Lesson 10
2 Nephi 26–30


2 Nephi 26

Verse 20: To whom does “the Gentiles” refer? Why must we understand that to understand the import of these verses?

What image does the phrase “lifted up in the pride of their eyes” convey? How is that appropriate to the meaning conveyed?

What is their stumbling block?

Though in the nineteenth century the word church meant pretty much what it means today, according to the Oxford English Dictionary (a historical dictionary) it seems originally to have meant “that which has to do with a lord.” So we can understand a church to be more than a religious institution; in principle, any organization that has a lord can be called a church. What is a lord? How does it differ from a boss? From a parent? Perhaps the broader meaning of the word church can help us understand the many churches that have been built up as a description of our culture as a whole rather than as a description of only its religious life.

Note the comparison created by the use of “put down” and “preach up.” What does that say about the people being
described? Specifically, how does one preach his own wisdom and learning? How does doing so allow one to “get gain and grind upon the face of the poor”?

What does “grind upon the face of the poor” mean? (This is Nephi’s variation of a phrase from Isaiah. See Isaiah 3:15 and 2 Nephi 13:15.) How and when do we do that?

**Verse 21:** Can you give examples of how churches create envyings and malice and strife? Does envy, malice, or strife ever find a place in our congregations? How?

**Verse 22:** What is a secret combination? (See 2 Nephi 9:9 and the corresponding study questions.) What is the point of the *flaxen* cord? What does the fact that it is flaxen—made of flax (linen) or looking like flax—indicate?

**Verses 23–25:** Notice that the point of verse 22 seems not to have been so much an explanation of how Satan works as it is a comparison to the Lord, so we will understand how the Lord *doesn’t* work.

Verse 23 is a hinge that swings us from the description of how Satan works to a description of how the Lord works.

In verse 25, what contrast does Nephi make between the Lord and Satan?

In verse 25 we see Nephi use a phrase from Isaiah: “buy milk and honey without money and without price.” What is the significance of milk and honey? What is the significance of buying it “without price”?

In what sense is the gospel a free gift? Why might Nephi have been reminded of Isaiah’s phrase in this context? How is the theme of these verses related to the last part of verse 20?
**Verses 26–28:** What is the point of these verses? Why are they formulated as rhetorical questions? Why are the messages of these verses important to us?

**Verse 29:** Why is this called *priestcraft*? Is it something found primarily among priests? How do we go about setting ourselves up for a light to the world? Compare this to 3 Nephi 12:16. What’s the difference? What does it mean to seek the welfare of Zion?

**Verse 30:** Instead of priestcraft, the Lord has commanded people to have charity. Why is charity the antidote (or is it the response?) to priestcraft?

Why is it that without charity we are nothing? What is the difference between this nothing and the nothing that Benjamin says we must recognize ourselves to be if we are to receive salvation (Mosiah 4:11)?

**Verse 31:** Is *perish* used here in the same sense it is used at the end of verse 30? If so, we are commanded not to allow the laborer in Zion to labor for money. It isn’t just that he shouldn’t *do* it, but that we are told that if we have charity we won’t *allow* it. What is a laborer in Zion? (Am I not laboring in Zion when I take up my occupation?) What would it mean for such a person to labor for money? How would we prevent that for ourselves? Can we prevent it or help prevent it for others?

**2 Nephi 27**

**Verses 24–25:** The Savior quoted a version of verse 25 to Joseph Smith (Joseph Smith—History 1:19). How did it
apply to the people among whom Joseph found himself? In what sense might it apply to us today?

What is fear toward the Lord? (Notice that 2 Nephi 27:34 suggests that sanctify and fear may have similar meanings.) What are the precepts of men? What would it mean to have our fear of the Lord taught by the precepts of men?

Verses 26–27: Whom is the Lord warning in these verses? Of what is he warning them? How would we “seek deep to hide [our] counsel [i.e., deliberations] from the Lord”? Why might a person think that his or her acts are hidden? What does it mean to compare a person’s worldview to potter’s clay? How does Nephi explain the fact that the Lord knows all our works?

Verses 28–30: Nephi quotes from Isaiah again (Isaiah 29:17ff.). Isaiah gives a list of miracles: Lebanon (in those days a forest) will become a fruitful field and the fruitful field will become a forest, the deaf will hear the words of the book and the blind will see, and the meek (the gentle, i.e., those without worldly power) will increase. What is the point of this list of miracles? There are obvious literal fulfillments of these, but beyond that what do they say to us?

Isaiah and, therefore, Nephi mention the poor over and over again, and they regard the deliverance of the poor as tantamount to the Second Coming. Why do Isaiah and Nephi take such a keen interest in the poor, and in what sense do the poor have a special relation to the Lord? What does this say to us?
2 Nephi 28

Verse 11: Who has gone out of the way and become corrupted? Once again Nephi seems to be quoting scripture. This is a variation on or another translation of the beginning of Psalms 14:3 and 53:3. (See also Romans 3:12.) Does looking at those psalms help us understand the point Nephi is making?

Verse 12: Why is pride mentioned twice in this verse? You may have heard of chiasmus, a rhetorical form of inverted parallelism found in scripture and other writings. This verse is in another, similar rhetorical form: inclusion. An inclusion is like a sandwich, with two pieces of bread and a filling in between. Inclusion creates a set of parentheses around something to help us understand that thing. Here the “bread” is the mention of pride; the “filling” is what comes between: false teachers, false doctrine, corrupt and lifted-up churches. What is the relation between the “bread” of this inclusion” and its “filling”?

What is doctrine? A look at a fairly comprehensive dictionary (perhaps the Oxford English Dictionary) or at the 1828 edition of Webster’s can give you good ideas as to what this word might mean. Also use a concordance to look at some of the ways the word gets used in the scriptures, and ask yourself how those uses differ from what you thought the word means.

Verse 13: How do fine sanctuaries rob the poor? Is this something we must be cognizant of?
How does fine clothing rob the poor? Our society puts a great emphasis on fashion. Might we sometimes be guilty of robbing the poor with our fine clothing? How? What is the alternative?

Who are the meek and the poor in heart? How are they persecuted? Are there ways in which we persecute the meek and poor in heart? Can you give specific examples of how?

Verse 14: Only a few haven’t gone astray. To whom does they refer in the phrase “nevertheless, they are led, that in many instances they do err”? To those with stiff necks and high heads, or to the few who are humble followers of Christ? Does the word nevertheless help us answer that question by pointing to one of these groups more than the other?

Verse 15: What is the connection between pride, preaching false doctrine, committing whoredoms, and perverting the way of the Lord? In what ways are these kinds of acts related? Is “pervert[ing] the right way of the Lord” one of a list of four things, or is it the general description of the three things that come before it?

As we read verses 19–24, it is often tempting to see someone else as the person described, often someone outside the Church, but if someone inside, then someone with whom we disagree. However, the scriptures are most useful to us when we apply them to ourselves, so our questions should be about us: how do I anger at that which is good, become lulled into carnal security, or accept flattery and deny the existence of hell?

Verses 19–20: When will the kingdom of the devil shake? Will it shake with its power or be shaken by something ex-
ternal to it? Who is in the kingdom of the devil? (Review 1 Nephi 14:10 in context.)

Why do we sometimes anger at that which is good? How do we justify such anger to ourselves and others?

**Verse 21:** In what ways might we be pacified in Zion?

Can you explain what it means to say that the devil cheats the souls of those who are pacified? How does he do that? Of what does he cheat them?

**Verse 22:** Can believing Latter-day Saints be duped in the manner described in this verse? How?

**Verse 24:** What does it mean to be at ease in Zion? Isn’t Zion a place of rest (ease) and security? Is the ease this verse warns against a cessation of labor or the ease of conscience?