Lesson 4
1 Nephi 12–14

Why would the vision recounted in these chapters have been important to Nephi? What difference to him would this information about the future have made? What difference might having a record of this vision have made to Mormon? How is this vision, a vision of mostly past events, important to us?

1 Nephi 12

**Verse 9:** Why would the descendants of Lehi have a different set of twelve judges than the descendants of Israel since, after all, the descendants of Lehi are also descendants of Israel?

**Verse 10:** How do we understand the doctrine taught in these verses: the twelve judges from among the Nephites “are righteous forever”? Why? Because their faith has made their garments white through the atonement? Why doesn’t the angel say anything about keeping the commandments?

**Verse 18:** The manuscript of the Book of Mormon says “even the sword of the justice of God” rather than “even the word of the justice of God,” as we now have it. How would that change the meaning of this verse, if it does?

**Verse 22:** We find here the phrase “dwindle in unbelief” for the first time, though it occurs often in the rest of
the Book of Mormon. It is a distinctly Book of Mormon phrase; it doesn’t occur in other scripture, ancient or modern. To dwindle is to shrink in size. What does it mean to dwindle in unbelief? Does it mean to decrease in number? What evidence from the Book of Mormon might there be for that interpretation? Or is dwindle being used metaphorically? If so, can you explain the metaphor? In what sense does someone who doesn’t believe, or particularly someone who no longer believes, shrink or get smaller?

1 Nephi 13

Verse 3: To what is the angel referring when he points to “the nations and kingdoms of the Gentiles”?

Verses 5–9: The angel points out three things that this abominable church does:

Verse 5: It slays, tortures, binds down, and yokes the Saints of God.

Verses 7–8: It desires gold, silver, silks, scarlets, fine-twined linens, and harlots.

Verse 9: It destroys the Saints “for the praise of the world.”

How are these three related to each other? Is the third the same as the first? Whether it is or not, what’s the connection between the ideas of these three points?

Verses 10ff.: In context it is fairly clear that the Gentiles in these verses are the western Europeans. Why is it important
that those people be identified as Gentiles? How does that fit into Nephi’s understanding of the world? How is it important to our understanding of the world?

**Verse 23:** The Bible was written by many different people, some prophets, some not. Unlike the Book of Mormon, there is no single voice, such as that of Mormon, that gives it unity. What does it mean, then, to say that the book came “out of the mouth of a Jew”?

This verse appears to refer to the Bible as a whole, both the Old Testament and the New. What does its insistence that the Bible is one book and a Jewish book suggest about seeing a sharp dichotomy between the teachings of those two testaments?

Why does the angel focus so much on the covenants of the Bible?

**Verse 26:** “Parts which are plain and most precious” and “many covenants of the Lord” appear to be parallel. If so, then in scripture it wouldn’t be unusual for them to mean the same thing. How might a covenant be plain and precious? What covenants have been taken away from the Bible?

How do you suppose the abominable church has taken away the plain and precious things and the covenants? Does the angel’s earlier description of the church give any clues?

**Verse 29:** How does the absence of the plain and precious things from the Bible cause people to stumble if those things are texts that used to be in the Bible? How does it do
so if those things are doctrines or beliefs? How does it do so if those things are covenants?

**Verse 33:** The angel puts two things in parallel here: being merciful to the Gentiles and exercising great judgment on the remnant of Israel. (The parallel is conceptual, however, rather than grammatical.) How is exercising great judgment on Israel an act of mercy to the Gentiles?

**Verse 34:** What does it mean to say that the gospel is plain? Does the word mean “simple” or “unadorned”? Does it mean “clear and obvious”?

**Verse 37:** In the name of the Lord the angel says, “Blessed are they who shall seek to bring forth my Zion at that day.” Why does the Lord speak of *bringing forth* Zion rather than establishing it or creating it? What does the metaphor of bringing forth suggest?

**Verse 39:** To what does “other books” refer? To Restoration scripture?

**Verse 40:** This verse tells us that the Book of Mormon restores the plain and precious things that have been lost from the Bible. That suggests that those things are not, mostly, lost texts since the biblical texts that are repeated in the Book of Mormon are, for the most part, like the biblical texts as we now have them. So what is it that the Book of Mormon restores that was lost from the Bible?

1 Nephi 14

**Verses 1–2:** These verses are one long sentence. Here is a paraphrase and outline of them:
If the Gentiles will (a) listen to the Lamb of God

when he shows himself to them in word, power, and deed, removing what has previously kept them from believing—

and (b) not harden their hearts against the Lamb of God,

then they will (1) be numbered among the descendants of Nephi’s father;

they will be numbered among the house of Israel;

and (2) always be a blessed people on the promised land;

they will not be made captives again;

and the house of Israel will not be confounded any more.

In short, the first two verses say that if the Gentiles will listen to Christ and not harden their hearts, then they will be counted as Israelites and receive the blessings of Israel.

When does the Savior show himself to the Gentiles “in word, and also in power, in very deed”? There seem to be two possible interpretations of verse 2: (1) the Gentiles will be numbered among Lehi’s (Nephi’s father’s) seed; (2) the father the angel is referring to is Jacob (Israel). Which do you think makes the most sense and why?

Verse 3: This is another long sentence. It tells of how the pit that Satan dug will be filled, no longer being a place to capture humankind. How does the last part of the verse, “not
the destruction of the soul, save it be the casting of it into that hell which hath no end,” relate to the rest of the verse grammatically? Whose destruction is it denying?

**Verse 7:** What is the marvelous work to which the angel refers here? Is it the Restoration? The Second Coming? Something else? Does it have a definite reference, or is it a scripture that can have more than one meaning?

Depending on your answer to that question, you will understand differently what it means that this will be “a work which shall be everlasting.” In any case, however, *everlasting* describes either the convincing of the Gentiles or their being delivered over to the hardness of their hearts. What would an eternal convincing be? What would it mean to be delivered over to the hardness of one’s heart eternally?

In the last half of this verse, “the deliverance of them to the hardness of their hearts and the blindness of their minds,” “being brought down into captivity,” and “[being brought] into destruction, both temporally and spiritually” seem to be ways of saying the same thing. How is hardness of heart the same as being destroyed? How is it the same as being made captive? What is “the captivity of the devil”?

**Verse 8:** To what does “the covenants of the Father unto the house of Israel” refer? Why does the angel ask Nephi whether he remembers those covenants before he shows Nephi a vision of the two churches?

**Verse 10:** If there are only two churches, that of the Lamb of God and that of the devil, to what do those two phrases refer? Though some have assumed that the church of the devil refers to the Catholic church, most use this verse to
argue against that assumption. What does their argument look like?

Verses 11–12: What is the world like for those who are members of the church of the Lamb of God?

Verse 13: What is the promise to them?

Verses 15–16: How does this passage explain the wars of the time period that Nephi sees in vision?

Verse 17: Does this verse explain the angel’s question in verse 8? If so, how so?

Verses 18–28: Why was it important for Nephi to have the same vision as John? Why is it important for us to know that he did?

Verse 23: We know what it means for something someone writes to be true, but what does it mean for it to be “just and true”? Is “just and true” a case of using two words to mean the same thing (such as “without form and void” in Genesis 1:2 and Moses 2:2; compare Abraham 4:2)?

Verse 26: What does this verse promise?