

TEACHINGS OF THE BOOK OF MORMON

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Helaman 13–3 Nephi 2

The Hopelessness in Wickedness

The Twelve Apostles at Far West, Missouri, April 1838

Now, we're beginning to learn a lesson that these Book of Mormon people were having a hard time learning—that things do [change]. It's not always going to be the same. They thought it was, you know. We're in chapter 13 of Helaman. We got down to where he's talking about blind guides. They lifted him [the false prophet] up, remember. From the Chilam Balam—that's the oldest record we have from Central America, the Mayan record—when a prophet is approved by the people, they dress him in costly apparel and carry him on their shoulders in a sedan chair around the town. It says the very same thing [in Helaman 13:28]: Ye will lift him up, give him your substance, and clothe him in costly apparel. Everything follows the customs.

How far can public relations and rhetoric be carried here? We're going to find out. Verse 29: "Yea, how long will ye suffer yourselves to be led by foolish and blind guides. . . . He hath cursed the land because of your iniquity [are there no limits here?] And behold, the time cometh that he curseth your riches, that they become slippery." It's a very interesting phenomenon of riches. It seems you can have them one day and don't have them the next. The richest American, the first billionaire we had, was Commodore Vanderbilt. He was by far the richest man in the world, yet his grandchildren are all dead broke. It didn't last that long. They used to have a saying in America: "From shirtsleeves to shirtsleeves, three generations." You start out in shirtsleeves; the next generation is wealthy and doesn't know what to do with it, and you're back to shirtsleeves again. "He curseth your riches, that they become slippery, that ye cannot hold them; and in the days of your poverty ye cannot retain them."

It's a funny thing that happens; well, just look at the Dow and what it does. We don't know where all that money goes all of a sudden when it drops 508 points in one afternoon. And a lot of very rich people are very poor all of a sudden. That happens you see. Verse 32: "And in the days of your poverty ye shall cry unto the Lord [well, that's what poverty is for, among other things]. . . . Your destruction is made sure; and then shall ye weep and howl in that day . . . and say: O that I had repented."

Have you all heard the Leroy Robertson *Book of Mormon Oratorio*? Oh, you must get it—it's tremendous. This is a great climax when this comes out. "O that we had repented"—marvelous. "O that I had repented . . . that we had remembered the Lord our God in the day that he gave us our riches, and then they would not have become slippery that we should lose them; for behold, our riches are gone from us." And notice there's no security anywhere anymore, anymore than there is here [in the United States]. Of course we think of October '89 and October '29 when the same thing happened. But here [verse 34]: "Behold, we lay a tool here and on the morrow it is gone; and behold, our swords are taken from us in the day we have sought them for battle."

What do you do? Well, every year we have to buy new garden tools where I live. They're gone. We put them in the garage, and the next year there's nothing. We have to start all over again. This has gone on year after year after year. You lay a tool here and it's gone when you want it, and the same thing with weapons. What happens then? They've slipped away from us. Our treasures have slipped away; everything seems slippery. There's a curse on the land. You can't hold on to anything, and this is exactly what happens. Everybody lifts everything. "All things are become slippery, and we cannot hold them," he says.

Then the great fear comes. Verse 37: "Behold, we are surrounded by demons." At the end of the fourth and fifth centuries the very same thing happened in the ancient world, all throughout Europe and the Mediterranean. People were seized by this terrible fear. It was a strange kind of fear. There was the great fear of 1789 (there's a new book out on it now) in France mostly. People were suddenly seized by a terrible fear. They didn't know what it was; it just drove them wild. Well, the same thing happened in 1384, all down the Rhine Valley, where there were the *Totentänze*. People just went crazy. With the Children's Crusade earlier than that [there were] these same social diseases.

The most famous, the first one, is described by Aristotle. It's the Abderite fever. Aristotle was a native of Abdera, you know. Well, one day they were giving the tragedy "The Madness of Heracles." There's a scene in which Heracles, visiting a hospitable home, suddenly goes mad and smashes all the furniture. He does it offstage. It's very interesting. The Greeks living in those ancient and savage times were much more considerate and rational than we are. They followed the order, again from Aristotle, "Let not Medea slay her children before the populace." All murders—and there were lots of murders—took place offstage. They were described by a messenger usually, but they never had the bloodshed or the murder or the torture before the public. And here, of course, it's the big attraction of the play. This is why we turn on the TV, to see that, the very thing that was forbidden by the Greeks. It wasn't a decent thing to do.

Well anyway [back to] this Abderite fever. It was a very hot day in July or August, and Heracles started smashing the furniture. The people suddenly went mad. They started taking off their clothes and yelling and howling. They ran wild through the city, and it spread from city to city. It became the popular practice to take all the furniture you had, all the junk you had, to the central square of the city, put it in a big pile, set fire to it, and jump into the flames. That's what Herodotus tells in earlier times about Croesus. And so we do have these strange epidemics of apparent madness. It's attributed now to ergot. See, they had barley more than wheat. They lived on barley, and just a little bit of ergot (blight in barley) will have that effect. It will drive you quite crazy. They found that in 1789 the crops of Europe had a very strong blight of this ergot, barley blight, and they say this may have been responsible. But something was driving these people absolutely crazy. This happens.

These people [in Helaman 13] got the same way. I think this is built up. It reaches a point when you can't trust anything. What are you going to do? Well, you finally just go like a young soldier in Israel. Nothing could be settled at all, so he just committed suicide. You have these mass suicides at times like this, but it's this idea that they're surrounded by demons. They're haunted and helpless. They're in the grip of something, and they think they're spooked. They don't know what it is. They get that illusion, and it drives them crazy. They see little green men and things like that: "We are surrounded by demons, yea, we are encircled about by the angels of him who hath sought to destroy our souls." This feeling of utter helplessness culminates in this. What are they going to do?

Verse 38: “But behold, your days of probation are past; ye have procrastinated the day of your salvation.” Every day brings us closer to this, you see. It’s an amazing thing that you do reach this point, and then you have these climaxes in civilization, and these sharp breaks. Our memories are very small. These unpleasant things we don’t like to remember. So the next generation forgets them almost immediately, and it goes on as if they were the only people who ever lived. It happens after a war, too. You get half a nation wiped out, and in a little while nobody ever thinks of them. They’re gone, and so we go on living from day to day. “Ye have sought all the days of your lives for that which ye could not obtain; and ye sought for happiness in doing iniquity, which thing is contrary to the nature of that righteousness which is in our great and Eternal Head.”

And what is that? The American dream. That’s the story of Citizen Kane. You’ve all seen that epic film, I’m sure. He was William Randolph Hearst. Hearst was actually much worse than that. I know some people who knew him quite well in California. Aunt Polly lived almost right next door to him. In the early days when he was wild and had all the money in the world, they would have the most horrendous orgies up there on Knob Hill in San Francisco. He did anything he wanted, had anything he wanted, and was always seeking. It turns out to be *Rosebud*, if you remember the play. But he was utterly depressed. All his life what he was doing was seeking for happiness in what he could obtain. He sought it in orgies and sex and in all kinds of wealth, luxury, and power. He had to have power. He had to have all these things, you see, and it soured him.

There’s a book written about that by Aldous Huxley. When Aldous Huxley came and started writing for Hollywood, he wrote a book about [Hearst] called *After Many a Summer Dies the Swan*. It’s true that he wouldn’t allow the word death to be mentioned in his presence. He accumulated about him all the junk in the world. If he liked a castle in Europe, he’d take the whole castle and bring it to San Simeon and set it up there. He had to live in something that actually equaled the splendors of the retired Roman emperors on Goat Island, there off the coast of Italy, where Tiberius lived in such riotous luxury and all this sort of thing. But William Randolph Hearst had everything, and he was always after everything all the time. That’s the American dream with bells on, and it didn’t work. That’s the whole idea. It was a complete flop. You can think of many other examples equal to that. We mentioned Vanderbilt. He was a sour, bitter, mean old so-and-so. He was unloved by everybody, but he made more money than anybody else.

So it was “contrary to the nature of that righteousness,” and that’s your foolishness—you wasted the time trying to get that. Now Samuel the Lamanite is talking here. He predicts the coming of Christ. Helaman 14:2: “Behold, I give unto you a sign; for five years more cometh, and behold, then cometh the Son of God to redeem all those who shall believe on his name.” Remember, the prophecy for Kirtland was five years, too. The Prophet Joseph said, “We’ll be here five years.” It was just five years, and they had to get out. “This will I give unto you for a sign at the time of his coming.” Now notice these signs are all a matter of timing. Of course, the meteors that are going to show in the heavens are already on their way. The way these things are coordinated is a very interesting thing. When these great events happen, there are these signs of coordination, how these things are worked together, and you see a lot of it here. “For behold, great lights in heaven, insomuch that in the night before he cometh there shall be no darkness.” In the timing of the meteors they’re already on the way. Then for 36 hours it will be like one night and one day. Apparently a supernova. Those things have happened—the one in 1054 A.D. could be seen all over the world. It was almost as bright as the sun. The supernova exploded and

became the Crab Nebula today. You can still see it, only it's just a nebula scattering in all directions. "And behold, there shall a new star arise." Well, there's a nova, all right. That's the Star of Bethlehem, "And . . . there shall be many signs and wonders in the heaven." They go along with it.

Verse 9: And behold, thus hath the Lord commanded me, by his angel, that I should come and tell this thing unto you." [Alma 8:16] says the same thing. In a crisis it's an angel that's sent. "Yea, he hath said unto me: Cry unto this people, repent and prepare the way of the Lord." Because I'm a Lamanite, you're not going to listen to me; you just get angry with me. The Nephites resent Lamanite righteousness teaching them anything. They're the righteous people [in their eyes]. "And ye shall hear my words, for, for this intent have I come up upon the walls of this city . . . that ye might know the conditions of repentance." He's going to give them a break. He's going to reason with them and give them an explanation. Of course they don't want any of it. "And if ye believe on his name, ye will repent of all your sins; . . . and behold, again, another sign I give unto you, yea, a sign of his death. For behold, he surely must die that salvation may come; yea, it behooveth him and becometh expedient that he dieth to bring to pass the resurrection of the dead [now this is the Atonement] that thereby men may be brought into the presence of the Lord."

It's going to be a matter of a breakthrough, you notice in verse 16: "Yea, behold, this death bringeth to pass the resurrection," and nothing else [can do it]. This death is one thing. It's in the nature of a breakthrough. The whole system is going this way, and then something breaks through and puts it on an entirely different footing. Something changes everything. Of course, this is the way things happen in nature too. ". . . and redeemeth all mankind from the first death . . ." All mankind right now are cut off and are considered as dead. But when that happens there's going to be a real change. Something marvelous is going to take place.

I was just thinking this morning about the heavenly world, the celestial world, the other realms, the eternities that we can't even imagine. Most people don't believe they exist at all. They are so hard to imagine. But equally hard is the other side—the extreme, irrational, wild and insane other world. Imagine that we have that, you see. That's just as incredible, just as hard to believe. But the point is, we don't just walk into that other world. We're not equipped. It is there all right, but because I'm not there now I may not believe it. But don't expect that you can just walk into it—that's the whole point. We're preparing for it here because there's going to be a lot to do. In this terrible mess we're preparing for it, and that's what it's going to be. But there is this division line. It comes like that, and precise times and places are marked. These things [miracles] come, and when they're realized, you say, well it's the most natural thing in the world. He's going to talk about that, the resurrection.

Verse 18: "Yea, and it bringeth to pass the condition of repentance. [It's a state required for the accomplishment of that, the condition of repentance], . . . and there cometh upon them again a spiritual death, yea, a second death, for they are cut off again as to things pertaining to righteousness." You can go on in a state of corruption, but you'll have nothing to do with that other world at all—you'll be out. See, [the Lord said] worlds without number have I created—all sorts, many mansions. "Therefore, repent ye, repent ye, lest by knowing these things and not doing them ye shall suffer yourselves to come unto condemnation." There's the tragedy, to know and not do.

And then these are the signs of his death; they're described more fully later on in 3 Nephi. Verse 20: "And there shall be no light upon the face of this land . . . for the space of three days." That's just the opposite. There was the light for three days, and now there's darkness for three days to match it. This is the cosmic effect. And "there shall be thunderings and lightnings for the space of many hours, and the earth shall shake and tremble." A vivid description is going to be given of this later on. "One solid mass, shall be broken up . . . shall be rent in twain, and shall ever after be found in seams and in cracks, and in broken fragments [go up Rock Canyon, you'll see this all right] upon the face of the whole earth, yea, both above the earth and beneath," like the earthquake in 1954. That was the worst of them all.

The lamentation and creation literature all have to do with these great catastrophes. They're very well recorded, these colossal catastrophes. We never realized that they were true before. They are literally described in Amenemhet in 825 [B.C.], the Book of the Dead in 175, the Salt Papyrus, the famous Cannibal Hymn from the Pyramid Texts and Lambert's collection of Babylonian and lamentation texts. The whole society was just wiped out with a smash overnight. And this has happened again and again. And then many mountains shall be laid low, and valleys shall become mountains. Well, we'll get this routine later on. I think we'll get it in the very next lesson if I hurry up.

Verse 25: "And many graves shall be opened, and shall yield up many of their dead." Now does that mean resurrection, or is it the shattering of the tombs where the dead fall out? There are various interpretations. Why not all appear if it's going to be a resurrection? It says "many of the saints shall appear unto many"—not all of them. What's going on? Again we'll find a description later on—be patient. "Darkness should cover the face of the whole earth for the space of three days." There it is. Things happen that haven't happened before. Well, I think in the fall of '89 we've seen things happen—storms of such severity in all parts of the earth as have never been recorded before. They said a storm could never reach this speed, but they've been doing it and breaking all the records everywhere. It's wonderful how we can go on breaking records. But this shows us that things can happen, as Moses said, "which thing I never had supposed."

Verse 28: And this "that there should be no cause for unbelief among the children of men." They will not believe a righteous judgment, see. Will they believe this? Now do we convince by miracles? This is the point. No, a wicked and adulterous nation seeketh a sign. Can you force people to believe by miracles? No, it doesn't work. They immediately start explaining it away on scientific grounds, etc., as it tells us here. A number of reactions are possible. But this leaves them actually without excuse. As the Lord said, if I had not done the miracles I have done among them, they wouldn't be without excuse. But now they have seen and hated both me and my father [they have no excuse]. The reason they doubt is they say these things don't happen. This is impossible, this is not sensible, this is not scientific. But when you show them that they do happen, then you rob them of that argument. That's the only argument they have. They're rational, scientific, sensible people. They don't believe in these extravagant, over-picturesque, over-wild things. One of the basic principles of geology up until very recently was that nothing spectacular ever happens. Well, don't fool yourself. Things infinitely spectacular happen.

Verse 30: "And now remember, remember, my brethren, that whosoever perisheth, perisheth unto himself." With all these titanic forces around us, the decision is still our own. You can be impressed or not be impressed, but the fact is when this has wrecked your best excuse, you see that these things don't just happen. "And whosoever doeth

iniquity, doeth it unto himself; for behold, ye are free; ye are permitted to act for yourself [nobody is going to twist your arm here]. . . . He hath given unto you that ye might know good from evil.” See, the miracles that belie the excuse of pure reason leave you with nothing else, but you know the good and evil, and you can always judge that.

“My beloved brethren,” he says [in Helaman 15:1]; he calls them that. Now he gives them what the Lord teaches in Matthew 24: Make sure that you don’t have any pregnant women around when this happens, because there’s going to be a bad time. “Ye shall attempt to flee, and there shall be no place for refuge; yea, and wo unto them which are with child, for they shall be heavy and cannot flee; . . . wo unto this people who are called the people of Nephi except they repent. . . . They have been a chosen people of the Lord; yea, the people of Nephi he hath loved, and also hath he chastened them . . . because he loveth them. But behold, my brethren, the Lamanites hath he hated [that’s strong language, to say the Lord hated the Lamanites] because their deeds have been evil continually, and this because of the iniquity of the tradition of their fathers. But behold, salvation hath come unto them.” It’s been completely reversed; the bad guys are now the good ones. The Lord will prolong their days, he said. This part of the chapter is an encomium of the Lamanites. “The more part of them . . . walk circumspectly before God [and they do]. . . . Yea, I say unto you, that the more part of them are doing this, and they are striving with unwearied diligence that they bring the remainder of the brethren to the knowledge of the truth.”

Verse 9: “And ye know also that they have buried their weapons of war [they followed the example of the Ammonites on a broad scale in burying the hatchet, you see], and they fear to take them up lest by any means they should sin; yea, ye can see that they fear to sin [well, the NRA would put an end to that] . . . and [they] will not lift their swords against them, and this because of their faith in Christ. . . . The Lord shall bless them and prolong their days, notwithstanding their iniquity [because they have redeeming virtues]. Yea, even if they should dwindle in unbelief [which they do] the Lord shall prolong their days until the time . . . spoken by our fathers, and . . . many other prophets, concerning the restoration of our brethren, the Lamanites [eventually they will be restored]. . . . In the latter times the promises of the Lord have been extended to our brethren, the Lamanites; and notwithstanding the many afflictions which they shall have . . . they shall be driven to and fro upon the face of the earth, and be hunted, and shall be smitten.” This is the fate of the Lamanites now, of course, in the country. Every treaty that’s been made with them has been broken. Any time anything of any value was found on the reservation, they just went in and took it from them. “. . . and scattered abroad, having no place for refuge.” This is the basis, and it’s true. He says they’ll suffer all that. They’ll go all the way down before, and then they’ll be blessed. But they shall be “numbered among his sheep.” Verse 16: “I will not utterly destroy them [that’s quite a promise] I will not utterly destroy them . . . they shall return again unto me, saith the Lord.” That’s the promise. But, in the next verse: “I will utterly destroy them [the Nephites].” There’s the difference. “I will not utterly destroy them [the Lamanites—this is the condition of today but] . . . concerning the people of the Nephites: If they will not repent, and observe to do my will, I will utterly destroy them.” That’s the promise.

Well, as many as believed on his [Samuel’s] words, hurried to confess and get baptized. Most of them, though, cast stones at him and shot arrows at him, but they couldn’t hit him as he stood on the wall. When they saw that he couldn’t be hit, they went away to Nephi to be baptized. Helaman 16:4–5: “For behold, Nephi was baptizing, and prophesying [like Alma]; . . . therefore as many as believed on the words of Samuel went

forth unto him [Nephi] to be baptized.” He was the one who had the authority to do it. So they didn’t go to Samuel; they went to Nephi after they had heard the preaching of Samuel. Verse 6: “But the more part of them did not believe in the words of Samuel . . . they [said]: Take this fellow and bind him, for behold he hath a devil”—because we can’t hit him. See, they interpreted it their way all the time—supernatural protection. So he jumped from the wall and ran out of the land, went to preach among his own people, and was never heard of again among the Nephites, like Alma and the younger Nephi. It was something of a custom, wasn’t it, like the ancient anchorites. You would just flee out of society and never be heard of again.

Verse 10: “And thus ended also the eighty and seventh year of the reign of the judges, the more part of the people remaining in their pride and wickedness.” The people began to be more hardened. In the ninetieth year there were great signs “and angels did appear unto men, wise men [now the chain begins, you see] and did declare unto them glad tidings. . . . Nevertheless, the people began to harden their hearts, all save it were the most believing part of them . . . and began to depend upon their own strength and upon their own wisdom, saying: [the intellectuals began to explain everything, and there were commentators and panels and everything else to explain it all]. Some things they may have guessed right, among so many.” Statistically they may have guessed some things right and explained them. That’s true; that could happen that way. After all, so many things are happening, like great and marvelous works [they reasoned].

Verse 17: “And they began to reason and to contend among themselves.” As I said, they had meetings, debates, and discussions. This was Korihor’s line—it’s not logical. They were very smart. Notice, they said, “it is not reasonable that such a being as a Christ shall come.” (It isn’t—I’d never figure that out myself.) And if that’s the case, why doesn’t he show himself to us instead of just to those of Jerusalem? That doesn’t make sense either [they said]. This is not only a false tradition, it’s a wicked one. Some great and marvelous thing is going to happen in a land far away—so what? Notice verse 20: They say that just to keep us in ignorance. They don’t have to explain it, because it won’t happen here. You’ll notice it’s not going to happen here; it’s going to happen there. So they’re safe; they can say anything they want to. They keep us in ignorance where we can’t witness it with our own eyes. So they can tell us anything they want [the intellectuals said].

Verse 21: “For we depend upon them to teach us the word; and thus will they keep us in ignorance. . . . They were much disturbed for Satan did stir them up to do iniquity continually; yea, he did go about spreading rumors and contentions upon all the face of the land [See, there are such times when rumors just go wild. Nobody knows what to believe anymore—rumors about El Salvador, etc.], that he might harden the hearts of the people against that which was good and against that which should come, . . . [and thus did] Satan get great hold upon the hearts of the people upon all the face of the land.” And thus ends the book of Helaman.

Finally we get to 3 Nephi here. “And it was in the year that Lachoneus was the chief judge and the governor over the land.” Lachoneus is going to play an important role here; he’s an important man. And what’s the Greek name Lachoneus doing there? Well, where was Laconia? Laconia was in the southeast Peloponnesus. In Lehi’s day who ruled Palestine? Necho II of Egypt did. It was a commercial empire, but he kept it in control by mercenaries. He had a whole mercenary army and a mercenary navy of Carian fleets. Also at that time a new kind of warship was invented that revolutionized sea warfare, and Necho thought he could beat the Babylonians by using it. That was the new trireme

[invented by] the Carians of Asia Minor. And along with that, major shipbuilding was along the coast of Laconia, which had wonderful harbors. Laconians—including Lacedaemonians that went as far up as Sparta—were the best mercenary soldiers. They were mercenaries because they were not only great fighters, but they lived in a very poor, rocky, mountainous country. The only way they could make ends meet was to hire themselves out.

So the entire army of the kings of the 26th dynasty were employed Greeks from Laconia and elsewhere, but mostly from there. Both the sailors and soldiers were prime people from Laconia. So the fact that you find the name Lachoneus is certainly to be expected here, because you'd find guys by the name of Lachoneus walking around in Palestine in Lehi's day. They were the troops—not the troops of occupation or anything like that, because the kings were taking the side of Egypt. Remember, they were leaning on Egypt to support them against the threat from Asia, from the Babylonians. So don't be shocked when you see a name like Lachoneus here. It should be here.

Verse 2: “And Nephi, the son of Helaman, had departed out of the land of Zarahemla, giving charge unto his son, Nephi [and we have an account of the record here]. Then he departed out of the land, and whither he went, no man knoweth.” There it is again. Alma did that. Where is it they go in these places? They used to say there were two places where these mysterious people always disappeared—to San Francisco or to Paris. They would end up there. That's where you could achieve anonymity very quickly, you see. Or, for many years [they would go] out West. You just go out West and disappear. Nobody would ever see you again, especially if you were wanted by the law or anything like that. It was a safe thing to do. So he disappeared too. They were always disappearing up north anyway.

Well then, how about this time? The time had been set. Verse 4: “There began to be greater signs and . . . [they] began to say that the time was past” and heaved a great sigh of relief. The time has passed, and you've missed it—you've muffed it. And they began to rejoice about it. “The ides of March are come. Aye, but not gone,” as Caesar said. [Shakespeare's *Julius Caesar*]. He was mocking them—they're not gone yet. And of course this is what happened at Far West. There are many examples of that when they set a particular date [for something to happen], and when [it doesn't happen on] that date there's a great uproar.

Verse 6: “And they began to rejoice over their brethren, saying: Behold, the time is past, and the words of Samuel are not fulfilled; therefore, your joy and your faith concerning this thing have been vain. . . . They did make a great uproar. . . . There was a day set apart by the unbelievers, that all those who believed in those traditions should be put to death except the sign should come to pass.” Well, wasn't that rather extreme? No, that has happened lots of times, such as St. Bartholomew's Day in 1572. On August 23 every Protestant in France was to be murdered in that one night. And they nearly succeeded in doing just that. And there was the same thing with the famous Sicilian vespers, when all the Normans occupying Sicily were wiped out in one night. The Sicilian vespers were during Easter, and in one night they killed them all. Also, the Mamelukes [were killed] in one night. They set a particular time, and then all the Mamelukes in Egypt were killed. And there have been others, like the bloodbath of Hitler's Kristallnacht. He was going to get rid of all the Jews in one night, the crystal night, because they had smashed all the windows. It's a funny thing that [people] think they can finally solve the Mormon problem or the Indian problem or the Lamanite problem just by getting rid of them in

one fell swoop. That's been tried again and again, and some of those have nearly succeeded.

But for setting the date, a very dramatic example is that at Far West. This is how Brigham Young told it. I like what he says in introduction, though. It's a very important thing he says: "Joseph Smith had to work by faith. It's true that he had knowledge of a great many things, as Saints of former days had, but in many things he had to exercise faith." Just because he was the prophet he didn't have it all given to him, not by any means. "He believed he was fulfilling the prophecy of the ancient prophets. He knew that God had called him, but in the establishment of his kingdom, he had to work continually by faith. He sealed his testimony with his blood. His whole life was as if wading through deep waters of persecution and oppression. The Saints should seek to cherish and grow in this principle, that we may have faith in every revelation and promise and every word of the Lord that has been given in the Bible, the Book of Mormon, and the Covenants." There's the source of our revelation. We must have faith in them, you see.

Well, he goes on: "When the members of Zion's Camp were called, many of us had never beheld each other's faces. We were strangers to each other. We were young men, and what we had to do, we had to do by faith [this is what they had to do]. We accomplished a great deal, though apostates and unbelievers many times asked the question, what have you done? [when they went to Far West and laid the foundation stone of the temple]. We gained an experience we never could have gained in any other way. We gathered some 200 elders from throughout the nation at early day and sent us broadcast into the world to preach the gospel of Jesus Christ. Had I not gone up with Zion's Camp, I should not have been here today and presume that would have been the case with many others. We have to work and live by faith."

Well, now, this is the story: "The twelve apostles were called by revelation to go to Far West, [Caldwell County, Missouri], to lay the foundations of the cornerstone of the temple. When that revelation was given, the Church was at peace in Missouri. It's the only revelation that's ever been given since the organization of the Church that I know anything about that had a day and date given with it. [The point is a particular day was assigned, and everybody knew what that day would be. Now what would happen on the day?] The Lord called the Twelve Apostles. While in this state of prosperity, it looked all right on the 26th day of April 1838 to go to Far West to lay the cornerstone of the temple and from there to take their departure to England to preach the gospel. Previous to the arrival of that [date], the whole Church was driven out. Between the command to carry that out on that particular date and the chance to do it, the whole Church was kicked out of Missouri. How could they do it then? And it was as much as a man's life was worth to be found in the state if it was known that he was a Latter-day Saint, and especially was this the case with the Twelve. "When the time came for the cornerstone of the temple to be laid as directed by revelation, the Church in Illinois having been expelled from Missouri by an edict of the governor. Joseph and Hyrum Smith and Parley P. Pratt were in chains in Missouri for the testimony of Jesus. As time grew nigh for the accomplishment of this work, the question arose, what is to be done? Here was a revelation commanding the Twelve to be in Far West on the 26th day of April to lay the cornerstone of the temple. It had to be fulfilled. The Missourians had sworn by all the gods of eternity that if every other revelation given to Joseph Smith was fulfilled, this one should not be, for the day and the date were given, and they declared that it should fail." So they knew exactly when and where this should take place, and they vowed that it never would happen. But what happened?

“The general feeling in the Church was, don’t try it. It’s too risky. There’s no point to it now. So far as I know, under the circumstances it was impossible to accomplish the work, and the Lord would accept the will for the deed [like the Law of Consecration, wait till later]. This was the feeling of Father Smith, father of the Prophet. Joseph was not with us. He was in chains in Missouri for this religion. When President Young asked the question of the Twelve, Brethren, what will you do about this, the reply was, the Lord has spoken it, and it is for us to obey. [Just as Nephi said, the Lord has spoken and I’ll go get the plates no matter what.] We felt that the Lord God had given a commandment, and we had faith to go forward and accomplish it feeling that it was his business whether we lived or died in its accomplishment. We started for Missouri. There were two wagons. I had one and took Brother Pratt and President Young in mine. Brother Cutler, one of the building committee, had the other. When we reached Far West and laid the cornerstone according to the revelation that had been given us, we cut off the apostates and those who had sworn away the lives of the brethren [they were still living in Missouri and had left the Church]. We ordained Armand Chase and Norman Shearer to the Seventies. Brother George Albert Smith and myself were ordained into the Quorum of the Twelve on the cornerstone of the temple. We had been called before but not ordained. We then returned [nobody lifted a finger, nothing happened at all] nobody having molested or made us afraid. We performed that work by faith, and the Lord blessed us in doing it. The devil, however, tried to kill us, for before we started for England, every one of the Twelve was taken sick. [He said he had never had the ague before], but upon this occasion I was taken with it for the first time in my life. All the Twelve became violently ill. [But, they all went on their missions. And what’s the point of all this?] We went to England, we baptized in the year 1840 something like seven thousand people. We established churches in almost all the principal cities of the kingdom. Brother Pratt established a branch in Edinburgh, Scotland; Brother Kimball and George Albert and myself set up a branch in London. We baptized 1800 persons in the south of England in seven months. Out of that number, 200 were preachers belonging to different denominations in the land. We opened an emigration office, published the Book of Mormon, and gathered many to Zion. God was with us. I may say that he has been in all the labors of the Church and kingdom.”

So this is what happened [because of their] faith. And here [in 3 Nephi] was a day set, and what was going to happen? It looked pretty bad, Verse 10: “Nephi, the son of Nephi, saw this wickedness of his people [he was upset, of course, and he] . . . cried mightily to his God in behalf of his people.” He prayed and prayed and the Lord said, “Lift up your head”—I’m coming tomorrow, so don’t worry. Verse 13: “Be of good cheer; for behold, the time is at hand; and on this night shall the sign be given, and on the morrow come I into the world.” Notice this fine tuning. The dates are set. When the Lord came after the resurrection to the apostles, he said to John, tell the brethren to go and meet me in Galilee (that’s way up north) exactly three days from today. There was a particular time and place where they were going to meet; everything was set here. Then Moroni said to Joseph Smith, come back to this place exactly one year from today, the 23rd of September, and you’ll meet me here again. That happened to be the autumnal equinox, and they did that four times, three times after the first time. Everything is timed. The Magi saw his [the Savior’s] sign in the heaven. These events that happen are timed in the affairs of men, and when the time [will come] you never know. Who would have told us eighteen months ago that the whole face of Eastern Europe would be changed today—its psychological and social [aspects], attitudes and everything. The Communist freeze, like a great iceberg, looked as if it would never melt, and all of a sudden in a matter of weeks it’s gone. See, the Lord times these things, and they happen just like that.

The time is at hand and the sign shall be given, he said. In the creation of the world it was the same thing. When a certain thing had been accomplished, [the Lord said] now the next thing we do is this. The Lord said, you go down and do this, and then you come and report. They said, “We will go down.” Everything is timed and properly organized. That’s what’s going on here. Then, here’s this marvelous passage. This is just like poetry, the prose is so marvelous here [verse 15]: “And it came to pass that the words which came unto Nephi were fulfilled, according as they had been spoken [the great solemnity of this is like the tolling of a great bell]; for behold, at the going down of the sun there was no darkness [it sounds just like a Greek chorus—a supernova appeared]; and the people began to be astonished because there was no darkness when the night came. And there were many, who had not believed the words of the prophets, who fell to the earth, . . . for they knew that the great plan of destruction. . . . [We talked about falling to earth as supplication, submission, and terror at the same time.] All the people upon the face of the whole earth from the west to the east, both in the land north and in the land south, were so exceedingly astonished that they fell to the earth.” Does that mean they lost their foothold? It could have been deliberate. See this is the point. When you’re faced with something too much to cope with, when there’s some power that’s beyond your control, that’s what you do, of course. You put yourself in a position of complete submission. You go down on your face, not only in complete submission but in supplication. This is a very interesting thing. When the great God appears in Egyptian writing, like the 312th section of the Coffin Texts or the 178th section of the Book of the Dead, the first thing is—down on your faces. That’s the first thing that happens in the presence of any great power. It’s the normal thing to do. Well, this was a cultural thing. It was a customary thing, and they did it deliberately. It’s the ancient way to cope with too much. It’s called the *proskynesis*. It means kissing the ground on your face, and it’s spontaneous. They began to fear.

Well, I’ll tell you a wonderful story about Mars Bumgardt who was an astronomer in Southern California. He was in charge of the Clark Observatory, which used to be at USC. A very close friend of mine (when we were kids we used to go out in the mountains together and camp and this sort of thing) became assistant to Mars Bumgardt. He became an astronomy major and later professor at UCLA. This was 1925 or ‘26 and Mars Bumgardt was preparing for a total eclipse. They were going to have a total eclipse in Mexico, so they made big preparations. They prepared for a whole year for this expedition. It was a big thing going down there. And they got all their equipment and set it all up on the mountain, knowing exactly where things would happen. He got everything set up and ready to go. And then the shadow of the moon started hissing toward them like this, an overpowering thing. The way Mars Bumgardt described it, after all this preparation, after all this getting ready with the instruments set up and everything, all he could do, he said, was go down on his knees and raise his hands (just like the kid in the tent) and say, “There is a God, there is a God, there is a God.” He wasted a whole two minutes just doing that; he said he was completely overpowered. Well, with the astronauts it was the same thing. They knew the sort of thing they’d see when they got out there. But when they actually saw it, like Collins, they became converted. They never knew anything like that existed; it just overpowered them.

This is what happened to these people [in the Book of Mormon]. This was a real supernova; you can be sure of that. But Mars Bumgardt’s experience was an anticlimax if there ever was one. But he considered it a fair exchange. That changed his life, you see. He had been an astronomer, very much a scientist. I remember old Dr. Larkin when we went up to the Echo Mountain Observatory at Mount Lowe. They had a good telescope, a 16-

inch Brashear, there. He just spent all his time fulminating against ancient Hebrew mythology; he couldn't stand it. So in those days they were down on ancient Hebrew mythology, but when Mars Bumgardt saw the shadow coming toward him, it just overpowered him. So I really believe [their reaction] was spontaneous. A new expectation, a new kind of reality suddenly appeared.

Verse 19: "There was no darkness in all that night, but it was as light as though it was mid-day, . . . and they knew that it was the day that the Lord should be born. . . . A new star did appear according to the word." Ah, now you say, this would certainly convert them and there would be no more lying, but it was just the opposite in verse 22: "And it came to pass that from this time forth there began to be lyings sent forth among the people by Satan to harden their hearts." They said, we can explain this all right. Immediately, the reaction is not what you expected. You can explain every situation. Notice how Satan is going to exploit every situation to his ends. "The more part of the people did believe. . . . Nephi went forth among the people, and also many others, baptizing unto repentance." There was peace in the land, and they preached by the scriptures. Verse 24: "And there were no contentions, save it were a few that began to preach . . . that it was no more expedient to observe the law of Moses," because Christ had come, but they were soon converted and everything went along smoothly. There was peace "save it were for the Gadianton robbers, who dwelt upon the mountains, who did infest the land."

Now, we have a very interesting psychological study in this first chapter from verse 27 to the end, namely the younger generation. You remember the clever Zoramites. They were the snazzy people that wore the natty uniforms. They were the best fighters. There was a time when all the best officers in the Lamanite army were Zoramites who had been Nephites. They were very hard working, rich, prosperous, and pious. They observed strict dress standards and all that sort of thing, and they were the ones that intrigued the young to go over and join the Gadiantons. They gave it sort of a romantic allure—become soldiers of fortune, etc. It tells us that [they went] among the Gadianton robbers in their secret places. "Therefore they did commit many murders, and did do much slaughter among the people. And it came to pass that in the ninety and fourth year they began to increase in a great degree, because there were many dissenters of the Nephites who did flee unto them." Well, why would that be? Just like people go to these training camps in the South to become soldiers of fortune. The glamor of it they find irresistible. Up in Idaho and in the deep South we have training camps, and here the same thing.

Verse 29: "And there was also a cause of much sorrow among the Lamanites; for behold, they had many children." When they started to grow up they were led away by some of those who were Zoramites. The Zoramites sold them on this. The Zoramites were recruiters for the Gadiantons. They said it was glamorous and adventurous. ". . . led away by some who were Zoramites, by their lyings and their flattering words to join those Gadianton robbers [so that's what happened]. And thus the Lamanites were afflicted also, began to decrease as to their faith and righteousness because of the wickedness of the rising generation." The young were very much attracted by this. The life of a Gadianton robber was romantic, it was exciting, and it was profitable, too. And the Zoramites went out and recruited them successfully. A very interesting psychological touch there.

In the second chapter the signs and wonders began to be less and less astonishing because they got to see more and more—they became commonplace. People have short memories. The moon landing is a good example, isn't it. All my life I heard that if man could land

on the moon, it would be the greatest thing that ever happened. In fact, when it happened Nixon said, “This is the greatest event since the creation of the world.” Yet the next day people were already complaining that their favorite soap operas had been cut off and they couldn’t see them because of the greatest event since the foundation of the world. That’s how long it lasts. That’s how long people’s memories excite them in these things. So they began to say, well, anything could happen. “They began to be hard in their hearts, and blind in their minds, and began to disbelieve all which they had heard and seen—imagining up some vain thing in their hearts, that it was wrought by men and by the power of the devil, . . . and thus did Satan get possession of the hearts of the people again.”

This left them unimpressed, just like we can put things off and on. The company explanation will always give you an answer, which is not an answer, as to whether it’s ozone or acid rain or radon or solar wind or cosmic rains or whatever it is. When they [scientists] say these things threaten, that’s just a myth. These things don’t happen. We have no solid evidence for this if it interferes with our profits. They can always argue around that. They’re great at that, and that’s what the people started doing here. They started explaining and rationalizing these things away.

Verse 3: “The people began to wax strong in wickedness [this is a fine thing to happen] and abominations; and they did not believe that there should be any more signs or wonders given; and Satan did go about, leading away the hearts of the people, tempting them and causing them that they should do great wickedness in the land.” This is going to be pretty bad, I’m afraid.

We’re told in verse 8 that “the Nephites began to reckon time from this period when the sign was given. . . . And Nephi, who was the father of Nephi . . . could nowhere be found in all the land [he went out]. . . . The people did still remain in wickedness, notwithstanding the much preaching and prophesying which was sent among them [they get worse and worse]. . . . There began to be wars and contentions [verse 11] throughout all the land.” The Gadianton robbers just took charge. They laid waste many cities, like our Bagaudi, Free Companies, Vitalian Brethren, and the barbarian hordes with these servile wars, etc. The Apaches are a good example here. Verse 11: “It became expedient that all the people, both the Nephites and the Lamanites, should take up arms against them.” They were compelled to take arms against them. The Nephites were threatened with utter destruction from these robbers. It’s getting very serious.

Verse 14: “Those Lamanites who had united with the Nephites were numbered among the Nephites.” There’s a nice note on race again. If you were Lamanite who had joined the Nephites, you were now called a Nephite. “And their curse was taken from them.” Did they change their complexion and become white overnight? No, it’s a cultural thing. The same things go together all the time. And they were called Nephites; the same name was given to them. We can’t dwell on that now—we will later.

Verse 17: “The people of Nephi did again gain some advantage of the robbers [who were like the Druze] insomuch that they did drive them back out of their lands into the mountains [again], . . . [but then] because of the wickedness of the people of Nephi, and their many contentions and dissensions, the Gadianton robbers did gain many advantages over them. . . . And [thus] the sword of destruction did hang over them, insomuch that they were about to be smitten down by it, and this because of their iniquity.”

Now we get the letter of Lachoneus here. I wanted to hit the big climax here. We have to have the coming of the Lord. We just have time to have that happen [this semester] won't we? But these steps, these processes have taken on so much more meaning in the last few years. Things weren't this extreme before. There was no such thing as talking about a people as being wicked. People were just normal people in every way. But now we start looking at statistics and things like that and start taking public opinion polls on what people value. When 80 or 90 percent of the people say, "Yes, you have to be dishonest in business if you're going to succeed," that's pretty bad. There's never been anything like that before [in our society]. So the Book of Mormon gets more and more impact with every passing week, I'm afraid.