain the same only as long as the people of the land worship and serve the God of the land, Jesus Christ (Ether 2:9–12; compare 9:20; 13:2).

4. *The power of faith and the results of gospel living.* There is perhaps no greater illustration in all of scripture regarding the power of simple faith in the word and ways of God than that of the brother of Jared. Here we see a man who acknowledged his fallen condition and his weakness before the Lord, who prayed for forgiveness, expressed his trust in and need for divine assistance, and watched as the veil was parted and the powers of heaven were made manifest (see Ether 3). Even during a period of great wickedness, there arose occasionally among the Jaredites a righteous king. Such was the case with Emer and Coriantum. “And Emer did execute judgment in righteousness all his days, and he begat many sons and daughters; and he begat Coriantum, and he anointed Coriantum to reign in his stead. And after he had anointed Coriantum to reign in his stead he lived four years, and he saw peace in the land; yea, and he even saw the Son of Righteousness, and did rejoice and glory in his day; and he died in peace.” (Ether 9:21–22.)

5. *The important place of prophets and the plight of those who reject their words.* The Lord has from the beginning sent his prophets to serve as his mouthpieces, to speak and act on his behalf to a people who desperately need the divine word. Prophet-leaders in the Nephite record like Lehi, Nephi, Jacob, Abinadi, Alma, Helaman, Mormon, and Moroni—these all stand as examples of what the people can be and receive. Their task is seldom easy, inasmuch as people simply do not like to be told of their wickedness. But the Savior honors his servants the prophets. Indeed, we learn that those who were destroyed on the American continent at the time of the Savior’s death were those who had cast out the prophets (see 3 Nephi 9:10; 10:12). And thus among the Jaredites, in the days of King Shule, “there came prophets among the people, who were sent from the Lord, prophesying that the wickedness and idolatry of the people was bringing a curse upon the land, and they

should be destroyed if they did not repent. And it came to pass that the people did revile against the prophets, and did mock them.” (Ether 7:23–24.) At a later time “there came prophets in the land again, crying repentance unto them—that they must prepare the way of the Lord or there should come a curse upon the face of the land; . . . But the people believed not the words of the prophets, but they cast them out; and some of them they cast into pits and left them to perish. . . . And it came to pass that there began to be a great dearth upon the land, and the inhabitants began to be destroyed exceedingly fast because of the dearth, for there was no rain upon the face of the earth. And there came forth poisonous serpents also upon the face of the land, and did poison many people.” (Ether 9:28–31; compare 11:1–5, 12–13, 20–22.)

6. *The sending of natural disasters to humble the people.* As we have seen above, just as the Lord sent a famine in the days of Nephi and Lehi, sons of Helaman, in order to gain the attention of a wayward generation and drive them to their knees (see Helaman 11), so the Lord did the same among the Jaredites (see Ether 9:28–35). In a time when many of the prophets of God among the Jaredites were put to death, a day when the people “hearkened not unto the voice of the Lord,” thereafter “there began to be wars and contentions in all the land, and also many famines and pestilences, inasmuch that there was a great destruction, such an one as never had been known upon the face of the earth” (Ether 11:5–7).

7. *The reality and power of Jehovah, Jesus Christ.* The record of the Jaredites stands as an accompanying witness that Jesus is the Christ, the Eternal God, manifesting himself to all nations. In this abridgment we find the ever-present reminder that the Son of Man is eager and willing to assist those who will be saved and infinitely patient with those of us frail mortals who seek to follow that path. He reaches out (through his prophets, through his voice, and by the power of the Holy Ghost) to the Jaredites, just as he did to the Nephites and the Jews, and as he does to the Latter-day Saints. His plan of salvation is the same, his laws the same, his covenants and ordinances the same, the strait and narrow way forever the same. He is a God of mercy. He forgives sins and he forgets them. He dispenses his gifts and his graces. He is a God of justice. His Spirit will not always strive with those who spurn at his ways and reject his counsel. He dispenses his punishments upon the ungodly. He sends speedy destruction upon a nation which is beyond feeling, beyond civilization, and beyond repentance, and thus beyond the pale of saving grace and mercy. The book of Ether, like the rest of the Book of Mormon, attests that “there is a God, and he is Christ” (2 Nephi 11:7).

Ether's Teachings on Faith and Hope

Ether 12:1–22

1. And it came to pass that the days of Ether were in the days of Coriantumr; and Coriantumr was king over all the land.

2. And Ether was a prophet of the Lord; wherefore Ether came forth in the days of Coriantumr, and began to prophesy unto the people, for he could not be restrained because of the Spirit of the Lord which was in him.

3. For he did cry from the morning, even until the going down of the sun, exhorting the people to believe in God unto repentance lest they should be destroyed, saying unto them that by faith all things are fulfilled—

4. Wherefore, whoso believeth in God might with surety hope for a better world, yea, even a place at the right hand of God, which hope cometh of faith, maketh an anchor to the souls of men, which would make them sure and steadfast, always abounding in good works, being led to glorify God.

5. And it came to pass that Ether did prophesy great and marvelous things unto the people, which they did not believe, because they saw them not.

6. And now, I, Moroni, would speak somewhat concerning these things; I would show unto the world that faith is things which are hoped for and not seen; wherefore, dispute not because ye see not, for ye receive no witness until after the trial of your faith.

7. For it was by faith that Christ showed himself unto our fathers, after he had risen from the dead; and he showed not himself unto them until after they had faith in him; wherefore, it must needs be that some had faith in

him, for he showed himself not unto the world.

8. But because of the faith of men he has shown himself unto the world, and glorified the name of the Father, and prepared a way that thereby others might be partakers of the heavenly gift, that they might hope for those things which they have not seen.

9. Wherefore, ye may also have hope, and be partakers of the gift, if ye will but have faith.

10. Behold it was by faith that they of old were called after the holy order of God.

11. Wherefore, by faith was the law of Moses given. But in the gift of his Son hath God prepared a more excellent way; and it is by faith that it hath been fulfilled.

12. For if there be no faith among the children of men God can do no miracle among them; wherefore, he showed not himself until after their faith.

13. Behold, it was the faith of Alma and Amulek that caused the prison to tumble to the earth.

14. Behold, it was the faith of Nephi and Lehi that wrought the change upon the Lamanites, that they were baptized with fire and with the Holy Ghost.

15. Behold, it was the faith of Ammon and his brethren which wrought so great a miracle among the Lamanites.

16. Yea, and even all they who wrought miracles wrought them by faith, even those who were before Christ and also those who were after.

17. And it was by faith that the three disciples obtained a promise that they should not taste of death; and they obtained not the

promise until after their faith.

18. And neither at any time hath any wrought miracles until after their faith; wherefore they first believed in the Son of God.

19. And there were many whose faith was so exceedingly strong, even before Christ came, who could not be kept from within the veil, but truly saw with their eyes the things which they had beheld with an eye of faith, and they were glad.

20. And behold, we have seen in this record that one of these was the brother of Jared; for so great was his faith in God, that when God put forth his finger he could not hide it from the sight of the brother of Jared, because of

his word which he had spoken unto him, which word he had obtained by faith.

21. And after the brother of Jared had beheld the finger of the Lord, because of the promise which the brother of Jared had obtained by faith, the Lord could not withhold anything from his sight; wherefore he showed him all things, for he could no longer be kept without the veil.

22. And it is by faith that my fathers have obtained the promise that these things should come unto their brethren through the Gentiles; therefore the Lord hath commanded me, yea, even Jesus Christ.

1-3. Ether, as the Lord's chosen prophet, was untiring in his ministry in exhorting his people to repent in order to avert destruction. He was so filled with the Spirit of the Lord that he could not be restrained by others or prevented by them from fulfilling his divine mandate (compare Mosiah 13:2-7). Being filled with the Spirit also compelled Ether, as it can work upon us, to magnify his calling and not be distracted or diverted from such important work by things of lesser significance.

3. By faith all things are fulfilled] Ether's message to his people was that they should "believe in God *unto repentance*." It is by faith in Christ and his atoning sacrifice that repentance is made possible (see Alma 34:14-17). "True repentance is based on and flows from faith in the Lord Jesus Christ," declared President Ezra Taft Benson. "There is no other way." (*Teachings of Ezra Taft Benson*, p. 71.) It is by faith that all things relating to the plan of salvation come to fruition in the hearts and lives of the children of God. The work and glory of God (see Moses 1:39) is fulfilled by faith.

4. Which hope cometh of faith, maketh an anchor to the souls of men] Hope that saves is born of faith in the Lord Jesus Christ and leads one to a hungering and thirsting after righteousness. Hope is not merely wishful thinking, fantasizing, or emotional escapism. It is a moving confidence and a firm expectation of eternal life that comes from trusting in and following the Savior (see *Mormon Doctrine*, pp. 365-66). The hope that is an anchor to the souls of men is riveted to the infinite and eternal sacrifice of the Lord. It is by reason of the Atonement that we have hope for a better world. Hope in Christ that flows from faith is an abiding

confidence in the fulfillment of God's promises and covenants to us. It is an inner peace that results from a personal relationship with Deity. This active hope in Christ makes one "sure and steadfast, always abounding in good works, being led to glorify God." From Book of Mormon usage of the concept of hope it appears that hope is linked to the change of heart that comes with "faith unto repentance." Faith leads one to desire righteousness, which in turn leads to repentance and a change of heart, which brings hope. Such hope leads one to continue to abound in righteousness and to a yearning for eternal associations with the pure in heart and those whose garments have been made white by the blood of the Lamb. Elder John H. Groberg declared: "The basis of all righteous hope is the person of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. In Him all hope has its existence. Without Him there is no hope. But because He was and is and ever will be, there was, is, and ever will be hope. . . . In Christ who lives and loves and works miracles now, there is always hope." ("There Is Always Hope," in *Hope*, pp. 48, 65; for a more extensive discussion of faith, hope, and charity, see commentary on Moroni chapter 7; see also Larry E. Dahl, "Faith, Hope, Charity," in *The Book of Mormon: The Keystone Scripture*, pp. 137–50.)

4. Hope for a better world] From the context, and from other Book of Mormon discourses on hope, it is clear that Ether and Moroni are referring to the "hope of a glorious resurrection" (D&C 42:45) and eternal life that comes to all who "press forward with a . . . perfect brightness of hope" (2 Nephi 31:20) and who in faith repent of their sins, are faithful to the commandments of the gospel, and who endure to the end. This hope for a better world is not, however, totally unrelated to the mortal world. Hoping for a better world should not be viewed as passively putting up with the problems and pains of this life, being fixated only on the next life. It implies living in such a way that our hope for a better world can be to some degree realized in this life. Hope, like faith, implies action. Hoping for a better world will, of necessity, motivate us to love our fellowmen and seek to eliminate, where possible, the suffering of our brothers and sisters around us. Hope will lead us to greater compassion and more merciful dealings with those around us. In this practical way we can hope for a better world here and now.

5–6. Many of Ether's great prophecies and testimonies were rejected by the spiritually blind Jaredites. Moroni informs us that their disbelief was because "they saw them not." This is an age-old rejection of the spiritual workings of God. The world states that "seeing is believing." Such logic, however, defies the workings of God and denies the words of prophets. Faithless anti-Christes, like Korihor, and others always insist on visual "proof" as a preface to and a condition for faith (see Alma 30:15). The scriptures,

however, repeatedly teach that seeing is not only unessential to faith but in some respects is also irrelevant to the acquisition of faith and hope (see Hebrews 11:1; Romans 8:24–25; Alma 32:21; D&C 63:6–12). The Savior testified that those who believe without seeing are more blessed than those who require tangible evidences in order to believe (see John 20:29; 3 Nephi 12:1–2; D&C 34:4). Moroni’s urging us to “dispute not because ye see not” is not a reprimand but an invitation to acquire greater faith. To those who have true faith there is no reason to murmur or dispute, because they realize that faith—faith that is not dependent upon mortal sight—opens the spiritual eyes to greater views of the things of God. This kind of spiritual “seeing” inevitably leads one to greater faith and hope, the filling of one’s life with charity, and a life that abounds in good works and service to others.

6. Ye receive no witness until after the trial of your faith] To have our spiritual eyes opened through faith necessitates a “trial” of our faith. Believing without seeing will result in greater seeing. This opening of our spiritual eyes is not granted by God to us without effort on our part. It comes only as we are willing to exercise our faith and trust in the Lord when the path we must pursue is not completely illuminated. Regarding his return to the city of Jerusalem on a dangerous mission to procure the sacred brass plates that were in the possession of Laban, Nephi said: “And I was led by the Spirit, *not knowing beforehand the things which I should do*” (1 Nephi 4:6, italics added). Nephi’s “witness”—seeing the mission fulfilled in a miraculous and unexpected way—came only after a “trial” of his faith. The way was opened for him to do what the Lord commanded, but only after he was willing to “walk by faith, not by sight” (see 2 Corinthians 5:7).

This concept is further illustrated in the following experience of Elder Boyd K. Packer: “Some years ago I learned a lesson that I shall never forget. I had been called as an Assistant to the Council of the Twelve, and we were to move to Salt Lake City and find an adequate and permanent home. President Henry D. Moyle assigned someone to help us. A home was located that was ideally suited to our needs. Elder Harold B. Lee came and looked it over very carefully and then counseled, ‘By all means, you are to proceed.’

“But there was no way we could proceed. I had just completed the course work on a doctor’s degree and was writing the dissertation. With the support of my wife and our eight children, all of the resources we could gather over the years had been spent on education. By borrowing on our insurance, gathering every resource, we could barely get into the house, without sufficient left to even make the first monthly payment.

“Brother Lee insisted, ‘Go ahead. I know it is right.’

“I was in deep turmoil because I had been counseled to do something I had never done before—to sign a contract without having the resources to meet the payments. When Brother Lee sensed my feelings he sent me to President David O. McKay, who listened very carefully as I explained the circumstances. He said, ‘You do this. It is the right thing.’ But he extended no resources to make the doing of it possible.

“When I reported to Brother Lee he said, ‘That confirms what I have told you.’

“I was still not at peace, and then came the lesson. Elder Lee said, ‘Do you know what is wrong with you—you always want to see the end from the beginning.’ I replied quietly that I wanted to see at least a few steps ahead. He answered by quoting from the sixth verse of the twelfth chapter of Ether: ‘Wherefore, dispute not because ye see not, for ye receive no witness until after the trial of your faith.’ And then he added, ‘My boy, you must learn to walk to the edge of the light, and perhaps a few steps into the darkness, and you will find that the light will appear and move ahead of you.’

“And so it has—but only as we walked to the edge of the light.” (*The Holy Temple*, pp. 183–85.)

7–22. Faith precedes miracles—whatever their nature or manifestation. Moroni illustrates this doctrine with several scriptural examples of prophets and others who had gone before him who were recipients of great miracles, testimonies, and blessings of the Lord as a result of their great faith. These role models of faith and beneficiaries of such marvelous faith-produced miracles, cited by Moroni, included Alma and Amulek (see Alma 14:26–29), Nephi and Lehi (see Helaman 5:45, 50–52; 3 Nephi 9:20), Ammon (see Alma 17:29–39; see also Alma 17–26), the great biblical prophets and Apostles whose faith produced mighty miracles (see Hebrews 11:7–40), the three translated Nephites (see 3 Nephi 28; see also Mormon 8:10–11), and the brother of Jared, whose faith pierced the veil of eternity (see Ether 3:4–6, 25–26). The last example Moroni uses to illustrate the power of faith has direct application to the very work in which he is engaged—the abridgment, preparation, and preservation of the records in order that they may come forth in the last days to fulfill their intended purpose. It is by the faith of all those who preceded Moroni—men who had pleaded with the Father in faith that these records be preserved—that the Book of Mormon has come forth in this dispensation for the convincing of Jew and Gentile that Jesus is the Christ (see Enos 1:12–13, 15–18).

By using each of these examples, Moroni is teaching us that no miracle, whatever kind or in whatever manner, is possible without the exercise of faith. “Miracles without number have been

wrought by faith by the prophets and saints of all dispensations," Elder Bruce R. McConkie wrote. "And always faith precedes the miracle; always the power of faith performs the miracle; always the miracle proves that faith was present and in active operation." (*New Witness*, p. 199.)

8. That . . . others might be partakers of the heavenly gift] The heavenly gift of which Moroni speaks is the forgiveness of sins, the companionship of the Holy Ghost (see Hebrews 6:4), and the accompanying gifts of the Spirit that are bestowed upon the just and faithful Saints of God. The Apostle Peter spoke of this gift as "the divine nature" (see 2 Peter 1:4) that, through the atoning grace of Christ, swallows up the natural man. Through faith and acceptance of Christ's atoning plan of mercy people can be cleansed of iniquity, transformed into "new creatures." During the golden era of the Nephite Zion society the people partook of the heavenly gift, which produced a society free from contention and disputation, injustices and inequities, lasciviousness and crime. By virtue of this transformation that resulted from their faith in Christ it was said of them that "there could not be a happier people among all the people who had been created by the hand of God" (see 4 Nephi 1:2–3, 15–18).

From the words and examples of faith of these holy men of God as found in the scriptures, Moroni desires that others may also come to have that kind of faith and hope and thereby partake of this heavenly gift (see verses 8–9). Today, as in all dispensations, the primary purpose of the Church is to lead women and men unto Christ, that through faith on his sacred name they will partake of higher ordinances and covenants and will demonstrate their faith through acts of service and continued righteousness. This faith, of which Moroni so eloquently speaks, will lead to that heavenly gift and divine nature. President Spencer W. Kimball testified: "Just as undaunted faith has stopped the mouths of lions, made ineffective fiery flames, opened dry corridors through rivers and seas, protected against deluge and drouth, and brought heavenly manifestations at the instance of prophets, so in each of our lives faith can heal the sick, bring comfort to those who mourn, strengthen resolve against temptation, relieve from the bondage of harmful habits, lend the strength to repent and change our lives, and lead to a sure knowledge of the divinity of Jesus Christ. Indomitable faith can help us live the commandments with a willing heart and thereby bring blessings unnumbered, with peace, perfection, and exaltation in the kingdom of God." (*Faith Precedes the Miracle*, p. 12.)

11. A more excellent way] The more excellent way of life is to be found only in Christ—in believing in him, loving, praising and worshipping him, and following him by obedience to his commandments. He is the Way (see John 14:6), and only by living his

life can we experience the “abundant life”—the more excellent way of life—he promised (see John 10:10). The Apostle Paul used this same phrase to speak of charity, the pure love of Christ (see 1 Corinthians 12:31). And, of course, the greatest manifestation of the love of God is in the gift of his holy Son (see John 3:16; Ether 12:33–34; D&C 34:1–3).

12. If there be no faith among the children of men God can do no miracle among them] “Miracles are the fruits of faith,” the Prophet Joseph taught. “. . . Where faith is there will be some of the fruits: all gifts and power which were sent from heaven, were poured out on the heads of those who had faith.” (*HC* 5:355.) On another occasion he explained that the lack of miracles comes in direct proportion to the lack of faith. “Faith has been wanting, not only among the heathen, but in professed Christendom also, so that tongues, healings, prophecy, and prophets and apostles, and all the gifts and blessings have been wanting” (*HC* 5:218). See Mormon 9:20; Moroni 7:26–29; and corresponding commentaries.

Weak Things Are Made Strong Through Christ

Ether 12:23–28

23. And I said unto him: Lord, the Gentiles will mock at these things, because of our weakness in writing; for Lord thou hast made us mighty in word by faith, but thou hast not made us mighty in writing; for thou hast made all this people that they could speak much, because of the Holy Ghost which thou hast given them;

24. And thou hast made us that we could write but little, because of the awkwardness of our hands. Behold, thou hast not made us mighty in writing like unto the brother of Jared, for thou madest him that the things which he wrote were mighty even as thou art, unto the overpowering of man to read them.

25. Thou hast also made our words powerful and great, even that we cannot write them; wherefore, when we write we behold our weakness, and stumble

because of the placing of our words; and I fear lest the Gentiles shall mock at our words.

26. And when I had said this, the Lord spake unto me, saying: Fools mock, but they shall mourn; and my grace is sufficient for the meek, that they shall take no advantage of your weakness;

27. And if men come unto me I will show unto them their weakness. I give unto men weakness that they may be humble; and my grace is sufficient for all men that humble themselves before me; for if they humble themselves before me, and have faith in me, then will I make weak things become strong unto them.

28. Behold, I will show unto the Gentiles their weakness and I will show unto them that faith, hope and charity bringeth unto me—the fountain of all righteousness.

23–26. Moroni, like many of his prophet-fathers who preceded him, feared that the words he recorded in the Nephite record would be ridiculed and/or rejected by later readers because of his weakness in writing (compare 1 Nephi 19:6; Jacob 4:1; Mormon 8:13–17; 9:31, 33). We can only speculate as to why these prophets felt that their writing was awkward and weak. Moroni, like those before him, had earnestly prayed that the Lord would, through the great power of his Spirit, compensate for their weaknesses in writing. In response to Moroni's prayerful concerns the Lord assured him that the unbelieving, mocking Gentiles could not gain advantage over the meek and humble believers of the Nephite record. Even though the Book of Mormon was written and abridged by mortal men who had mortal frailties and weaknesses, the power and Spirit of God transforms this book that fools may perceive as "weak"—as a foolish fantasy—into an inspired volume of scripture that can and does convince Jew and Gentile that Jesus is indeed the Christ. Although "fools mock" the Book of Mormon, as the word of God it has a "more powerful effect upon the minds of the people than the sword, or anything else" (Alma 31:5), and in this way the Lord's promise to Moroni is fulfilled as this Nephite record continues to testify of Christ and lead men and women to "the fountain of all righteousness." See 1 Corinthians 1:25–28.

27. I give unto men weakness that they may be humble
Weaknesses of the flesh come in many forms, but all come as a result of the fall of Adam, which introduced into the world pains and problems, sicknesses and sorrows, temptations and trials. Not only did the nature of man become fallen—carnal, sensual, and devilish (see Ether 3:2; Mosiah 16:3; Alma 22:13)—but the entire world fell to a telestial state with all of its accompanying "weaknesses" and inherent problems. Such weaknesses affect all mankind—even the prophets of God. "Notwithstanding the great goodness of the Lord, in showing me his great and marvelous works, my heart exclaimeth: O wretched man that I am!" Nephi bemoaned. "Yea, my heart sorroweth because of my flesh; my soul grieveth because of mine iniquities. I am encompassed about, because of the temptations and the sins which do so easily beset me. And when I desire to rejoice, my heart groaneth because of my sins." (2 Nephi 4:17–19; compare Paul's similar struggles in Romans 7:19–21.)

These Fall-induced "weaknesses of the flesh" impose natural limitations upon us all. Mortals are always bound by worldly weaknesses and limitations in strength, knowledge, and power. Recognizing these limitations in stark contrast to God's infinite wisdom and power causes one to be humble. "The foolishness of God is wiser than men," declared Paul the Apostle, "and the weakness of God is stronger than men" (1 Corinthians 1:25). One of the

purposes of the conditions created by the Fall is to impel men to acknowledge their own weaknesses of the flesh and depend more on the power of God than on the “arm of flesh” (see 2 Nephi 4:34; D&C 1:19; 18:11). Hardships and afflictions in mortality are often allowed by an omniscient God in order to turn the hearts of the children of men to him (see Mosiah 1:17; Helaman 12:3; Psalm 78:34–35).

In addition to the universal weaknesses of the flesh that come as a result of the Fall, the Lord will at times “give unto men” a personalized, individual challenge that is designed to increase a person’s faith in and dependence upon the Lord. It is in these moments of personal pain and recognition of our individual weaknesses and limitations that humbly leaning upon the “ample arm” of Jesus (see *Hymns*, no. 120) produces strength which compensates for and overcomes mortal weaknesses. The Lord’s giving us weaknesses in order that we may humbly look to him as our source of strength is not just a series of isolated events in a lifetime but rather is an ongoing process. C. S. Lewis insightfully observed: “When a man turns to Christ and seems to be getting on pretty well (in the sense that some of his bad habits are now corrected), he often feels that it would now be natural if things went fairly smoothly. When troubles come along—illnesses, money troubles, new kinds of temptation—he is disappointed. These things, he feels, might have been necessary to rouse him and make him repent in his bad old days; but why now? Because God is forcing him on, or up, to a higher level: putting him into situations where he will have to be very much braver, or more patient, or more loving, than he ever dreamed of before. It seems to us all unnecessary; but that is because we have not yet had the slightest notion of the tremendous thing He means to make of us.” (*Mere Christianity*, p. 174.)

27. Then will I make weak things become strong unto them] Weaknesses of the flesh—whether they be trials, temptations, character flaws, or any other kind of mortal limitation—in and of themselves do not produce strength of spirit. In this verse, the Lord clearly teaches that weaknesses are turned to strengths *only* through one’s coming unto Christ in faith and humility. Then is his grace sufficient to make such transformation. It is through the atonement of Jesus Christ that the weaknesses of the flesh resulting from the Fall are swallowed up, just as that which “is sown in corruption is raised in incorruption” (see 1 Corinthians 15:42, 53). It is not just in the next life that the “weak things” are made strong through Christ. The Savior’s grace is sufficient even in mortality to buoy up the spirit, to strengthen and spiritually enlarge one above natural abilities. Ammon recognized this when he declared: “I know that I am nothing; as to my strength I am weak; therefore I will not boast of myself, but I will boast of my God, for

in his strength I can do all things” (Alma 26:12). Whatever the weakness, Christ can supply the strength to overcome it. All other earthly efforts to overcome the effects of the weaknesses of the flesh, as helpful as they may be, are limited in their soul-transforming power. It is through the grace of Christ that even mortal inadequacies are compensated for or overcome while we yet tarry in the flesh (see *By Grace Are We Saved*, pp. 38–39). Through faithful acceptance of the atonement of Jesus Christ all losses can be ultimately restored, all suffering can cease, and all inequities and injustices in life can be rectified. “The Savior desires to save us from our inadequacies as well as our sins,” wrote Bruce C. Hafen. “Inadequacy is not the same as being sinful—we have far more control over the choice to sin than we may have over our innate capacity. . . . A sense of falling short or falling down is not only natural but essential to the mortal experience. Still, after all we can do, the Atonement can fill that which is empty, straighten our bent parts, and make strong that which is weak.” (*The Broken Heart*, pp. 19–20.)

28. Faith, hope and charity bringeth unto me—the fountain of all righteousness] Christ is the embodiment, the personification, of all righteousness. He is the fountain—the source and dispenser of all righteousness. We become righteous, pure, holy, and perfect through him and by his grace. The “fountain of righteousness” gives us “living waters” (see Jeremiah 17:13) even eternal life. Partaking of that gift is possible only as we have faith, hope, and charity in our lives. These principles lead us to him.

Moroni’s Prayer About Faith, Hope, and Charity

Ether 12:29–37

29. And I, Moroni, having heard these words, was comforted, and said: O Lord, thy righteous will be done, for I know that thou workest unto the children of men according to their faith;

30. For the brother of Jared said unto the mountain Zerin, Remove—and it was removed. And if he had not had faith it would not have moved; wherefore thou workest after men have faith.

31. For thus didst thou manifest thyself unto thy disciples; for after they had faith, and did speak in thy name, thou didst show thyself unto them in great power.

32. And I also remember that thou hast said that thou hast prepared a house for man, yea, even among the mansions of thy Father, in which man might have a more excellent hope; wherefore man must hope, or he cannot receive an inheritance in the place which thou hast prepared.

33. And again, I remember that thou hast said that thou hast loved the world, even unto the laying down of thy life for the world, that thou mightest take it again to prepare a place for the children of men.

34. And now I know that this love which thou hast had for the

children of men is charity; wherefore, except men shall have charity they cannot inherit that place which thou hast prepared in the mansions of thy Father.

35. Wherefore, I know by this thing which thou hast said, that if the Gentiles have not charity, because of our weakness, that thou wilt prove them, and take away their talent, yea, even that which they have received, and give unto them who shall have more abundantly.

36. And it came to pass that I

prayed unto the Lord that he would give unto the Gentiles grace, that they might have charity.

37. And it came to pass that the Lord said unto me: If they have not charity it mattereth not unto thee, thou hast been faithful; wherefore, thy garments shall be made clean. And because thou hast seen thy weakness thou shalt be made strong, even unto the sitting down in the place which I have prepared in the mansions of my Father.

29–37. As a natural outgrowth of Moroni's concern about the Gentiles' reaction to his words when they should come forth in the last days, he prays that those Gentiles might be filled with faith, hope, and charity, which are essential for salvation. In the course of the prayer he speaks of the importance of each of these attributes. No doubt his words reflect the teachings of his father, Mormon (see Moroni 7:40–48 and the corresponding commentary for a more extensive discussion of faith, hope, and charity). In answer to his prayers, the Lord tells Moroni not to worry about whether the Gentiles will obtain faith, hope, and charity. That will be up to them. Moroni, however, is promised eternal life because *he* has come unto Christ with faith, hope, and charity (see verse 37).

30. The Savior taught that a person with faith the size of a mustard seed can have power to move a mountain (see Matthew 17:20). From this Book of Mormon verse we can see that this statement was not just a symbolic teaching device on the Savior's part to illustrate the power of faith. Jesus may actually have been referring to this literal event.

32. A more excellent hope] Moroni is teaching that hope in Christ that is born of unshaken faith is essential to securing eternal life. (See commentary on Moroni 7:40–48.)

33–34. Charity is the pure love of Christ (see Moroni 7:47). This love of Christ is two-directional by nature. The pure love Christ has for the children of men is charity, and the love which they have for the Savior, that comes with faith and repentance, is also charity. When we are filled with charity we are filled with the perfect love of the Savior for us. "We love him, because he first loved us," testified John (1 John 4:19). Such charity in our hearts is then manifested by our pure love of Christ, by our obedience (see John 14:15; 1 John 3:24), and by our love and charity for our fellowmen (see 1 John 3:16–18; 4:7–11).

Moroni Bids Farewell to the Gentiles and to His Brethren

Ether 12:38–41

38. And now I, Moroni, bid farewell unto the Gentiles, yea, and also unto my brethren whom I love, until we shall meet before the judgment-seat of Christ, where all men shall know that my garments are not spotted with your blood.

39. And then shall ye know that I have seen Jesus, and that he hath talked with me face to face, and that he told me in plain humility, even as a man telleth an-

other in mine own language, concerning these things;

40. And only a few have I written, because of my weakness in writing.

41. And now, I would commend you to seek this Jesus of whom the prophets and apostles have written, that the grace of God the Father, and also the Lord Jesus Christ, and the Holy Ghost, which beareth record of them, may be and abide in you forever. Amen.

38–41. Moroni concluded this portion of his abridgment by bidding farewell to the Gentiles for whom he had prayed and for whom his record was intended. In addition he bade farewell to his brethren—the Nephites and the Lamanites. Moroni did not know how much longer he was going to live. These verses are the first of “final testimonies” of Moroni, wherein he leaves his witness and a final warning and exhortation to those who will receive his and his father’s record (see Moroni 10:34).

37–38. It is worthy of note that it was these verses which Hyrum Smith had been reading in the Book of Mormon only a short time before going to the place of martyrdom at Carthage (see D&C 135:4–5).

38. The judgment-seat of Christ] See John 5:22, 27; Alma 11:44; Moroni 10:34.

38. My garments are not spotted with your blood] In giving this warning and testimony, Moroni is saying that he has taught and testified, preached and prophesied, as he has been commanded of the Lord. He has fulfilled his responsibility, and if people reject his words they must do so by their own agency and at their own risk. In so doing they are left without excuse. This phrase reflects what Jacob earlier taught his people concerning his prophetic responsibility and their own accountability. “And we did magnify our office unto the Lord, taking upon us the responsibility, answering the sins of the people upon our own heads if we did not teach them the word of God with all diligence; wherefore, by laboring with our might their blood might not come upon our garments; otherwise their blood would come upon our garments, and we would not be found spotless at the last day” (Jacob 1:19).

Just as Jacob and Moroni labored diligently that their garments

would not be spotted with the sins of others, we too must labor in our own callings and service to teach and testify, to be “an example of the believers” (1 Timothy 4:12), and in particular to live in such a way that we are not found to be a stumbling block to the spiritual progress of another; neither must we be the cause of someone’s disbelief or rejection of the gospel. We have an obligation as believers to warn the world and to invite all to come unto Christ (see D&C 63:58; 88:81). If we neglect this mandate by willfully refusing to be a conscientious “watchman” of the Lord, then the sins of those affected by our wickedness and slothfulness will be answered upon our heads (see Ezekiel 3:17–21; 33:1–9).

39. I have seen Jesus] Just as had his father Mormon (see Mormon 1:15), Moroni was privileged to see the resurrected Christ. He received this Second Comforter on account of his great faith and righteousness. This blessing came to him as an anchor to his soul—to support and strengthen him in the enormous challenges and obstacles he faced. There is another reason, however, why Moroni is giving us this information. It is not to boast of his own righteousness, nor is it to speak lightly of such a sacred privilege that was his. It was to give power and authority to his words and testimony and to demonstrate that the words contained in the Book of Mormon were authorized and accepted by the God of Israel.

41. I would commend you to seek this Jesus] Moroni leaves his testimony with an urgent plea to all who would read his record—a plea to come unto Christ. The foundational objective of the Book of Mormon is the “convincing of the Jew and Gentile that Jesus is the Christ” (Book of Mormon title page). By commending us to seek Jesus, Moroni is urging us to come unto Christ by reading and applying the teachings of the Book of Mormon. We seek Jesus not just by being converted to him but also by partaking of his ordinances of salvation and by living his laws and being filled with the Holy Spirit. In the ultimate sense, however, Moroni is also inviting us to seek Jesus in the way that he (Moroni) had, and to come to know the Master in the most significant way. If we patiently, faithfully, and diligently *seek* the Savior, the time will come when we will *see* him, as did Moroni (see D&C 38:8; 67:10; 88:68; 93:1). Of this Elder Bruce R. McConkie said: “As believing saints it is our privilege . . . to see the Lord face to face; to talk with him as a man speaketh with his friend; to have his Person attend us from time to time; and to have him manifest to us the Father. . . .

“After the true saints receive and enjoy the gift of the Holy Ghost; after they know how to attune themselves to the voice of the Spirit; after they mature spiritually so that they see visions, work miracles, and entertain angels; after they make their calling and election sure and prove themselves worthy of every trust—

after all this and more—it becomes their right and privilege to see the Lord and commune with him face to face. Revelations, visions, angelic visitations, the rending of the heavens, and appearances among men of the Lord himself—all these things are for all of the faithful. They are not reserved for apostles and prophets only. God is no respecter of persons. They are not reserved for one age only, or for a select lineage or people. We are all our Father's children. All men are welcome." (*Promised Messiah*, pp. 571, 575.)

Ether Prophecies Concerning the New Jerusalem

Ether 13:1–12

1. And now I, Moroni, proceed to finish my record concerning the destruction of the people of whom I have been writing.

2. For behold, they rejected all the words of Ether; for he truly told them of all things, from the beginning of man; and that after the waters had receded from off the face of this land it became a choice land above all other lands, a chosen land of the Lord; wherefore the Lord would have that all men should serve him who dwell upon the face thereof;

3. And that it was the place of the New Jerusalem, which should come down out of heaven, and the holy sanctuary of the Lord.

4. Behold, Ether saw the days of Christ, and he spake concerning a New Jerusalem upon this land.

5. And he spake also concerning the house of Israel, and the Jerusalem from whence Lehi should come—after it should be destroyed it should be built up again, a holy city unto the Lord; wherefore, it could not be a new Jerusalem for it had been in a time of old; but it should be built up again, and become a holy city of the Lord; and it should be built unto the house of Israel—

6. And that a New Jerusalem

should be built up upon this land, unto the remnant of the seed of Joseph, for which things there has been a type.

7. For as Joseph brought his father down into the land of Egypt, even so he died there; wherefore, the Lord brought a remnant of the seed of Joseph out of the land of Jerusalem, that he might be merciful unto the seed of Joseph that they should perish not, even as he was merciful unto the father of Joseph that he should perish not.

8. Wherefore, the remnant of the house of Joseph shall be built upon this land; and it shall be a land of their inheritance; and they shall build up a holy city unto the Lord, like unto the Jerusalem of old; and they shall no more be confounded, until the end come when the earth shall pass away.

9. And there shall be a new heaven and a new earth; and they shall be like unto the old save the old have passed away, and all things have become new.

10. And then cometh the New Jerusalem; and blessed are they who dwell therein, for it is they whose garments are white through the blood of the Lamb; and they are they who are numbered among the remnant of the

seed of Joseph, who were of the house of Israel.

11. And then also cometh the Jerusalem of old; and the inhabitants thereof, blessed are they, for they have been washed in the blood of the Lamb; and they are they who were scattered and gathered in from the four quarters of the earth, and from the north

countries, and are partakers of the fulfilling of the covenant which God made with their father, Abraham.

12. And when these things come, bringeth to pass the scripture which saith, there are they who were first, who shall be last; and there are they who were last, who shall be first.

2. He truly told them of all things, from the beginning of man] Ether's prophetic teachings included instruction concerning God's dealings with man from Adam to Noah and all things that were necessary for the Jaredites to increase their faith in and understanding of the Lord. He taught them in clarity the Lord's promise concerning their land of inheritance. Undoubtedly, Mormon's abridgment contains but little of the magnificent ministration and prophecies of Ether.

3. The New Jerusalem, which should come down out of heaven] The establishment of Zion and the New Jerusalem will come "down out of heaven" in both a literal and a symbolic way. In the symbolic way, the New Jerusalem will be built upon heavenly principles and under the influence of revelation to the Lord's chosen officers. In this way, it will come down from heaven, and then mortals who are cleansed and purified through the atonement of Jesus Christ will build up a new City of Holiness, even a New Jerusalem.

There is, however, an additional meaning—a very literal meaning—to this phrase. Enoch's city—the City of Holiness that was taken up into heaven (see Moses 7:13–21) will come down from heaven and be united with the earthly New Jerusalem (see Elder Bruce R. McConkie, *Doctrinal New Testament Commentary* 3:581; see also *Millennial Messiah*, pp. 302–9).

4–11. Mormon, in abridging Ether's records, includes Ether's prophecies that the New Jerusalem will be built on the American continent for the remnant of the house of Joseph and that also the old Jerusalem will be "built up again, and become a holy city" and will be a gathering place for Judah and others of the house of Israel. (For a more in-depth doctrinal discussion of this New Jerusalem refer back to the relevant paragraphs of commentary on 3 Nephi chapters 20 and 21.)

9. There shall be a new heaven and a new earth] Elder Bruce R. McConkie taught: "This earth was created in a new or paradisiacal state; then, incident to Adam's transgression, it fell to its present telestial state. At the Second Coming of our Lord, it will be renewed, regenerated, refreshed, transfigured, become again a new earth, a paradisiacal earth. Its millennial status will be a

return to its pristine state of beauty and glory, the state that existed before the fall. . . . (Isaiah 65:17–25; 66:22–24; Matthew 19:28; D&C 63:20–21; 101:23–31.) This same designation applies also to the celestial heaven and earth that will prevail in the day when the Father and the Son make this planet their habitation. . . . (D&C 29:22–25; 77:1; 88:16–32; Revelation 21:10–27.)" (*Doctrinal New Testament Commentary* 3:580.)

10. Blessed are they who dwell therein, for it is they whose garments are white through the blood of the Lamb] Citizenship in the New Jerusalem is obtained only through the sanctification that comes from accepting the Lord Jesus Christ through faith, repentance, ordinances of salvation, receiving the Holy Ghost, and continued diligence and endurance. These inhabitants of the New Jerusalem are those who have been true and faithful to their covenants and birthright in the house of Israel through the lineage of Joseph (see Revelation 7:14).

11. Ether prophesied of the millennial day when old Jerusalem also will become again a holy city, inhabited by Jews who have not only been gathered to their promised land from the four quarters of the earth but also have accepted Jesus and his only true, and living Church and have been cleansed by faith in the Atonement and faithfulness to gospel ordinances and commandments. The temple will play a significant role in creating a sanctified and holy people and thereby making Jerusalem a holy city (see *Millennial Messiah*, pp. 278–81). "Jerusalem shall rise again," wrote Elder Bruce R. McConkie. "As she fell from grace because she forsook the living God, so shall she rise again when she once more worships her Eternal King in the beauty of holiness. As she fell because of iniquity, so shall she be restored through righteousness. When the Jews receive the fulness of the everlasting gospel as it has been restored through the Prophet Joseph Smith, they will return to Jerusalem as the Lord's true legal administrators to build up Jerusalem as a Zion and to place again on the ancient site the temple of the new kingdom. And then when the Lord comes, the ancient city will shine forth with a glory and a splendor never before known among mortals." (*Millennial Messiah*, p. 300; see also Zechariah 8:1–23.)

Ether Prophecies About the Destruction of the Jaredite Civilization

Ether 13:13–31

13. And I was about to write more, but I am forbidden; but great and marvelous were the

prophecies of Ether; but they esteemed him as naught, and cast him out; and he hid himself in the

cavity of a rock by day, and by night he went forth viewing the things which should come upon the people.

14. And as he dwelt in the cavity of a rock he made the remainder of his record, viewing the destructions which came upon the people, by night.

15. And it came to pass that in that same year in which he was cast out from among the people there began to be a great war among the people, for there were many who rose up, who were mighty men, and sought to destroy Coriantumr by their secret plans of wickedness, of which hath been spoken.

16. And now Coriantumr, having studied, himself, in all the arts of war and all the cunning of the world, wherefore he gave battle unto them who sought to destroy him.

17. But he repented not, neither his fair sons nor daughters; neither the fair sons and daughters of Cohor; neither the fair sons and daughters of Corihor; and in fine, there were none of the fair sons and daughters upon the face of the whole earth who repented of their sins.

18. Wherefore, it came to pass that in the first year that Ether dwelt in the cavity of a rock, there were many people who were slain by the sword of those secret combinations, fighting against Coriantumr that they might obtain the kingdom.

19. And it came to pass that the sons of Coriantumr fought much and bled much.

20. And in the second year the word of the Lord came to Ether, that he should go and prophesy unto Coriantumr that, if he would repent, and all his household, the Lord would give unto him his

kingdom and spare the people—

21. Otherwise they should be destroyed, and all his household save it were himself. And he should only live to see the fulfilling of the prophecies which had been spoken concerning another people receiving the land for their inheritance; and Coriantumr should receive a burial by them; and every soul should be destroyed save it were Coriantumr.

22. And it came to pass that Coriantumr repented not, neither his household, neither the people; and the wars ceased not; and they sought to kill Ether, but he fled from before them and hid again in the cavity of the rock.

23. And it came to pass that there arose up Shared, and he also gave battle unto Coriantumr; and he did beat him, insomuch that in the third year he did bring him into captivity.

24. And the sons of Coriantumr, in the fourth year, did beat Shared, and did obtain the kingdom again unto their father.

25. Now there began to be a war upon all the face of the land, every man with his band fighting for that which he desired.

26. And there were robbers, and in fine, all manner of wickedness upon all the face of the land.

27. And it came to pass that Coriantumr was exceedingly angry with Shared, and he went against him with his armies to battle; and they did meet in great anger, and they did meet in the valley of Gilgal; and the battle became exceedingly sore.

28. And it came to pass that Shared fought against him for the space of three days. And it came to pass that Coriantumr beat him, and did pursue him until he came to the plains of Heshlon.

29. And it came to pass that

Shared gave him battle again upon the plains; and behold, he did beat Coriantumr, and drove him back again to the valley of Gilgal.

30. And Coriantumr gave Shared battle again in the valley of Gilgal, in which he beat Shared and slew him.

31. And Shared wounded Coriantumr in his thigh, that he did not go to battle again for the space of two years, in which time all the people upon the face of the land were shedding blood, and there was none to restrain them.

13–14. Despite the marvelous prophecies and teachings of Ether to his people, he was rejected and his words were “trampled under foot.” His people, like Mormon’s, would not hear and heed his words, so he was left to witness and record their destruction from a cave.

13. I was about to write more, but I am forbidden] Moroni desires to include in his abridgment more of the great prophecies of Ether, but is constrained by the Spirit from doing so. We are left to wonder what he would have included and why he was forbidden to do so. The record is silent on both accounts, but possibly it has to do with a trial of faith (see 3 Nephi 26:9–11).

20–22. As battles raged and secret combinations contended among the people, Ether was commanded to call Coriantumr to repentance and prophesy about him. In these verses, we see inspired utterances not only on the fate of Coriantumr but also on his entire people. If he and they would not repent, the entire Jaredite nation would be destroyed and Coriantumr would survive to witness the fulfillment of these prophecies and to see another people receive the land as an inheritance. Note that despite the Jaredites’ past wickedness and hard-heartedness, Ether’s prophecies of doom and destruction were conditional. Such terrible bloodshed and suffering could be averted if they would but repent and turn to the Lord.

Coriantumr Battles Against Secret Combinations and the Armies of Shiz

Ether 14:1–31

1. And now there began to be a great curse upon all the land because of the iniquity of the people, in which, if a man should lay his tool or his sword upon his shelf, or upon the place whither he would keep it, behold, upon the morrow,

he could not find it, so great was the curse upon the land.

2. Wherefore every man did cleave unto that which was his own, with his hands, and would not borrow neither would he lend; and every man kept the hilt of his

sword in his right hand, in the defence of his property and his own life and of his wives and children.

3. And now, after the space of two years, and after the death of Shared, behold, there arose the brother of Shared and he gave battle unto Coriantumr, in which Coriantumr did beat him and did pursue him to the wilderness of Akish.

4. And it came to pass that the brother of Shared did give battle unto him in the wilderness of Akish; and the battle became exceedingly sore, and many thousands fell by the sword.

5. And it came to pass that Coriantumr did lay siege to the wilderness; and the brother of Shared did march forth out of the wilderness by night, and slew a part of the army of Coriantumr, as they were drunken.

6. And he came forth to the land of Moron, and placed himself upon the throne of Coriantumr.

7. And it came to pass that Coriantumr dwelt with his army in the wilderness for the space of two years, in which he did receive great strength to his army.

8. Now the brother of Shared, whose name was Gilead, also received great strength to his army, because of secret combinations.

9. And it came to pass that his high priest murdered him as he sat upon his throne.

10. And it came to pass that one of the secret combinations murdered him in a secret pass, and obtained unto himself the kingdom; and his name was Lib; and Lib was a man of great stature, more than any other man among all the people.

11. And it came to pass that in the first year of Lib, Coriantumr came up unto the land of Moron,

and gave battle unto Lib.

12. And it came to pass that he fought with Lib, in which Lib did smite upon his arm that he was wounded; nevertheless, the army of Coriantumr did press forward upon Lib, that he fled to the borders upon the seashore.

13. And it came to pass that Coriantumr pursued him; and Lib gave battle unto him upon the seashore.

14. And it came to pass that Lib did smite the army of Coriantumr, that they fled again to the wilderness of Akish.

15. And it came to pass that Lib did pursue him until he came to the plains of Agosh. And Coriantumr had taken all the people with him as he fled before Lib in that quarter of the land whither he fled.

16. And when he had come to the plains of Agosh he gave battle unto Lib, and he smote upon him until he died; nevertheless, the brother of Lib did come against Coriantumr in the stead thereof, and the battle became exceedingly sore, in the which Coriantumr fled again before the army of the brother of Lib.

17. Now the name of the brother of Lib was called Shiz. And it came to pass that Shiz pursued after Coriantumr, and he did overthrow many cities, and he did slay both women and children, and he did burn the cities.

18. And there went a fear of Shiz throughout all the land; yea, a cry went forth throughout the land—Who can stand before the army of Shiz? Behold, he sweepeth the earth before him!

19. And it came to pass that the people began to flock together in armies, throughout all the face of the land.

20. And they were divided; and a part of them fled to the army of Shiz, and a part of them fled to the army of Coriantumr.

21. And so great and lasting had been the war, and so long had been the scene of bloodshed and carnage, that the whole face of the land was covered with the bodies of the dead.

22. And so swift and speedy was the war that there was none left to bury the dead, but they did march forth from the shedding of blood to the shedding of blood, leaving the bodies of both men, women, and children strewed upon the face of the land, to become a prey to the worms of the flesh.

23. And the scent thereof went forth upon the face of the land, even upon all the face of the land; wherefore the people became troubled by day and by night, because of the scent thereof.

24. Nevertheless, Shiz did not cease to pursue Coriantumr; for he had sworn to avenge himself upon Coriantumr of the blood of his brother, who had been slain, and the word of the Lord which came to Ether that Coriantumr should not fall by the sword.

25. And thus we see that the Lord did visit them in the fulness of his wrath, and their wickedness and abominations had prepared a way for their everlasting destruction.

26. And it came to pass that Shiz did pursue Coriantumr eastward, even to the borders by the

seashore, and there he gave battle unto Shiz for the space of three days.

27. And so terrible was the destruction among the armies of Shiz that the people began to be frightened, and began to flee before the armies of Coriantumr; and they fled to the land of Corihor, and swept off the inhabitants before them, all them that would not join them.

28. And they pitched their tents in the valley of Corihor; and Coriantumr pitched his tents in the valley of Shurr. Now the valley of Shurr was near the hill Comnor; wherefore, Coriantumr did gather his armies together upon the hill Comnor, and did sound a trumpet unto the armies of Shiz to invite them forth to battle.

29. And it came to pass that they came forth, but were driven again; and they came the second time, and they were driven again the second time. And it came to pass that they came again the third time, and the battle became exceedingly sore.

30. And it came to pass that Shiz smote upon Coriantumr that he gave him many deep wounds; and Coriantumr, having lost his blood, fainted, and was carried away as though he were dead.

31. Now the loss of men, women and children on both sides was so great that Shiz commanded his people that they should not pursue the armies of Coriantumr; wherefore, they returned to their camp.

1-2. As a result of the wickedness that prevailed among the Jaredites and their lack of conscience and concern, the earth became cursed in that whatever was left unattended was stolen. This caused people to become more vigilant as to their possessions and unwilling to lend to or borrow. This curse of the land that caused things to become "slippery" is similar to the condition created by

secret combinations in Nephite times, such as the Gadianton band (compare Helaman 13:17–23, 31; commentary on Mormon 1:18–19; see also *Commentary* 3:403, 406–7).

3–31. The remainder of the chapter recounts the ferocious battles that raged between Coriantumr and the rebels who sought to overthrow him and who were supported in their rebellion by secret combinations. Terrible bloodshed enveloped the land, and the sights and scents of death permeated the entire area. Perhaps millions of Jaredite men, women, and children were slaughtered in these battles, and their bodies covered the landscape. It was impossible for any inhabitants to escape the horrors of these wars.

25. The Lord did visit them in the fulness of his wrath] These painful consequences of war were the direct result of their own wickedness, which in turn produced a literal fulfillment of earlier prophecies wherein the Lord had promised peace and protection to the inhabitants of this land if they would obey him and destruction if they did not (see Ether 2:8–12). It is clear from Moroni's statement that the wrath of God was poured upon the Jaredite civilization as a natural consequence of their own wickedness. Much if not all of the pain and suffering that could be viewed as "the wrath of God" came by means of the meanness, the cruelty, and the thirst for blood that filled the hearts of the spiritually sick and dead (compare Mormon 4:5).

The Destruction of the Jaredite Nation

Ether 15:1–34

1. And it came to pass when Coriantumr had recovered of his wounds, he began to remember the words which Ether had spoken unto him.

2. He saw that there had been slain by the sword already nearly two millions of his people, and he began to sorrow in his heart; yea, there had been slain two millions of mighty men, and also their wives and their children.

3. He began to repent of the evil which he had done; he began to remember the words which had been spoken by the mouth of all the prophets, and he saw them that they were fulfilled thus far, every whit; and his soul mourned

and refused to be comforted.

4. And it came to pass that he wrote an epistle unto Shiz, desiring him that he would spare the people, and he would give up the kingdom for the sake of the lives of the people.

5. And it came to pass that when Shiz had received his epistle he wrote an epistle unto Coriantumr, that if he would give himself up, that he might slay him with his own sword, that he would spare the lives of the people.

6. And it came to pass that the people repented not of their iniquity; and the people of Coriantumr were stirred up to anger against the people of Shiz; and the people

of Shiz were stirred up to anger against the people of Coriantumr; wherefore, the people of Shiz did give battle unto the people of Coriantumr.

7. And when Coriantumr saw that he was about to fall he fled again before the people of Shiz.

8. And it came to pass that he came to the waters of Ripliancum, which, by interpretation, is large, or to exceed all; wherefore, when they came to these waters they pitched their tents; and Shiz also pitched his tents near unto them; and therefore on the morrow they did come to battle.

9. And it came to pass that they fought an exceedingly sore battle, in which Coriantumr was wounded again, and he fainted with the loss of blood.

10. And it came to pass that the armies of Coriantumr did press upon the armies of Shiz that they beat them, that they caused them to flee before them; and they did flee southward, and did pitch their tents in a place which was called Ogath.

11. And it came to pass that the army of Coriantumr did pitch their tents by the hill Ramah; and it was that same hill where my father Mormon did hide up the records unto the Lord, which were sacred.

12. And it came to pass that they did gather together all the people upon all the face of the land, who had not been slain, save it was Ether.

13. And it came to pass that Ether did behold all the doings of the people; and he beheld that the people who were for Coriantumr were gathered together to the army of Coriantumr; and the people who were for Shiz were gathered together to the army of Shiz.

14. Wherefore, they were for the space of four years gathering together the people, that they might get all who were upon the face of the land, and that they might receive all the strength which it was possible that they could receive.

15. And it came to pass that when they were all gathered together, every one to the army which he would, with their wives and their children—both men, women and children being armed with weapons of war, having shields, and breastplates, and head-plates, and being clothed after the manner of war—they did march forth one against another to battle; and they fought all that day, and conquered not.

16. And it came to pass that when it was night they were weary, and retired to their camps; and after they had retired to their camps they took up a howling and a lamentation for the loss of the slain of their people; and so great were their cries, their howlings and lamentations, that they did rend the air exceedingly.

17. And it came to pass that on the morrow they did go again to battle, and great and terrible was that day; nevertheless, they conquered not, and when the night came again they did rend the air with their cries, and their howlings, and their mournings, for the loss of the slain of their people.

18. And it came to pass that Coriantumr wrote again an epistle unto Shiz, desiring that he would not come again to battle, but that he would take the kingdom, and spare the lives of the people.

19. And behold, the Spirit of the Lord had ceased striving with them, and Satan had full power over the hearts of the people; for they were given up unto the hard-

ness of their hearts, and the blindness of their minds that they might be destroyed; wherefore they went again to battle.

20. And it came to pass that they fought all that day, and when the night came they slept upon their swords.

21. And on the morrow they fought even until the night came.

22. And when the night came they were drunken with anger, even as a man who is drunken with wine; and they slept again upon their swords.

23. And on the morrow they fought again; and when the night came they had all fallen by the sword save it were fifty and two of the people of Coriantumr, and sixty and nine of the people of Shiz.

24. And it came to pass that they slept upon their swords that night, and on the morrow they fought again, and they contended in their might with their swords and with their shields, all that day.

25. And when the night came there were thirty and two of the people of Shiz, and twenty and seven of the people of Coriantumr.

26. And it came to pass that they ate and slept, and prepared for death on the morrow. And they were large and mighty men as to the strength of men.

27. And it came to pass that they fought for the space of three hours, and they fainted with the loss of blood.

28. And it came to pass that when the men of Coriantumr had

received sufficient strength that they could walk, they were about to flee for their lives; but behold, Shiz arose, and also his men, and he swore in his wrath that he would slay Coriantumr or he would perish by the sword.

29. Wherefore, he did pursue them, and on the morrow he did overtake them; and they fought again with the sword. And it came to pass that when they had all fallen by the sword, save it were Coriantumr and Shiz, behold Shiz had fainted with the loss of blood.

30. And it came to pass that when Coriantumr had leaned upon his sword, that he rested a little, he smote off the head of Shiz.

31. And it came to pass that after he had smitten off the head of Shiz, that Shiz raised up on his hands and fell; and after that he had struggled for breath, he died.

32. And it came to pass that Coriantumr fell to the earth, and became as if he had no life.

33. And the Lord spake unto Ether, and said unto him: Go forth. And he went forth, and beheld that the words of the Lord had all been fulfilled; and he finished his record; (and the hundredth part I have not written) and he hid them in a manner that the people of Limhi did find them.

34. Now the last words which are written by Ether are these: Whether the Lord will that I be translated, or that I suffer the will of the Lord in the flesh, it mattereth not, if it so be that I am saved in the kingdom of God. Amen.

1-3. Amidst the horrors of the battlefield, Coriantumr is brought to the awful recognition that the prophecies of Ether concerning him and his people are literally being fulfilled (see Ether 13:20-21). There is no salvation in merely recognizing the

fulfillment of prophecy. Such recognition, however, may serve as a catalyst, as in the case of Coriantumr, to the recognition of other workings of God and as a spiritual awakening of the soul that will lead one to call upon the Lord, be touched by the Spirit, and be led to repentance. This certainly was the case with Coriantumr. As he pondered on the words of the prophets, he was brought to the disconsolate state of knowing that he and his people had perhaps gone beyond the point of return and were left without hope for success.

11. The hill Ramah] Moroni notes that this hill, which was a sacred site to him, was the same Cumorah where his father, Mormon, had deposited the sacred plates. We do not know whether this hill had any other significance to the Jaredites, but it may not be totally unreasonable to suggest that Ether, under the inspiration of the Lord, may have likewise secreted his plates away there in a similar manner as did Mormon (see verse 33).

12–13. In contrast to Mormon's role as a witness of his people's destruction, Ether was not a participant in the battles but rather could observe and record from his vantage point in hiding.

15. Women and children being armed with weapons of war] In preparation for battle, all Jaredites (excluding Ether, see verse 12), even women and children, were equipped with armor and armed with weapons of war. One can scarcely imagine such a war, where every person—young and old, man, woman or child—is compelled to fight for his or her very life. This verse gives us a glimpse of the horrors of a war of total annihilation.

16–17. When we understand that even little children and nursing mothers along with all others were engaged in bloody hand-to-hand combat, we do not wonder why Ether recorded that at the end of each day's warring "their howlings and lamentations . . . did rend the air exceedingly." This poignant, graphic image shows not only mourning for the death of young, strong soldiers but also anguished cries of pain and suffering for the inhumane destruction of entire families.

19. Satan had full power over the hearts of the people] As a result of their gross wickedness and their bloodthirsty and warring nature, the Spirit of the Lord no longer could influence them to righteousness. Thus their hearts were hardened and their minds were blinded. They had become, like Mormon's people, dead to workings of the Spirit. In this spiritually desensitized condition they became bound by the chains of their own sinfulness, and the day of grace had passed for them. (See commentary on Mormon 2:15.)

22. They were drunken with anger] Just as a person who is inebriated with alcohol suffers from dulled senses and slowed reactions, so also does a person whose intense anger produces an emo-

tional intoxication and hence irrational thinking and actions. Because anger and contention are of the devil, the clear thinking that comes from the guidance of the Spirit disappears where these prevail. Compassion and consideration for others is swallowed up by selfishness and self-indulgence. Coriantumr's people were so filled with hatred and anger that they were as much out of control and frenzied as if they were physically under the influence of drugs or alcohol.

23–32. So great was the destruction of the armies of Shiz and Coriantumr that they, as the two leaders, were left as the only survivors of war. Some have suggested that it is implausible that there could or would be such a battle to the death as to leave the two military leaders as the lone survivors. In fact this manner of warfare is not by any means unknown; it finds precedent in ancient, Asiatic modes of warfare.

32. Coriantumr fell to the earth, and became as if he had no life] Coriantumr did not die as a result of his wounds and his battle with Shiz, but survived to be a witness of the destruction of his people just as prophesied by Ether (see Ether 13:21) and to see another group of people inherit the land of promise (see Omni 1:21–22).

33–34. With the total demise of the Jaredite civilization Ether was commanded to complete his record and hide it up in such a way as to be found by a future people. Moroni recorded that his abridgment of Ether's account was not "a hundredth part" of the record's totality. With his mission completed, Ether ended his record, not knowing whether he would be translated by the power of the Lord or would tarry until death upon the earth. The Book of Mormon does not tell which of these fates befell him, but to him it did not matter because he had at least a firm hope of eternal life and very likely had received the "more sure word of prophecy" (compare Mosiah 13:9 and Mormon 2:19; see also D&C 131:5).

The Book of Moroni

Moroni pondered about what he could add to the records that would be of further value to those who would one day receive his writings, and especially, as he said, to his “brethren, the Lamanites.” The writings in the book of Moroni serve almost like an appendix to the Book of Mormon. Moroni included in it some items of practical instruction, a sermon and some epistles from his father, and his own final, powerful testimony and farewell. We do not know how he then finished his sojourn on earth, but we know from subsequent events in the earliest days of this last dispensation of the gospel that he did indeed triumph as he predicted.

Perhaps realizing that his “brethren, the Lamanites” would need to have not only the fulness of the gospel restored among them but also the Church itself, he made a record of fundamental ordinances administered by the Church of his day. He stated in general terms the overall purpose, mission, and administration of the Church. His record of such matters is not extensive and is probably not intended to serve as an instruction manual for the future Church. However, it seems to have a two-fold purpose.

First, it testifies of the need for a formal church organization with ritually administered sacred ordinances. These ordinances are not empty, passive rituals; rather, they bind the individual to receive the promises and blessings of the gospel by means of a covenant of action between himself and the Lord. Furthermore, such ordinances witness his devotion publicly so that others may be benefited and God may be glorified. Throughout the preceding portion of the Book of Mormon the reader is invited to “come unto Christ” and “partake of his salvation.” Very little is mentioned about the formal church organization among the Nephites, although there is no question that it existed. Moroni is verifying that it cannot be just any organization but must be one established by Jesus Christ himself, having *his* ordinances and being led by *his*

Spirit. This leads us to the second purpose of having this information added by Moroni.

The second benefit of this record is its witness of the continuity and unchanging nature of Jesus Christ and his Church. As Joseph Smith translated these passages, he may have wondered whether the Lord would direct him to institute these same ordinances in the Church soon to be restored. Though he had this record at his disposal and could have followed the patterns Moroni described, Joseph waited until he was instructed by the Lord to institute the same ordinances and they were revealed anew (see D&C 20:76–79). This served as a second witness of Moroni's record and as an affirmation of the one true Church of Jesus Christ.

We should be deeply grateful to Moroni for adding the masterful sermon of his father, Mormon. It provides practical instruction on discerning between good and evil, between that which is of God and that which is of Satan. Perhaps the greatest contributions of Mormon's discourse, however, are his teachings on faith, hope, and charity. Nowhere else in all of our scriptures do we gain such understanding of the total interdependence of these three core elements of the gospel of Jesus Christ. Charity, the most important of these three, is especially illuminated by Mormon's teachings. Though often mentioned in the New Testament, it is never made so understandable and accessible as it is in Moroni chapter 7.

Mormon's epistle to his son Moroni on infant baptism must have been very interesting to Joseph Smith as he translated it. This practice had been the subject of great controversy in Christianity for centuries, and though Joseph may not have been acquainted with all facets of the dilemma, he would probably have been exposed to it somewhat in his earlier search for the "true" church. The question was now unequivocally set to rest by Mormon. Furthermore, having lost an infant son himself, Joseph must have been comforted to learn that his innocent child would not be lost from heaven, as some had taught, but would be "alive in Christ." Joseph thus continued to learn why the true organization of the Church of Jesus Christ had to be restored to the earth.

Moroni included one more epistle from his father which contains a final witness and documentation of the total depravity of the Nephite people. Mormon's account is so horrifying that he fears it will overwhelm Moroni. Once again he commends his son to the grace of God, his only hope in the midst of such a hell.

By way of conclusion, we see Moroni adding his last testimony to the records entrusted to him. This final testimony is powerful and befits the scope of the rest of the Book of Mormon itself. He no longer seems concerned about his inadequacies in writing but seems filled with the power of the Spirit and able to bear an indisputable witness. Like the final crescendo of a stirring musical mas-

terpiece, Moroni's closing invitation to "come unto Christ and be perfected in him" climaxes and masterfully encompasses the whole intent of this mighty book, the Book of Mormon.

Moroni's Words Are for the Benefit of the Lamanites

Moroni 1:1–4

1. Now I, Moroni, after having made an end of abridging the account of the people of Jared, I had supposed not to have written more, but I have not as yet perished; and I make not myself known to the Lamanites lest they should destroy me.

2. For behold, their wars are exceedingly fierce among themselves; and because of their hatred they put to death every Nephite that will not deny the Christ.

3. And I, Moroni, will not deny the Christ; wherefore, I wander whithersoever I can for the safety of mine own life.

4. Wherefore, I write a few more things, contrary to that which I had supposed; for I had supposed not to have written any more; but I write a few more things, that perhaps they may be of worth unto my brethren, the Lamanites, in some future day, according to the will of the Lord.

1–4. Moroni tells us that he had not previously planned to write more on the plates after completing his abridgment of the book of Ether. Perhaps as he wandered and hid from the Lamanites who sought his destruction additional thoughts came to his mind that impressed him to add a few more items to the record. Certainly he did not view these additions as nothing more than "fillers." Recording things on the plates was not an easy or convenient thing. It required considerable effort and time. Thus we must assume that Moroni felt strongly that the things he was now to include were of special significance—particularly to his brethren the Lamanites of the last days.

4. That perhaps they may be of worth unto my brethren, the Lamanites, in some future day] Moroni's impression that his words and this sacred record would be a unique benefit to the latter-day Lamanites is similar to Enos's desire and the Lord's promise to him (see Enos 1:13, 16). Other Book of Mormon prophets also prophesied of the great day when the Lamanites would come unto the Lord in faith on account of this record (see 2 Nephi 3:15; Alma 37:19; Mormon 7:8–10; Ether 12:22). In the title page to the Book of Mormon the first group of people that is identified as the target audience of this record is the Lamanites. It is intended to show them "what great things the Lord hath done for their fathers; and that they may know the covenants of the Lord, that they are not cast off forever." In these last days the Lord

has declared that the Book of Mormon is the fulfillment of these earlier prophecies and promises, and that “for this very purpose are these plates preserved, which contain these records—that the promises of the Lord might be fulfilled, which he made to his people; and that the Lamanites might come to the knowledge of their fathers, and that they might know the promises of the Lord, and that they may believe the gospel and rely upon the merits of Jesus Christ, and be glorified through faith in his name, and that through their repentance they might be saved” (D&C 3:19–20).

Nephite Disciples Are Given Power to Confer the Holy Ghost and Ordain Others to the Priesthood

Moroni 2-3

2:1. The words of Christ, which he spake unto his disciples, the twelve whom he had chosen, as he laid his hands upon them—

2:2. And he called them by name, saying: Ye shall call on the Father in my name, in mighty prayer; and after ye have done this ye shall have power that to him upon whom ye shall lay your hands, ye shall give the Holy Ghost; and in my name shall ye give it, for thus do mine apostles.

2:3. Now Christ spake these words unto them at the time of his first appearing; and the multitude heard it not, but the disciples heard it; and on as many as they laid their hands, fell the Holy Ghost.

3:1. The manner which the dis-

ciples, who were called the elders of the church, ordained priests and teachers—

3:2. After they had prayed unto the Father in the name of Christ, they laid their hands upon them, and said:

3:3. In the name of Jesus Christ I ordain you to be a priest, (or, if he be a teacher) I ordain you to be a teacher, to preach repentance and remission of sins through Jesus Christ, by the endurance of faith on his name to the end. Amen.

3:4. And after this manner did they ordain priests and teachers, according to the gifts and callings of God unto men; and they ordained them by the power of the Holy Ghost, which was in them.

2:1-3. God is the same yesterday, today, and forever. Whenever there has been priesthood, keys, and servants of the Lord authorized to proclaim the everlasting gospel and administer in its ordinances, there also has been the Church—the earthly kingdom of God. Perhaps Moroni, in writing to his latter-day readers, is showing that the foundational principles upon which the Nephite Church was built are the same today and in all generations. These verses also testify that the Nephite Church organized by the Savior himself operated under the power and authority of the Mel-

chizedek Priesthood. It is by this higher priesthood that the gift of the Holy Ghost can be conferred upon people who have entered the Church through proper baptism. In discussing the practices and principles that governed the Nephite Church, there is probably good reason why Moroni first records the disciples being empowered to confer the gift of the Holy Ghost. The Holy Ghost and its accompanying gifts are imperative to the operation of the priesthood and the work of the Church. "We believe in the gift of the Holy Ghost being enjoyed now, as much as it was in the Apostles' days," the Prophet Joseph declared. "We believe that it [the gift of the Holy Ghost] is necessary to make and to organize the Priesthood, that no man can be called to fill any office in the ministry without it; we also believe in prophecy, in tongues, in visions, and in revelations, in gifts, and in healings; and that these things cannot be enjoyed without the gift of the Holy Ghost." (*Teachings*, p. 243.)

2:2. Ye shall call on the Father in my name, in mighty prayer; and after ye have done this ye shall have power] Priesthood power is governed by principles of faith and righteousness (see D&C 121:36). In order to properly represent the Lord in any priesthood capacity, the priesthood holder must be a pure and worthy receptacle of the Spirit of the Lord. It is only through personal preparation by worthy living and seeking the guidance of the Spirit in mighty prayer that a priesthood holder will be empowered with divine utterance in speaking for and in behalf of the Lord in all priesthood blessings and ordinances.

3:1-4. The Nephite disciples, who were ordained by Jesus (see 3 Nephi 12:1), called others to priesthood service in the Church. This priesthood practice parallels that which was revealed by the Lord to Joseph Smith in this dispensation (see D&C 20:38-56). The Book of Mormon thereby stands not only as another witness of Christ but also as another witness of the "true and living Church" of Christ.

3:3. To preach repentance and remission of sins through Jesus Christ] The mission of the Church and the ministry of all priesthood representatives is to proclaim the gospel, to testify of the atoning sacrifice of Jesus Christ (see D&C 33:8-13; 76:40-42). All principles of the gospel and all priesthood ordinances are intended to lead men unto Christ. It is through him that all principles and ordinances of the gospel have any enduring efficacy.

3:4. After this manner did they ordain priests and teachers] In earlier Nephite times priests and teachers were called and ordained to service in the kingdom. These priests and teachers were not officers in the Aaronic Priesthood as we know it today. They were priests and teachers in the general sense that they were Melchizedek Priesthood servants who ministered to the people

and taught the gospel (see 2 Nephi 5:26; Jacob 1:18; Mosiah 18:18; see also *Commentary* 1:225; 2:260). It is not explicit in Moroni's account whether he is referring to "priests and teachers" in a generic way, meaning those who would minister under the Melchizedek Priesthood, or to the literal offices of priest and teacher in the Aaronic Priesthood. President Joseph Fielding Smith explained: "There were no Levites who accompanied Lehi to the Western Hemisphere. Under these conditions the Nephites officiated by virtue of the Melchizedek Priesthood from the days of Lehi to the days of the appearance of our Savior among them. It is true that Nephi 'consecrated Jacob and Joseph' that they should be priests and teachers over the land of the Nephites, but the fact that the plural terms *priests and teachers* were used indicates that this was not a reference to the definite office in the priesthood in either case, but it was a general assignment to teach, direct, and admonish the people. Otherwise the terms *priest and teacher* would have been given, in the singular. . . .

"When the Savior came to the Nephites, he established the Church in its fulness among them, and he informed them that former things had passed away, for they were all fulfilled in him. He gave the Nephites all the authority of the priesthood which we exercise today. Therefore we are justified in the belief that not only was the fulness of the Melchizedek Priesthood conferred, but also the Aaronic, just as we have it in the Church today; and this Aaronic Priesthood remained with them from this time until, through wickedness, all priesthood ceased. We may be assured that in the days of Moroni the Nephites did ordain teachers and priests in the Aaronic Priesthood; but before the visit of the Savior they officiated in the Melchizedek Priesthood." (*Answers to Gospel Questions* 1:124, 126.)

Mode of Administration of the Sacrament

Moroni 4–5

4:1. The manner of their elders and priests administering the flesh and blood of Christ unto the church; and they administered it according to the commandments of Christ; wherefore we know the manner to be true; and the elder or priest did minister it—

4:2. And they did kneel down with the church, and pray to the Father in the name of Christ,

saying:

4:3. O God, the Eternal Father, we ask thee in the name of thy Son, Jesus Christ, to bless and sanctify this bread to the souls of all those who partake of it; that they may eat in remembrance of the body of thy Son, and witness unto thee, O God, the Eternal Father, that they are willing to take upon them the name of thy Son,

and always remember him, and keep his commandments which he hath given them, that they may always have his Spirit to be with them. Amen.

5:1. The manner of administering the wine—Behold, they took the cup, and said:

5:2. O God, the Eternal Father, we ask thee, in the name of thy

Son, Jesus Christ, to bless and sanctify this wine to the souls of all those who drink of it, that they may do it in remembrance of the blood of thy Son, which was shed for them; that they may witness unto thee, O God, the Eternal Father, that they do always remember him, that they may have his Spirit to be with them. Amen.

During the resurrected Savior's ministry among the Nephites he introduced to them the ordinance of the sacrament of the Lord's Supper and taught them the significance of it (see 3 Nephi 18 and the corresponding commentary). In these chapters Moroni is illuminating this doctrine and ordinance, not by further doctrinal teaching of the symbolism or its significance but rather by demonstrating that it was a formal ordinance that was practiced in the Nephite Church. Moroni gives us the exact words of the prescribed prayer that must be offered as a part of this essential ordinance because the sacrament is not merely a ritual of remembrance but is in very deed a solemn covenant. The specific words and phrases of the sacramental prayer are a critical part of that covenant. Perhaps Moroni realized that in his father's abridgment the doctrine of the sacrament was taught and discussed but the words of the covenantal prayers had not been included; and that they should be in order that the latter-day reader of the Book of Mormon would better understand the significant covenants and blessings associated with the sacrament.

4:3 (5:2). That they may eat (drink) in remembrance of the body (blood) of thy Son] The emblems of the sacrament are symbols of the sacrifice of the Savior's flesh and body that were broken and his blood that was spilt in the course of the infinite and eternal Atonement. The symbolic nature of these sacred emblems is clearly taught in the scriptures (see JST, Matthew 26:22–25; JST, Mark 14:20–25; 3 Nephi 18:7–10; see also Bruce R. McConkie, *Doctrinal New Testament Commentary* 1:718–24).

4:3 (5:2). And witness unto thee] It is clear from the Book of Mormon usage of the verb "to witness" as it relates to baptism (see Mosiah 18:10) and the sacrament (see 3 Nephi 18:11) that it means to enter into a solemn covenant. Another way this phrase could read is "and *covenant* with thee." Only when we understand that as we "witness" we are covenanting with the Father to do certain things does the ordinance of the sacrament truly become a renewal of our previous covenants taken at baptism.

4:3. That they are willing to take upon them the name

of thy Son] The name of Christ comes upon us not merely for the asking but only as we exercise faith in him, keep his commandments, and partake of the ordinances of salvation. When we covenant to take the name of Christ we are in fact covenanting with the Lord that we will so live our lives that we can be spiritually “born of him” and “become his sons and his daughters” (see Mosiah 5:7–12; 15:11–12; 27:25; D&C 34:2–3; 39:4). Those who have thus been born again become members of the family of Christ and thus take upon them the family name—they become Christians in the true sense of that word and are obligated by covenant to live by the rules and regulations of the royal family, to live a life befitting the new and sacred name they have taken. “Family members bear the family name,” wrote Elder Bruce R. McConkie. “By it they are known and called and identified; it sets them apart from all those of a different lineage and ancestry. Adopted children take upon themselves the name of their new-found parents and become in all respects as though they had been born in the family. And so it is that the children of Christ, those who are born again, those who are spiritually begotten by their new Father, take upon themselves the name of Christ. By it they are known; in it they are called; it identifies and sets them apart from all others. They are now family members, Christians in the real and true sense of the word.

“Do they themselves become Christs? Not in the sense that they are called upon to atone for the sins of others and make immortality and eternal life available for themselves or their fellowmen on this or any world. But they do carry his name and are obligated to bear it in decency and dignity.” (*Promised Messiah*, p. 363.)

4:3 (5:2). Always remember him] When we covenant to “always remember him” we are not only committing ourselves to reflect and ponder upon the mission and teachings of the Lord but also are binding ourselves to follow the teachings of the Master and to seek diligently to walk in his footsteps, to live our lives and to treat our fellowmen as we remember the Savior to have done. Elder Dallin H. Oaks has declared that if we are to *remember* Jesus we must also *follow* him. He cited several specific ways by which we demonstrate our remembrance of the Savior:

“He calls us to take time from our daily activities to follow him and serve our fellowmen. Even the greatest among us should be the servant of all. Those who always remember him will straightway assume and faithfully fulfill the responsibilities to which they are called by his servants. . . . If we always remember our Savior, we will forgive and forget grievances against those who have wronged us. . . . As we always remember him, we should strive to assure that we and our family members and, in-

deed, all the sons and daughters of God everywhere follow our Savior into the waters of baptism. This reminds each of us of our duties to proclaim the gospel, perfect the Saints, and redeem the dead. . . . We should always remember how the Savior taught us to love and do good to one another. Loving and serving one another can solve so many problems!" (*Ensign*, May 1988, pp. 30-31.)

4:3. Keep his commandments which he hath given them] The covenant taken at baptism includes the covenant of obedience to the commandments of God (see 2 Nephi 31:7-10; Mosiah 18:10; D&C 20:37). This covenant of obedience is renewed weekly through the sacramental ordinance.

4:3 (5:2). That they may always have his Spirit to be with them] One's faithfulness to the covenants made in baptism and renewed with worthy partaking of the sacrament binds the Lord to his part of the covenant agreement. He has promised that we may have the influence of the Holy Ghost as a constant companion. There are many significant spiritual fruits that come to us as the Lord fulfills this promise to us. The Holy Ghost is a sanctifier, and as a result we are forgiven of our sins and cleansed by the Holy Spirit through worthy partaking of the sacrament. "If we have done wrong; if there is a feeling in our souls that we would like to be forgiven," Elder Melvin J. Ballard declared, "then the method to obtain forgiveness is not through rebaptism; it is not to make confession to man; but it is to repent of our sins, to go to those against whom we have sinned or transgressed and obtain their forgiveness, and then repair to the sacrament table where, if we have sincerely repented and put ourselves in proper condition, we shall be forgiven, and spiritual healing will come to our souls. It will really enter into our being." (*Improvement Era*, October 1919, pp. 1026-27.)

In addition to the cleansing from sin and the spiritual healing that comes by the Holy Ghost, having the Spirit with us yields other great blessings. If we are true to our covenants, the Spirit helps us to speak with power (see D&C 88:137), brings things to our remembrance (see John 14:26), gives us peace and joy (see Galatians 5:22), teaches and testifies of eternal truths (see John 14:26; Moroni 10:5), opens up revelations to our minds (see Alma 5:46), shows us all things that we should do (see 2 Nephi 32:5), strengthens body, mind and spirit (see Romans 8:26), comforts us in times of sorrow (see Acts 9:31), unfolds to us the mysteries of the kingdom (see 1 Nephi 10:19), and brings us many other spiritual blessings. Mortal minds cannot fully comprehend and words cannot fully explain what great things can come to us if we partake worthily of the sacrament and merit the Lord's promise to have his Spirit with us always.

The Work and Mission of the Nephite Church

Moroni 6:1-9

1. And now I speak concerning baptism. Behold, elders, priests, and teachers were baptized; and they were not baptized save they brought forth fruit meet that they were worthy of it.

2. Neither did they receive any unto baptism save they came forth with a broken heart and a contrite spirit, and witnessed unto the church that they truly repented of all their sins.

3. And none were received unto baptism save they took upon them the name of Christ, having a determination to serve him to the end.

4. And after they had been received unto baptism, and were wrought upon and cleansed by the power of the Holy Ghost, they were numbered among the people of the church of Christ; and their names were taken, that they might be remembered and nourished by the good word of God, to keep them in the right way, to keep them continually watchful unto prayer, relying alone upon the merits of Christ, who was the author and the finisher of their

faith.

5. And the church did meet together oft, to fast and to pray, and to speak one with another concerning the welfare of their souls.

6. And they did meet together oft to partake of bread and wine, in remembrance of the Lord Jesus.

7. And they were strict to observe that there should be no iniquity among them; and whoso was found to commit iniquity, and three witnesses of the church did condemn them before the elders, and if they repented not, and confessed not, their names were blotted out, and they were not numbered among the people of Christ.

8. But as oft as they repented and sought forgiveness, with real intent, they were forgiven.

9. And their meetings were conducted by the church after the manner of the workings of the Spirit, and by the power of the Holy Ghost; for as the power of the Holy Ghost led them whether to preach, or to exhort, or to pray, or to supplicate, or to sing, even so it was done.

1-3. Moroni's description of the qualifications for baptism into the Nephite Church of Christ shows virtually the same conditions as those listed by the Lord through revelation in this dispensation (compare D&C 20:37). Worthiness to be admitted into the kingdom of God on earth is not open to negotiation. These conditions are prescribed by the Lord and are the same from one dispensation to another.

1. They brought forth fruit meet that they were worthy of it] The "fruit" of faith and repentance includes not only a willingness to be baptized but also a life that demonstrates that desire and reflects a love for the Savior and for his teachings. Thus an interview is an essential part of preparation for baptism. Repentance and sincere commitment to gospel principles are the indicators of

spiritual readiness for the covenant of baptism (see Matthew 3:8; Alma 13:10–13).

2. Came forth with a broken heart and a contrite spirit]

The “fruit” worthy of baptism is seen in *actions*, and the “broken heart and contrite spirit” are reflected in one’s *attitudes* and desires. This emphasis on the heart and the spirit demonstrates that training the inner man—inward spirituality—is also requisite for baptism by water and by fire (see 2 Nephi 2:7; 3 Nephi 9:19–20; 12:19; Ether 4:15). “To have a broken heart and contrite spirit,” wrote Elder Bruce R. McConkie, “is to be broken down with deep sorrow for sin, to be humbly and thoroughly penitent, to have attained sincere and purposeful repentance” (*Mormon Doctrine*, p. 161). This kind of humility is not just sorrow for sin but is also an attitude of gratitude for the Savior’s sacrifice and a recognition of one’s total and complete dependence upon his merits and mercy.

3. Took upon them the name of Christ] See commentary on Moroni 4:3.

4–6. From these verses we see the practice of the Church *after* men and women are baptized. They meet together often to “teach one another the doctrine of the kingdom” (see D&C 88:77) and to fellowship and strengthen one another through “all [their] conversation, in all [their] prayers, in all [their] exhortations, and in all [their] doings” (see D&C 108:7). This spiritual fellowshiping and nurturing of one another is an essential part of the “perfection of the Saints.” All meetings and activities and practices of the Church should be designed to spiritually nourish the Saints and keep them in the “right way.”

4. Their names were taken, that they might be remembered] This perhaps has reference to the Nephite Church’s equivalent of our modern-day membership record system. Keeping a record of the members of the Church was not done for the sake of reporting statistics or “boasting” in numbers but rather so that each member could be identified and remembered. The purpose is the same today. Members are remembered in that priesthood leaders are kept aware of all those in their units in order that, through priesthood quorums and auxiliaries and through effective home teaching, the Saints can be spiritually ministered to and encouraged to live the gospel, to be mindful of the need for prayer, and to more faithfully rely upon the merciful arm of the Savior. We do not know exactly what procedures and/or programs were employed by the Nephite Church to meet these objectives, but we can clearly see that the responsibilities of fellowshiping and nurturing one another, of being our “brother’s keeper,” is an age-old requirement of all of the Lord’s Saints. (Compare D&C 20:42, 46–55.)

4. Christ, who was the author and the finisher of their

faith] Compare Hebrews 5:9; 12:2. God the Father is the author of the plan of salvation. Jesus, by divine investiture of authority and as the chief proponent of the Father's plan, is also often referred to as the author of our faith. In some translations of the Bible this term *author* is translated as *captain*. Our Savior is indeed the captain of our salvation and the prime mover of our faith and the source of all righteousness. Another word for *author* is *father*. Jesus is truly the father or author of the salvation of all who come unto him and are "born again" and thus become his children.

Christ is the finisher of our faith in that, through our faith in him, he perfects our faith and perfects us. Through his grace we are saved or, in other words, spiritually finished as to immortality and eternal life. It is upon Christ and his infinite atonement that we should focus our hearts, minds, and strength. He is indeed the Light at the "end of the tunnel"—it is he that the scriptures command us to consider as "the end of your salvation" (D&C 46:7).

5. The Church did meet together oft] The value of Church meetings is not in their frequency but rather in that coming together often in the spirit of fasting and prayer helps feed the spirit and keep one close to gospel principles. Just as it is unhealthy and physically dangerous to neglect one's health and nutrition, so is it spiritually life-threatening to go without the spiritual nutrition that comes from meeting together, serving one another, and being taught. Partaking of the sacrament weekly is also an imperative ingredient in a spiritual "balanced diet." President Anthon H. Lund declared: "Unless the Saints attend their meetings it will be hard for them to keep alive in the Gospel" (CR, October 1907, p. 9).

5. Speak one with another concerning the welfare of their souls] One of the fundamental purposes of the Church is the perfection of the Saints. There are many ways by which this is accomplished, but one of the most common and significant is through formal, consistent, and continual gospel instruction in Church meetings and programs. Much of the Church's resources are expended on teaching the Saints concerning the "welfare of their souls." This instruction is not given just to increase gospel scholarship but is designed to lead men and women to partake of Christ's atonement in their own lives—which in turn leads to greater compassion and concern for the welfare of the souls of others.

6. They did meet together oft to partake of bread and wine, in remembrance of the Lord Jesus] "No man goes away from this Church and becomes an apostate in a week, nor in a month," observed Elder Melvin J. Ballard. "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 one 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 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 the Latter-day Saints." (*Improvement Era*, October 1919, p. 1028.)

7–8. Church discipline too is an important element of the perfection-of-the-saints mission of the Church. Rooting out iniquity from the *institutional* Church has always been one of the responsibilities of the "elders" in all dispensations, but there is a more important blessing to the *individual* that comes from such discipline. The Nephites, like the modern Church, sought not only to preserve the spiritual integrity of the institution but also to help each member repent and walk uprightly before the Lord (see D&C 20:80; 42:80–83; 102:12–23). Those who misunderstand the mission of the Church and the indispensable role of discipline in fulfilling that mission may view excommunication, disfellowshipment, or other formal disciplinary measures as unfairly punitive and humiliating. On the contrary, Elder Theodore M. Burton noted that "the most loving action the Church can take at times is to disfellowship or excommunicate a person" ("To Forgive Is Divine," *Ensign*, May 1983, p. 70). When deemed necessary through inspiration, these repentance remedies can help the sinner fully realize the seriousness of his transgression. If a serious offense is treated too lightly it is more likely to be repeated. Such Church actions can ensure that the necessary price for repentance is paid.

They also serve to mercifully protect the errant person from the full weight and responsibility of his covenants, which if left in full force would bring condemnation upon him in his yet unforgiven state. Through Church discipline a wrongdoer can demonstrate to the Lord, to the Church, and to others a sincere desire to repent and be forgiven, whatever the cost. This period of discipline is an opportunity to be retained as a disciple of him who made our repentance possible. If such discipline does not yield repentance, reformation, and forgiveness for the sinner, such discipline still protects the sanctity and purity of the Church. To do otherwise is an offense to God, for he declared: "And him that repenteth not of his sins, and confesseth them not, ye shall bring before the church, and do with him as the scripture saith unto you, either by commandment or by revelation. And this ye shall do that God may be glorified—not because ye forgive not, having not compassion, but that ye may be justified in the eyes of the law, that ye may not offend him who is your lawgiver." (D&C 64:12–13.)

9. Their meetings were conducted by the church after the manner of the workings of the Spirit] See D&C 20:45;

46:2. Today, just as in the Nephite Church, our meetings should be filled with the power of the Holy Ghost. To ensure this, leaders should prayerfully seek the guidance of the Lord in planning meetings, in selecting speakers and the topics to be addressed, and in the choosing of the sacred hymns of praise. Meetings should be conducted in a reverential manner that will be conducive to the spirit of true worship. This scriptural injunction to see that meetings are conducted “after the manner of the workings of the Spirit” is not reserved or directed solely to presiding officers. Speakers and teachers should likewise prayerfully seek inspiration that their part will be “led by the Spirit.” Congregation members, too, have a sacred obligation to spiritually prepare for meetings and attend them in the proper frame of mind so as to be touched by the power of the Holy Ghost. When all members of the Church recognize him who is the Head and seek to commune with him through reverent worship at Church meetings, then the Spirit of the Lord can be poured out upon the Saints. In these circumstances they “understand one another, and . . . are edified and rejoice together” (see D&C 50:17–22).

Mormon Speaks to the Peaceable Followers of Christ

Moroni 7:1–5

1. And now I, Moroni, write a few of the words of my father Mormon, which he spake concerning faith, hope, and charity; for after this manner did he speak unto the people, as he taught them in the synagogue which they had built for the place of worship.

2. And now I, Mormon, speak unto you, my beloved brethren; and it is by the grace of God the Father, and our Lord Jesus Christ, and his holy will, because of the gift of his calling unto me, that I am permitted to speak unto you at this time.

3. Wherefore, I would speak unto you that are of the church, that are the peaceable followers of Christ, and that have obtained a sufficient hope by which ye can enter into the rest of the Lord, from this time henceforth until ye shall rest with him in heaven.

4. And now my brethren, I judge these things of you because of your peaceable walk with the children of men.

5. For I remember the word of God which saith by their works ye shall know them; for if their works be good, then they are good also.

2. The gift of his calling unto me] Mormon wrote on another occasion: “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.” (3 Nephi 5:13.)

3. The peaceable followers of Christ] There is a quiet confi-

dence, an assurance born of righteousness and trust in the Almighty, that characterizes the true followers of the Prince of Peace. They are peacemakers because they are at peace. They settle disputes because they are grounded and settled in the faith. They have come to know and evidence that which their Master promised: “Peace I leave with you, my peace I give unto you: not as the world giveth, give I unto you. Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid.” (John 14:27; compare Romans 5:1; Philippians 4:7; Colossians 3:15.)

3. A sufficient hope by which ye can enter into the rest of the Lord] President Joseph F. Smith taught that once the Saints of God have gained a testimony which is unshakeable and which will allow them to confront the antagonists of the faith with confidence, they have in this life entered into the rest of the Lord. Theirs is a settled conviction of the truth which comes through their hope in Christ and the faith that he will in time bestow upon them the riches of eternity. (See *Gospel Doctrine*, pp. 58, 126.)

3. Until ye shall rest with him in heaven] See commentary on Alma 12:34. See also Alma 40:12; 60:13; D&C 84:24.

4. Your peaceable walk with the children of men] “And the members shall manifest before the church, and also before the elders, by a godly walk and conversation, that they are worthy of it, that there may be works and faith agreeable to the holy scriptures—walking in holiness before the Lord” (D&C 20:69).

5. See 3 Nephi 14:15–20.

All Things That Are Good Come from God

Moroni 7:6–13

6. For behold, God hath said a man being evil cannot do that which is good; for if he offereth a gift, or prayeth unto God, except he shall do it with real intent it profiteth him nothing.

7. For behold, it is not counted unto him for righteousness.

8. For behold, if a man being evil giveth a gift, he doeth it grudgingly; wherefore it is counted unto him the same as if he had retained the gift; wherefore he is counted evil before God.

9. And likewise also is it counted evil unto a man, if he shall pray and not with real intent of heart; yea,

and it profiteth him nothing, for God receiveth none such.

10. Wherefore, a man being evil cannot do that which is good; neither will he give a good gift.

11. For behold, a bitter fountain cannot bring forth good water; neither can a good fountain bring forth bitter water; wherefore, a man being a servant of the devil cannot follow Christ; and if he follow Christ he cannot be a servant of the devil.

12. Wherefore, all things which are good cometh of God; and that which is evil cometh of the devil; for the devil is an enemy unto

God, and fighteth against him continually, and inviteth and enticeth to sin, and to do that which is evil continually.

13. But behold, that which is of

God inviteth and enticeth to do good continually; wherefore, every thing which inviteth and enticeth to do good, and to love God, and to serve him, is inspired of God.

6–13. These verses could easily be misunderstood. It is not that evil persons—or persons with less than noble motives—cannot do good things. They certainly can. It is just that their deeds prove in the end to be a blessing neither to themselves nor to those they serve. That is, so long as good deeds are motivated by selfish or malicious desires they cannot transform and enrich either the giver or the receiver. Unfortunately, such doctrine has caused some members of the Church to conclude, “Well, given the way I feel about going to church right now [or doing my home teaching, or serving at the cannery], it would be better to just stay home!” No, it would not be better to stay home. Giving a gift is one thing. Performing my duties in the Church is another. It is almost always better to do the right thing for the wrong reason than to do the wrong thing—better to go to church or visit my families or show up for the welfare activity with a bad attitude than to remain at home. In most cases the very act of doing my duty (even with a less than celestial motive) results in good feelings and subsequent gratitude for having done the right thing.

6. Real intent] That is, service or gifts should be offered sincerely, selflessly, with the intent of doing something simply because it is the right thing to do. Compare 2 Nephi 31:13; Moroni 10:4.

7–9. See commentary on 3 Nephi 13.

10–11. Compare 3 Nephi 14:17–20.

11. A man being a servant of the devil cannot follow Christ] The impossibility of serving both God and Mammon is ever before us (see 3 Nephi 13:24). A man or woman cannot be wedded to Jehovah and Beelzebub at one and the same time. Both of these insist upon the complete allegiance and dedication of their municipals; neither will be served half-heartedly. Double-mindedness creates instability and spiritual schizophrenia (see James 1:8).

12–13. Amaleki explained that “there is nothing which is good save it comes from the Lord: and that which is evil cometh from the devil” (Omni 1:25; see also Alma 5:40). This is the great litmus test for determining the truthfulness or rightness of a matter—does it invite and entice one to come unto God, to partake of his goodness and grace, to enjoy the fruits of his Spirit, to gain in time those godly attributes and godly powers which will equip the person to be with and be like God? If it does so, it is of God. Nephi wrote concerning the Book of Mormon: “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.)

We Judge Right from Wrong Through the Light of Christ

Moroni 7:14–19

14. Wherefore, take heed, my beloved brethren, that ye do not judge that which is evil to be of God, or that which is good and of God to be of the devil.

15. For behold, my brethren, it is given unto you to judge, that ye may know good from evil; and the way to judge is as plain, that ye may know with a perfect knowledge, as the daylight is from the dark night.

16. For behold, the Spirit of Christ is given to every man, that he may know good from evil; wherefore, I show unto you the way to judge; for every thing which inviteth to do good, and to persuade to believe in Christ, is sent forth by the power and gift of Christ; wherefore ye may know with a perfect knowledge it is of God.

17. But whatsoever thing per-

suadeth men to do evil, and believe not in Christ, and deny him, and serve not God, then ye may know with a perfect knowledge it is of the devil; for after this manner doth the devil work, for he persuadeth no man to do good, no, not one; neither do his angels; neither do they who subject themselves unto him.

18. 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.

19. Wherefore, I beseech of you, brethren, that ye should search diligently in the light of Christ that ye may know good from evil; and if ye will lay hold upon every good thing, and condemn it not, ye certainly will be a child of Christ.

14–19. "Every man or woman born into this world is born with what the scriptures call the Light of Christ or the Spirit of Jesus Christ (D&C 84:46; Moroni 7:16; John 1:9). The Light of Christ is the means by which the cosmos is ordered, the power and force by which the laws of nature exist and hold sway in the universe (see D&C 88:6–13). This same light is planted in the spirit of man by a benevolent God and serves as the source of reason and conscience and discernment. It is a moral monitoring device, a directing and guiding influence which will strive with men and women and lead them to do good and choose righteousness if they will but acknowledge and respond to the soft inner impressions of

this light. . . . If men and women in the world will respond to the quiet promptings and subtle whisperings of the Spirit of Jesus Christ within them, they will be led, either in this life or the next, to that higher light of the Holy Ghost found only in the covenant gospel through membership in the Lord's Church." (Joseph Fielding McConkie and Robert L. Millet, *The Holy Ghost*, p. 6.)

14. Indeed, Isaiah pronounced a woe upon those who pervert the truth, who call evil good, as well as those who call good evil (see Isaiah 5:20; 2 Nephi 15:20).

15. There is nothing deep or complex about the matter: if we strive to be true to the light we have, the Light of Christ will assist us in judging or discerning the good from the evil, the noble from the ignoble, the relevant from the irrelevant. For Mormon, hearkening to the Light of Christ is a simple matter.

18. See that ye do not judge wrongfully] Here the counsel seems to broaden out to the point where we are warned against unrighteous judgment or even prejudging other people. This verse seems to imply that the Light of Christ will assist us to discern the spirit or intent or motives of others, so that we will always "judge righteous judgment" (JST, Matthew 7:2).

19. Search diligently in the light of Christ] This is an unusual phrase. It seems to mean something like, "Be diligent in following the Light of Christ," or "Search your hearts diligently and pay heed to the light within," or "Search diligently to know the truth and then hearken to the quiet voice within you."

19. Lay hold upon every good thing] Mormon here counsels the people to receive the gospel—the gifts and blessings and powers and privileges associated with membership in Christ's Church—and not condemn it. In the ultimate sense a person lays hold upon every good thing when he or she lays hold on—meaning lays claim to, through faithfulness and the mercy and grace of Christ—eternal life.

19. A child of Christ] One becomes a child of Christ by being born again to the things of righteousness, through dying as to the things of a fallen world. See *Commentary* 2:168–75.

In Christ Is Found Every Good Thing

Moroni 7:20–26

20. And now, my brethren, how is it possible that ye can lay hold upon every good thing?

21. And now I come to that faith, of which I said I would speak; and I will tell you the way

whereby ye may lay hold on every good thing.

22. For behold, God knowing all things, being from everlasting to everlasting, behold, he sent angels to minister unto the children of

men, to make manifest concerning the coming of Christ; and in Christ there should come every good thing.

23. And God also declared unto prophets, by his own mouth, that Christ should come.

24. And behold, there were divers ways that he did manifest things unto the children of men, which were good; and all things which are good cometh of Christ; otherwise men were fallen, and there could no good thing come unto them.

25. Wherefore, by the ministering of angels, and by every word

which proceeded forth out of the mouth of God, men began to exercise faith in Christ; and thus by faith, they did lay hold upon every good thing; and thus it was until the coming of Christ.

26. And after that he came men also were saved by faith in his name; and by faith, they become the sons of God. And as sure as Christ liveth he spake these words unto our fathers, saying: Whatsoever thing ye shall ask the Father in my name, which is good, in faith believing that ye shall receive, behold, it shall be done unto you.

20–26. Paul taught that “faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God” (Romans 10:17). Joseph Smith elaborated on this principle when he taught: “Faith comes by hearing the word of God, through the testimony of the servants of God; that testimony is always attended by the Spirit of prophecy and revelation” (*Teachings*, p. 148). That testimony may be borne by mortals or by angels. In the earliest ages of the world, “the Gospel began to be preached, from the beginning, being declared by holy angels sent forth from the presence of God, and by his own voice, and by the gift of the Holy Ghost” (Moses 5:58; compare D&C 20:35).

22. God knowing all things] See *Commentary* 1:246–47.

22. Being from everlasting to everlasting] Our God, the Almighty Elohim who is our Father in Heaven, is a man, a glorified man, an exalted Man of Holiness. Joseph Smith explained in his famous King Follett sermon that that being whom we now worship was once a mortal man who dwelt on an earth, even as we do now (see *Teachings*, pp. 345–46). How, then, can he be “from everlasting to everlasting” or “from eternity to eternity”? Simply stated, this means “from the spirit existence through the probation which we are in, and then back again to the eternal existence which will follow.” (Joseph Fielding Smith, *Doctrines of Salvation* 1:12; see also Bruce R. McConkie, *Promised Messiah*, p. 166.)

22. In Christ there should come every good thing] There is no blessing in time or eternity, no right or privilege, no station or attainment of more than temporary duration, that does not find its fulfillment in and find itself linked inextricably to the Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. No teaching—even doctrinal teaching—which is unattached to Christ and his atoning mission will have saving efficacy or virtue here or hereafter.

24. Otherwise men were fallen, and there could no good

thing come unto them] Without the atonement of Christ all men and women—without exception—would be lost forever, fallen and alienated creatures, beings without hope of deliverance. Fallen and unredeemed man is worthy of “no good thing.” Only those who receive Christ and the ordinances of his gospel prepare themselves to receive “every good thing.”

25. By every word which proceeded forth] See Matthew 4:4; D&C 84:44.

26. After that he came men also were saved by faith] The pattern for salvation, the process of faith, was no different for those who lived in the meridian of time than for those who lived in the days of Adam some four thousand years before. Nor is it any different for those who live two thousand years after his coming in the flesh—men and women must exercise faith in his name, repent of their sins, be reborn and renewed through his blood and by the power of the Holy Ghost, and endure faithfully to the end (see D&C 20:25–27). In so doing they prepare themselves to enjoy “every good thing.”

26. Whatsoever thing . . . which is good] This is a slightly different wording from that recorded for the Savior’s expression to the Nephites. According to our record the Lord said: “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, italics added).

Angels Minister and Miracles Are Wrought Among the Faithful

Moroni 7:27–39

27. Wherefore, my beloved brethren, have miracles ceased because Christ hath ascended into heaven, and hath sat down on the right hand of God, to claim of the Father his rights of mercy which he hath upon the children of men?

28. For he hath answered the ends of the law, and he claimeth all those who have faith in him; and they who have faith in him will cleave unto every good thing; wherefore he advocateth the cause of the children of men; and he dwelleth eternally in the heavens.

29. And because he hath done this, my beloved brethren, have miracles ceased? Behold I say unto you, Nay; neither have angels ceased to minister unto the children of men.

30. For behold, they are subject unto him, to minister according to the word of his command, showing themselves unto them of strong faith and a firm mind in every form of godliness.

31. And the office of their ministry is to call men unto repentance, and to fulfill and to do the work of the covenants of the Father, which he hath made unto

the children of men, to prepare the way among the children of men, by declaring the word of Christ unto the chosen vessels of the Lord, that they may bear testimony of him.

32. And by so doing, the Lord God prepareth the way that the residue of men may have faith in Christ, that the Holy Ghost may have place in their hearts, according to the power thereof; and after this manner bringeth to pass the Father, the covenants which he hath made unto the children of men.

33. And Christ hath said: If ye will have faith in me ye shall have power to do whatsoever thing is expedient in me.

34. And he hath said: Repent all ye ends of the earth, and come unto me, and be baptized in my name, and have faith in me, that ye may be saved.

35. And now, my beloved brethren, if this be the case that these things are true which I have spoken unto you, and God will show unto you, with power and great glory at the last day, that they are true, and if they are true

has the day of miracles ceased?

36. Or have angels ceased to appear unto the children of men? Or has he withheld the power of the Holy Ghost from them? Or will he, so long as time shall last, or the earth shall stand, or there shall be one man upon the face thereof to be saved?

37. Behold I say unto you, Nay; for it is by faith that miracles are wrought; and it is by faith that angels appear and minister unto men; wherefore, if these things have ceased wo be unto the children of men, for it is because of unbelief, and all is vain.

38. For no man can be saved, according to the words of Christ, save they shall have faith in his name; wherefore, if these things have ceased, then has faith ceased also; and awful is the state of man, for they are as though there had been no redemption made.

39. But behold, my beloved brethren, I judge better things of you, for I judge that ye have faith in Christ because of your meekness; for if ye have not faith in him then ye are not fit to be numbered among the people of his church.

27–28. The greatest of all miracles is the Atonement. Mortal mind cannot fathom or comprehend how one being can assume the burdens and sins of another, much less how one infinitely pure person can take responsibility for the stains of billions of impure persons. Nor can we begin to grasp how one man, Jesus of Nazareth, could take up his physical body in the resurrection and then make immortality available to all who have been tabernacled in flesh. These are the mysteries of godliness. They are the grandest miracles of all time. Mormon is essentially asking, “Since the Atonement has been wrought, the greatest miracle in time or eternity, have miracles ceased, or has Jesus ceased to minister to us?”

Alma explained to his son Corianton that “all mankind were fallen, and they were in the grasp of justice; yea, the justice of God, which consigned them forever to be cut off from his presence. And now, the plan of mercy could not be brought about except an

atonement should be made; therefore God himself atoneth for the sins of the world, to bring about the plan of mercy, to appease the demands of justice, that God might be a perfect, just God, and a merciful God also." (Alma 42:14–15.) In a modern revelation we hear these tender words: "Listen to him who is the advocate with the Father, who is pleading your cause before him—saying: Father, behold the sufferings and death of him who did no sin, in whom thou wast well pleased; behold the blood of thy Son which was shed, the blood of him whom thou gavest that thyself might be glorified; wherefore, Father, spare these my brethren that believe on my name, that they may come unto me and have everlasting life" (D&C 45:3–5). Indeed, herein is manifest the grand miracle of the ages, the miracle of forgiveness, the wondrous act by which a tattered and tainted soul is made pure and whole through the renovating powers of the Holy One of Israel.

28. He hath answered the ends of the law] See 2 Nephi 2:7. A person answers to the justice of God in one of two ways: (1) perfect obedience to the law, which leads to blessings and joy; (2) disobedience to the law, which leads to suffering and punishment and requires a payment or penalty. Christ answered on both counts. He kept the law perfectly. In addition, he pays the penalty for our sins, which payment becomes efficacious as we repent and trust in him.

30. Angels are the servants of Christ. They are heavenly messengers sent by the Lord to minister to men and women on earth. Their ministry is not capricious, their service not haphazard. They labor under the Holy Priesthood after the Order of the Son of God. Their ministry—whether seen or unseen—is to those of strong faith.

30. A firm mind] Angels do not appear to—just as gifts and fruits of the Spirit are not bestowed upon—the unstable and the spiritually immature. The Lord knows best our spiritual bearing capacity and generally reveals himself, through whatever medium, to those who are steadfast and immovable in the faith.

31–32. Angels preach the gospel. They help to fulfil and do the work of the covenants of the Father; they help to gather Israel. They bear witness—seen and unseen—to the chosen vessels, who in turn can bear a faithful witness to the residue, meaning to others of our Father's children. To some they appear in person. To others they whisper and warn and counsel quietly. To some it is given to know. To others it is given to believe on the words of those who know (see D&C 46:13–14).

36–37. If miracles have ceased, and if angels no longer minister to people on earth, then we are living in a time of great apostasy and in a day of unbelief. Where faith is, there are gifts and wonders and miracles. There are angels. Where these things—the

signs of the believers—are not found, there the fruits of the gospel are not to be found, and all is vain, meaning empty and hollow. (See 2 Nephi 27:23; Ether 12:12.)

38. They are as though there had been no redemption made] Of what value is the Atonement and the redeeming mission of Jesus Christ if the people of the earth are to continue to live in darkness and despair? Why should the only sinless man ever to grace this planet offer up his life if his sufferings and death will not result in added truth and added vision to a benighted world? In short, why have an atonement—a priceless gift intended to repair the damage of death and sin—if the bulk of mankind have no reason to rejoice in the gifts and graces associated with the new creation in Christ?

Mormon Discourses on Faith, Hope, and Charity

Moroni 7:40–48

40. And again, my beloved brethren, I would speak unto you concerning hope. How is it that ye can attain unto faith, save ye shall have hope?

41. And what is it that ye shall hope for? Behold I say unto you that ye shall have hope through the atonement of Christ and the power of his resurrection, to be raised unto life eternal, and this because of your faith in him according to the promise.

42. Wherefore, if a man have faith he must needs have hope; for without faith there cannot be any hope.

43. And again, behold I say unto you that he cannot have faith and hope, save he shall be meek, and lowly of heart.

44. If so, his faith and hope is vain, for none is acceptable before God, save the meek and lowly in heart; and if a man be meek and lowly in heart, and confesses by the power of the Holy Ghost that Jesus is the Christ, he must needs have charity; for if he have not charity he is nothing; wherefore

he must needs have charity.

45. And charity suffereth long, and is kind, and envieth not, and is not puffed up, seeketh not her own, is not easily provoked, thinketh no evil, and rejoiceth not in iniquity but rejoiceth in the truth, beareth all things, believeth all things, hopeth all things, endureth all things.

46. Wherefore, my beloved brethren, if ye have not charity, ye are nothing, for charity never faileth. Wherefore, cleave unto charity, which is the greatest of all, for all things must fail—

47. But charity is the pure love of Christ, and it endureth forever; and whoso is found possessed of it at the last day, it shall be well with him.

48. Wherefore, my beloved brethren, pray unto the Father with all the energy of heart, that ye may be filled with this love, which he hath bestowed upon all who are true followers of his Son, Jesus Christ; that ye may become the sons of God; that when he shall appear we shall be like him,

for we shall see him as he is; that
we may have this hope; that we

may be purified even as he is pure.
Amen.

40–42. Faith and hope are closely tied. In one sense, a type of hope, what Alma called “a desire to believe” (Alma 32:27), precedes faith. That is to say, before faith in Christ can be firmly established one must begin with some kind of desire to believe. Then as a person gains the quiet assurance that there is a God, gains a correct understanding of the nature and perfections of God, and gains the assurance from the Lord that his course in life is approved, he is on the pathway of faith. When one has faith in Christ—trusts in his almighty power to forgive and lift and lighten and transform the soul—one begins to gain that hope which comes only as a result of believing in and relying upon the merits and mercy of Christ. Hope in this sense is not a weak and whimpering yearning that lacks even the beginning of assurance. It is not expressed in such thoughts as “I hope I can get to heaven one day,” or “I hope the Lord will forgive my sins,” or “I hope there’s a place for people like me in the celestial kingdom.” Rather, to have hope in Christ is to have the peaceful assurance that one is on course, the quiet confidence that in general terms the Lord is pleased with one’s efforts, the anticipation of happiness here and glory and honor hereafter. Alma encouraged his people to live in such a way as to allow the Spirit of the Lord to cleanse and direct them, “and thus be led by the Holy Spirit, becoming humble, meek, submissive, patient, full of love and all long-suffering; having faith on the Lord; *having a hope that ye shall receive eternal life*” (Alma 13:28–29, italics added).

40. How is it that ye can attain unto faith, save ye shall have hope?] Given our discussion above, this question might be understood from two different perspectives. In the first sense it could be: “How can you gain faith unless you first have hope, that is, unless you first have a desire to believe?” In the second sense the question would be: “How can you gain faith except you shall then have hope, since hope in Christ flows from one’s faith in Christ? Truly, without faith there cannot be any hope.”

43. When one has faith and hope in Christ, he trusts in Christ. He yields his heart unto Christ and seeks to do only those things which please his Master. He is meek—is in complete control of his emotions and of his desires, is teachable and malleable. He is lowly in heart—he knows that of himself he is nothing, “even less than the dust of the earth” (Mosiah 2:25; 4:2); he knows that only in and through the Redeemer can he have hope for success and happiness here and hereafter.

44. The power by which one is made meek and lowly of heart, the power by which a person comes to know and confess that Jesus is Lord—by that same power, the power of the Holy

Ghost, one receives the greatest and grandest of all spiritual gifts: charity.

44. His faith and hope is vain] Compare 1 Corinthians 15:14, 17.

45. Mormon's language here is unmistakably similar to Paul's language in his epistle to the Corinthians (1 Corinthians 13:4–7). Certainly both could have received independent revelations from the Lord on the same matter. In offering an alternative explanation, Elder Bruce R. McConkie said: "Both Paul and Mormon expounded with great inspiration about faith, hope, and charity, in many verses using the same words and phrases. If there is any difference between them it is that Mormon expounds the doctrines more perfectly and persuasively than does Paul. It does not take much insight to know that Mormon and Paul both had before them the writings of some Old Testament prophet on the same subjects." ("The Doctrinal Restoration," in *The Joseph Smith Translation: The Restoration of Plain and Precious Things*, p. 18.)

Both Paul and Mormon described the charitable person as one who:

1. *Suffers long, bears all things.* He or she is endowed with a portion of the love of God and thus, to some degree, with the patience and perspective of God toward people and circumstances. That person's vision of here and now (the present) is greatly affected by his glimpse of there and then (the future). It was by means of this pure love of Christ, which followed their spiritual rebirth (see Mosiah 28:3), that Alma and the sons of Mosiah were able to bear the burdens placed upon them, even persecution and rejection.

2. *Is kind.* Charity motivates such people to goodness, to benevolence and sensitivity toward the needs of others. People are their business. It was by means of this pure love of Christ that Ammon, son of Mosiah, was able to extend himself, kindly and lovingly, in the service of Lamoni and his household, to win their hearts, and to be an instrument in their conversion to the truths of the gospel (see Alma 17–19).

3. *Enviest not.* Those who love the Lord and are filled with his love are much less prone to concern themselves with the acquisitions or accolades of others. Their joy is full in Christ (see D&C 101:36). They find happiness in simple pleasures and delight in God's goodness to them. It is by means of this pure love of Christ, this anchor to the soul, that people are able to ignore—to give no heed to—the tauntings and temptations of those who chant and proselyte from the great and spacious building (see 1 Nephi 8).

4. *Is not puffed up, seeks not his own.* The charitable person seeks diligently to turn attention away from self and toward God. He or she eagerly acknowledges the hand of the Lord in all things and is hesitant to take personal credit for accomplishments. Such a one is

void of pride. Mormon spoke of a time when many of the Nephites were lifted up in pride, so much so that they proved a major stumbling block to the Church, and “the church began to fail in its progress” (Alma 4:10). At the same time, in this day of inequality and wickedness there were others who, filled with the love of God, were “abasing themselves, succoring those who stood in need of their succor, such as imparting their substance to the poor and the needy, feeding the hungry, and suffering all manner of afflictions, for Christ’s sake, who should come according to the spirit of prophecy” (Alma 4:13).

5. *Is not easily provoked.* Those filled with the love of Christ are meek; theirs is a quiet but pervasive poise under provocation. Because the Lord has begun to remake their hearts they do not express anger, because they do not experience anger. Because of their trust in the Almighty and the power and perspective of that love which flows from him, Alma and Amulek were able to view the hideous scene of women and children being sent to the flames because of their acceptance of the truth. As their Master would do over a century later on another hemisphere, they stood with meek majesty before the tauntings and assaults of the unholy. (See Alma 14.)

6. *Thinks no evil.* Such persons’ minds are on things of righteousness, their desires are for that which builds and strengthens and encourages. They have no secret agenda, no private yearnings for personal aggrandizement, only a heart focused on the Lord and his kingdom. “Behold,” Nephi wrote, “my soul delighteth in the things of the Lord; and my heart pondereth continually upon the things which I have seen and heard” (2 Nephi 4:16).

7. *Rejoices not in iniquity, but rejoices in the truth.* The charitable person is repulsed by sin, though anxious to fellowship and lift the sinner. He or she is pained by the waywardness of the world and labors tirelessly to extend gospel assistance to those who stray from the path of peace. At the same time this person delights in the Spirit, in goodness, in noble accomplishments and discoveries, no matter what the source. Filled with a portion of the Lord’s love, this person, like the people of Benjamin, has no more disposition to do evil but rather to do good continually (see Mosiah 5:2). Though possessed with love for the wayward, he or she cannot look upon sin save it be with abhorrence (see Alma 13:12).

8. *Believes all things.* One possessed of charity is not naive or gullible but is simply open to truth. He or she enjoys the spiritual gift of a believing heart and has little or no difficulty in accepting the words and following the counsel of those called to direct the destiny of the Church. Because such people are believing in nature, all things work together for their good (see D&C 90:24). Like Sam, son of Lehi, the charitable person readily believes on the tes-

timony of one who knows (see 1 Nephi 2:17; compare D&C 46:13–14).

9. *Hopes all things.* Such persons have a firm hope in Christ, a quiet but dynamic assurance that, even though they are imperfect, they are on course, that the Lord is pleased with their lives, that eternal life is at the end of the path. “What is it that ye shall hope for?” Mormon asked of the humble followers of Christ. “Behold I say unto you that ye shall have hope through the atonement of Christ and the power of his resurrection, to be raised unto life eternal” (Moroni 7:41).

10. *Endures all things.* No matter what the true follower of Christ is required to pass through, he or she proceeds as called. Neither the shame of the world nor the threat of physical death can deter one who is bent upon enjoying the love of God everlastingly. “If ye shall press forward,” Nephi wrote, “feasting upon the word of Christ, and endure to the end, behold, thus saith the Father: Ye shall have eternal life” (2 Nephi 31:20).

46. If ye have not charity, ye are nothing Paul stated this same idea powerfully when he wrote: “Though I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, and have not charity, I am become as sounding brass, or a tinkling cymbal. And though I have the gift of prophecy, and understand all mysteries, and all knowledge; and though I have all faith, so that I could remove mountains, and have not charity, I am nothing. And though I bestow all my goods to feed the poor, and though I give my body to be burned, and have not charity, it profiteth me nothing.” (1 Corinthians 13:1–3.) It is true that service sanctifies, that service is essential to salvation. But charity is more than service; it is, in fact, a manifestation of the Spirit and as such is the proper motivation for service. As discussed under verse 48, though it is vital to be endowed with charity in order to bless the lives of others through Christian service, the overriding purpose of charity is to renew our souls and make us even like our exalted Lord.

46. Charity never faileth Though there will come a time when we will be endowed with the knowledge and vision and powers of God—by which time the gifts of prophecy and revelation and knowledge available on earth will have served their rightful functions—there will never be a time in all eternity when charity will not be burning brightly in the souls of the sanctified.

46. The greatest of all Charity is the highest of all the spiritual gifts, the capstone of spiritual endowments. It is, in the language of Paul, “a more excellent way” (1 Corinthians 12:31). To be endowed with charity is to be clothed in the mantle of perfectness and peace (see D&C 88:125).

47. Charity is the pure love of Christ This statement has two possible (and certainly related) meanings: (1) one who has

charity loves others purely, just as Christ does; and (2) one who has charity loves Christ purely. Pure love comes from a pure source, from God. It is not and cannot be generated by man; it comes from heaven. It is in Christ, who is symbolized by the tree of life toward which all men and women press who seek eternal life (see *Commentary* 1:76–77); it is the love of God which “sheddeth itself abroad in the hearts of the children of men” (1 Nephi 11:22). Indeed, as Moroni explained, the love which Christ has had for the children of men is charity (see Ether 12:34).

48. Here we come to the heart of the matter. Charity is a gift of the Spirit. It is bestowed by God. One does not “work on” his charity any more than he might work on his prophecy, dreams, visions, or discernment. Charity is that “more excellent way” (see 1 Corinthians 12:31) that comes by and through the Holy Ghost as one of the gifts of God. It is true that we have a responsibility to give of ourselves in service to others as a part of our covenantal obligation as Christians (see Mosiah 18:8–10; James 2:8). It is true that service is essential to salvation. But service and charity are not necessarily the same. Charity is “the highest, noblest, strongest kind of love, not merely affection; the pure love of Christ. It [the term] is never used to denote alms or deeds or benevolence, although it may be a prompting motive.” (*LDS Bible Dictionary*, p. 632.) That is, charity is that gift of the Spirit which motivates us to greater goodness, specifically greater service and compassion for others. In a manner of speaking, we can serve people without loving them; we cannot truly love them (as the Lord does) without serving them. Bruce C. Hafen has written: “Our own internally generated compassion for the needs of others is a crucial indication of our desire to be followers of the Savior. . . . For that reason, we must be reaching out to others even as we reach out to God, rather than waiting to respond to others’ needs until our charitable instincts are quickened by the Spirit. But even then, charity in its full-blown sense is ‘bestowed upon’ Christ’s righteous followers. Its source, like all other blessings of the Atonement, is the grace of God.” (*The Broken Heart*, pp. 195–96.)

When Benjamin challenged his people (and us) to be spiritually reborn, to put off the natural man and become a saint through the atonement of Christ, he further instructed us to become as little children—“submissive, meek, humble, patient, *full of love*, willing to submit to all things which the Lord seeth fit to inflict” upon us (Mosiah 3:19, italics added). Likewise, Alma warned the people of Ammonihah against procrastination: “But that ye would humble yourselves before the Lord, and call on his holy name, and watch and pray continually, that ye may not be tempted above that which ye can bear, *and thus be led by the Holy Spirit, becoming humble, meek, submissive, patient, full of love and all long-suffering*; hav-

ing faith on the Lord; having a hope that ye shall receive eternal life; *having the love of God always in your hearts*, that ye may be lifted up at the last day and enter into his rest" (Alma 13:28, italics added).

We see from Mormon's profound pronouncement, then, that the purpose of charity is not just to motivate us to Christian service (as important as such is), but also to sanctify us from sin and prepare us not only to be with God but also to be like him (see Ether 12:34). In Mormon's words, those who become sons and daughters of Jesus Christ—who have applied the atoning blood of the Savior and have been born again as to the things of righteousness—are the ones upon whom the Lord bestows this gift. Bruce C. Hafen thus explained:

"The ultimate purpose of the gospel of Jesus Christ is to cause the sons and daughters of God to become as Christ is. Those who see religious purpose only in terms of ethical service in the relationship between man and fellowmen may miss that divinely ordained possibility. It is quite possible to render charitable—even 'Christian'—service without developing deeply ingrained and permanent Christlike character. Paul understood this when he warned against giving all one's goods to feed the poor without true charity. . . . We can give without loving, but we cannot love without giving. If our vertical relationship with God is complete, then, by the fruit of that relationship, the horizontal relationship with our fellow beings will also be complete. We then act charitably toward others, not merely because we think we should, but because that is the way we are.

"Service to others will surely bring us closer to God, especially when motivated by an unselfish sense of personal compassion. But even such desirable service will not of itself complete our relationship with God, because it will not by itself result in the bestowal of the complete attributes of godliness. That bestowal requires the ordinances and doctrines of the restored gospel and all the other elements of sacrifice and obedience spelled out in the scriptures. For that reason, while religious philosophies whose highest aim is social relevance may do much good, they will not ultimately lead people to achieve the highest religious purpose, which is to become as God and Christ are." (*The Broken Heart*, pp. 196–97.)

Joseph Smith the Prophet observed: "There is a love from God that should be exercised toward those of our faith, who walk uprightly, which is peculiar to itself, but it is without prejudice; it also gives scope to the mind, which enables us to conduct ourselves with greater liberality towards all that are not of our faith, than what they exercise towards one another. These principles approximate nearer to the mind of God, because it is like God, or God-like." (*Teachings*, p. 147.)

48. When he shall appear we shall be like him] See 1 John 3:1–2. We speak much in the Church about one day being *with* our Heavenly Father. The only way we can qualify to do that is to be transformed by the blood of Christ, through that healing medium we know as the Holy Ghost, so that we truly become the sons and daughters of Jesus Christ. Then we shall be *like* him, and shall dwell with him in comfort and with confidence. Of that glorious day the Psalmist wrote: “As for me, I will behold thy face in righteousness: I shall be satisfied, when I awake, with thy likeness” (Psalm 17:15).

Mormon’s Epistle on Infant Baptism

Moroni 8:1–24

1. An epistle of my father Mormon, written to me, Moroni; and it was written unto me soon after my calling to the ministry. And on this wise did he write unto me, saying:

2. My beloved son, Moroni, I rejoice exceedingly that your Lord Jesus Christ hath been mindful of you, and hath called you to his ministry, and to his holy work.

3. I am mindful of you always in my prayers, continually praying unto God the Father in the name of his Holy Child, Jesus, that he, through his infinite goodness and grace, will keep you through the endurance of faith on his name to the end.

4. And now, my son, I speak unto you concerning that which grieveth me exceedingly; for it grieveth me that there should disputations rise among you.

5. For, if I have learned the truth, there have been disputations among you concerning the baptism of your little children.

6. And now, my son, I desire that ye should labor diligently, that this gross error should be removed from among you; for, for this intent I have written this epistle.

7. For immediately after I had learned these things of you I inquired of the Lord concerning the matter. And the word of the Lord came to me by the power of the Holy Ghost, saying:

8. Listen to the words of Christ, your Redeemer, your Lord and your God. Behold, I came into the world not to call the righteous but sinners to repentance; the whole need no physician, but they that are sick; wherefore, little children are whole, for they are not capable of committing sin; wherefore the curse of Adam is taken from them in me, that it hath no power over them; and the law of circumcision is done away in me.

9. And after this manner did the Holy Ghost manifest the word of God unto me; wherefore, my beloved son, I know that it is solemn mockery before God, that ye should baptize little children.

10. Behold I say unto you that this thing shall ye teach—repentance and baptism unto those who are accountable and capable of committing sin; yea, teach parents that they must repent and be baptized, and humble themselves as their little children, and they shall all be saved with their little children.

11. And their little children need no repentance, neither baptism. Behold, baptism is unto repentance to the fulfilling the commandments unto the remission of sins.

12. But little children are alive in Christ, even from the foundation of the world; if not so, God is a partial God, and also a changeable God, and a respecter to persons; for how many little children have died without baptism!

13. Wherefore, if little children could not be saved without baptism, these must have gone to an endless hell.

14. Behold I say unto you, that he that supposeth that little children need baptism is in the gall of bitterness and in the bonds of iniquity, for he hath neither faith, hope, nor charity; wherefore, should he be cut off while in the thought, he must go down to hell.

15. For awful is the wickedness to suppose that God saveth one child because of baptism, and the other must perish because he hath no baptism.

16. Wo be unto them that shall pervert the ways of the Lord after this manner, for they shall perish except they repent. Behold, I speak with boldness, having authority from God; and I fear not what man can do; for perfect love casteth out all fear.

17. And I am filled with charity, which is everlasting love; wherefore, all children are alike unto me; wherefore, I love little children with a perfect love; and they are

all alike and partakers of salvation.

18. For I know that God is not a partial God, neither a changeable being; but he is unchangeable from all eternity to all eternity.

19. Little children cannot repent; wherefore, it is awful wickedness to deny the pure mercies of God unto them, for they are all alive in him because of his mercy.

20. And he that saith that little children need baptism denieth the mercies of Christ, and setteth at naught the atonement of him and the power of his redemption.

21. Wo unto such, for they are in danger of death, hell, and an endless torment. I speak it boldly; God hath commanded me. Listen unto them and give heed, or they stand against you at the judgment-seat of Christ.

22. For behold that all little children are alive in Christ, and also all they that are without the law. For the power of redemption cometh on all them that have no law; wherefore, he that is not condemned, or he that is under no condemnation, cannot repent; and unto such baptism availeth nothing—

23. But it is mockery before God, denying the mercies of Christ, and the power of his Holy Spirit, and putting trust in dead works.

24. Behold, my son, this thing ought not to be; for repentance is unto them that are under condemnation and under the curse of a broken law.

1–8. These verses give the historical context for one of the most significant doctrinal discourses in the Book of Mormon. In the verses that follow, Mormon discusses the doctrine of accountability and the false notion of infant baptism. It appears from this introduction that Moroni had previously been called to an important priesthood position of responsibility. Moroni, in that new

stewardship, probably wrote to his father concerning an important matter of concern and conflict. In response Mormon gave him some fatherly, as well as some ecclesiastical, counsel concerning a very important doctrinal dispute that had arisen among the Nephites. The record is silent as to what prompted this doctrinal dispute or how the notion of infant baptism had crept in among the people. Mormon's epistle to Moroni is designed to correct any error that has been made or false doctrines that have been taught and to plainly teach the truth of the matter. This contextual introduction also bears the author's witness of the words that follow. They are not merely Mormon's opinions but are the mind and will of the Lord that have come by direct revelation to Mormon through the power of the Holy Ghost. This revelation begins with the Savior himself bearing testimony that the words, ideas, and doctrine that follows in Mormon's epistle are "the words of Christ" (see verses 7–8).

9–24. One of the most insidious of Satan's heresies that he has promulgated in the earth is the notion that little children are born in sin and, unless baptized, are doomed to eternal damnation. The Nephites were not the first or the only people to have introduced among them this false and damning notion. By the third century the heresies of original sin and infant baptism had crept into the church in the Old World. This early Christian controversy has its roots in even earlier attempts by Satan to undermine and destroy the true doctrine of the Atonement and pervert the true ordinance of baptism. As far back as Abraham's day it was necessary for the Lord to rebuke those who espoused this false doctrine and to clarify the doctrines of accountability and baptism as it applies to little children (see JST, Genesis 17:4–8, 11).

Mormon makes it clear that acceptance of this doctrine reflects a gross misunderstanding or blatant rejection of the atonement of Jesus Christ and the principles and ordinances of the Gospel. It is "solemn mockery before God" because it denies the infinite and eternal effects of the Atonement and is a perversion of the most sacred of ordinances and covenants. Several important aspects of the doctrine of the Atonement and the ordinance of baptism are emphasized and clarified by Mormon in this epistle.

1. Baptism is for the remission of sins. In order for baptism to be of efficacy there must also be faith in the Lord Jesus Christ and complete repentance.

2. Since little children and those who because of mental or physical deficiencies never mature in the moral or spiritual sense are not accountable (see D&C 20:71; 29:49–50; 68:25–27), it is impossible for them to sin. Without accountability there is no sin. Without sin there is no need for repentance and baptism.

3. Because little children cannot sin they cannot bring about

their own spiritual “fall” or estrangement from God. The only spiritual death they experience, therefore, is that which comes upon all mankind by reason of the fall of Adam. Thus they are “alive in Christ” because the atonement of Jesus Christ has redeemed all, including little children, from the effects—both temporal and spiritual—of the fall of Adam. Those, then, who die without achieving personal accountability are redeemed and saved by the mercy, goodness, and pure love of Christ as evidenced by his atoning sacrifice. They become heirs of the celestial kingdom. (For an extensive doctrinal discussion of this concept see Elder Bruce R. McConkie, “The Salvation of Little Children,” *Ensign*, April 1977, pp. 3–7.)

8. Little children are whole, for they are not capable of committing sin] It should not be thought that this verse teaches that little children of the mentally deficient are incapable of doing anything wrong, mean, or dishonest. They are “whole” and incapable of committing sin not because of any inherent perfection or goodness on their part but by reason of the Atonement. They are incapable of sinning because they are not accountable for their actions. This means that whatever actions they may do that are mean or dishonest are not counted against them as sins.

“Too often Latter-day Saints—concerned about and confused over the scriptural statement that children are conceived in sin (Moses 6:55)—ask the question, Are children pure? The answer to this question is always a resounding yes. No one disputes that. The real issue is *why* children are pure. Two answers suggest themselves: (1) The Greek or humanistic response is that children are pure because human nature is pure, prone toward the good; and (2) the Christian response is that children are pure because of the Atonement, because Jesus Christ has declared them so. Children are redeemed because of the righteousness of our Redeemer. . . .

“The revelations state that little children ‘cannot sin, for power is not given unto Satan to tempt little children, until they begin to become accountable before me’ (D&C 29:47). All of us know of deeds performed by little children that may only be described as evil. I am aware of a seven-year-old who in an act of rage killed his brother. The act of murder is a heinous sin. But in this case the child’s action is not accounted as sin. Why? Because, in the words of God, ‘little children are redeemed from the foundation of the world through mine Only Begotten’ (D&C 29:46). Christ explained through Mormon that ‘the curse of Adam is taken from [children] in me, that it hath no power over them’ (Moroni 8:8). Little children are subject to the pull and effects of the Fall, just as everyone is. They are not, however, held accountable for their acts. In summary, little children are saved without any preconditions—without faith, repentance, or baptism. Their innocence is

decreed and declared by and through the tender mercies of an all-loving Lord. They are innocent through the Atonement, not because there is no sin in their nature.” (Robert L. Millet, *Life in Christ*, pp. 32–33.)

8. The law of circumcision is done away in me] See D&C 74:5–7.

10. Repentance and baptism unto those who are accountable and capable of committing sin] See D&C 20:71; also D&C 29:47; 68:25–27.

11. Baptism is unto repentance to the fulfilling the commandments unto the remission of sins] See Mark 1:4; Luke 3:3; Acts 2:38; 2 Nephi 31:17; Mosiah 3:13; D&C 13:1; 20:37; 84:27; 138:33.

14–16, 20–21. In these verses Mormon clearly demonstrates his displeasure with and anger towards the doctrine (and those who espouse it) that God will doom some little children to an endless hell for something that is no fault of their own. It should not be thought, however, that Mormon is saying that anyone who even thinks that little children may need baptism are condemned to hell. There are many good and honorable people in the world who, through ignorance and the foolish traditions of their fathers (see D&C 93:39), believe in the false notion of infant baptism. These devout men and women who are not yet fully informed doctrinally and not yet fully mature spiritually are not condemned merely by their ignorance. It appears that what Mormon is condemning and characterizing as “damning belief” is the rejection of the merciful workings of the Atonement *after* one understands the role of accountability, the effects of the fall of Adam, and the necessity of the Savior’s redemption. When one understands these doctrines and knows the nature of God, yet *continues* to hold to a view of God as capricious and arbitrary and *continues* to deny the unconditional aspects of the atonement of Jesus Christ in overcoming both the spiritual and physical deaths that resulted from the Fall, *then* one will experience a temporary hell until he can repent and acknowledge the saving power and mercy of Christ.

It is Lucifer who is behind this doctrine and who seeks to pervert the ways of God and distort the true nature of Deity. Satan, the father of this lie and all lies, is the one who is without faith, hope, and charity. It is he who denies the mercy afforded by the Atonement. It is he and his angels who are “in the gall of bitterness and in the bonds of iniquity” and who ultimately “must go down to hell.” They are the ones who spread lies about God and the gospel to ensnare and enslave others in their wicked webs of falsehoods and to make them miserable like themselves. Those who follow Lucifer and embrace his false teachings are the ones who are “in danger of death, hell, and endless torment.” In this epistle

Mormon is exercising all his power and authority to preach against Lucifer's false and damning doctrine concerning the salvation of little children and exhorting all to repent and come to a true understanding and acceptance of the mercies of the Messiah. As can be seen especially with this doctrine, the Book of Mormon exposes the anti-Christ Lucifer and the mortal proponents of his anti-Christ doctrines and invites all men and women everywhere to come unto Christ and partake of his goodness and mercy.

16. Perfect love casteth out all fear] See 1 John 4:18.

17–19, 22. Sometimes the questions are raised: Do all little children who die before achieving the age of accountability inherit the celestial kingdom? Will some have to be tested in order to achieve ultimate exaltation? Mormon stresses that *all* little children and *all* that “are without the law” are alive in Christ because of His mercy. It is clear from Mormon's words and modern prophetic commentary that *all* who die without accountability are incapable of sin and repentance and are “redeemed” and “alive in Christ”—meaning they inherit the celestial kingdom.

Little children are innocent and pure in this existence and will be pure and innocent in the world to come, and will come forth in the resurrection of the pure in heart at the appropriate time. At the time of the second coming of Christ, wickedness will be cleansed from the face of the earth. The great Millennium will be ushered in with power, and then Satan and his hosts will be bound by the righteousness of the people (see 1 Nephi 22:26). During this glorious era of enlightenment the earth shall be given to the righteous “for an inheritance; and they shall multiply and wax strong, and *their children shall grow up without sin unto salvation*” (D&C 45:58, italics added). But will not the devil be loosed at the end of the Millennium, some may ask? Could not those who had left mortality without trial be tested during that “little season”? Certainly not, for these children will have already come forth from the graves as resurrected and immortal beings. How could such persons—whose salvation is already assured—possibly be tested? To reason otherwise is to place God and all exalted beings in peril of apostasy. In the words of President Joseph Fielding Smith: “Satan will be loosed to gather his forces after the millennium. The people who will be tempted, will be people living on this earth, and they will have every opportunity to accept the gospel or reject it. Satan will have nothing to do whatever with little children, or grown people who have received their resurrection and entered into the celestial kingdom. *Satan cannot tempt little children in this life, nor in the spirit world, nor after their resurrection. Little children who die before reaching the years of accountability will not be tempted.*” (*Doctrines of Salvation* 2:56–57.)

22. Also they that are without the law] The law that is

here being referred to is accountability to the gospel law. It is not only little children who are incapable of sinning because of their lack of accountability; so also are those who are mentally deficient and thereby not accountable because they are not physically, mentally, and/or spiritually mature enough to repent (see D&C 29:49–50; see also Elder Bruce R. McConkie's discussion of this issue in "The Salvation of Little Children," *Ensign*, April 1977, pp. 6–7).

Little children and the mentally handicapped are but two groups of the larger body of people who died without full accountability and the blessing of knowing the law. Although their circumstances are somewhat different, the Atonement still offers them a great blessing. By virtue of the mercy of the Savior they are not condemned for not abiding a law of which they knew not. "Where there is no law given there is no punishment," declared Jacob, "and where there is no punishment there is no condemnation; and where there is no condemnation the mercies of the Holy One of Israel have claim upon them, because of the atonement; for they are delivered by the power of him" (2 Nephi 9:25; see also *Commentary* 1:250–52).

In his vision of the celestial kingdom Joseph Smith gained a significant doctrinal insight concerning this latter group of people. In it the doctrine of salvation for the dead—those who were not able to be fully accountable in mortality—was taught him. "Thus came the voice of the Lord unto me saying: All who have died without a knowledge of this gospel, *who would have received it if they had been permitted to tarry*, shall be heirs of the celestial kingdom of God; also all that shall die henceforth *without a knowledge of it, who would have received it with all their hearts*, shall be heirs of that kingdom" (D&C 137:7–8, italics added).

The "Fruits" of Repentance and a Remission of Sins

Moroni 8:25–30

25. And the first fruits of repentance is baptism; and baptism cometh by faith unto the fulfilling the commandments; and the fulfilling the commandments bringeth remission of sins;

26. And the remission of sins bringeth meekness, and lowliness of heart; and because of meekness and lowliness of heart cometh the visitation of the Holy Ghost, which Comforter filleth with hope

and perfect love, which love endureth by diligence unto prayer, until the end shall come, when all the saints shall dwell with God.

27. Behold, my son, I will write unto you again if I go not out soon against the Lamanites. Behold, the pride of this nation, or the people of the Nephites, hath proven their destruction except they should repent.

28. Pray for them, my son, that

repentance may come unto them. But behold, I fear lest the Spirit hath ceased striving with them; and in this part of the land they are also seeking to put down all power and authority which cometh from God; and they are denying the Holy Ghost.

29. And after rejecting so great a

knowledge, my son, they must perish soon, unto the fulfilling of the prophecies which were spoken by the prophets, as well as the words of our Savior himself.

30. Farewell, my son, until I shall write unto you, or shall meet you again. Amen.

25. The first fruits of repentance is baptism] True repentance is born of faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. There absolutely cannot be any repentance or remission of sins without faith in the redemptive power of the Savior. Hence, repentance is a “fruit” of faith. Baptism for the remission of sins—both the baptism by water and the baptism by fire—comes as a result or fruit of “faith unto repentance” (see Alma 34:14–17). The remission of sins comes by the power of the Holy Ghost as one exercises faith in the Lord, repents in all sincerity of soul, submits to the ordinance of baptism, keeps the commandments, and lives in such a way as to warrant being “born again” (see 3 Nephi 9:20; Alma 5:14) and becoming “new creatures in Christ” (see 2 Corinthians 5:17).

25. Fulfilling the commandments bringeth remission of sins] A remission of sins comes by repentance and by obedience to God’s laws and commandments. In fact, repentance and obedience are intertwined. There cannot be true repentance without also a conscientious effort to keep all of God’s commandments. Too often we tend to think of forsaking sin as merely stopping doing the one sin of which we are repenting. That is necessary, of course, but repentance that yields a remission of sins requires much more. President Spencer W. Kimball taught that there is no true repentance if we forsake only some selected sins but continue to embrace sinfulness. “That transgressor is not fully repentant who neglects his tithing, misses his meetings, breaks the Sabbath, fails in his family prayers, does not sustain the authorities of the Church, breaks the Word of Wisdom, does not love the Lord nor his fellowmen. A reforming adulterer who drinks or curses is not repentant. The repenting burglar who has sex play is not ready for forgiveness. God cannot forgive unless the transgressor shows a true repentance which spreads to all areas of his life.” (*The Miracle of Forgiveness*, p. 203.)

Obedience to God’s commandments is not only an indicator of our true repentance but is also a fruit of our faith in the Lord (see James 2:17–18). When we exercise faith in the Lord Jesus Christ we are naturally drawn to repentance. True repentance, in turn, naturally leads us to greater righteousness and firmer obedience to God’s laws, ordinances, and commandments. These by-products of faith when combined together are the “all we can do” which in

turn yields a remission of sins by the grace of Christ (see 2 Nephi 25:23).

26. The remission of sins bringeth meekness, and lowliness of heart] Meekness and humility are part of repentance and are also fruits of faith. These necessary spiritual qualities *precede* repentance and a remission of sins. Here, however, Mormon is saying that they come *after* a remission of sins. Both are correct. It may be that what Mormon is referring to is an even greater change of heart and spiritual nature that comes by the power of the Holy Ghost *after* one repents, is born again, and receives the cleansing baptism of fire that remits sin. The spiritual gifts that accompany this experience include an increase in one's meekness and humility. In addition, Mormon states that the Holy Ghost also works on the hearts and souls of men and women whose sins have been remitted, filling them with greater hope and perfect love—which is charity. “To renew the mind of man is the work of the Holy Ghost,” Elder Orson Pratt explained. “The Holy Ghost [changes us] more thoroughly by renewing the inner man, and by purifying the affections and desires, and thoughts which have so long been habituated in the impure ways of sin. Without the aid of the Holy Ghost, a person who has long been accustomed to love sin, and whose affections and desires have long run with delight in the degraded channel of vice, would have but very little power to change his mind, at once, from its habituated course and walk, and to walk in newness of life. Though his sins may have been cleansed away, yet so great is the force of habit, that he would, without being renewed by the Holy Ghost, be easily overcome, and contaminated again by sin. Hence, it is infinitely important that the affections and desires should be in a measure changed and renewed, so as to cause him to hate that which he before loved, and to love that which he before hated: to renew the mind of man is the work of the Holy Ghost.” (“The Holy Spirit,” in *Orson Pratt: Writings of an Apostle*, p. 57.)

26. Which Comforter filleth with hope and perfect love] Hope and charity—the pure love of Christ—are gifts of the Spirit that come to one who prays with “all the energy of heart, that [he] may be filled with this love” and to all those who are “true followers of [God’s] son, Jesus Christ” (Moroni 7:48; see also the corresponding commentary). The visitation of the Holy Ghost that fills one with hope and charity comes to disciples of Christ through faith, repentance, baptism, and continued obedience and faithfulness. Greater faith, hope, and charity are among the many fruits of spiritual rebirth and remission of sins.

26. Which love endureth by diligence unto prayer, until the end shall come] Not only is charity preserved and strengthened through continued faith and “diligence unto prayer,” but charity in and of itself lends us spiritual strength which enables us

to endure “until the end shall come.” In the previous chapter Moroni included his father’s great discourse on faith, hope, and charity. One important phrase there was “charity is the pure love of Christ, and it endureth forever” (Moroni 7:47; see also Romans 13:10). One way in which charity endures forever is that the person who possesses it is better equipped to endure forever. The Prophet Joseph Smith declared: “Until we have perfect love we are liable to fall and when we have a testimony that our names are sealed in the Lamb’s book of life we have perfect love and *then it is impossible for false Christs to deceive us*” (*Teachings*, p. 9, italics added).

27–30. In these final verses of his epistle to Moroni, Mormon recounts the awful consequences of the spiritual decline of his people. He emphatically declares that it is Nephite pride that has brought about the destruction of the nation (verse 27; see also D&C 38:39; Ezra Taft Benson, “Beware of Pride,” *Ensign*, May 1989, pp. 4–7). Because of their pride and wickedness the Nephites in Mormon’s area were seeking to ignore, minimize, or discredit the authority of all who would try to teach them the things of God (verse 28). Because they were “denying the Holy Ghost”—meaning that they were fighting against the Spirit and the things of God—their destruction and doom was sure and the prophecies about them were being fulfilled. Mormon’s epistle ends with a farewell and a hint of possible subsequent letters or visits.

28. They are denying the Holy Ghost] Mormon had strong sentiments concerning the wilful and knowing rebellion of his people. He knew that they had had prophets among them, even the beloved disciples of Christ. The Nephites had been taught and had had the gospel among them. Yet even with such knowledge and background they wilfully rebelled against God. Like Amulek, they knew but they would not know (see Alma 10:6).

Mormon’s Second Epistle to Moroni

Moroni 9:1–26

1. My beloved son, I write unto you again that ye may know that I am yet alive; but I write somewhat of that which is grievous.

2. For behold, I have had a sore battle with the Lamanites, in which we did not conquer; and Archeantus has fallen by the sword, and also Luram and Emron; yea, and we have lost a great number of our choice men.

3. And now behold, my son, I

fear lest the Lamanites shall destroy this people; for they do not repent, and Satan stirreth them up continually to anger one with another.

4. Behold, I am laboring with them continually; and when I speak the word of God with sharpness they tremble and anger against me; and when I use no sharpness they harden their hearts against it; wherefore, I fear lest the

Spirit of the Lord hath ceased striving with them.

5. For so exceedingly do they anger that it seemeth me that they have no fear of death; and they have lost their love, one towards another; and they thirst after blood and revenge continually.

6. And now, my beloved son, notwithstanding their hardness, let us labor diligently; for if we should cease to labor, we should be brought under condemnation; for we have a labor to perform whilst in this tabernacle of clay, that we may conquer the enemy of all righteousness, and rest our souls in the kingdom of God.

7. And now I write somewhat concerning the sufferings of this people. For according to the knowledge which I have received from Amoron, behold, the Lamanites have many prisoners, which they took from the tower of Sherrizah; and there were men, women, and children.

8. And the husbands and fathers of those women and children they have slain; and they feed the women upon the flesh of their husbands, and the children upon the flesh of their fathers; and no water, save a little, do they give unto them.

9. And notwithstanding this great abomination of the Lamanites, it doth not exceed that of our people in Moriantum. For behold, many of the daughters of the Lamanites have they taken prisoners; and after depriving them of that which was most dear and precious above all things, which is chastity and virtue—

10. And after they had done this thing, they did murder them in a most cruel manner, torturing their bodies even unto death; and after they have done this, they devour

their flesh like unto wild beasts, because of the hardness of their hearts; and they do it for a token of bravery.

11. O my beloved son, how can a people like this, that are without civilization—

12. (And only a few years have passed away, and they were a civil and a delightful people)

13. But O my son, how can a people like this, whose delight is in so much abomination—

14. How can we expect that God will stay his hand in judgment against us?

15. Behold, my heart cries: Wo unto this people. Come out in judgment, O God, and hide their sins, and wickedness, and abominations from before thy face!

16. And again, my son, there are many widows and their daughters who remain in Sherrizah; and that part of the provisions which the Lamanites did not carry away, behold, the army of Zenephi has carried away, and left them to wander whithersoever they can for food; and many old women do faint by the way and die.

17. And the army which is with me is weak; and the armies of the Lamanites are betwixt Sherrizah and me; and as many as have fled to the army of Aaron have fallen victims to their awful brutality.

18. O the depravity of my people! They are without order and without mercy. Behold, I am but a man, and I have but the strength of a man, and I cannot any longer enforce my commands.

19. And they have become strong in their perversion; and they are alike brutal, sparing none, neither old nor young; and they delight in everything save that which is good; and the suffer-

ing of our women and our children upon all the face of this land doth exceed everything; yea, tongue cannot tell, neither can it be written.

20. And now, my son, I dwell no longer upon this horrible scene. Behold, thou knowest the wickedness of this people; thou knowest that they are without principle, and past feeling; and their wickedness doth exceed that of the Lamanites.

21. Behold, my son, I cannot recommend them unto God lest he should smite me.

22. But behold, my son, I recommend thee unto God, and I trust in Christ that thou wilt be saved; and I pray unto God that he will spare thy life, to witness the return of his people unto him, or their utter destruction; for I know that they must perish except they repent and return unto him.

23. And if they perish it will be like unto the Jaredites, because of the wilfulness of their hearts, seeking for blood and revenge.

24. And if it so be that they perish, we know that many of our brethren have deserted over unto the Lamanites, and many more will also desert over unto them; wherefore, write somewhat a few things, if thou art spared and I shall perish and not see thee; but I trust that I may see thee soon; for I have sacred records that I would deliver up unto thee.

25. My son, be faithful in Christ; and may not the things which I have written grieve thee, to weigh thee down unto death; but may Christ lift thee up, and may his sufferings and death, and the showing his body unto our fathers, and his mercy and long-suffering, and the hope of his glory and of eternal life, rest in your mind forever.

26. And may the grace of God the Father, whose throne is high in the heavens, and our Lord Jesus Christ, who sitteth on the right hand of his power, until all things shall become subject unto him, be, and abide with you forever. Amen.

1–5. Amidst the terrible bloodshed of raging battles that surrounded him, Mormon wrote to Moroni to inform his son that he was yet alive and to encourage him not to give up hope. In explaining to Moroni the conditions of the people and the losses to the war, Mormon painted a graphic portrait of the prevailing wickedness (compare Mormon chapters 2–6).

4. I speak the word of God with sharpness] 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. It means unveiling wickedness and proclaiming against it in clarity—leaving no room for misunderstanding. “Reproving betimes with sharpness, when moved upon by the Holy Ghost” (D&C 121:43) is a divine charge. Such testifying is “sharp” in that the power behind the words is the power of the Holy Ghost, therefore they have a “more powerful effect upon the minds of the people than the

sword” (Alma 31:5). The Lord’s words are “quick and powerful, sharper than a two-edged sword, to the dividing asunder of both joints and marrow” (D&C 11:2). The sharp words of the Lord pierce to the very center of the soul. To the wicked such sharpness is painful (see 1 Nephi 16:2; 2 Nephi 9:40), and they desire smooth and soothing words. Smooth words, however, do not stir the souls nor prick the conscience of men. Mormon confirmed this when he declared to Moroni that when he did not use sharpness in his teaching of them they not only ignored his words but also became hardened to them.

5. They have lost their love, one towards another] See commentary on Mormon 4:11.

6. Let us labor diligently] This one verse contains an entire discourse on the importance of enduring to the end and always being found doing one’s duty. Both Mormon and Moroni could have easily given up hope on their people, lost the motivation to continue in their prophetic callings, and become fatalistic. Instead, Mormon exhorts Moroni to continue to labor in his divinely inspired duty. From their examples we learn that diligence in doing one’s duty is not to be dependent upon the receptiveness of others. We must do our duty, be diligent in fulfilling the Lord’s commands, regardless of how others choose to conduct their lives or how they respond to our efforts. To do otherwise is to let go of the iron rod, to cease enduring to the end, which brings one under condemnation (compare 2 Corinthians 5:9; Jacob 1:19). One can hardly imagine how discouraging it must have been for both Mormon and Moroni to continue to labor among such a hardened and wicked people, yet they did “press forward with a steadfastness in Christ, having a perfect brightness of hope, and a love of God and of all men.” If we will do likewise—whatever our duties, whatever our burdens—if we will endure in faith to the end, we, like Mormon and Moroni and numerous others, will hear the words: “Behold, thus saith the Father: Ye shall have eternal life” (2 Nephi 31:20).

7–20. These verses contain graphic images of the gross wickedness of both Lamanites and Nephites. Mormon writes of the cruelties, brutalities, and murders on both sides, and even cannibalism among the Nephites. As difficult as it is to imagine the inhumane and abominable practices he mentions, Mormon writes that the wickedness of the Nephites even surpassed the unspeakable iniquities of the Lamanites, practicing horrible cruelties and tortures on captured Lamanites, and even rape. So great were the Nephite brutalities and perversions that Mormon described them as delighting “in everything save that which is good.” Neither tongue nor pen could (or even should) fully describe these awful scenes of wickedness and brutality. See Mormon 4:11–14.

9. That which was most dear and precious above all things, which is chastity and virtue] In the context of describing the awful abominations of the Nephites, Mormon explains that chastity and virtue are most dear and precious. This brief but profound phrase reflects the truths taught by earlier Nephite prophets concerning the premium the Lord attaches to virtue and morality. The Lord had declared to Jacob: “For I, the Lord God, delight in the chastity of women. And whoredoms are an abomination before me.” (Jacob 2:28; see also *Commentary* 2:21–22.) In counseling and reproving his own son who had transgressed the Lord’s law of chastity, Alma taught that sexual impurity and immorality “are an abomination in the sight of the Lord; yea, most abominable above all sins save it be the shedding of innocent blood or denying the Holy Ghost” (Alma 39:5; see also *Commentary* 3:289–90).

Modern prophets continue to teach and testify of the Lord’s “delight” in the chastity and moral cleanliness of both women and men. If this eternal truth could be burned into the souls of all people as if by fire, much of the hurt and heartaches and problems and plagues of this world could be averted. Virtue and chastity bring happiness and peace, whereas immorality, promiscuity, and perversion yield distrust and sorrows in this life, and, unless repented of, ultimate spiritual death in the next. “The strengthening of family ties should become the rallying cry for Latter-day Saint families everywhere,” proclaimed President Spencer W. Kimball. “So also should a return to chastity, *our most valuable possession*. Chastity and virtue are ‘most dear and precious above all things’ (Moroni 9:9), more valuable than rubies or diamonds, than herds and flocks, than gold and silver, or than automobiles and land. But, sadly, in many cases they are on sale at the cheapest shops and at the cheapest prices.

“These virtues cannot be purchased with money, but may be enjoyed by all people, even those of humble birth and humble circumstances as well as the rich, as much by the high school student as by those who are the professors of the universities. Everyone may enjoy these great blessings by living for them.

“The lack of chastity, fidelity, and virtue—fast becoming great, worldwide sins which need to be repented of—causes rivers of tears to flow, breaks numerous homes, deprives and frustrates armies of innocent children. Loss of virtue, as you know, has toppled many nations and civilizations. Moral decadence is a villain, and his forehead is branded with the words *dishonesty, bribery, irreverence, selfishness, immorality, debauchery, and all forms of sexual deviation*.

“Each of us is a son or daughter of God and has a responsibility to measure up to a perfect, Christlike life of self-mastery, finally returning to God with our virtue.” (CR, October 1979, p. 6.)

20. They are without principle, and past feeling] A person or people without principle is without conscience. People without principle follow only their own rules of survival—having no regard for others or for society. Such people are hardened—in-capable of compassion or charity for others. Hearts that are so hardened by the scar tissue of selfishness and sin cannot be pierced by the sword of the Spirit. See 1 Nephi 17:45; also *Commentary* 1:137; Mormon 5:16–18.

21–26. Despite the terrible scenes of wickedness and warfare he had observed and described to Moroni, Mormon ends his epistle with hope and encouragement that is centered in Christ. He prays for the protection of his beloved son and gives a final exhortation to Moroni not to despair because of the terrible things happening around them, but to be of good cheer in Christ. “Be faithful in Christ,” was this loving father’s closing counsel and blessing to his son. We do not know whether Moroni received later letters or had any further contact with his father after this, but at least according to the Book of Mormon account this is the last that Moroni (and we) read of the great Nephite prophet-abridger, Mormon. “May Christ lift thee up. . . . And may the grace of God the Father . . . abide with you forever.” What greater hope for and blessing of a son or daughter could a father leave than this final testimony and blessing of Mormon’s?

25. Be faithful in Christ] See 2 Nephi 31:20; *Commentary* 1:363–68.

25. May Christ lift thee up] There appears to be a double meaning in this phrase. Mormon is worried that his descriptions of the horrible wickedness and bloodshed among the Nephites and the Lamanites will cause Moroni to become so despondent and discouraged that he is “weighed down unto death.” Mormon’s hope that Christ will lift his son up refers to a lifting of Moroni’s emotions and spirit. Amidst adversity and affliction Christ can and does lift our spirits and gives us hope and strength to carry on (see 1 Peter 5:7; Matthew 11:28–30).

“May Christ lift thee up” also has a meaning beyond mortality. Through the atonement of Jesus Christ, righteous men and women will be “lifted up” to meet the Savior at his glorious second coming (see D&C 45:45; 88:96–97) and are “lifted up” by Jesus to an inheritance of exaltation and eternal life (see 3 Nephi 27:13–21; Mosiah 23:22; Alma 13:29; D&C 5:35; 9:14; 52:43–44).

A Witness of the Book of Mormon Comes from Almighty God

Moroni 10:1–7

1. Now I, Moroni, write somewhat as seemeth me good; and I write unto my brethren, the Lamanites; and I would that they should know that more than four hundred and twenty years have passed away since the sign was given of the coming of Christ.

2. And I seal up these records, after I have spoken a few words by way of exhortation unto you.

3. Behold, I would exhort you that when ye shall read these things, if it be wisdom in God that ye should read them, that ye would remember how merciful the Lord hath been unto the children of men, from the creation of Adam even down until the time that ye shall receive these things, and ponder it in your hearts.

4. And when ye shall receive these things, I would exhort you

that ye would ask God, the Eternal Father, in the name of Christ, if these things are not true; and if ye shall ask with a sincere heart, with real intent, having faith in Christ, he will manifest the truth of it unto you, by the power of the Holy Ghost.

5. And by the power of the Holy Ghost ye may know the truth of all things.

6. And whatsoever thing is good is just and true; wherefore, nothing that is good denieth the Christ, but acknowledgeth that he is.

7. And ye may know that he is, by the power of the Holy Ghost; wherefore I would exhort you that ye deny not the power of God; for he worketh by power, according to the faith of the children of men, the same today and tomorrow, and forever.

1. I write unto my brethren, the Lamanites] See Moroni 1:4.

2. I seal up these records] Other prophet-editors who had no one they could pass them onto wrote of “hiding up” the records or “depositing them unto the Lord” (see Mormon 1:3; 5:12; 8:4).

3–5. In this sacred passage, known perhaps better than any other Book of Mormon admonition, is to be found a divine formula for testing and evaluating the truth of religious matters: Read, ponder, and pray. It is not enough for one to read the Book of Mormon. It is not sufficient to read and pray about the book. In order to activate both mind and soul, head and heart, one needs to read, ponder, and pray about the truthfulness of the Book of Mormon. In what may be one of the finest explanations of the place of pondering in this process, Elder Bruce R. McConkie explained to the Church:

“May I be so bold as to propose a test and issue a challenge. It is hoped that all who take this test will have a knowledge of the Holy Bible, because the more people know about the Bible, the greater their appreciation will be of the Book of Mormon.

"This test is for saint and sinner alike; it is for Jew and Gentile, for bond and free, for black and white, for all of our Father's children. We have all been commanded to search the scriptures, to treasure up the Lord's word, to live by every word that proceedeth forth from the mouth of God (see D&C 84:44). This, then, is the test.

"Let every person make a list of from one hundred to two hundred doctrinal subjects, making a conscious effort to cover the whole field of gospel knowledge. The number of subjects chosen will depend on personal inclination and upon how broad the spectrum will be under each subject.

"Then write each subject on a blank piece of paper. Divide the paper into two columns; at the top of one, write 'Book of Mormon,' and at the top of the other, 'Bible.'

"Then start with the first verse and phrase of the Book of Mormon, and continuing verse by verse and thought by thought, put the substance of each verse under its proper heading. Find the same doctrine in the Old and New Testaments, and place it in the parallel columns.

"Ponder the truths you learn, and it will not be long before you know that Lehi and Jacob excel Paul in teaching the Atonement; that Alma's sermons on faith and on being born again surpass anything in the Bible; that Nephi makes a better exposition of the scattering and gathering of Israel than do Isaiah, Jeremiah, and Ezekiel combined; that Mormon's words about faith, hope, and charity have a clarity, a breadth, and a power of expression that even Paul did not attain; and so on and so on.

"There is another and simpler test that all who seek to know the truth might well take. It calls for us simply to read, ponder, and pray—all in the spirit of faith and with an open mind. To keep ourselves alert to the issues at hand—as we do read, ponder, and pray—we should ask ourselves a thousand times, 'Could any man have written this book?'

"And it is absolutely guaranteed that sometime between the first and thousandth time this question is asked, every sincere and genuine truth seeker will come to know by the power of the Spirit that the Book of Mormon is true, that it is the mind and will and voice of the Lord to the whole world in our day." (CR, October 1983, p. 106.)

3. If it be wisdom in God that ye should read them] One wonders when there would ever be a time when it would *not* be wisdom in God for an individual to read the Book of Mormon. Could there be such a time? In one sense, this phrase may refer to one's readiness to receive the gospel, his or her time to be taught the truth about the Restoration. From another point of view, it may simply refer to "when in the providences of God you should have occasion to read these things."

3. Remember how merciful the Lord hath been] For the Judaeo-Christian world, this knowledge could be had through the stories and doctrines and principles found in the Bible. In the stick of Judah (as in the stick of Joseph) is chronicled the goodness and mercy and long-suffering of the great Jehovah toward the children of men.

4. With a sincere heart, with real intent] A sincere heart and real intent imply openness to truth, openness to new ideas, openness to an additional book of holy writ. Seldom if ever will a man or woman approach the Book of Mormon with a skeptical mind, with a desire to prove it false, and come away with that witness that is delivered through the sweet whisperings of the Spirit. For that matter, it may be that few of earth's inhabitants that approach the Book of Mormon with a neutral attitude, with feelings of curiosity alone or of indifference, will gain that spiritual assurance promised to those who are sincerely and intently open to truth. To borrow a phrase from Samuel Taylor Coleridge, one should initially approach the Book of Mormon with a "willing suspension of disbelief," with the quiet but sincere possibility in mind that it just might be true.

4. Having faith in Christ] Nephi's faith in Christ serves as a model for all who desire to know the truth of God. He wrote: "And it came to pass after I, Nephi, having heard all the words of my father, concerning the things which he saw in a vision, and also the things which he spake by the power of the Holy Ghost, which power he received by faith on the Son of God—and the Son of God was the Messiah who should come—I, Nephi, was desirous also that I might see, and hear, and know of these things, by the power of the Holy Ghost, which is the gift of God unto all those who diligently seek him, as well in times of old as in the time that he should manifest himself unto the children of men. For he is the same yesterday, today, and forever; and the way is prepared for all men from the foundation of the world, if it so be that they repent and come unto him." (1 Nephi 10:15-18.) That is, Nephi had faith in the principle that God constantly manifests himself to those who seek Christ.

5. Moroni is probably not suggesting here that it is by the power of the Holy Ghost that people come to know the truths of physics or chemistry or biology, though God frequently endows the honest in heart with insights and discoveries. Rather, he seems to be suggesting that it is by the power of the Holy Ghost that we know the truth, that we know when something is true and when something is not. It is by the power of the Holy Ghost that we can have discernment and divine judgment. Indeed, it is by means of this unction, this anointing from on high, that the people of God come to know things they could never learn from man, pure

things which come from a pure source (see 1 John 2:27; JST, Matthew 3:24–26; compare John 14:26; D&C 43:15).

6–7. Those who seek a testimony of the Book of Mormon—or a divine manifestation of any sort—must be open to the possibility that God can so speak, that the heavens are open, that the God and Father of us all is eager to grant wisdom and truth to those who do not deny his gifts and graces.

Moroni Discourses on the Gifts of the Spirit

Moroni 10:8–26

8. And again, I exhort you, my brethren, that ye deny not the gifts of God, for they are many; and they come from the same God. And there are different ways that these gifts are administered; but it is the same God who worketh all in all; and they are given by the manifestations of the Spirit of God unto men, to profit them.

9. For behold, to one is given by the Spirit of God, that he may teach the word of wisdom;

10. And to another, that he may teach the word of knowledge by the same Spirit;

11. And to another, exceedingly great faith; and to another, the gifts of healing by the same Spirit;

12. And again, to another, that he may work mighty miracles;

13. And again, to another, that he may prophesy concerning all things;

14. And again, to another, the beholding of angels and ministering spirits;

15. And again, to another, all kinds of tongues;

16. And again, to another, the interpretation of languages and of divers kinds of tongues.

17. And all these gifts come by the Spirit of Christ; and they come unto every man severally, according as he will.

18. And I would exhort you, my

beloved brethren, that ye remember that every good gift cometh of Christ.

19. And I would exhort you, my beloved brethren, that ye remember that he is the same yesterday, today, and forever, and that all these gifts of which I have spoken, which are spiritual, never will be done away, even as long as the world shall stand, only according to the unbelief of the children of men.

20. Wherefore, there must be faith; and if there must be faith there must also be hope; and if there must be hope there must also be charity.

21. And except ye have charity ye can in nowise be saved in the kingdom of God; neither can ye be saved in the kingdom of God if ye have not faith; neither can ye if ye have no hope.

22. And if ye have no hope ye must needs be in despair; and despair cometh because of iniquity.

23. And Christ truly said unto our fathers: If ye have faith ye can do all things which are expedient unto me.

24. And now I speak unto all the ends of the earth—that if the day cometh that the power and gifts of God shall be done away among you, it shall be because of unbelief.

25. And wo be unto the children of men if this be the case; for there shall be none that doeth good among you, no not one. For if there be one among you that doeth good, he shall work by the power and gifts of God.

26. And wo unto them who shall do these things away and die, for they die in their sins, and they cannot be saved in the kingdom of God; and I speak it according to the words of Christ; and I lie not.

8–26. We see that it is in the context of encouraging his future readers to read, ponder, and pray about the Book of Mormon, with faith in the gifts and wonders of the Holy Messiah, that Moroni launches into a lengthy discussion of the gifts of the Spirit. It is surely his way of illustrating that the power and gifts of God are real, that they should be sought after and acquired, and that the Saints of God in any age are living beneath their privileges if these gifts are not conspicuously evident in their midst. That the topic is of rich importance to the Lord is seen in the fact that it is found in three places in the standard works—the New Testament (1 Corinthians 12–14), the Doctrine and Covenants (section 46), and here in the Book of Mormon.

8. There are numerous gifts of the Spirit, all different in type and in manner of ministration, but they all come from the one and same God. God is the same, but his children are different—their weaknesses and needs and hopes require different gifts and different manifestations of the power of God. Paul wrote to the Corinthian Saints: “Now there are diversities of gifts, but the same Spirit. And there are differences of administrations, but the same Lord. And there are diversities of operations, but it is the same God which worketh all in all. But the manifestation of the Spirit is given to every man to profit withal. . . . All these [gifts] worketh that one and the selfsame Spirit, dividing to every man severally as he will. For as the body is one, and hath many members, and all the members of that one body, being many, are one body: so also is Christ.” (1 Corinthians 12:4–7, 11–12.)

“Wherefore, beware lest ye are deceived; and that ye may not be deceived seek ye earnestly the best gifts, always remembering for what they are given; for verily I say unto you, they are given for the benefit of those who love me and keep all my commandments, and him that seeketh so to do; that all may be benefited that seek or that ask of me, that ask and not for a sign that they may consume it upon their lusts. And again, verily I say unto you, I would that ye should always remember, and always retain in your minds what those gifts are, that are given unto the church. For all have not every gift given unto them; for there are many gifts, and to every man is given a gift by the Spirit of God. To some is given one, and to some is given another, that all may be profited thereby.” (D&C 46:8–12.)

8. Deny not the gifts of God] See Mormon 9:7–9; D&C 11:25.

9–10. It is a gift of God, a precious endowment which should be sought for by all the Saints, to teach the truth by the power of the Holy Ghost. It is one thing to gain the truth and to acquire wisdom for oneself (see D&C 46:17–18), and quite another to be able to teach the same things to others.

11. Exceedingly great faith] Faith is a gift of God (see Ephesians 2:8), a grace which prepares one for other gifts.

11. The gifts of healing] It is a gift of the Spirit to be able to stand in the place of God, to be able to exercise the powers of life which dwell independently in the Almighty, in behalf of the sick and the afflicted.

12. Mighty miracles] “In the gospel sense, *miracles are those occurrences wrought by the power of God which are wholly beyond the power of man to perform.* Produced by a supernatural power, they are marvels, wonders, and signs, which cannot be duplicated by man’s present powers or by any powers which he can obtain by scientific advancements. Miracles in the gospel sense are gifts of the Spirit.” (Bruce R. McConkie, *Mormon Doctrine*, p. 506, italics in original.)

13. That he may prophesy concerning all things] “The testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy” (Revelation 19:10; see also *Teachings*, pp. 119, 160). A person comes to know concerning the future—to have “great views of that which is to come” (Mosiah 5:3)—by the same power, the gift of the Holy Ghost, by which he comes to know that Jesus is Lord and Redeemer. Indeed, the gift of prophecy is but an extension of the gift of revelation.

14. Beholding of angels and ministering spirits] “If a man has power to part the veil and converse with angels and with the ministering spirits who dwell in the realms of light, surely this is a gift of the Spirit. Also, how can anyone discern between the spirits sent of God and the evil spirits that do the devil’s bidding except by revelation? Among us, there are those so endowed.” (Bruce R. McConkie, *New Witness*, p. 374.)

15–16. The gift of tongues is given to men on earth to enable them to preach the gospel in a more effective manner (see *Teachings*, pp. 148–49, 195, 247), as well as to offer and express praise and thanksgiving and feelings of rapture to the Lord of love in a way that brings peace to the soul. There seem to be at least three manifestations of the gift of tongues: (1) when individuals are enabled to speak with ease or with fluency a foreign but known language (see Acts 2); (2) when persons are so endowed with the glory and power of God as to speak the pure or Adamic language (see Moses 6:5–6, 46; Joseph Fielding Smith, *The Way to Perfection*,

pp. 67–69; Orson Pratt, *JD* 3:99–103); and (3) when persons speak under the influence of the Holy Ghost, they speak with the tongue of angels; they speak what God or his ministering servants would speak if they were present (see 2 Nephi 31:13; 32:1–3). The Prophet Joseph Smith cautioned the Saints about the gift of tongues. He, like Paul, explained that it is one of the least of the gifts but generally the one most sought after (see *Teachings*, p. 246). He warned that Satan sought to offer his own counterfeits in order to deceive the people (see *Teachings*, pp. 25, 229).

17. All these gifts come by the Spirit of Christ] Elder Bruce R. McConkie has written: “The light of Christ is neither the Holy Ghost nor the gift of the Holy Ghost; but that member of the Godhead, because he along with the Father and the Son is God, uses the light of Christ for his purposes. Thus spiritual gifts, the gifts of God—meaning faith, miracles, prophecy, and all the rest—come from God by the power of the Holy Ghost. Men prophesy, for instance, when moved upon by the Holy Ghost. And yet Moroni says: ‘All these gifts come by the Spirit of Christ’ (Moroni 10:17), meaning that the Holy Ghost uses the light of Christ to transmit his gifts.” (*New Witness*, p. 258.)

17. According as he will] We are counseled in modern revelation to seek earnestly after the best gifts (D&C 46:8), meaning to plead with God in prayer for the gifts of the Spirit, both to avoid deception and to enjoy the sweet fruits of gospel living. President George Q. Cannon scolded the Latter-day Saints for their complacency in this regard. “We find, even among those who have embraced the Gospel,” he observed, “hearts of unbelief.

“How many of you, my brethren and sisters, are seeking for these gifts that God has promised to bestow? How many of you, when you bow before your Heavenly Father in your family circle or in your secret places, contend for these gifts to be bestowed upon you? How many of you ask the Father, in the name of Jesus, to manifest Himself to you through these powers and these gifts? Or do you go along day by day like a door turning on its hinges, without having any feeling on the subject, without exercising any faith whatever; content to be baptized and be members of the Church, and to rest there, thinking that your salvation is secure because you have done this? I say to you, in the name of the Lord, as one of His servants, that you have need to repent of this. You have need to repent of your hardness of heart, of your indifference, and of your carelessness. There is not that diligence, there is not that faith, there is not that seeking for the power of God that there should be among a people who have received the precious promises we have. . . . I say to you that it is our duty to avail ourselves of the privileges which God has placed within our reach. . . .

“I feel to bear testimony to you, my brethren and sisters, . . .

that God is the same to-day as He was yesterday; that God is willing to bestow these gifts upon His children. . . . If any of us are imperfect, it is our duty to pray for the gift that will make us perfect. Have I imperfections? I am full of them. What is my duty? To pray to God to give me the gifts that will correct these imperfections. If I am an angry man, it is my duty to pray for charity, which suffereth long and is kind. Am I an envious man? It is my duty to seek for charity, which envieth not. So with all the gifts of the Gospel. They are intended for this purpose. No man ought to say, 'Oh, I cannot help this; it is my nature.' He is not justified in it, for the reason that God has promised to give strength to correct these things, and to give gifts that will eradicate them. If a man lack wisdom, it is his duty to ask God for wisdom. The same with everything else. That is the design of God concerning His Church. He wants His Saints to be perfected in the truth. For this purpose He gives these gifts, and bestows them upon those who seek after them, in order that they may be a perfect people upon the face of the earth, notwithstanding their many weaknesses, because God has promised to give the gifts that are necessary for their perfection." (*Millennial Star*, vol. 56 [1894], pp. 260–61.)

18–19. See Moroni 7:36.

20–21. See commentary on Moroni 7:40–48.

22. One who continues in sin denies the faith and thus robs himself of hope, even the hope that in the resurrection he will be raised to inherit eternal life (see Moroni 7:41). Despair is a state of no hope, a pitiful plight of those who sin against light and thus betray their consciences. Having forsaken the values of their souls, they lack that faith or confidence which allows them to trust in or rely on anything but their own unaided strength.

23. See Moroni 7:33.

24. I speak unto all the ends of the earth] Compare 2 Nephi 33:10. The Book of Mormon is delivered and addressed in the last days to the whole world, to all mankind.

24. It shall be because of unbelief] See Mormon 9:7, 20; Moroni 7:37.

25. None that doeth good among you, no not one] Men and women do good, in the eyes of the Lord, only as they come unto him, as they receive the testimony of the servants of God, partake of the covenants and ordinances of his holy gospel, and become identified with the true Church of Jesus Christ by membership (see D&C 35:12; 84:49–50). And thus where the Church of Jesus Christ is established, where the gift of the Holy Ghost is bestowed, there is a people who seek after, obtain, and bask in the light of the gifts and wonders of God.

26. They die in their sins] Indeed, to deny the gifts of God, to shun or ignore the endowments of the Spirit, to walk in dark-

ness at noon-day (see D&C 95:5–6), is to sin a very grievous sin, to live well beneath our promised privileges.

Moroni Bears Witness of the Book of Mormon

Moroni 10:27–29

27. And I exhort you to remember these things; for the time speedily cometh that ye shall know that I lie not, for ye shall see me at the bar of God; and the Lord God will say unto you: Did I not declare my words unto you, which were written by this man, like as one crying from the dead, yea, even as one speaking out of the dust?

28. I declare these things unto the fulfilling of the prophecies. And behold, they shall proceed forth out of the mouth of the everlasting God; and his word shall hiss forth from generation to generation.

29. And God shall show unto you, that that which I have written is true.

27–29. Compare Ether 5:6. Each of the major writers of the Book of Mormon—Nephi, Jacob, Mormon, and Moroni—testified that their writings were true and further spoke with boldness to the effect that the day would come when the Almighty God would, at the bar of justice, likewise confirm their testimony of this sacred volume of scripture (see 2 Nephi 33:10–15; Jacob 6:1, 12–13; Mormon 3:14, 20–22; Moroni 10:24–34). In regard to one’s response to the Book of Mormon, salvation itself is at stake.

Moroni Beckons to Us: “Come unto Christ”

Moroni 10:30–34

30. And again I would exhort you that ye would come unto Christ, and lay hold upon every good gift, and touch not the evil gift, nor the unclean thing.

31. And awake, and arise from the dust, O Jerusalem; yea, and put on thy beautiful garments, O daughter of Zion; and strengthen thy stakes and enlarge thy borders forever, that thou mayest no more be confounded, that the covenants of the Eternal Father which he hath made unto thee, O house of Israel, may be fulfilled.

32. Yea, come unto Christ, and be perfected in him, and deny yourselves of all ungodliness; and if ye shall deny yourselves of all ungodliness, and love God with all your might, mind and strength, then is his grace sufficient for you, that by his grace ye may be perfect in Christ; and if by the grace of God ye are perfect in Christ, ye can in nowise deny the power of God.

33. And again, if ye by the grace of God are perfect in Christ, and deny not his power, then are ye sanctified in Christ by the grace of

God, through the shedding of the blood of Christ, which is in the covenant of the Father unto the remission of your sins, that ye become holy, without spot.

34. And now I bid unto all, farewell. I soon go to rest in the

paradise of God, until my spirit and body shall again reunite, and I am brought forth triumphant through the air, to meet you before the pleasing bar of the great Jehovah, the Eternal Judge of both quick and dead. Amen.

30–34. The power unto life and salvation is in Christ the Person. Programs and procedures and policies, though helpful and time-saving and even inspired, cannot save us. It is the gospel that is “the power of God unto salvation” (Romans 1:16). It is the gospel that provides the hope and extends the invitation to change our ways, forsake the worldly, and partake of the divine nature. The gospel is the glad tidings, the good news of Christ. The purpose of the true Church is to invite individuals and congregations to come unto Christ and be saved.

30. Lay hold upon every good gift] That is, come unto Christ, be cleansed by his blood, be filled with his Spirit, and walk in the light of the gifts of that Spirit until you shall receive the greatest of all the gifts of God—eternal life (see 1 Nephi 15:36; D&C 6:13; 14:7).

30. Touch not the evil gift, nor the unclean thing] The Saints of the Most High are under covenant to cleave to that which is good and to eschew that which is unwholesome and unclean. They are to reject all that is filthy and fight against all that is perverse. They are to be enticed by the good and repulsed by the bad.

31. See Isaiah 52:1–2. Quoting Isaiah, Moroni here issues a call for latter-day Israel to loose themselves from their scattered condition by returning to the Lord whom they have forsaken; to put on the authority of the priesthood and return to the power they once knew; and to seek and operate under that spirit of revelation which ought to characterize the people of the covenant (D&C 113:8–10).

31. Strengthen thy stakes and enlarge thy borders] Moroni, like Isaiah, called for latter-day Jacob to assume her righteousness and strength and size that have been prophesied for millennia. “For Zion must increase in beauty, and in holiness; her borders must be enlarged; her stakes must be strengthened; yea, verily I say unto you, Zion must arise and put on her beautiful garments” (D&C 82:14; compare 133:9; Isaiah 33:20; 54:2).

31. The covenants of the Eternal Father] See commentary on 3 Nephi 16:5; commentary on 3 Nephi 20:25–46.

32. Come unto Christ, and be perfected in him] The Saints are commanded to be perfect (JST, Matthew 5:50; 3 Nephi 12:48). We are never justified in lowering the lofty standard held out to the followers of the Christ. Nor are our actions or attitudes

approved of God if we suggest that the Savior did not mean what he said when he called us to the transcendent level of perfection. Our task is not to water down the ideal, nor to dilute the directive. Rather, we must view our challenge with perspective, must see things as they really are and as they really can be.

The fact of the matter is that no man or woman except Jesus—not even the greatest Apostle or the mightiest prophet—has ever traversed this mortal sphere perfectly, without flaw. Only the Son of the Man of Holiness stayed on the strait and narrow path perfectly. But he commands us to be perfect. Is it too late for us, given that we have already sinned? No, for perfection is a process, a lengthy process which begins here and continues hereafter. The key principle to be remembered by the disciple of Christ is that *perfection is in Christ*. Our Lord offers to make us perfect, meaning whole, complete, and finished. Jesus Christ, the author and finisher of our faith (see Hebrews 12:2; Moroni 6:4), seeks to perfect us in the sense that he makes us whole and complete. Without him we are nothing and can do nothing of eternal value (see John 15:1-5). With him we are complete. As Nephi explained, above and beyond all we can do we are saved by the grace—the enabling power—of Jesus Christ (see 2 Nephi 25:23). Stephen E. Robinson has described the process as follows: “Perfection comes through the Atonement of Christ. We become one with him, with a perfect being. And as we become one, there is a merger. Some of my students are studying business, and they understand it better if I talk in business terms. You take a small bankrupt firm that’s about ready to go under and merge it with a corporate giant. What happens? Their assets and liabilities flow together, and the new entity that is created is solvent. . . .

“Spiritually, this is what happens when we enter into the covenant relationship with our Savior. We have liabilities, he has assets. He proposes to us a covenant relationship. I use the word ‘propose’ on purpose because it is a marriage of a spiritual sort that is being proposed. That is why he is called the Bridegroom. This covenant relationship is so intimate that it can be described as a marriage. I become one with Christ, and as partners we work together for my salvation and my exaltation. My liabilities and his assets flow into each other. I do all that I can do, and he does what I cannot yet do. The two of us together are perfect.” (“Believing Christ: A Practical Approach to the Atonement,” *1989-90 BYU Devotional and Fireside Speeches*, pp. 120-21.)

In short, the Master offers not only to change us, but to *exchange* with us—to exchange his goodness for our sin (see 2 Corinthians 5:21; Galatians 3:13; Philippians 3:8-9; Hebrews 2:9). He came not only to cleanse our souls but also to fill our souls. He came not only to wipe away the stains but also to endow us with

his righteousness and his power. He came to perfect us. Thus it is that those who go to the celestial kingdom are those who are “just men [and women] *made perfect through Jesus the mediator of the new covenant*, who wrought out this perfect atonement through the shedding of his own blood” (D&C 76:69, italics added).

32. Deny yourselves of all ungodliness] This is one of the ways in which we bear the cross of Christ. “And now for a man to take up his cross, is to deny himself all ungodliness, and every worldly lust, and keep my commandments” (JST, Matthew 16:26).

32. Love God with all your might, mind and strength] “To love God with all your heart, soul, mind, and strength,” President Ezra Taft Benson has taught, “is all-consuming and all-encompassing. . . . The breadth, depth, and height of this love of God extend into every facet of one’s life. Our desires, be they spiritual or temporal, should be rooted in a love of the Lord.” (*The Teachings of Ezra Taft Benson*, p. 349.)

32. Then is his grace sufficient for you] “No more heinous doctrine could exist than that which encourages lip service to God but discourages wholehearted obedience and the works attendant to discipleship. . . . And surely no more diabolical belief could exist than that which encourages the kind of smug self-assurance that comes from trusting in one’s own works, relying upon one’s own strength, and seeking to prosper through one’s own genius. It is an affront to God and a mock of the atoning power of him whom God sent, for man to place himself at the center of things, for him to revel in his own greatness and marvel at his own achievements. Pure humanism is a doctrine of the devil: it places an inordinate emphasis upon fallible man and thus deflects man’s vision away from the heavens and the powers of redemption. . . . The key to understanding this sacred principle—the relationship between the grace of God and the works of man—is balance, balance and perspective provided through the scriptures of the Restoration and the words of living oracles of this dispensation.” (Robert L. Millet, *By Grace Are We Saved*, pp. 72–73.) It is only as we seek to rid ourselves of the taints of this telestial world that we prepare ourselves to receive the Lord’s grace, his power and strength, which then enable us to do that which we could not do on our own. President Harold B. Lee wisely taught: “Spiritual certainty that is necessary to salvation must be preceded by a maximum of individual effort. Grace, or the free gift of the Lord’s atoning power, must be preceded by personal striving.” (*Stand Ye in Holy Places*, p. 213.)

32. If by the grace of God ye are perfect in Christ, ye can in nowise deny the power of God] It is as if Moroni has just said: “Once you have partaken of the Lord’s grace and mercy, have come to know his healing and lifting powers, then your witness of Jesus Christ as a God of miracles and power is certain; you are a personal witness.”

33. Those who are made perfect in Christ, who yield their hearts unto him (see Helaman 3:35), whose eye is single to his glory (see D&C 88:67), who partake of his grace and mercy, are sanctified—made pure and holy through the blood of Christ, through the medium of the Holy Ghost, who is the sanctifier (see Alma 13:12; 3 Nephi 27:20).

34. To rest in the paradise of God] Moroni, a righteous man who has been true and faithful to his charge, will, at the time of his mortal death, be received into paradise, the abode of the righteous in the postmortal spirit world (see 2 Nephi 9:13; Alma 40:12; *Commentary* 3:296–301). He knows this. He knows by the revelations of God that his life is approved and that he will come forth in the resurrection to inherit a glorified, celestial body.

34. Brought forth triumphant] Those who come forth from the grave in the resurrection shall do so “through the triumph and the glory of the Lamb, who was slain, who was in the bosom of the Father before the worlds were made” (D&C 76:39).

34. The pleasing bar] The bar of judgment is indeed pleasing to the faithful. It is the occasion for standing before the Master, receiving his loving approval, and being consigned thereafter to exaltation and glory. For the wicked it will be a less-than-pleasing occasion. Jacob began to close his book in similar fashion: “Finally, I bid you farewell, until I shall meet you before the pleasing bar of God, which bar striketh the wicked with awful dread and fear” (Jacob 6:13).

34. The great Jehovah, the Eternal Judge of both quick and dead] This is the only use of the name *Jehovah* in the Book of Mormon. It is a holy name, a sacred title which describes the great I AM, He who is, He who causes to be, He who brings into existence. Moroni no doubt chose his words carefully so as to end this remarkable record on a note of solemn and sober testimony, a note of witness and assurance, a note of deference to Jehovah, the Lord Omnipotent. It is to him—the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, the Holy One of Israel—that we must look everlastingly in our quest for truth and in our yearnings for peace and happiness here and for our eternal reward hereafter. And it is to him that the Almighty Elohim, the Man of Holiness (Moses 6:57), has committed all judgment (see John 5:22; 2 Nephi 9:41). He it is that shall judge the quick (the living) and the dead. “The hour is coming,” the Savior declared, “. . . when the dead shall hear the voice of the Son of God: and they who hear shall live. For as the Father hath life in himself, so hath he given to the Son to have life in himself; and hath given him authority to execute judgment also, because he is the Son of man. Marvel not at this; for the hour is coming, in the which all who are in their graves shall hear his voice, and shall come forth; they who have done good, in the resurrection of the just; and they who have done evil, in the resurrection of the

unjust. And shall all be judged of the Son of Man." (JST, John 5:25-30.)

In the spirit of Moroni's farewell, and in harmony with the soul-cry of the Beloved Revelator (Revelation 22:20), we say: "Even so, come, Lord Jesus."

Lifting the Condemnation: The Sanctifying Power of the Book of Mormon

As we complete the writing of this four-volume series, members everywhere are sharing the dawning of a brighter day in the Church. President Ezra Taft Benson has sounded a trumpet which will have an everlasting impact upon the Church and thus upon all the world. It is as though we have had a gift sitting under the Christmas tree for many Yuletide seasons—from all appearances a gift not unlike other items under the tree—but, because of what seemed to be more pressing or otherwise distracting business, some have been unable and thus unwilling to open it. It lingers. It beckons to be opened. Now, finally, as a result of a dramatic and repeated invitation to do so, we are beginning to remove the wrapping. We are the beneficiaries of a clear and certain sound, an unmistakable prophetic voice, which beckons us to engage the eternal. Thus the Saints of the Most High in greater numbers have begun to have joy and rejoicing in that which God has given us in these latter days. “For what doth it profit a man if a gift is bestowed upon him, and he receive not the gift? Behold, he rejoices not in that which is given unto him, neither rejoices in him who is the giver of the gift.” (D&C 88:33.)

Being True to the Restoration

The scriptural passage to which President Benson has referred so many times—the one which speaks of a significant sin of omission of which many Latter-day Saints are guilty—is worth reviewing at this point. The Lord declared in 1832: “And your minds in times past have been darkened because of unbelief, and because you have treated lightly the things you have received—which vanity and unbelief have brought the whole church under condemnation.” Vanity implies lightness, emptiness, lack of substance. The

unbelief was surely not a failure to accept the fact that God had opened a new dispensation, an unwillingness to receive the words of a modern seer, or a rejection of angelic ministrants or the priesthood and powers they have restored. No, the vanity and unbelief consisted of the Saints' trifling with, slighting, treating lightly (and thus treating as relatively unimportant) that which they had received, of not holding up before the world the banner or ensign of the Restoration. "And this condemnation," the Lord continued, "resteth upon the children of Zion, even all. And they shall remain under this condemnation until they repent and remember the new covenant, even the Book of Mormon and the former commandments which I have given them." (D&C 84:54–57.)

The Saints had certainly been instructed and warned before this time to take more seriously the things they had received. Thomas B. Marsh had been counseled: "Lift up your heart and rejoice, for the hour of your mission is come; and your tongue shall be loosed, and you shall declare glad tidings of great joy unto this generation." What, specifically, was Brother Marsh to teach? What were those glad tidings? "*You shall declare the things which have been revealed to my servant, Joseph Smith, Jun.*" (D&C 31:3–4, italics added.)

In a revelation directed to the Shakers, the Lord gave specific instruction concerning the preparation and schooling of Leman Copley, a recent convert from the Shakers: "My servant Leman shall be ordained unto this work, that he may reason with them [his former people, the Shakers], *not according to that which he has received of them, but according to that which shall be taught him by you, my servants*; and by so doing I will bless him, otherwise he shall not prosper" (D&C 49:4, italics added). There is a remarkable lesson for us here. Leman Copley's missionary approach was not to be based upon what he had learned as a Shaker, but what he had learned as a Latter-day Saint. In short, his assignment was not to establish common ground and glory in similarities; rather, he was to be true to the truth, to declare with boldness what had been delivered to earth by revelation in this final dispensation of grace. By being true to the Restoration he would be prospered.

A later incident in Church history further illustrates the power of this principle. Elder Parley P. Pratt writes of an occasion wherein the Prophet Joseph Smith and Sidney Rigdon addressed a large congregation in the East:

"While visiting with brother Joseph in Philadelphia, a very large church was opened for him to preach in, and about three thousand people assembled to hear him. Brother Rigdon spoke first, and dwelt on the Gospel, illustrating his doctrine by the Bible. When he was through, brother Joseph arose like a lion about to roar; and being full of the Holy Ghost, spoke in great power, bear-

ing testimony of the visions he had seen, the ministering of angels which he had enjoyed; and how he had found the plates of the Book of Mormon, and translated them by the gift and power of God. He commenced by saying: 'If nobody else had the courage to testify of so glorious a message from Heaven, and of the finding of so glorious a record, he felt to do it in justice to the people, and leave the event with God.'

This was no time to declare a message such as any other minister from any other church might deliver. This was no occasion for sharing and seeking to establish doctrine from the Bible. Joseph's work is a new and independent revelation, and his witness an independent witness. What was the result of Joseph Smith's sermon in Philadelphia? "The entire congregation were astounded; electrified, as it were, and overwhelmed with the sense of the truth and power by which he spoke, and the wonders which he related. A lasting impression was made; many souls were gathered into the fold. And I bear witness that he, by his faithful and powerful testimony, cleared his garments of their blood. Multitudes were baptized in Philadelphia and in the regions around." (*Autobiography of Parley P. Pratt*, pp. 298–99.)

In the words of Robert J. Matthews, we must guard against the tendency to live in the past, to remain one dispensation behind. "One of the problems in the meridian of time with the Jews and for a while with Paul," Brother Matthews has observed, "was that they were just one dispensation behind the times." That is, before his conversion Paul—as did most of the Jews of his day—refused a current revelation in the name of allegiance to an ancient one. Brother Matthews continued: "When Paul made that change in his own life he became useful to the then current work of the Lord, and all his past learning and experience were channelled into the proper dispensation in which he lived. How is it with us? . . .

"What about our individual thinking? Have we really caught the spirit of the Restoration, or do we still measure the Book of Mormon by the text of the Bible and the traditions of the manuscripts? Do we measure Joseph Smith's revelations by the traditions and canons of the world? Do we accept the JST as revealed words from a living prophet, or do we neglect it because it is not supported by the fragmentary, altered manuscripts left over from earlier dispensations? . . . We do not want to be a dispensation behind in these things. . . . Let's utilize our academic skills and knowledge to promote the things of the Restoration so as to make certain the road we travel both collectively and individually leads forward to the New Jerusalem, and not back to Athens, or to Rome." ("What Is a Religious Education?" Address to Religious Education faculty, 31 August 1989, pp. 16–17.)

What Is the Condemnation?

Then what is the condemnation? What is the scourge, the judgment? Why is it that the Lord says the Latter-day Saints as a people are under his divine censure and reprimand? For one thing, because of our near neglect of the Book of Mormon we are not possessed of the spirit of testimony, the spirit of conversion, as we might otherwise be.

It would seem that the condemnation which rests upon the Latter-day Saints is a loss of spiritual power, a loss of blessings, a loss of perspective about eternal possibilities. Perhaps we have not enjoyed the revelations, the divine direction, the sweet promptings of the Spirit which could have been ours. We have not been the recipients of the fruit of the Spirit—"love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance" (Galatians 5:22-23)—as we could have been. Surely we have not enjoyed the understanding, the light and truth, the lens of pure intelligence which is so readily accessible. In too many cases our minds and hearts have not been shaped and prepared by the Book of Mormon, by its lessons and logic, its testimony and transforming power, and thus too often our judgment and discernment—so essential to perceiving the false doctrines of the world, and even the irrelevant—have not been as strong as they might have been. Because we have not immersed and washed ourselves in those living waters which flow from the Book of Mormon, we have not enjoyed faith like the ancients, that faith which strengthens resolve and provides courage and peace in a time of unrest. So much of the stress and fear and apprehension and exhaustion that now exist in society is completely unnecessary; ours could be the right to that lifting and liberating Spirit which produces hope and peace and rest. Though the light of the fulness of the everlasting gospel has begun to break forth into a world of darkness (see D&C 45:28), yet too often we walk in darkness at noonday, or at least we traverse the path of life in twilight when we might be basking in the bright light of the Son. "There is no doubt," stated President Brigham Young, "if a person lives according to the revelations given to God's people, he may have the Spirit of the Lord to signify to him His will, and to guide and to direct him in the discharge of his duties, in his temporal as well as his spiritual exercises. I am satisfied, however, that in this respect, we live far beneath our privileges." (*JD* 12:104.)

In summary, we have denied ourselves supernal privileges because we have taken lightly the new covenant—another testament of Jesus Christ. "Our homes are not as strong," President Benson warned, "unless we are using [the Book of Mormon] to bring our children to Christ. Our families may be corrupted by worldly trends

and teachings unless we know how to use the book to expose and combat the falsehoods in socialism, organic evolution, rationalism, humanism, and so forth. Our missionaries are not as effective unless they are 'hissing forth' with it. . . . Our Church classes are not as spirit-filled unless we hold it up as a standard." In short, "we have not been using the Book of Mormon as we should." (*A Witness and a Warning*, p. 6.) That is the *description*. The *prescription* is straightforward: "I will forgive you of your sins with this commandment—that you remain steadfast in your minds in solemnity and the spirit of prayer, *in bearing testimony to all the world of those things which are communicated unto you*" (D&C 84:61, italics added).

Written for Our Day

We are given little indication in the biblical record that the prophet-writers delivered and preserved their messages for any day other than their own. There is no doubt that Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, Daniel, Malachi, Peter, Paul, John, and others spoke of the distant future, that by the power of the Spirit they saw and described the doings of peoples of another time and place. Their words were given to the people of their own time. Their words have found and will yet find application and fulfillment for future times. And yet we never see a particular prophet from the stick of Judah addressing himself directly to those who will one day read his pronouncements.

How very different is the Book of Mormon! It was prepared and preserved by men with seeric vision who wrote and spoke to us; they saw and knew our day and addressed themselves to specific issues which a people in the last days would confront. The poignant words of Moroni alert us to the contemporary relevance of the Book of Mormon: "Behold, I speak unto you as if ye were present, and yet ye are not. But behold, Jesus Christ hath shown you unto me, and I know your doing." (Mormon 8:35.) Later Moroni said: "Behold, I speak unto you as though I spake from the dead; for I know that ye shall have my words" (Mormon 9:30). In the words of President Benson, the Book of Mormon "was written for our day. The Nephites *never had the book*; neither did the Lamanites of ancient times. It was meant for us. Mormon wrote near the end of the Nephite civilization. Under the inspiration of God, who sees all things from the beginning, he abridged centuries of records, choosing the stories, speeches, and events that would be most helpful to us. . . . If [Book of Mormon prophet-writers] saw our day, and chose those things which would be of greatest worth to us, is not that how we should study the Book of Mormon? We should constantly ask ourselves, 'Why did the Lord

inspire Mormon (or Moroni or Alma) to include that in his record? What lesson can I learn from that to help me live in this day and age.'" (*A Witness and a Warning*, pp. 19–20, italics added.)

Do we desire to know how to handle wayward children; how to deal justly yet mercifully with transgressors; how to bear pure testimony; how to teach and preach in such a manner that people cannot go away unaffected; how to detect the enemies of Christ and how to withstand those who seek to destroy our faith; how to discern and expose secret combinations which seek to destroy the works of the Lamb of God; how to deal properly with persecution and anti-Mormonism; and how to establish Zion? If so, we must search and study the Book of Mormon.

Do we desire to know more about how to avoid pride and the perils of the prosperity cycle; how to avoid priestcraft and acquire and embody charity, the pure love of Christ; how our sins may be remitted and how we can know when they have been forgiven; how to retain a remission of sins from day to day; how to come unto Christ, receive his holy name, partake of his goodness and love, be sanctified by his Spirit, and eventually be sealed to him? Do we desire to know how to prepare for the second coming of the Son of Man? If so, we must search and study the Book of Mormon. This volume of holy writ is without peer. It is the most relevant and pertinent book available to mankind today.

We—the authors of this series—love the Bible, especially as it is clarified by Joseph Smith's translation. We teach the Old and New Testaments and find joy in doing so. They thrill the heart and soul with their numerous witnesses of our Lord and Savior. We cherish the Doctrine and Covenants, glory in its plain and pure doctrinal pronouncements and clarifications, and feel a deep sense of gratitude and thanksgiving for this "capstone of our religion" (see *A Witness and a Warning*, p. 30). The Pearl of Great Price is exactly what its symbolic name implies; it is worth more than the riches of the earth. It is an inspired collection of some of the unique Latter-day Saint doctrines and messages contained in our literature. It bears a powerful witness of Christ's eternal gospel, of the restoration in the last days, and of the divine calling of the Prophet Joseph Smith.

And yet the Book of Mormon is different from the other books of scripture. They are true and they are inspired. They come from God. But the Book of Mormon has a spirit all its own. "Not all truths are of equal value," President Benson has taught, "nor are all scriptures of the same worth." This modern prophet explains further: "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' (see 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." (*A Witness and a Warning*, pp. 10, 21–22.) This surely is what the Prophet Joseph Smith meant when he taught that a person could get nearer to God by abiding by the precepts of the Book of Mormon than by any other book (see *Teachings*, p. 194; Introduction to the Book of Mormon).

But there is more. The Book of Mormon is far more than a theological treatise, more even than a collection of great doctrinal sermons by prophets inspired of God. (It would be worth untold treasure even if it were no more than that!) It is not just a book which helps us feel good; it is a heavenly document which has been given to help us—all those living on earth in the last days—to *be* good. It is as if the Nephite prophet-leaders were beckoning and pleading to us from the dust: "We sought for the Lord. We found him. We applied the gospel of Jesus Christ and have partaken of its sweet fruits. We know the joy of our redemption and have felt to sing the song of redeeming love. And now, O reader, go and do thou likewise!" The Book of Mormon is not only an invitation to come unto Christ but also a pattern for the accomplishment of that consummate privilege. That invitation is extended to all mankind, the rank and file as well as the prophets and Apostles.

The Book of Mormon does more than teach with plainness and persuasion the effects of the Fall and the absolute necessity for an atonement; it cries out to us that unless we acknowledge our fallen state, put off the natural man, apply the atoning blood of Christ, and be born again, we can never be with or become like our Lord, worlds without end. Nor can we ever hope to establish Zion, a society of the pure in heart. Stated differently, this volume is not just a book about religion. It *is* religion. Thus saith the Lord: "They shall remain under this condemnation until they repent and remember the new covenant, even the Book of Mormon and the former commandments which I have given them, *not only to say, but to do* according to that which I have written—that they may bring forth fruit meet for their Father's kingdom; otherwise there remaineth a scourge and judgment to be poured out upon the children of Zion" (D&C 84:57–58, italics added). Our challenge, therefore, is not just to read and study the Book of Mormon; we must accept and apply its doctrines and philosophy—we must live it.

Salvation Is at Stake

Through the generations following the planting of the Lehite colony in America there came leader after leader, prophets and kings who led this branch of Israel in truth and righteousness. Though they were inspired by a singular cause, their styles and their approaches to leadership no doubt varied. One thing, however, one symbol and type, remained constant: the military leaders among the Nephites wielded the sword of Laban in the defense of their people. That sword was a sign, an ensign, a banner, and an ever-present reminder that through the Lord's assistance individuals or nations can be delivered from their enemies. It stood for something else as well—the price to be paid for scriptural and thus spiritual literacy. The first Nephi had known that future millions would need the plates of brass in order to preserve their language and their religious integrity. But there was an impediment, a wicked man who blocked the way. God thus commanded that this man's blood be shed in order that Nephi could obtain the sacred record. (See 1 Nephi 3–4.) The scriptures are bought with a price.

And so it is in regard to the Book of Mormon itself. Too much effort has been expended over too many centuries, too much blood has been shed, too many tears have watered pillows, too many prayers have ascended to the ears of the Lord of Sabaoth—too great a price has been paid for the Book of Mormon record to be destroyed. Or discarded. Or ignored. No, it must not be ignored, either by the Latter-day Saints (the present custodians of the stick of Joseph) or by a world which desperately needs its message and transforming power. No less a person than God himself has borne solemn witness of the Book of Mormon. To Oliver Cowdery, who was raised up to serve as scribe in the translation, the Lord affirmed: "I tell thee, that thou mayest know that there is none else save God that knowest thy thoughts and the intents of thy heart. I tell thee these things as a witness unto thee—that *the words or the work which thou hast been writing are true.*" (D&C 6:16–17, italics added; compare 18:2.)

The Almighty set his own seal of truthfulness upon the Nephite record by an oath when he said: "And he [Joseph Smith] has translated the book, even that part which I have commanded him, and *as your Lord and your God liveth it is true*" (D&C 17:6, italics added). Referring to that statement, a modern Apostle said: "This is God's testimony of the Book of Mormon. In it Deity himself has laid his godhood on the line. Either the book is true or God ceases to be God. There neither is nor can be any more formal or powerful language known to men or gods." (Bruce R. McConkie, CR, April 1982, p. 50.) "Do eternal consequences rest upon our response to this book?" President Ezra Taft Benson asked. He an-

swered: "Yes, either to our blessing or our condemnation." (*A Witness and a Warning*, p. 7.)

"The plain fact," Elder Bruce R. McConkie stated, "is that salvation itself is at stake in this matter. If the Book of Mormon is true—if it is a volume of holy scripture, if it contains the mind and will and voice of the Lord to all men, if it is a divine witness of the prophetic call of Joseph Smith—then to accept it and believe its doctrines is to be saved, and to reject it and walk contrary to its teachings is to be damned.

"Let this message be sounded in every ear with an angelic trump; let it roll round the earth in resounding claps of never-ending thunder; let it be whispered in every heart by the still, small voice. Those who believe the Book of Mormon and accept Joseph Smith as a prophet thereby open the door to salvation; those who reject the book outright or who simply fail to learn its message and believe its teachings never so much as begin to travel the course along the strait and narrow path that leads to eternal life." (CR, October 1983, p. 104.) Elder McConkie has written: "No man—great or small, wise or ignorant, theologian or atheist—no man who lives on the earth in the last days can be saved in the kingdom of heaven unless and until he comes to know, by the power of the Holy Ghost, that this holy book is the mind and will and voice of God to the world. . . . Men will stand or fall—eternally—because of what they think of the Book of Mormon." (*Millennial Messiah*, p. 147.)

Such language may sound overly harsh. To some it may even be offensive. And yet this is exactly what the Book of Mormon itself declares. Nephi closed his testimony as follows:

"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.

"And if they are not the words of Christ, judge ye—for Christ will show unto you, with power and great glory, that they are his words, at the last day; and you and I shall stand face to face before his bar; and ye shall know that I have been commanded of him to write these things, notwithstanding my weakness.

"And I pray the Father in the name of Christ that many of us, if not all, may be saved in his kingdom at that great and last day.

"And now, my beloved brethren, all those who are of the house of Israel, and all ye ends of the earth, I speak unto you as the voice of one crying from the dust: Farewell until that great day shall come.

"And you that will not partake of the goodness of God, and

respect the words of the Jews, and also my words, and the words which shall proceed forth out of the mouth of the Lamb of God, behold, I bid you an everlasting farewell, for these words shall condemn you at the last day.

“For what I seal on earth, shall be brought against you at the judgment bar; for thus hath the Lord commanded me, and I must obey. Amen.” (2 Nephi 33:10–15.)

Moroni delivered a similar testimony, a solemn and sacred witness as to the truthfulness of his own words and of the everlasting significance of the Book of Mormon:

“And now I, Moroni, bid farewell unto the Gentiles, yea, and also unto my brethren whom I love, until we shall meet before the judgment-seat of Christ, where all men shall know that my garments are not spotted with your blood.

“And then shall ye know that I have seen Jesus, and that he hath talked with me face to face, and that he told me in plain humility, even as a man telleth another in mine own language, concerning these things.” (Ether 12:38–39.)

And again:

“And now I speak unto all the ends of the earth—that if the day cometh that the power and gifts of God shall be done away among you, it shall be because of unbelief.

“And wo be unto the children of men if this be the case; for there shall be none that doeth good among you, no not one. For if there be one among you that doeth good, he shall work by the power and gifts of God.

“And wo unto them who shall do these things away and die, for they die in their sins, and they cannot be saved in the kingdom of God; and I speak it according to the words of Christ; and I lie not.

“And I exhort you to remember these things; for the time speedily cometh that ye shall know that I lie not, for ye shall see me at the bar of God; and the Lord God will say unto you: Did I not declare my words unto you, which were written by this man, like as one crying from the dead, yea, even as one speaking out of the dust?

“I declare these things unto the fulfilling of the prophecies. And behold, they shall proceed forth out of the mouth of the everlasting God; and his word shall hiss forth from generation to generation.

“And God shall show unto you, that that which I have written is true.” (Moroni 10:24–29.)

For those outside the faith, the Book of Mormon demands a decision. It forces an issue. A thinking person cannot simply dismiss it with a wave of the hand and a turn of the head; it must be explained. Thus, as Elder Bruce R. McConkie explained, “the time

is long past for quibbling about words and for hurling unsavory epithets against the Latter-day Saints. These are deep and solemn and ponderous matters. We need not think we can trifle with sacred things and escape the wrath of a just God. Either the Book of Mormon is true, or it is false; either it came from God, or it was spawned in the infernal realms. It declares plainly that all men must accept it as pure scripture or they will lose their souls. It is not and cannot be simply another treatise on religion; it either came from heaven or from hell. And it is time for all those who seek salvation to find out for themselves whether it is of the Lord or of Lucifer." (CR, October 1983, pp. 105–6.)

As far as members of the Church are concerned, President Ezra Taft Benson has declared boldly: "Every Latter-day Saint should make the study of this book a lifetime pursuit. Otherwise he is placing his soul in jeopardy and neglecting that which could give spiritual and intellectual unity to his whole life." (*A Witness and a Warning*, pp. 7–8.)

The Saints, the Book, and the Future

So here we are today. In compliance with the prophetic mandate, thousands of Latter-day Saints across the world have begun to search and pray about and teach from the Book of Mormon. Many of these have already begun to find answers to some of their problems; many have come alive to the scriptures, have—because of their study of the Book of Mormon—begun to understand many of the more mysterious passages in the Bible. Many have begun to feel that sometimes subtle but always certain transforming influence which flows from the Book of Mormon—they have begun to sense its sanctifying power. Theirs is a greater yearning for righteousness and the things of the Spirit, a heightened sensitivity to people and feelings, and a corresponding abhorrence for the sins of the world. Many have come to the point where they honestly and truly desire to surrender to the Lord and his ways, to know and abide by his will, and to keep an eye single to his glory. For such surely the condemnation spoken of in Doctrine and Covenants 84 is no more.

It is expected that such a pattern will continue and such a movement will grow. In regard to the future, President Benson said: "I have a vision of homes alerted, of classes alive, and of pulpits aflame with the spirit of Book of Mormon messages. I have a vision of home teachers and visiting teachers, ward and branch officers, and stake and mission leaders counseling our people out of the most correct of any book on earth—the Book of Mormon.

"I have a vision of artists putting into film, drama, literature,

music, and paintings great themes and great characters from the Book of Mormon.

"I have a vision of thousands of missionaries going into the mission field with hundreds of passages memorized from the Book of Mormon so that they might feed the needs of a spiritually famished world.

"I have a vision of the whole Church getting nearer to God by abiding by the precepts of the Book of Mormon.

"Indeed, I have a vision of flooding the earth with the Book of Mormon." (CR, October 1988, pp. 4–5.)

The day is within reach when the Lord's words—as found in the Book of Mormon—shall hiss forth to the ends of the earth, for a standard to the Lord's people, the house of Israel (see 2 Nephi 29:2). The covenant people of the Lord who are scattered among the nations will respond to that voice from the dust which speaks with a familiar spirit. Multitudes of our Father's children shall gather to Christ and thereafter to the lands of their inheritance through the Book of Mormon. All nations shall, as the ancients foresaw, gather to the mountain of the Lord's house—to the stakes of Zion and to the covenants and ordinances of the holy temple—in preparation for the establishment of the New Jerusalem. And the Book of Mormon shall play an integral role in that process. We note from the Prophet Joseph Smith's inspired translation of the Bible the role the Book of Mormon will play in the final winding-up scenes:

"And the Lord said unto Enoch: As I live, even so will I come in the last days, in the days of wickedness and vengeance, to fulfil the oath which I have made unto you concerning the children of Noah;

"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 7:60–62, italics added).

But such a scene will not come to pass without opposition. Ignorance and prejudice now abound among the indifferent and the ungodly, just as love and light and pure religion will abound

among those who accept and build their lives upon the Book of Mormon and modern revelation. Antipathy to Joseph Smith, to the Book of Mormon, and to the Latter-day Saints will increase. But amid it all the work of the Lord, with the Book of Mormon held high as an ensign to the nations, will go forward. As Moroni explained to Joseph Smith: "Those who are not built upon the Rock shall seek to overthrow this church; but it will increase the more [it is] opposed" (*Messenger and Advocate* 2:199).

We are not too far removed from a deeply significant era in this final dispensation, a time seen in vision by Nephi: "And it came to pass that I beheld that the great mother of abominations did gather together multitudes upon the face of all the earth, among all the nations of the Gentiles, to fight against the Lamb of God. And it came to pass that I, Nephi, beheld the power of the Lamb of God, that it descended upon the saints of the church of the Lamb, and upon the covenant people of the Lord, who were scattered upon all the face of the earth; and they were armed with righteousness and with the power of God in great glory." (1 Nephi 14:13–14.)

As the authors of this series we have written in the knowledge that the Book of Mormon is the word of God. We know that the Lord God is its author. It speaks peace and joy to our souls. It is a quiet, steadying influence in our lives. Many of our longings for another time and place, those vague but powerful feelings that we have wandered from a more exalted sphere, are satisfied and soothed when we read the Book of Mormon. Reading it is like coming home. It is a gift of God which we are expected to receive, understand, and experience. We feel a deep sense of kinship with its writers, particularly Mormon and Moroni. We know that they are as concerned now with what is done with their book, if not more so, than when they etched their messages onto the gold plates some sixteen centuries ago. We know, by the whisperings of the Holy Ghost to the soul, that the Almighty expects the Latter-day Saints to read and teach from the Book of Mormon and to devote significant time to the consideration and application of the doctrines and principles it contains.

All of the scriptures testify that perilous times lie ahead, that wickedness will widen and malevolence multiply, all before the Son of Man sets his foot upon this earth to reign as King of kings and Lord of lords. Before that time, before the proud and the wicked are burned as stubble, it is absolutely essential that those who call themselves after his name, and who seek to acquire the divine nature, stand and remain in holy places. Only the sanctified—those Saints who have yielded their hearts to God (see Helaman 3:35), who have an eye single to the glory of God (see D&C 88:67–68), and who, like God, have come to abhor sin (see Alma

13:12)—will be able to withstand the tauntings and pulls of the worldly wise who beckon and belittle from the great and spacious building. It is clear that the Book of Mormon will be one of the few mainstays to which we can rivet ourselves, one of the few constants and standards in a relativistic world, one of the few ensigns around which a weary people can rally in that future day when demons and mischievous mortals join hands to destroy the faithful. Truly, those who “treasure” up the word of the Lord “shall not be deceived” (Joseph Smith—Matthew 1:37).

God grant that we might be wise in the day of our probation. God grant us strength in our sacred care and keeping of this timely and timeless volume. Then, having done all in this regard, we shall rest our souls everlastingly with those who paid such a high price to preserve and bring it forth.

End of Volume IV

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DOCTRINAL COMMENTARY ON THE BOOK OF MORMON, VOLUME IV

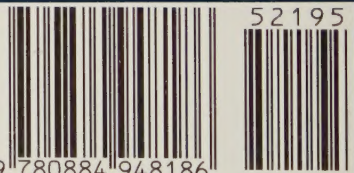
Joseph Fielding McConkie
Robert L. Millet
Brent L. Top

Joseph Fielding McConkie graduated from Brigham Young University, where he also received a master's degree in Church History and a doctorate in Educational Administration. He has been a member of the faculty of the Department of Ancient Scripture at Brigham Young University and is currently presiding as president of the Scotland Edinburgh Mission. In addition to the volumes in this series, he has coauthored with Robert L. Millet *Sustaining and Defending the Faith, The Life Beyond, Great Doctrines of the Book of Mormon* (cassette tapes), *In His Holy Name*, and *The Holy Ghost*. They are also coeditors of *The Man Adam*. Joseph Fielding McConkie has authored *Seeking the Spirit, The Spirit of Revelation, Teach and Reach, Gospel Symbolism, Prophets and Prophecy*, and *A Guide to Scriptural Symbols* (coauthored with Donald W. Parry). He and his wife, Brenda, are the parents of nine children.

Robert L. Millet is dean of Religious Education at Brigham Young University. He received both the B.S. and M.S. degrees in Psychology from Brigham Young University and a Ph.D. from Florida State University in Biblical Studies and Nineteenth- and Twentieth-Century Religious Thought. He is the author of *By Grace Are We Saved, Life in Christ*, and *An Eye Single to the Glory of God*, and is the editor of *To Be Learned Is Good If . . .*. He coedited *The Joseph Smith Translation: The Restoration of Plain and Precious Things* for Brigham Young University's Religious Studies Center, *The Capstone of Our Religion: Insights into the Doctrine and Covenants*, and the *Studies in Scripture* series. He and his wife, Shauna, are the parents of six children.

Brent L. Top graduated with honors from Brigham Young University, receiving a bachelor's degree in history. From that institution he later received a master's degree in instructional media and a Ph.D. in instructional science and technology. He is an assistant professor of Church History and Doctrine at Brigham Young University and lectures with the Know Your Religion and Education Week series. He is the author of *The Life Before*, *Though Your Sins Be As Scarlet*, and *Strength to Endure*. He and his wife, Wendy, are the parents of four children.


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