

TEACHINGS OF THE BOOK OF MORMON

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Mormon 2–5

Conflicts between the Nephites and the Lamanites

From now on we really plunge into the depths. We're on Mormon 2:13, and what a powerful statement this is: "My joy was vain." Remember, he thought they would become righteous again because they were sorrowing, but that didn't work at all. "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."

We know the stock market has crashed numbers of times, but do we learn anything from it? Do we repent at all, anything like that? There is this tragic situation of no repentance—no disavowal of misbehavior or anything like that when crimes are committed. We've done no wrong, we've made mistakes, we've had bad advice, we've been misinformed. We've done it all for the good of this, that, and the other, but no one ever really admits that we've been in a state of awful wickedness. That's what brings it on. The classic example of this we have with us now. We never knew such a perfect case would exist as what we do have now. What does this fit perfectly? The sorrowing of the damned. Sorrow for their sins, what they have done, what's brought this on them? No, but "because the Lord would not always suffer them to take happiness in sin." What's the attitude of people with AIDS? They sorrow, they suffer, they want a cure. We have to do something. They have to be saved, but never do they show any inclination to repent of what brought the thing on. If we only had the cure, then they could continue in their own ways and feel happy about it. They sort of resent being unable to do that. So this is a peculiar case in which this applies all the way. They sorrow, but it's the sorrow of the damned and they sorrow just for one reason—that they can't go on doing the very thing that's brought them into this terrible path. If they had a chance, they'd go right on doing it forever. The Lord must call a halt here sometime. So now he's going to do it.

In the next verse we have another psychological note, you'll notice: "They did curse God, and wish to die. Nevertheless they would struggle with the sword for their lives." There's another one, you see. "What should we have," said Hitler, "a terror without end, or a terrible end." We have the choice of a terrible end or a terror without end. That's the situation they live with; they'll go on struggling to the last ditch. But, they got both. They got both the terrible ending and the terror without end. The reason was that they were beyond repentance, as we read in the next verse. This is even more horrible. Notice the mounting despair here.

This is the question we have to ask as we read the Book of Mormon here. Does this have to be? We see it's happening, but does it have to happen with us? Remember, this comes to you, O you Gentiles, that you may be wiser than we have been. Now these things are happening just exactly in the grim declension in which we see them occurring today. This horrible thing is said here now, that the Lord should ever withdraw his grace; "I saw that the day of grace was passed with them." Here is *atē*. That's what *atē* is, the point of no return. You know about the four stages in Attic tragedy, I mentioned, by Sophocles, Euripides, and Aeschylus. The four stages are *olbia* and *koros* and *hybris* and *atē*. *Olbia* is when you're prosperous, you have everything, and you're living a happy life. That's happiness. Then with that you go on and you get full. Today, overweight is our main problem. We eat when we're not hungry, we drink when we're not thirsty, and that's small pleasures. See, we just talked about that with the fasting. In 4 Nephi when they lived as they

should, they fasted constantly, which means not eating what you shouldn't, or what you don't need.

Then you get *koros*. That means crammed full. *Koros* is when you're fat and you've had too much. Then comes the terrible state. Things have been going so well with you and you're so prosperous. That's the famous word you all know—*hybris* is presumption. [You think] you're responsible for your greatness. "I have done this thing." Then comes a vanity which is fatal, and then comes a point of no return which is *atē*. That's when you do everything you can to get yourself off the stage. That's when the villain or the hero, as the case may be (it's a heroic tragedy), cannot be saved. The last words that Clytemnestra speaks to Oedipus are, "You poor thing." This is the only thing I can say to you. He's completely loony. His grandeur has gone to his head, and he won't take any counsel from anyone. She says, that's all I can say and all I ever will. She's finally seen the light, because that's *atē*. That's the point of no return, and you're finished. The only problem then is not to keep you lingering, because there's no point to continuing the suffering. It doesn't have to go on forever and ever—that's terrible. So, the problem is to get rid of you, and so you do it. You have a sort of fascination in which everything you do is the very thing that will accelerate your demise. You do all the wrong things, all the things that will get rid of you—the right things, in this case. That's called *atē*. Have we reached a stage of *atē*? Here they've reached it, you'll notice. God's grace is always extended, but what do you have here? This horrible statement, "I saw that the day of grace was passed with them, both temporally and spiritually." They're not going to be able to get back on their feet economically or any other way. They go together. It's an awful statement.

And then, "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." This mass destruction [is evident]. We've mentioned the age of extermination we live in—how many thousands of acres are being destroyed of the world every minute and how many hundreds of species are disappearing every week, etc. We're ringing down the curtain now; everything is folding up. This is an age of extermination. There have been such things, and nothing makes this clearer than the Book of Mormon (we get this when we get to the Jaredites very soon) and the Doctrine and Covenants, and the Pearl of Great Price. That's what they emphasize. We've been through this cycle before. It's not a single cycle, as everybody used to suppose, on the old linear evolutionary line. We just evolve and progress—oh, no, you don't. You periodically collapse, and then you go through the misery all over again because we all have to be tested by the same tests. But, they were "heaped up as dung." Well, the nearest thing to that would be a nuclear situation. It had to be mass slaughter, but they did go crazy. They were wild about this.

Then another terrible thing happens. The Nephites try to disengage. You feel it here in these fateful words. We've been asking the question all along—where is it all leading? Well, this is the answer. The day of grace is passed. When Troy is just about to fall, the king says, well, this is the last day, and the time we can never avoid. We can't avoid it anymore—it's come. We were Trojans. We'd put it this way today—now we're history. Well, we're soon to become history. It was nice and pleasant history, but there's reassurance here. We're being told this because there's a chance it doesn't have to happen again—though it will.

Well, the Nephites try to disengage. A very interesting thing is going to happen. They began "to flee before the Lamanites . . . to the land of Jashon." They've had enough of fighting the Lamanites just because they're Lamanites, or fighting the Nephites just because they are Nephites. The game of good guys and bad guys doesn't make sense anymore. The withdrawal becomes a rout here.

Now they go to the city in the north where Ammaron had deposited the records, the city of Shim. I brought along a dictionary. They went to the hill Shim to the city Shim. They're falling back

toward the north, and this is what we read in the dictionary. I think this interruption is worth it because these little veristic touches in the Book of Mormon are really something. *Šaʾm*, which is related to *šim*, means the northern region. The point is they go to the hill Shim, which was to the north quite a ways. They've been falling back, always toward the north and east. That's their western frontier anyway. They go to the place where Ammaron hid the records, which he said was in the hill Shim up in the north. Verse 17: "And behold I had gone according to the word of Ammaron, and taken the plates of Nephi." Fifteen years had passed. He was now around 24 years old. Verse 18: "And upon the plates of Nephi I did make a full account of all the wickedness and abominations [Where are these plates? We don't have them.]; but upon these plates I did forbear to make a full account." This is why he's not going to harrow up our souls here with giving us the whole story after they disengage. A full description of the plates would be overdoing it and would just make us sick. This is another powerful statement here. I mean they just ring like successive strokes of doom, don't they.

This one now, "I did forbear to make a full account of their wickedness and abominations [because], 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." What a powerful statement, and how powerfully put, too. The interesting thing is, this used to sound like a very fanciful and climactic statement, like the guy had some imagination. But just consider today how many adults can make that statement, in Lebanon, in Ethiopia, or in Afghanistan. I mean people who have grown up to about twenty-four years old as Mormon was. Or in El Salvador or in Cambodia. You can name a dozen places (like Ireland, for that matter), whose people have seen nothing all the days of their life but a continual scene of wickedness and abomination. In all those places this is continuous. And in our own inner cities there are many young people who could say that—I've seen nothing but a continual sight of wickedness and abomination before my eyes. He may have been sitting in front of the TV all that time. He could say the same thing—nothing but a scene of crime and sex and big money and above all violence and murder all over the place. We just love it. That's your prime TV, "a continual scene of wickedness . . . since I have been sufficient to behold the ways of man." The power with which Joseph expresses those things! The Book of Mormon is something, isn't it. So his [Mormon's] heart is "filled with sorrow because of their wickedness." He has not had a happy life. As I said, many people of twenty-four can make the same statement today.

So they're driven north. Here it comes again in verse 20: "And it came to pass that we were driven forth until we had come northward to the land which was called Shem." See, there's north again.

"What language is Shem? Is that a Hebrew word?"

It's basic Semitic [and means about the same thing] in all Semitic languages. *Šəmôl* is the left hand; *Šaʾm* is the old name for Damascus, the north city—well, it still is, as a matter of fact. *Šəmôl* is north one when you're facing east. It applies in Egyptian or almost any Semitic language. This is a Lebanese dictionary; it used to be Palestinian, the Arabic that Nephi's people would have spoken, being Transjordan people who were half Manasseh. We needn't go into that, but he mentions again here that it's northward.

Notice they're hunted and driven—it's a rout. You'd be surprised that they are going to come back and win the whole thing back again. Are they in for a happy surprise. It's never too late, you might say. They make a big stand in the northern city of Shem, and then Mormon turns the tide in verses 24–26. "And my words did arouse them somewhat to vigor, insomuch that they did not flee from before the Lamanites." Their great leader was able to turn the tide (and this has happened before), but he's without hope. The interesting thing is that the military situation is not desperate; it's very much in their favor. They're going to win three big victories in a row now.

They're going to take everything back, including the land Desolation. They had no need for despair militarily, but that's not the problem, is it? We're properly armed and ready and marshalled for war; we've made our Cold War preparations on and on and on. That's not the problem at all; that's not going to solve a thing. That wasn't the issue [in the Book of Mormon either].

Notice in verse 27 that they actually conquer everything. "We did go forth against the Lamanites and the robbers of Gadianton, until we had again taken possession of the lands of our inheritance"—the whole works. This certainly makes Mormon the greatest general in the Book of Mormon because of the things he's able to do. The Lamanites and the Gadiantons, the bad guys, were willing to accept a treaty which was good for eight years, it says here. They were willing to accept terms in a treaty. "We did get the lands of our inheritance divided." This was the agreement in verse 29—a settlement that the lands to the north of the narrow pass were to belong to the Nephites. They fled up there, so now that they're there they're going to keep that. And what divides them is a narrow pass. Now the Isthmus of Panama is not a narrow pass; it's 20 miles wide. We're talking about the great narrow passes which allow either side to control them, you see. The Nephites could stop the Lamanites there, and the Lamanites could stop the Nephites there. This was the ideal place to make the boundary for the treaty here. You think of the famous passes like the Cilician Gates, the Khyber Pass, the Caucasion Gates, the Sankt Gotthard, or Echo Canyon here, or Cumberland Gap, or Thermopylae. There are narrow passes that control history, and the Isthmus of Panama is not one of them. Let's not get into Book of Mormon geography. There was a pass somewhere where they control it. The narrow passage was the one that the Nephites or Lamanites could hold. Of course, that's the best possible place to secure by treaty, which we learn at the beginning of the next chapter here. So the land south belongs to the Lamanites, the land north belongs to the Nephites, and there's a pass between them, which can be controlled by both, like Khyber Pass.

Then in the next chapter [they have] ten years of preparation and cold war now. After a victory like that they have good chances, but [it is] without repentance. We'll get them this time, we say in a cold war. ". . . preparing their lands and their arms against the time of battle." Cold war—that's what we do. We get more missiles than they get. We're preparing the big thing, you know. Then the king of the Lamanites sends his challenge. He sends a formal challenge in verse 4. Well, what goes on? The thing is, you should use the time repenting, but they had no intention of doing that. Verse 2: "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." It's never too late here. He had withdrawn his spirit. [Mormon] thought the day of grace was passed with them, but still the Lord holds out his hand to them. But "it was in vain." They wouldn't listen. He gave them a chance for repentance. That's what he calls it, "a chance for repentance. And behold they did harden their hearts." They didn't take it. Because of the victory they thought they could do it themselves. They thought it was a military problem, as we do today.

Verse 4: "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." Now that's the chivalric manner of war which was throughout the ancient world. You'll notice it especially in the book of Ether. But here it is all strictly according to form. It's a formal challenge, an ancient tradition. General Taylor who commanded the 101st Airborne Division was of the old school. He was the old heroic do-and-dash, sword-in-hand sort of guy. The first objective was to take Carentan. We held up for a whole week in Carentan. He said, I respect the colonel who is defending Carentan. I want to invite him to tea and congratulate him. So I was commissioned to take a white flag and go over and invite the colonel to come and have tea which General Taylor before we blasted them out. We couldn't blast them because they blasted us out. It was back and forth and back and forth at Carentan. They called it [the tea party] off at the last minute, but he was determined to have it. Well, that's the heroic, chivalric way of doing it. That's the chess game idea of battle [practiced during the] seventeenth century and eighteenth century when Prince Eugene or Prince

Bernadotte would be on one side one day one year and the other side the next, giving them his advice and counsel as a professional.

The Lamanite king sends them terms. Throughout this, you notice, the Nephites always are given a choice—they're given a chance. Can't we talk about this? Can't we do something about this? The Lord is lengthening it out as long as he can. He's giving them as much rope as possible, and they're going to hang themselves on it just as sure as anything.

Notice in verse 5 the narrow pass, "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." Well, Desolation goes with it. It's a place of battle, a place of war. It's a place not being farmed or densely occupied. A good defense zone is what it is, you see. But land Desolation—that's the old word *ḥorba* or *ḥōreb*. Muslims divide the world into the *Dār al-Islām*, the pacified world, and the *Dār al-Harb*, the people who are dedicated to war and destruction. That's what they do when they conquer. So you get a very good picture. See, here's the pass and the desolate country around there. They'd fought lots of wars there. It was the natural place for battle. There are such places in Europe, as you know. I mentioned those passes, every one of which has been the scene of many battles.

The Lamanite king sent an epistle that they were preparing to come to battle again. Well, Mormon's people gathered themselves in Desolation and fortified themselves with all their force and beat them. That was sensible because they were on the defensive. Clausewitz' first rule of war is always be on the defensive. The defensive always has the stronger side. That's a general rule. You might find some exceptions to that, but not with Clausewitz. He says you always have the advantage. Mormon will tell us what happened there and why they lost later on.

Well, they beat them, and in verse 8 they beat them again. A great victory now. They slew a great number of them. Here are two victories in a row; the Nephites were doing all right. Mormon was wrong all along here [it appears]. They decided they were unbeatable because of this great thing, and revenge becomes the motive. Verse 9: "And now, because of this great thing . . . 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." Here is the standard scenario of the Western, of course. The bad guys do bad things for the first half, and the good guys get revenge for the second half. And we love that revenge—catching up with them and shooting them or blowing them up, etc. That revenge is the main scene—the Green Beret motif, you see. John Wayne or someone is the good guy who doesn't want war or anything like that. Then they [the bad guys] do something very very bad. Then the thing we all sit on the edge of our seats and relish is the revenge that follows, because innocent people have suffered, etc. Then he's not Mr. Nice Guy anymore, then you really go to it. This is the theme of countless police stories, detective stories, and Westerns. Mr. Good Guy goes and cleans up the bad guy, but only after he's been driven to the extreme. He has to avenge the blood of his brethren.

Well, how about this noble motive of avenging the blood of your brethren—the private eye plot, the police officer whose pal gets shot, etc.? Is not avenging the blood of your brethren an ideal? Isn't it an obligation? When they started winning, they made it a big thing. That's what they were going to do. "And they did swear by the heavens [you know they're very religious about this—for God and country. "Kill a Gook for God," as we used to say], 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." Finally they're going to settle the Lamanite question once and for all with a big battle, because they've got them on the run now. But they shouldn't have done that.

And from that time on, Mormon says, I was through. Now here was their greatest general, the great hero, the one who had won the battles, etc. This was the ultimate folly, the last straw. The

leader renounced his commission. The [Nephites] were still wicked, but wicked men can never be on the right side, including ourselves. He became a conscientious objector, you see. It's not the side you're on at all. We said for years—Noriega's an s.o.b., a murderer, and a thug—but he's our murderer and thug. We used him, you see. He's a villain, but he's our villain. The side you're on makes a difference. Well, it doesn't at all [actually]; it's equal. Notice, he's said it twice about the Lamanites and Nephites—nothing to choose between them. They were equally bad.

He said, "Behold, I had led them, notwithstanding their wickedness I had led them many times to battle." The great-hearted Mormon. Why? Because I loved them, he said; I had to do it, "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." They're not going to do anything without faith. Mormon was the true hero. He was the true patriot, but he would not say, "my country, right or wrong." My country may not always be right, but my country right or wrong. He wouldn't say that. As soon as they were wrong, he said, I laid down my commission. I became a conscientious objector, an idle onlooker. I wouldn't have any part of it, he said. He went all out to make it right, but what can you do without faith? He says he had no faith here. (What other wisdom have I written down here?)

He gave them three chances. "And thrice have I delivered them out of the hands of their enemies, and they have repented not of their sins." They didn't get the point at all. But then when they reached the point that they swore "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." I repeat, what could be a loftier, more noble ideal than avenging yourselves in the manner of Rambo for the blood of your brethren? That's the theme we're all wrapped up in today, and this, he says, is going to wipe them out. This is what they should never have done, because it has been forbidden. "Vengeance is mine [the Lord says], and I will repay." And from that time, Mormon says, "I utterly refused to go up against mine enemies." He wouldn't fight at all. Well, well. It's very serious when the general won't fight.

He becomes the conscientious objector here. And what does he do? He becomes an idle witness. He becomes a reporter now. He's going to report the whole thing for our benefit, so it must somehow apply if this is the work he does. Verse 16: "I did stand as an idle witness to manifest unto the world the things which I saw and heard [by idle he means he's busy taking notes, but he's not fighting], according to the manifestations of the Spirit which had testified of things to come. Therefore I write unto you, Gentiles [ah hah! It is addressed to us; we're the Gentiles on the land], 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."

Remember how the house of Israel shall be judged. This is what the issue is; it has nothing to do with all this fighting back and forth, such as you find in Israel today. He writes for all of Israel in the last days. You do not divide into armies as good people and bad people. There is no dark side and bright side. Read these verses 17 to 19 very carefully here where it says [verse 20]: "And these things doth the Spirit manifest unto me." Well, what's the end of it all? What's it all getting to, and why is he telling us? This is it, you see. The issue is something totally different from all this. All this is just a distraction. This is Satan's way of engaging ourselves and getting ourselves committed here, because this is the thing you must be thinking about. "Ye must all stand before the judgment-seat of Christ." Every soul—back to the old individualism that's so strong in 3 Nephi. Every individual for himself. "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." Every individual, and that's the real issue, not which side is winning and all this glory, flag-waving, drum beating, etc.

Verse 21: “And also that ye may believe the gospel of Jesus Christ” and also that the Jews shall have another witness. According to these verses, you cannot claim a reward for being on one side or the other. Well, we say, we need an enemy. America needs an enemy, and he has to be the embodiment of evil so that we can go on being the good guys without having to repent. No one mentions that word *repent*; that’s a naughty word. You’ll lose any election if you mention it—believe me.

So we come to the next sad chapter, and the Nephites take the offensive now. Things are going to turn up now, you’ll see. They hadn’t stopped winning yet. “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 [the Nephites were driven back]. And while they were yet weary, a fresh army of the Lamanites did come upon them.” The Lamanites took the city Desolation back again. So here’s this see-saw war. They’re winning it back again. So what the Nephites do is consolidate, naturally. “And the remainder did flee and join the inhabitants of the city Teancum.” Now they’re using a silly system of check dams, so to speak. You have a check dam which doesn’t need to hold back much water, but it will hold back enough, and then another check dam, etc. The only thing is if you have an exceptional rain, one check dam breaks, and that compounds a rush of water on the next which was not built to contain that. So that’s overrun. Once the top check dam or any of them breaks, the whole thing is wiped out. This is what happens here. They started checking things this way. They’d dig in; “the remainder did flee and join the inhabitants of the city Teancum” so that when Teancum fell, it was a bigger calamity than ever. And here’s the fable for our time. I say this is the number one principle of our good friend Clausewitz here. Never, never do the foolish thing of going up [to war] if you don’t have to, absolutely. Deuteronomy 2:5–17 is very good about aggressors.

Verse 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.” But they took the aggression and went over. They had to punish the [Lamanites]. We were half-way through the Korean War and there was peace in the air when one of our generals said, “We have not punished them enough. We must continue the war so we can punish them.” Well, the Lord says here, “But, behold, the judgments of God will overtake the wicked; and it is by the wicked that the wicked are punished.” They’ll be punished all right, but pray that you won’t be the punisher of anyone, because it’s 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.”

In verse 8 we get a third victory for the Nephites. They take possession of the city of Teancum. “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 then went forth . . . and took possession again of the city Desolation.” They’ve got it back again. Back and forth it goes. This is one of those like the first day of the battle in which six hundred thousand men were killed—something like that—and they gained about forty yards. That’s the kind of generalship we had, and we still do.

And so they took everything back and “took possession again of the city Desolation.” And the Lamanites came again against them, back and forth, “and yet the Nephites repented not of the evil they had done, but persisted in their wickedness continually. 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. . . . Every heart was hardened, so that they delighted in the shedding of blood continually.”

Verse 12: “And there never had been so great wickedness among all the children of Lehi”—war as the supreme wickedness here. Ah, but the Lamanites start taking it back now, in verse 13: “The Lamanites did take possession of the city Desolation [how many times had Desolation changed hands now? There are many cities like that]. . . . And they did also march forward against the city

Teancum, and did drive the inhabitants forth out of her, and did take many prisoners [of war] both women and children, and did offer them up as sacrifices unto their idol gods.”

We mentioned their religion. We’re getting into the Mesoamerican Mayan, and especially Aztec, practice of mass sacrifice of prisoners on a tremendous scale. They did it to the point where it reduced the population so much. There are some very interesting studies made of that recently. At the drop of a hat, prisoners had to be sacrificed. It was not just a sacrifice that was symbolic once in a while; then it became an orgy of blood. That’s what they used their sacred towers for after that [development]—sacrifices unto their idol gods. That’s what they did. We’re already moving into the Mesoamerican horrors there. Well, this was a real outrage. The Nephites certainly have a righteous rage here in verse 15. They had a right to be mad at this. The Nephites win again, and they have eight years of peace, after all that. Well, this goes on and on. See, they could repent any time here.

This is another one of those statements in which the Book of Mormon, as epic writing, achieves real height with lofty expressions. The four conditions that Matthew Arnold said are found only in Homer you find in writings in the Book of Mormon here—the nobility, the speed, the loftiness, the simplicity, and the directness of language. He said you find that only in Homer, but you find it in the Book of Mormon, too. For example, [Mormon] says “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.”

I talked about this age of extermination, and that’s what happens. Whole species, whole areas of the world, whole populations have suddenly just melted away like the “dew before the sun.” They haven’t been attacked by anything of particular violence except big corporations and their exploitations, armies, plagues, and lots of famine. But we don’t pay much attention to it. It happens here, it happens there, and they begin to just disappear “even as a dew before the sun.” And great institutions [decline]. Some of you may have seen yesterday that article about the Exxon Valdez. Exxon started out doing everything right, but they just got lax in all regards, and everybody just let them go ahead. Nothing can happen [they thought]. They paid no attention to the lanes or the ice. The Coast Guard stopped giving signals. They could have set up more radars, but it was expensive, so they didn’t. All sorts of things they could have done, and they just didn’t care. The captain went to sleep, or was drunk—it made no difference. Only one man on the deck of this enormous ship as big as a city [paid attention to what was happening]. They’re all overworked because a small crew saves money. If anyone got sick, there was no one to take his place, etc. Well, there’s no villain there or anything—it’s just [apathy].

As I mentioned before, I’d like to read to you from some of the Roman satirists on why Rome collapsed, but it’s generally agreed that this is what happened. All the old studies end up the same way. Idris Bell calls it “a fatty degeneration of the intellect.” I used to talk an awful lot about the decline and fall of Rome; that was my own special study. Rostovtzeff said they just couldn’t think of anything new—it was just the same old stuff. I’ve written some things on rhetoric and the effect that public relations had on changing values and making people feel secure when there’s no security. Playing it with smoke and mirrors and words, is what you’re doing. A very highly developed study [indicates that they had] public relations gimmicks which were better than ours today, and just destroyed the ancient world. And so it goes. It just melted away. You can’t point to one particular villain.

Well, again the Lamanites come and beat the Nephites in verse 19, and they fled again to the city of Boaz. Verse 21: “And when they had come the second time, the Nephites were driven and slaughtered with an exceeding great slaughter; their women and their children were again sacrificed unto idols.” Now the sacrifice. What will we do with these people? Well, we’ll sacrifice them and make a virtue of it, and that’s what they did.

Verse 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.” So the migration has become a rout, and everybody has joined in it. It’s an irresistible rush when [invaders] come—people pushing baby buggies, hauling wagons (cars break down, etc.), carrying things like old junk and grandfather clocks on their backs. People do the strangest things when they evacuate.

Notice where they’re going: “And now I, Mormon . . . did go to the hill Shim, and did take up all the records which Ammaron had hid up unto the Lord.” Hiding the records was a sign that things were over. Now it’s time to move them and hide them. He’s going to move them to Cumorah—that’s where they’re going to end up, I’m sure. This is far up in the north here.

Well, here’s a remarkable thing about Mormon. After all that the great heart of Mormon [becomes evident]. A truly tragic figure, he’s larger than life here. He says [Mormon 5:1], “I did go forth among the Nephites, and did repent of the oath.” He had taken an oath that he’d never go and fight again because the Lord had forbidden them to seek revenge. He said he took an oath, but he broke it because his love for his people was so great—talk about a hero. “. . . 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.” He’s the last man they trust. Here’s a man we can finally trust. Mormon will solve it. He’s pulled us out before; he’ll get us out again, [they said] a la Napoleon. The French rallied to him again and again, and he pulled them out more than once. “For they looked upon me as though I could deliver them from their afflictions [as though I were the one who could save them—it’s very flattering]. “But behold, I was without hope.”

Notice again, here is the essence of tragedy—the fact that there is no hope here. He does the heroic thing, but he’s devoted to a lost cause. He dies for the cause. He knows it’s not going to do any good, and yet he does it for the people—the truly heroic figure. “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 [at the last minute they could have repented, but they wouldn’t repent. As I said, *repent* is a dirty word in our language; we don’t use it at all], but did struggle for their lives without calling upon that Being who created them.” As I said before, you tend not to.

So they flee to the city of Jordan, “driven back that they did not take the city at that time.” He sets up a defense in depth that worked so very well for Moroni. He invented the defense in depth, which was very effective. “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 the Nephites, which strongholds did cut them off .” We won’t go into the strategy of that, but it was invented by Moroni. It was very effective, and it was the only thing that could stop a blitzkrieg in World War II. The armored divisions could form a defense in depth, where they couldn’t bypass you and leave you. They’d have to take each one, and that slowed them down and made all the difference.

Verse 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.” This is a rout, a migration in size. In 1939 and 1945 the Russians retreated all the way from Central Europe clear back to Stalingrad. Half of Europe, an enormous continent, was evacuated. They fell back all the time, and they burned. It was black earth. They burned the towns and villages. This has been done before. Their towns, villages, and cities were burned. Well, it was done at the siege of Moscow—that’s the way they stopped Napoleon, as we know. Napoleon got there with a blitzkrieg, but then he couldn’t get back because there was nothing to live on. The Russians had destroyed the crops and burned the villages. This is what they had done here. Joseph Smith knew a lot about these things.

Verse 6: “And it came to pass that in the three hundred and eightieth year the Lamanites did come 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.” They are

hopelessly outnumbered here—this is something out of *Star Wars*. It really has epic dimensions, doesn't it.

So all they could do was run again. They took to flight. The person who can go fastest is the only one that will be saved; it's every man for himself now. "Those whose flight was swifter than the Lamanites' did escape." That was it. You had only one object—every man for himself. Get out as fast as you can—just run. Well, they're not going to win any wars anymore. They're not going to check them anymore. "And those whose flight did not exceed the Lamanites' were swept down and destroyed." They were run over like a tank division coming up behind them.

Verse 8: "And now behold, I, Mormon, do not desire to harrow up the souls of men in . . . such an awful scene of blood and carnage [anymore—this is enough. Haven't I told you enough?], . . . but I, knowing that these things must surely be made known," or you're doomed to repeat them. The main point is this: if we ignore the lessons of history, we're doomed to repeat them. These things must be made known. Why should these awful things be made known, and be made known unto us? As Brother Benson says, it's particularly for us in our time. Well, that must be very, very relevant, so we must pay very close attention here. What can we do about it? He's going to tell us what we can do about it. ". . . and also that a knowledge of these things must come unto the remnant of these people, and also unto the Gentiles [now we come to an amazing passage here, and this is what the Gentiles are going to do], who the Lord hath said should scatter this people, and this people should be counted as naught among them." [This describes how the United States] treated the Indians, and this is what happened. The Indians were very strong. They were half the inhabitants of the continent in Joseph Smith's day. But this is what was going to happen. "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." If I told you the whole thing, it would cripple you. It would weaken your hands, as the Lachish Letters say at the time of Lehi. The prophet telling the people too many things weakens their hands. They become slack and helpless. It has a paralyzing effect. I don't want to tell you too much, he says, "that ye might not have too great sorrow."

Verses 10–13: "And now behold, this I speak unto their seed, and also to the Gentiles, . . . 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. Now these things are written unto the remnant of the house of Jacob [these are the Indians]; 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. . . . And this is the commandment which I have received [I'm not going to give these records just to anybody]. . . . 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."

You get a strong impression that the Jews [I'm part Jew myself] are not going to accept it until they've got a good beating, too. After all, they're in very bad condition right now. They're not only outnumbered, but they have extremely difficult problems to solve. What are they going to do? They must be brought low, apparently, and this is what it tells us here, "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 [that one back there and this one here, as far as the inheritance goes—so there's going to be more roughhouse ahead, we can be sure of that], . . . for this people shall be scattered, and shall become a dark, a filthy, and a loathsome people." I brought something really hot, but I won't be able to read it. Again, these are common terms which do not refer to race at all and have nothing to do with the ethnic. This is a term that is used in the prose anciently to describe [people in negative terms]. You can talk about a kike, a yid, a wop, a dago, or anything like that. They're described in the same terms. This people 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 they are driven about as chaff before the wind.” Various things like this happened in 1832. The great march, the Trail of Tears from Florida into the Oklahomas, happened under President Jackson in 1832.

Verse 17: “They were once a delightsome people [see, *delightsome* is what they were, which means *cultivated* and *desirable*; it has nothing to do with race or anything like that to be delightsome]. . . . But now, behold, they are led about by Satan, even as chaff is driven before the wind.” They have no purpose, no direction, no control. They follow their lusts and their lists and they do what they want to, as Satan leads them about like chaff before the wind.

Verse 19: “And behold, the Lord hath reserved their blessings, which they might have received in the land, for the Gentiles.” And at that point, we’ll grind to a dead stop, because there’s something I want to say the next time before we get to the Jaredites. But be of good cheer. The mere fact that this is given to us shows that there is hope. There’s hope for somebody—you can be sure of that.