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The Vision of Enoch: Structure of a Masterpiece

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Abstract The seventh chapter of the Book of Moses portrays Enoch's vision of the history and future of the world within a specific literary framework. The text, coming from the Joseph Smith Translation of the Bible, outlines three periods of time: (1) the days of Noah, (2) the meridian of time, and (3) the last days. The portrayal of each of these time periods contains five similar characteristics. Szink also compares this text with accounts in the Bible and other nonbiblical sources to further understand the vision and the significance of its framework. By presenting the three periods in a literary art form, the author has created a complex beauty that reflects and reinforces the content of the vision.



THE
VISION of ENOCH

STRUCTURE OF A MASTERPIECE

TERRY SZINK

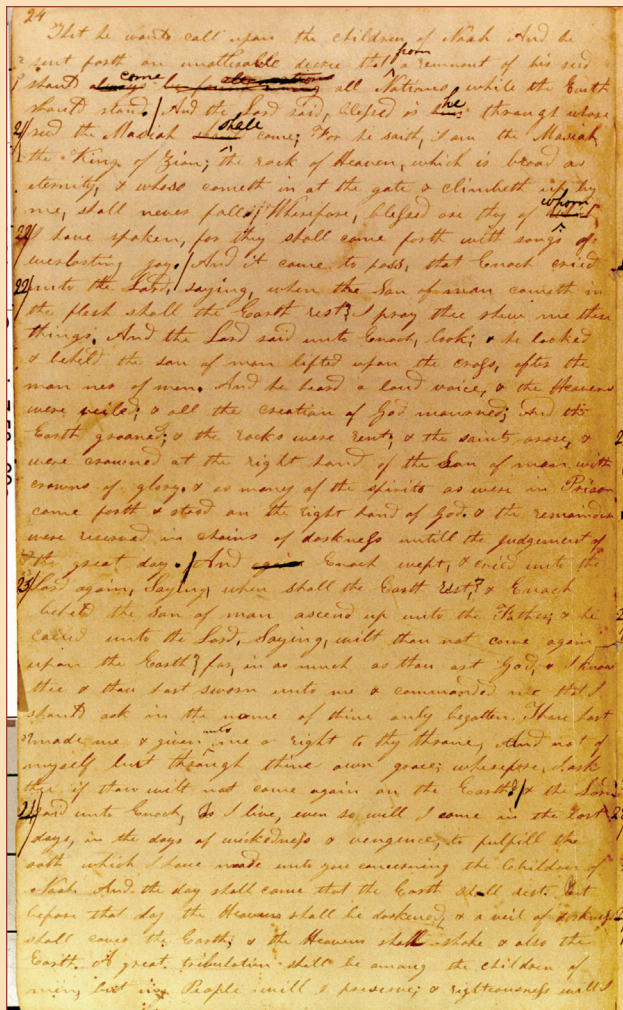
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R.T. BARRETT



THE SEVENTH CHAPTER OF THE BOOK OF MOSES in the Pearl of Great Price contains an account of an important vision of the history and future of the world given to the prophet Enoch. I will demonstrate that the author presented the vision in a very deliberate and artistic way, using a literary structure. Understanding the framework will give the reader a greater appreciation for the vision. I will also compare the vision with nonbiblical materials that cover the same events. While the Bible presents precious little information about Enoch (six verses in Genesis [5:18–24], one verse each in Luke [3:37], Hebrews [11:5], and Jude [1:14]) quite a bit of Enoch material appears in the Pseudepigrapha and other nonbiblical sources. Certainly the pseudepigraphical sources in no way date back to the time of Enoch; most were written between 200 BC and AD 200, yet occasionally interesting parallels with Enoch in the Book of Moses can be discovered.¹



This page from the Joseph Smith Translation features a portion of Enoch’s vision. Courtesy Community of Christ Archives, Independence, Missouri.

THE TEXT

The text of the Book of Moses comes from the Joseph Smith Translation of the Bible. The Book of Moses corresponds to Genesis 1:1–6:13.² The text of Moses 7 was first published in the newspaper the *Evening and Morning Star* in August 1832. As Kent Jackson has pointed out, that publication was based on the first of two manuscripts that Joseph produced as part of the JST, and thus it did not contain all the Prophet’s corrections.³ Franklin D. Richards included that version of the text in the first edition of the Pearl of Great Price published in 1851.⁴ The current text is based in part on a better manuscript and thus contains most, but not all, of Joseph Smith’s corrections.⁵

THE STRUCTURE

Enoch’s vision deals with three periods of time: (1) the days of Noah, (2) the meridian of time, and (3) the last days. With a carefully crafted literary framework, the author portrayed each of these time periods using similar characteristics:

- God described each of the three time periods as days of wickedness and vengeance.
- There was weeping because of the wickedness and vengeance.
- Enoch asked “When will the earth rest?” or a similar question.
- There was great destruction, often caused by seismic activity.
- While the seismic activity destroyed the wicked, the righteous were “lifted up” and preserved.

The author wove these different characteristics and time periods to produce a beautiful, complex tapestry. The following chart illustrates this structure. The numbers in the chart refer to the verse numbers in Moses 7 in which the different characteristics appear:

	Days of Noah	Meridian of Time	Last Days
Wickedness and vengeance	25, 26, 33, 34, 41	46	60
Weeping	28, 29, 31, 44	49	58
When will the earth rest	45	48, 54	58, 61, 64
Destruction—seismic activity	34, 38	56	61
Righteous lifted up	21, 23, 27	47, 55, 56, 59	63

NOAH'S DAY

The vision begins with the narrator noting that Zion was taken into heaven. After the translation of Zion, “Enoch beheld, and lo, all the nations of the earth were before him” (Moses 7:23). Enoch saw that not only had his city been removed from the earth but that other people who accepted the message of the gospel preached by angels sent from heaven were also translated. The result was that all those remaining upon the earth were wicked and under the control of Satan, who “had a great chain in his hand, and it veiled the whole face of the earth with darkness; and he looked up and laughed, and his angels rejoiced” (Moses 7:26).

Weeping. While Satan and his angels laughed at the darkness that covered the face of the earth, Enoch saw that God and the heavens wept because of this wickedness, and asked, “How is it that the heavens *weep*, and shed forth their tears as the

rain upon the mountains?”⁶ Later he continued the question “And thou hast taken Zion to thine own bosom, from all thy creations, from all eternity to all eternity; and naught but peace, justice, and truth is the habitation of thy throne; and mercy shall go before thy face and have no end; how is it thou canst *weep*?” (Moses 7:31, emphasis added).

As Enoch saw the destruction of the wicked in the flood, he also wept: “And as Enoch saw this, he had bitterness of soul, and *wept* over his brethren, and said unto the heavens: I will refuse to be comforted” (Moses 7:44, emphasis added).

God’s weeping over the wickedness and destruction of his children shows Him to be different from how some have viewed Him. For example, one author has written that God was “merciless” in his determination to exterminate humankind.⁷ As portrayed in the Book of Moses, the decision to destroy humankind was not reached lightly. God was sad that he had to send the flood, and the heavens wept over the wickedness of humankind and its destruction. In fact, Latter-day Saints can understand the flood to be an act of mercy. While the flood destroyed the wicked, it also stopped them from continuing to sin. Furthermore, with an understanding of the premortal existence, we can see that the flood was also merciful to the spirits waiting to come to earth; they would thus not be born into a world full of rebellion and violence. Enoch spoke the truth when he proclaimed to God, “thou art just; thou art merciful and kind forever” (Moses 7:30).

While weeping is associated with the flood in Enoch’s vision in the Book of Moses, there is no mention of it in Genesis. However, weeping is linked with the flood in nonbiblical accounts. In the eleventh tablet of the *Epic of Gilgamesh*,⁸ the gods who sent the flood were disconcerted by it and wept:

The gods were frightened by the deluge,
And, shrinking back, they ascended to the heaven
of Anu.
The gods cowered like dogs crouched against the
outer wall.
Ishtar cried out like a woman in travail,
The sweet-voiced mistress of the [gods] moans
aloud:
“The olden days are alas turned to clay,
Because I bespoken evil in the Assembly of the gods.
How could I bespeak evil in the Assembly of the gods,

Ordering battle for the destruction of my people,
When it is I myself who give birth to my people!
Like the spawn of the fishes they fill the sea!
The Anunnaki gods weep with her,
The gods, all humbled, sit and weep,
Their lips *drawn tight*, [. . .] one and all.⁹

As Hugh Nibley first pointed out, there is weeping associated with the flood in the pseudepigraphal book of *1 Enoch* as well.¹⁰ In *1 Enoch* 65:1–5, Noah wept to his grandfather about the coming flood:

In those days, Noah saw the earth, that she had become deformed, and that her destruction was at hand. And (Noah) took off from there and went unto the extreme ends of the earth. And he cried out to his grandfather, Enoch, and said to him, three times, with a bitter voice, “Hear me! Hear me! Hear me!” And I said unto


him, “Tell me what this thing is which is being done upon the earth, for the earth is struggling in this manner and is being shaken; perhaps I will perish with her in the impact.” At that moment, there took place a tremendous turbulence upon the earth; and a voice from heaven was heard, and I fell upon my face. Then Enoch, my grandfather, came and stood by me, saying to me, “Why did you cry out so sorrowfully and with bitter tears?”¹¹

As we will see, this weeping by God, the heavens, and Enoch continues through the vision.

Wickedness and Vengeance. God answered Enoch and explained that he had given the commandments to men “that they should love one another, and that they should choose (him)” (Moses 7:33). Note that these two commandments are those that Jesus would later identify as the “great

commandments,” which serve as the basis for the “law and prophets,” meaning the whole of the Bible (Matthew 22:34–40).¹² Humankind’s rejection of these commandments to love was effectively a rebellion against the whole of God’s plan. Because of this, humankind became “without affection, and they hate their own blood” (Moses 7:33). Clearly great wickedness characterized Enoch and Noah’s day. Later on, the narrator further describes the wickedness of this period: “And God saw that the wickedness of men had become great in the earth; and . . . the imagination of the thoughts of his heart [was] only evil continually” (Moses 8:22). This depraved state of man was the reason that the heavens wept. “Wherefore, for this shall the heavens weep, yea, and all the workmanship of mine hands. And it came to pass that the Lord spake unto Enoch, and told Enoch all the doings of the children of men; wherefore Enoch knew, and looked upon their *wickedness*, and their misery, and





wept and stretched forth his arms, and his heart swelled wide as eternity; and his bowels yearned; and all eternity shook” (Moses 7:40–41, emphasis added).¹³

This wickedness of humankind brought a strong reaction from God: “And the fire of mine indignation is kindled against them; and in my hot displeasure will I send in the floods upon them, for my fierce anger is kindled against them” (Moses 7:34).

Seismic Activity. Destruction in Noah’s day was caused by the flood: “I send in the floods upon them” (Moses 7:34). “But behold, these which thine eyes are upon shall perish in the floods” (Moses 7:38). In literature depicting the flood, an extended heavy downpour of rain was not the only cause. For example, the author of Genesis explained that “in the six hundredth year of Noah’s life, in the second month, the seventeenth day of the month, the same day were all *the fountains of the great deep broken up*, and the windows of heaven were opened” (Genesis 7:11, emphasis added). When the destruction had been accomplished, the author described the end of the flood in similar terms: “*The fountains also of the deep and the windows of heaven were stopped*, and the rain from heaven was restrained” (Genesis 8:2, emphasis added). So there were two sources for the flood: the opening of the floodgates of heaven from above and the breaking up of the earth, perhaps through seismic activity, releasing the subterranean waters of the deep. Ed Noort has explained, “The Deluge occurs because the large springs of the deep-lying underworld ocean break to the surface at the same time as heaven’s sluice gates are opened and the heavenly ocean is allowed to return to the earth.”¹⁴

In essence, the work of the creation had been reversed. During the creation, God had said: “Let there be a firmament in the midst of the waters, and let it divide the waters from the waters. And God made the firmament, and divided the waters which were under the firmament from the waters which were above the firmament: and it was so. And God called the firmament Heaven.” And later: “Let the waters under the heaven be gathered together unto one place, and let the dry land appear: and it was so” (Genesis 1:6–9). With the flood, the waters of the earth were no longer gathered together, and those of the heavens were no longer held back by the firmament.¹⁵

In some nonbiblical accounts, the flood also seems to be associated with seismic activity. The eleventh tablet of the *Epic of Gilgamesh* is similar in attributing its flood not only to rain but also to the breaking up of the earth.

With the first glow of dawn,
A black cloud rose up from the horizon.
Inside it Adad thunders,
While Shullat and Hanish go in front,
Moving as heralds over hill and plain.
Erragal tears out the posts;
Forth comes Ninurta and causes the dikes to follow.
The Anunnaki lift up the torches,
Setting the land ablaze with their glare.
Consternation over Adad reaches to the heavens,
Who turned to blackness all that had been light.
[The wide] land was shattered like [a pot]!¹⁶

In this account, the god Adad thundered within the black cloud while the gods Erragal and Ninurta destroyed the dikes and released the subterranean waters, leaving the land “shattered like a pot.”

The dual source of the flood waters appears in the Pseudepigrapha as well. In *1 Enoch* 54:7, we read: “And in those days, the punishment of the Lord of the Spirits shall be carried out, and they shall open all the storerooms of water in the heavens above, in addition to the fountains of water which are on earth.”¹⁷

Righteous Lifted Up. While the flood destroyed the wicked, who had rejected God’s plan, the righteous were preserved by being lifted up. The narrator explained that Enoch and his city, “Zion,” were “*taken up into heaven*” (Moses 7:21, 23). As noted above, not only did God lift up Enoch, but angels descended and proclaimed the gospel, and those who accepted their teachings were “caught up by the powers of heaven into Zion” (Moses 7:27). Although Noah and his family remained on the earth, God also preserved them in the ark. In Genesis the theme of the righteous being lifted up is extended to Noah and his family: “And the flood was forty days upon the earth; and the waters increased, and *bare up the ark*, and it was *lift up above the earth*” (Genesis 7:17, emphasis added).¹⁸ The narrator of Enoch’s vision explained that “Noah built an ark; and that the Lord smiled upon it, and held it in his own hand” (Moses 7:43). This passage is similar to one in *1 Enoch* 67:1–2: “In those days, the word of God came unto me, and said unto me, ‘Noah, your

lot has come up before me—a lot without blame, a lot of true love. At this time the angels are working with wood (making an ark) and when it is completed, I shall place my hands upon it and protect it, and the seed of life shall arise from it; and a substitute (generation) will come so that the earth will not remain empty.’”¹⁹

When will the earth rest? After viewing the destruction of the wicked, Enoch was distraught: “And it came to pass that Enoch looked; and from Noah, he beheld all the families of the earth; and he cried unto the Lord, saying: When shall the day of the Lord come? When shall the blood of the Righteous be shed, that all they that mourn may be sanctified and have eternal life?” (Moses 7:45). This question about the fate of the earth and those who live upon it, along with the weeping, will continue to drive the vision forward.

MERIDIAN OF TIME

The second period of time that the author of the vision addresses is the meridian of time. The term *meridian* means the highest point and refers to the fact that Christ was born and had his mortal existence during this period.²⁰ The author of the vision described this period of time in terms similar to ones he used in discussing Noah’s day.

Wickedness and Vengeance. In Enoch’s vision the Lord described the meridian of time as “days of wickedness and vengeance” (Moses 7:46). Certainly this is an accurate description of the era. The Book of Mormon prophet Jacob described those who crucified Jesus as “the more wicked part of the world” and went on to say that there was “none other nation on earth that would crucify their God” (2 Nephi 10:3).

Not only was there wickedness in the Old World that resulted in the crucifixion of Jesus, but there was great wickedness among the Nephites and Lamanites in the New World at that time. Third Nephi describes the rise of the secret combinations, the collapse of the government, the murder of prophets, and general wickedness that characterized the age (see 3 Nephi 7:5–7).

Because of this wickedness, vengeance was swift in coming. According to Nephi, “the Jews shall be scattered among all nations; yea, and also Babylon shall be destroyed; wherefore, the Jews shall be scattered by other nations” (2 Nephi 25:15). The Jewish historian Josephus described in graphic detail



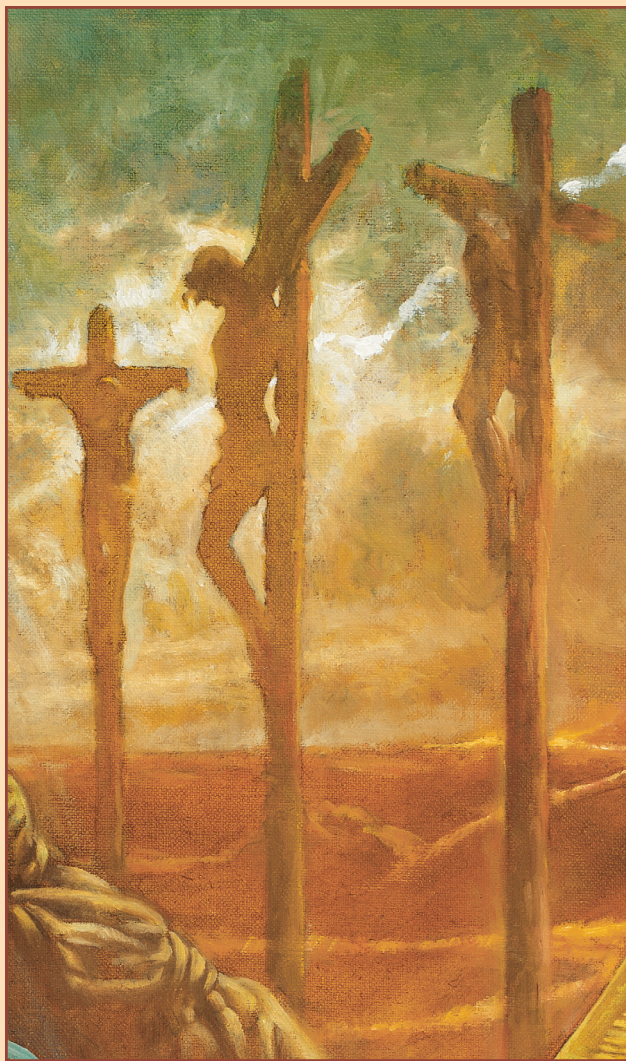
the Roman siege and capture of Jerusalem.²¹ Jesus, while prophesying of this destruction, identified the era as days of vengeance: “For these be the *days of vengeance*, that all things which are written may be fulfilled” (Luke 21:22, emphasis added).

The vengeance in the New World was no less destructive. Third Nephi 8 recounts the many natural disasters that took place at the time of the death of Christ and destroyed the more wicked part of the Nephites and Lamanites.

Seismic Activity. One of the ways in which the author of the vision characterized each of the three periods treated in the vision is seismic activity. As Enoch saw in vision the crucifixion of the Savior, “he heard a loud voice; and the heavens were veiled; and all the creations of God mourned; and the *earth groaned; and the rocks were rent*; and the saints arose, and were crowned at the right hand of the Son of Man, with crowns of glory” (Moses 7:56, emphasis added). This groaning of the earth

and the rending of the rocks may be descriptions of the seismic activity that certainly took place in the meridian of time at the time of the death of Christ. The Gospel of Matthew describes it:

Jesus, when he had cried again with a loud voice, yielded up the ghost. And, behold, the veil of the temple was rent in twain from the top to the bottom; and the earth did quake, and the rocks rent; 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. Now when the centurion, and they that were with him, watching Jesus, saw the earthquake, and those things that were done, they feared greatly, saying, Truly this was the Son of God. (Matthew 27:50–54)



Perhaps better known to Latter-day Saints is the destruction in the New World that took place at the time of the death of the Savior:

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 thunders and the lightnings, and the exceedingly great quaking of the whole earth; And the high-ways were broken up, and the level roads were spoiled, and many smooth places became rough. 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. (3 Nephi 8:12–14)

Nephi, quoting the prophet Zenos, prophesied the destruction in the New World which would take place at the time of the death of Jesus. “And all these things must surely come, saith the prophet Zenos. And the rocks of the earth must rend; and because of the groanings of the earth, many of the kings of the isles of the sea shall be wrought upon by the Spirit of God, to exclaim: The God of nature suffers” (1 Nephi 19:12). Here the “groaning of the earth” is directly connected with destruction in the New World. The source of this destruction was almost certainly seismic activity, consisting of earthquakes with accompanying tsunamis and explosive volcanic activity.²²

When will the earth rest? As Enoch witnessed the terrible scenes of wickedness and vengeance, he heard the voice of the personified earth speaking: “Wo, wo is me, the mother of men; I am pained, I am weary, because of the wickedness of my children. *When shall I rest*, and be cleansed from the filthiness which is gone forth out of me? When will my Creator sanctify me, *that I may rest*, and righteousness for a season abide upon my face?” (Moses 7:48, emphasis added). Enoch then saw the coming of the Messiah and forwarded the earth’s request: “And it came to pass that Enoch cried unto the Lord, saying: When the Son of Man cometh in the flesh, *shall the earth rest?*” (Moses 7:54, emphasis added). After seeing the death of the Savior, Enoch repeated the plea: “When shall the earth rest?” (Moses 7:58). In writing this question, the author may have been making a subtle reference back to Noah. The personal name *Noah* comes from the

Hebrew verb *nwh*, which means to “settle down,” “rest,” “repose.”²³ This possible wordplay in Hebrew did not come from Enoch, who did not speak Hebrew, but from a later author or editor. Not only did the author use the wordplay on Noah’s name to refer back to the patriarch, but he also mentioned Noah three times in this section: “Wilt thou not bless the children of *Noah*? And it came to pass that Enoch continued his cry unto the Lord, saying: I ask thee, O Lord, in the name of thine Only Begotten, even Jesus Christ, that thou wilt have mercy upon *Noah* and his seed, that the earth might never more be covered by the floods. And the Lord could not withhold; and he covenanted with Enoch, and sware unto him with an oath, that he would stay the floods; that he would call upon the children of *Noah*” (Moses 7:49–51, emphasis added). Not only is there possible wordplay, but by specifically mentioning the name Noah the author also reminds the reader of the previous section.

Weeping. The theme of weeping continues in the section on the meridian of time. We read in Moses 7:49: “And when Enoch heard the earth mourn, he *wept, and cried* unto the Lord” (emphasis added).

Righteous Lifted Up. In the first period of time examined in the vision, the righteous who were living in Zion were translated, while Noah and his family were saved from the destructive flood in the ark, which the waters lifted up. In an ironic twist in the meridian of time, the “lifting up” did not save the righteous directly; rather, the lifting up of the Righteous One saved all others. Enoch saw in vision the crucifixion of Jesus, and the author used the phrase “lifted up” to report it: “The Righteous is lifted up, and the Lamb is slain from the foundation of the world; and through faith I am in the bosom of the Father, and behold, Zion is with me” (Moses 7:47). The author used this phrase not just once but twice: “And the Lord said unto Enoch: Look, and he looked and beheld the Son of Man lifted up on the cross, after the manner of men” (Moses 7:55). Later, this phrase would appear several times in the Gospel of John referring to the death of the Son of Man: “And as Moses *lifted up* the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of man be *lifted up*” (John 3:14, emphasis added); “When ye have *lifted up* the Son of man, then shall ye know that I am he, and that I do nothing of myself; but as my Father hath taught me, I speak these things” (John 8:28, emphasis added); “And I, if I be *lifted up* from the

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(MOSES 7:61).

earth, will draw all men unto me. This he said, signifying what death he should die” (John 12:32–33, emphasis added). This phrase is also included in the Book of Mormon by various speakers and writers. Nephi wrote: “And I, Nephi, saw that he was *lifted up* upon the cross and slain for the sins of the world” (1 Nephi 11:33, emphasis added). It may be that Nephi’s use of these words is based on the writings of the prophet Zenock, for he reported that Christ would be “*lifted up*, according to the words of Zenock” (1 Nephi 19:10). Another prophet named Nephi wrote that just as the brazen serpent was lifted up in the wilderness, Christ would be lifted up (Helaman 8:14). Moroni used it in his abridgement of the plates of the Jaredites in the book of Ether (Ether 4:1). The risen Christ himself also used this phrase: “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—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” (3 Nephi 27:14–15, emphasis added; see 28:6).

The author of the vision of Enoch noted that this lifting up of the Son of Man would make possible the lifting up of many who believed in him: “And he heard a loud voice; and the heavens were veiled; and all the creations of God mourned; and the earth groaned; and the rocks were rent; and *the saints arose*, and were crowned at the right hand of the Son of Man, with crowns of glory” (Moses 7:56, emphasis added). This fact was also witnessed in the Gospel of Matthew: “And the graves were opened; and many bodies of the saints which slept *arose*” (Matthew 27:52, emphasis added). This fact had been prophesied by Samuel the Lamanite (see 3 Nephi 23:9–10).

Finally, Enoch also saw Christ taken up into heaven: “And Enoch beheld the Son of Man *ascend up* unto the Father” (Moses 7:59, emphasis added).

LAST DAYS

The final period of time which the author of the vision addressed is the last days. The author used the same terminology that he previously used in describing Noah’s day and the meridian of time.

Weeping. The final section depicting the last days begins with Enoch continuing his weeping: “And again Enoch *wept and cried* unto the Lord, saying: When shall the earth rest?” (Moses 7:58, emphasis added).

Wickedness and Vengeance. Again the Lord described the final period discussed in the vision as days of wickedness and vengeance: “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” (Moses 7:60, emphasis added).

Later he added that the “heavens shall be darkened, and a veil of darkness” would cover the earth (Moses 7:61). Notice how this last statement echoes the description of the earth at the beginning of the vision: “And he beheld Satan; and he had a great chain in his hand, and it veiled the whole face of the earth with darkness; and he looked up and laughed, and his angels rejoiced” (Moses 7:26).

Certainly many prophecies of the last days decry the wickedness that characterizes that time period. For example, Matthew 24 in the New Testament and Joseph Smith—Matthew in the Pearl of Great Price²⁴ contain a prophecy of Christ that states that “because iniquity shall abound, the love of men shall wax cold” (JS—Matthew 1:30). Compare this to the description of the wickedness in the days of Noah where the author describes humankind as being “without affection, and they hate their own blood” (Moses 7:33).

Speaking to those who would live in the last days, Mormon proclaimed: “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” (3 Nephi 30:2). These types of prophecies abound in the scriptures, most often accompanied by predictions of vengeance that will befall the wicked.

Modern prophets have even compared the wickedness of the last days to that of previous times. Joseph Smith is reported to have said, “I prophecy in the name of the Lord God anguish & wrath . . . & tribulation and the withdrawing of the spirit of God await this generation. until they are visited with utter destruction. this generation is as corrupt as the generation of the Jews that crucified Christ. and if he were here today & should preach the same doctrine he did then why they would crucify him.”²⁵

Seismic Activity. Enoch saw that earthquakes would be part of the vengeance inflicted upon the wicked: “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” (Moses 7:61). Other prophets have also indicated that earthquakes will be prevalent in the last days. John wrote in Revelation: “And there was a great *earthquake*, such as was not since men were upon the earth, so mighty an *earthquake*, and so great” (Revelation 16:18, emphasis added). In discussing the last days, when the record of the Nephites would come forth, Moroni wrote: “And there shall also be heard of wars, rumors of wars, and *earthquakes* in divers places” (Mormon 8:30, emphasis added). There are many other examples of prophets foretelling seismic activity in the last days (see Joel 3:14–16; D&C 29:13; 43:18; 84:118; 88:89).

When will the earth rest? After seeing the events of the meridian of time, Enoch again repeated the question that drove the account of the vision forward: “When shall the earth rest?” (Moses 7:58). The answer was that after the vengeance and destruction, Christ would return and finally the earth would find rest: “And the day shall come that *the earth shall rest*” (Moses 7:61, emphasis added). This answer is repeated a few verses later. The rest that the earth would find is that of the millennium: “And there shall be mine abode, and it shall be Zion, which shall come forth out of all the creations which I have made; and for the space of a thousand years the *earth shall rest*” (Moses 7:64, emphasis added).

Righteous Lifted Up. As was the case with the righteous of the two previous time periods discussed, the days of Noah and the meridian of time, the righteous of the last days would also be preserved from the destruction by being lifted up. In this case, Enoch saw that the righteous of the last days would arise and join his city as they descend at the time of the coming of the Son of Man: “And the Lord said unto Enoch: Then shalt thou and all thy city meet them there, and we will receive them into our bosom, and they shall see us; and we will fall upon their necks, and they shall fall upon our necks, and we will kiss each other” (Moses 7:63). This doctrine appears in the Bible in 1 Thessalonians 4:17: “Then we which are alive and remain *shall be caught up* together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord” (1 Thessalonians 4:17, emphasis added). It is also confirmed by other Latter-day scripture: “And the saints that are upon the earth, who are alive, shall be quickened and be caught

up to meet him. And they who have slept in their graves shall come forth, for their graves shall be opened; and they also shall be caught up to meet him in the midst of the pillar of heaven” (D&C 88:96–97).

A SECOND FLOOD

Near the end of the vision, there is a return to the flood motif that first appeared in Noah’s day. The Lord spoke to Enoch and promised that he would fulfill the oath which he had made “concerning the children of Noah” (Moses 7:60). The oath mentioned is recorded in verse 51: “And the Lord could not withhold; and he covenanted with Enoch, and swore unto him with an oath, that he would stay the floods; that he would call upon the children of Noah” (Moses 7:51). The Lord swore two things: that he would “stay the floods”—that is, he would not send a destructive flood of waters—and that he would “call upon the children of Noah.” Accordingly, after “great tribulations” the earth would rest, and God would preserve his people (Moses 7:61). Ironically, this time the “children of Noah” would be *preserved* by a flood: “And righteousness will I send down out of heaven; and truth will I send forth out of the earth, . . . and righteousness and truth will I cause to sweep the earth as with a flood” (Moses 7:62). In the original manuscript of the Joseph Smith Translation, from which the Book of Moses was taken, the tie with the flood of Noah’s day is even stronger. Verse 62 reads: “And righteousness and truth will I cause to sweep the earth as with *the flood*.”²⁶ In the prophet’s original words, the use of the definite article points back directly to the flood of Noah’s day.

Strengthening the tie between the two floods, this latter-day flood, like the one in the days of Noah, has two sources: (1) righteousness sent down out of heaven, and (2) truth sent forth out of the earth. These two floods, the destructive one in Noah’s day and the salvific latter-day flood of righteousness, serve as bookends to Enoch’s vision. President Ezra Taft Benson understood the prophecy of “truth sent forth out of the earth” to be a reference to the Book of Mormon: “The Book of Mormon is the instrument that God designed to ‘sweep the earth as with a flood, to gather out [his] elect.’ (Moses 7:62.) This sacred volume of scripture needs to become more central in our preaching, our teaching, and our missionary work.”²⁷

Furthermore, this flood of righteousness would “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 7:62). This gathering is reminiscent of the way that Noah brought two of every sort of living creature into the ark and also gathered of all food that is eaten (Genesis 6:19–21). The city of Zion or New Jerusalem will become the new ark and those who are gathered to it will be lifted up just as the ark was lifted up.

The author could have described the latter-day restoration of truth and righteousness in any number of ways. I believe he chose to present it as a flood to purposely hark back to the flood with which he began his account of Enoch’s vision. Furthermore, the mention of Zion as the gathering place strengthens this echoing of Enoch and Noah’s day.

Isaiah used a similar metaphor, comparing righteousness to rain: “Drop down, ye heavens, from above, and let the skies pour down righteousness: let the earth open, and let them bring forth salvation, and let righteousness spring up together; I the Lord have created it” (Isaiah 45:8).

This vision is not the only scripture that draws a connection between Noah’s flood and the latter days. In the apocalyptic chapter 24 of Matthew, we read: “But as the days of Noe were, so shall also the coming of the Son of man be. For as in the days that were before the flood they were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, until the day that Noe entered into the ark, and knew not until the flood came, and took them all away; so shall also the coming of the Son of man be” (Matthew 24:37–39).

CONCLUSION

We have seen that there is a definite literary framework to the account of the visions of Enoch.

Noted biblical scholar Robert Alter has demonstrated that literary art plays a crucial role in presenting the stories in the Bible. He has explained:

I have tried throughout to focus on the complexly integrated ways in which the tale is told, giving special attention to what is distinctive in the artful procedures of biblical narrative, what requires us to learn new modes of attentiveness as readers. Such attentiveness, I think, is important not only for those curious about matters of narrative technique, whether ancient or modern, but also for anyone who wants to come to terms with the significance of the Bible.²⁸

In the case of the vision of Enoch, the author uses a number of devices to present his ideas in an artistic way: First, note the contrast between Satan laughing and his angels rejoicing at the condition



of the inhabitants of the earth with the weeping of God, the heavens, and Enoch. This sets the scene for the ultimate battle of good versus evil that the vision addresses.

Second, there is possible wordplay with the name Noah which means “rest” or “repose” and the question “when will the earth rest?” As noted above, this wordplay did not come from Enoch, who did not speak Hebrew, but may have come from a later author or editor. The repetition of the name Noah ties the first and second sections together.

Third, the author purposefully repeated the same characteristics in describing the three periods of time. By repeating these characteristics, the author creates a unity across the different time periods. While the vision moves forward chronologically, the reader is shown the same themes again and again. The author identified a pattern that God follows in dealing with His children and used this pattern in presenting the vision: Humans rebel against God and become wicked; God and his prophets are distressed by this wickedness and attempt to overcome it through teaching the gospel. They long for a time when wickedness will end. The rebellious wicked are destroyed while the righteous are protected and saved. This pattern has been repeated in almost every gospel dispensation in time throughout the world, and the vision’s structure reflects it. Nephi understood the repetitive nature of God’s dealings with his children and commented on it:

For he that diligently seeketh shall find; and the mysteries of God shall be unfolded unto them, by the power of the Holy Ghost, as well in these times as in times of old, and as well in times of old as in times to come; wherefore, the course of the Lord is one eternal round. (1 Nephi 10:19)

The author of Enoch’s vision presented God’s dealings with humankind in the three time periods in a repetitive way to mirror the “one eternal round” that Nephi identifies as God’s economy. Robert Alter has noted patterns of repetition in the Bible, has labeled them “type-scenes,” and views them as a “central organizing convention of biblical narrative.”²⁹ The vision of Enoch is organized using these “type-scenes.”

Fourth, the author used language to describe the restoration of the gospel in the last days in a way

that would call to mind the flood of Noah’s day. As mentioned above, this creates a pair of bookends: Noah’s destructive flood that destroys the wicked and the flood of truth in the last days that saves the righteous. These two floods serve to begin and end the vision. They tie the ends together to make it a nice unit.

Much like Isaiah, Jeremiah, and other scriptural prophets, the author of the visions of Enoch wrote an account that was artistic as well as prophetic. As Nephi stated above, “he that diligently seeketh shall find; and the mysteries of God shall be unfolded unto them.” A careful reading of the text reveals its complex beauty. The author has woven a number of themes together to form a wonderful tapestry that is worthy of the prophetic ideas presented within. The telling of the visionary experience reflects and reinforces what the prophet saw.

Finally, the fact that many of the themes found in the vision of Enoch appear in later accounts, both scriptural and nonscriptural, of the same time period speaks strongly of the power of Enoch’s vision. Truly “the Lord spake unto Enoch, and told Enoch all the doings of the children of men” (Moses 7:41). ■

Notes

1. See James H. Charlesworth, “Pseudepigrapha, OT,” in *The Anchor Bible Dictionary*, ed. David Noel Freedman (New York: Doubleday, 1992), 5:537–40.
2. The best source for the text of the Joseph Smith Translation (hereafter referred to as JST) is Scott H. Faulring, Kent P. Jackson, and Robert J. Matthews, *Joseph Smith’s New Translation of the Bible* (Provo, UT: BYU Religious Studies Center, 2004).
3. Kent P. Jackson, *The Book of Moses and the Joseph Smith Translation Manuscripts* (Provo, UT: BYU Religious Studies Center, 2005), 14.
4. For a brief history of the Pearl of Great Price, see Richard D. Draper, S. Kent Brown, and Michael D. Rhodes, *The Pearl of Great Price: A Verse-by-Verse Commentary* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 2005), 1–11.
5. See Jackson, *Book of Moses and the Joseph Smith Translation Manuscripts*, 29–52.
6. In Moses 7:28 in the Pearl of Great Price, not only did the heavens weep but God himself wept: “And it came to pass that the God of heaven looked upon the residue of the people, and he wept; and Enoch bore record of it, saying: How is it that the heavens weep, and shed forth their tears as the rain upon the mountains? And Enoch said unto the Lord: How is it that thou canst weep, seeing thou art holy, and from all eternity to all eternity?” (Moses 7:28–29, emphasis added). In Joseph Smith’s final revision of the text, Old Testament Manuscript 2 of his translation, it is Enoch and the heavens that weep: “And it came to pass, that the God of Heaven <Enoch> look=ed upon the residue of the people & wept. And Enoch bore record of it saying how is it the heavnes weep <he beheld and <lo!> the heavens wept also> & shed forth <t>h[er]<eir> tears as the rain upon the Mountains And Enoch Said unto the heavens how is it that thou canst weep Seeing Thou art holy & from all eternity to all eternity” (Moses 7:28–29 Old Testament Manuscript 2). Faulring, Jackson, and

- Matthews, *Joseph Smith's New Translation of the Bible*, 618. It may be argued that in saying that “the heavens wept,” the author was implying that God himself also wept.
7. “Yahweh . . . is just as merciless, just as determined to exterminate mankind.” Norman Cohn, *Noah's Flood: The Genesis Story in Western Thought* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1996), 16. Jerome M. Segal has suggested that God's response to the events surrounding the flood portrays “not an image of divine, balanced, and omniscient judgment. Rather we are being told of a mood, a darkness that has come over God. What we have here resembles depression, an emotional darkness that will lead God toward destruction.” *Joseph's Bones: Understanding the Struggle between God and Mankind in the Bible* (New York: Riverhead, 2007), 50.
 8. Gilgamesh is one of the earliest examples of epic literature. It was written in Akkadian and had a wide distribution throughout Mesopotamia. Scholars have long noted a literary connection between the *Epic of Gilgamesh* and Genesis. See Alexander Heidel, *The Gilgamesh Epic and Old Testament Parallels* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1946), and Jack M. Sasson, “Gilgamesh Epic,” in *Anchor Bible Dictionary*, 2:1024–27.
 9. *Epic of Gilgamesh* XI:113–26, trans. E. A. Speiser, in *Ancient Near Eastern Texts Related to the Old Testament*, ed. James B. Pritchard (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1969), 94 (emphasis and brackets in original).
 10. *First Enoch* is one of three books attributed to but certainly not written by Enoch. It is a composite work with different parts being written by different authors at different times, probably during the intertestamental period. The original language may have been either Hebrew or Aramaic while the surviving text is written in ancient Ethiopic. See Hugh Nibley, *Enoch the Prophet* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book and FARMS, 1986), 5–7; and George W. E. Nickelsburg, “Enoch, First Book of,” in *Anchor Bible Dictionary*, 2:508–16.
 11. *First Enoch* 65:1–5, trans. E. Isaac, in *The Old Testament Pseudepigrapha*, ed. James H. Charlesworth (New York: Doubleday, 1983 and 1985), 1:45.
 12. By the time of Christ, the phrase *law and prophets* was used to indicate the whole of what we now call the Old Testament. See, for example, Matthew 5:17; 7:12; 11:13; 22:40; Luke 16:16; 24:44.
 13. The wording of this passage is different in Joseph Smith's final corrected manuscript: “Wherefore, Enoch knew, & looked upon their wickedness, & their misery, & wept, & stretched forth his arms, and he beheld eternity, & his bowels yearned, & all eternity shook.” Faulring, Jackson, and Matthews, *Joseph Smith's New Translation of the Bible*, 619.
 14. Ed Noort, “Stories of the Great Flood,” in *Interpretations of the Flood*, ed. Florentino García Martínez and Gerard P. Luttikhuisen (Leiden: Brill, 2006), 7.
 15. Noort, “Stories of the Great Flood,” 7.
 16. *Epic of Gilgamesh* XI:96–107, in *Ancient Near Eastern Texts*, 94 (brackets in original).
 17. *First Enoch* 54:7, in *Old Testament Pseudepigrapha*, 1:38.
 18. The Hebrew verbs here are forms of the roots *nasa*² meaning “to lift, lift up” and *ram* meaning “to be high above.” See Ludwig Koehler and Walter Baumgartner, *The Hebrew and Aramaic Lexicon of the Old Testament* (Leiden: Brill, 2001), 2:724 and 3:1202.
 19. *First Enoch* 67:1–2, in *Old Testament Pseudepigrapha*, 1:46.
 20. The Oxford English Dictionary defines *meridian* as “the point or period of highest development or perfection, after which decline sets in; culmination, full splendour.” *The Compact Edition of the Oxford English Dictionary* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1971), s.v. “meridian.”
 21. For an English translation, see Paul L. Maier, *Josephus: The Essential Writings* (Grand Rapids, MI: Kregel, 1988), 339–78.
 22. See Russell H. Ball, “An Hypothesis concerning the Three Days of Darkness among the Nephites,” *JBMS* 2/1 (1993): 107–23.
 23. Koehler and Baumgartner, *Hebrew and Aramaic Lexicon of the Old Testament*, 1:679.
 24. Just as the Book of Moses is taken from the JST of Genesis, Joseph Smith—Matthew is the JST version of Matthew 24.
 25. Recorded in Joseph Smith Diary, by Willard Richards (15 October 1843, Sunday morning), in *The Words of Joseph Smith*, ed. Andrew F. Ehat and Lyndon W. Cook (Provo, UT: BYU Religious Studies Center, 1980), 256.
 26. Faulring, Jackson, and Matthews, *Joseph Smith's New Translation of the Bible*, 109, emphasis added.
 27. Ezra Taft Benson, “Flooding the Earth with the Book of Mormon,” *Ensign*, November 1988, 4.
 28. Robert Alter, *The Art of Biblical Narrative* (New York: Basic Books, 1981), 179.
 29. Alter, *Art of Biblical Narrative*, 181.