

# TEACHINGS OF THE BOOK OF MORMON

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Semester 3, Lecture 83  
3 Nephi 8–11  
Great Catastrophes

We don't have time for anything anymore. Why do we go into such detail about the earthquake and storm? Well, it's very accurate; it describes a typical one. But there's a point to all this—a point to showing that all nature, all the earth, is in tremendous uproar. This is going to be followed by more uproar, and then suddenly comes the voice of the Lord. But first we have to see that the earth is dependent on him. He's going to say personally, I did all this myself. First, it tells us at the beginning [3 Nephi 8:5–6] “there arose a great storm” and also “a great and terrible tempest.” It would appear that the storm developed into a hurricane. Well, here we read from some books on earthquakes. Major earthquakes are so often accompanied by “heavy rains, thunder and hailstorms, violent tempests,” etc., that some specialists insist that “there is some evidence that certain weather conditions may ‘trigger’ an earthquake,” as with the Japanese earthquake of 1923.<sup>1</sup> Great earthquakes are almost always preceded by great storms. Aristotle said it was the air pressure that did it, as a matter of fact.

And then there's an awful lot of noise. Verse 6: “There was terrible thunder, insomuch that it did shake the whole earth as if it were about to divide asunder.” Why would you have the thunder before the earthquake? This is a puzzling thing, but that's the way it happens, as it says here. “In accounts of earthquakes we always hear of the frightful noise which they produce. . . . But in addition, it seems that sometimes the earthquake can be heard before it is felt [this is difficult to explain]. . . . One should feel the shock before hearing it.” Nevertheless, it comes first, and it makes a terrific racket. The thunder seems to shake the earth, since “the sound always appears to come from the ground beneath the observer. [And] . . . one thing is stressed in all reports: the awful rumble that heralded the outbreak of the quake, . . . a deafening roar, louder than anything any of the witnesses had ever heard before.” So we're right on track here. First you have the storm; then you have this tremendous noise, louder than anything else; and then you have the dreadful groanings and tumultuous noises and exceedingly sharp lightnings.

According to eyewitness accounts, the great earthquake that completely destroyed the old capital of Guatemala on September 11, 1541 (this is right down in Book of Mormon country, you'll notice) was preceded by “the fury of wind, the incessant, appalling lightning and dreadful thunder indescribable” in their violence. One of the still unexplained phenomena of earthquakes is that “all types of lights are reported seen. . . . There are flashes, balls of fire, and streamers”—every type of lightning. It says there were “exceedingly sharp lightnings”—well, that would come next—indescribable in their violence and appalling lightning and thunder. Then next, the Book of Mormon says there were high winds. Occasional whirlwinds even carried some people away, it tells us 3 Nephi 8:12,16. In the Japanese earthquake of 1923 the wind reached a velocity of 50 miles an hour, and “the fires, in turn, set up minor tornadoes”; and in the Assam earthquake

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<sup>1</sup> See Hugh Nibley's article, “Some Fairly Foolproof Tests,” in *Since Cumorah*, vol. 7 in *The Collected Works of Hugh Nibley* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book and FARMS, 1988), 231.

“strong winds raised the dust until visibility was reduced to a few feet.” Verse 8: “And the city of Zarahemla did take fire.” Now, most of the destruction in the Book of Mormon was caused by fire, not by the earthquake, like the San Francisco earthquake. This is always so in earthquakes, because people have open fires, lamps, and things, and they start everything burning. It would appear from the Nephite account that the main cause of destruction was fire in the cities (3 Nephi 8:8–11), which agrees with all major statistics through the centuries; for “earthquakes are largely a city problem,” mainly because the first heavy shock invariably sets fires all over town. In the Japanese experience “wind-driven flames were shown to be more dangerous than the greatest earthquake.” The flames are the worst.

Verse 9: “And the city of Moroni did sink into the depths of the sea.” Remember, the seas are nearby on both sides here [in Central America], and this tsunami or sea wave “is the most spectacular and . . . appalling of all earthquake phenomena,” we’re told, and almost invariably follows a major shakeup on the coast. Along with this, however, we have in the Book of Mormon record what seems to be a permanent submergence of coastal areas when “the waters . . . [came] up in the stead thereof.” Such a submergence happened on a spectacular scale in the Chilean earthquake of 1960: “We would have taken these [permanently] flooded stretches for coastal lagoons,” a geologist reports, “if here and there we had not seen roads that ran straight toward them and into them, . . . roads that vanished, or sometimes showed under the stagnant water, branching into what had been the streets of a town.” In the New Madrid earthquake in Missouri in 1811 two vast tracts of land were covered with fresh water both by the damming of streams and the bursting out of numerous earthquake blows or fountains, flooding the newly submerged areas.

Verse 10: “And the earth was carried up upon the city of Moronihah, that in the place of the city there became a great mountain.” Well, here’s a spectacular mountain. This is a woodcut from [1538], and this is what happened here. In 1538 a mountain came up and suddenly covered a town on the Bay of Naples. Of course, since then there has been the great one at Surtsey in Iceland in the 1960s, and there has been the one in central Mexico, where these mountains came up and actually covered the town. Well, it goes on here, and ever since [the 1538 earthquake] the mountain has been known as Monte Nuove, or New Mountain. The quakings “did last for about the space of three hours,” in the Book of Mormon, and then there were three days of aftershocks, described as tremblings and groanings.

And this is important. Verse 20–22: “There was thick darkness. . . . The inhabitants could feel the vapor of darkness. . . . Neither could there be fire kindled . . . so great were the mists of darkness.” This, like much else in the account (e.g., that God “did send down fire and destroy them,” 3 Nephi 9:11), suggests nearby volcanic activity. Of course, this is right in a string of volcanoes all down Central America there. Earthquakes are preparation for the volcano that follows, as in the Chilean 1960 quake which triggered the activity of long-dormant volcanoes in the area. (We’ve had more terrible things happen in the 1980s in Chile, as you know.)

Most of the victims of the great catastrophes of Pompeii, St. Pierre (Martinique, 1902), and Mount Pelee (1906) died of suffocation when earthquake dust, volcanic ash, steam, and hot gases (mostly sulfurated hydrogen gas) took the place of air. In some areas, the Book of Mormon reports, people were “overpowered by the vapor of smoke and darkness,”—and so lost their lives. There it is, this vapor of smoke and darkness that comes down. It shuts everything out. Even without volcanic accompaniments, however,

major earthquakes kick up a terrible dust, according to Sieberg. They're accompanied by phenomenal vapors and astonishingly thick air. According to 3 Nephi 8:20–21, the vapor of darkness was not only tangible to the survivors but defeated every attempt to light candles or torches for illumination. And here's an example of the same thing from [the Greek island of Thera in 1400 B.C.], eight times as violent as Krakatoa. The overpowering thickness of the air extinguished all lamps and made it impossible to light them.

The Book of Mormon also mentions the rising and sinking of the land, forming new hills and valleys—with no mention of major mountain ranges, nothing like that. This is just the way it happens. In the New Madrid earthquake of 1811–12, “over an area of 30,000 square miles the land surface lowered by amounts of 6 to 15 feet [the whole central United States] and over a much smaller area was raised by similar amounts.” So you'd have a differential of 30 feet there. Hydrographic surveys after the Japanese quake of 1923 showed that over an area of 500 square miles, some areas were lowered as much as 700 feet, and adjacent areas were raised as high as 820 feet. So you have a 1,500-foot difference between areas sunk and raised.

In the Nephite catastrophe, some cities escaped total destruction. See, this is not an exaggeration. They didn't lie at the center of the earthquake zone, but were south of it, we're told. There's a well-known quote here: “Central America lies in the heavy earthquake belt,” as well as being both a coastal and volcanic area—a perfect setup for the disaster described here. And everything looked strangely changed after the debacle, with seams and cracks everywhere [verse 13] “highways were broken up, and the level roads were spoiled, and many smooth places became rough.” It's just like the photographs we see following the 1906 earthquake in San Francisco. They are spoiled; that's a thing you notice. Well, we need no further commentary.

It's talking about all this physical stuff. Why does it go into that so far? Remember, the Book of Mormon begins with Moroni, who was an angel. He was not something Joseph Smith imagined—he came and talked with him. He gave him this book, told him where to find it. They had at least five different discussions and talked back and forth about these things. And this shows us everything in an entirely different setting. We see this whole thing against the background of the eternities. Here's someone who has come from another world. The angel Moroni has come. We have to do everything differently now, because he was real—that's the point. He wasn't an imagined angel. But the Book of Mormon has just one theme. Every chapter, almost every sentence, points to that one theme, the coming of Christ—that he will come or that he has come. It's always that God would come down, just as Moroni came down and talked with men here. He would be with them, with his own. It's a visit of God himself to ordinary mortals. He's the Creator—he introduces himself as that. Everything in the Book of Mormon centers on that one single event and on that one single person, it's going to tell us. He goes through this list of disasters we've just mentioned here, and then the Lord comes. Then he renames them all himself and says why he caused them—that he's responsible for that. We'll come to that.

The concentration with intensity on this one person, this one event, suggests something like the singularity of the scientists, the quantum physicists—that everything in the universe concentrates in one point. Well, it's a parallel to that because there's this intense concentration on one thing. But the point is we're all included in it. We're all invited to the party when the Lord comes. This is what the voice says. This is what we're told throughout the Book of Mormon. The Lord wants us all to be in on it. There's a standing

invitation to all of us to come to the party, and we refuse. Remember, the Lord gave the parable about the man who gave the big feast for his son. He invited important people to come. One person said he was too busy; he had to inspect a field he had bought. Others had bought some oxen and things like that. They were just too busy to come, and he wasn't pleased with them at all. Notice the kind of busy-ness that will keep us out of the kingdom. They were all busy making money, so they couldn't come to the party. The Lord was very angry with them, but we have this invitation. What we do is prefer another kind of party, don't we? This is your Book of Mormon story—the glitzy, sexy, rich, snobbish party. That's the kind of parties we like—wild parties, too, MTV type of parties. Well, yes, they're parties.

Now look what happens. Then we have the results here: “And there was not any light seen.” Notice this great darkness. You might say, well, this is symbolic. The symbolic and the real go right together here. They were in darkness [spiritually], and they were truly in darkness here. They brought this on themselves; we'll see that. Verse 21: “And there could be no light, because of the darkness, neither candles, neither torches; neither could there be fire kindled [this is a very thick air, a sulphurated stuff, and it's full of vapor; enormous amounts of dust are kicked up, so you can't light a lamp at all]; . . . and there was not any light seen, neither fire, nor glimmer.” It was utter blackness with the mists of darkness. The same thing happened at Pompeii. Remember, we have an eyewitness from Pompeii. Pliny the Younger was there and lost his life.

Verse 23: “And it came to pass that it did last for the space of three days that there was no light seen; and [you can imagine] there was great mourning; . . . great were the groanings of the people, because of the darkness.” This is a terrible part, this dramatic part. Notice again the description of these phenomena. They are not in scientific terms, so they're quite accurate as they're reported by [ordinary] people. This is as they would appear to human beings. We're seeing the whole thing from the human point of view. This is the way it looked—the groanings, the darkness, the terrible thunders, and then the human reaction to it. This is all the human story we're having here. It doesn't give us figures. It doesn't say it was probably 10 or 11 on the Richter Scale, or something like that, or as high as 12 on the Wood-Neuman. That's what the Assam earthquake was. This is a human story, but notice how we're involved with our environment here. They're all mixed into it. It's part of what happens to us, of course. We feel very personally involved when the earth starts shaking around us. Some of you have been in earthquakes; I've been in some pretty bad ones. They cried, “O that we had repented before this great and terrible day [they knew they were guilty], and had not killed and stoned the prophets.” All along they knew they were guilty. Then why would people do such a thing? 3 Nephi 9:1: “And it came to pass that there was a voice heard among all the inhabitants of the earth, upon all the face of the land, crying: Wo, wo, wo unto this people; wo unto the inhabitants of the whole earth except they shall repent.”

President Grant used to tell a story about having a debate with somebody who made great mockery of this passage here. How could you have a voice that wasn't loud and yet could be heard by everybody? Then President Grant would give the example of radio, which had been introduced long after that. “For the devil laugheth, and his angels rejoice [it's his inning], because of the slain of the fair sons and daughters of my people; and it is because of their iniquity and abominations that they are fallen!” This is where it leads, what you've been doing.

Now, this is an interesting thing. This you get a little later on, and it's what you call an aretology, when God announces what he does and what his power is. He speaks to himself. It's a doxology when we praise God. It's an eretology when he announces to us what his power is. Notice how many times he says *I*, in every verse. "Behold, that great city Zarahemla have I burned with fire, and the inhabitants thereof. And behold, that great city Moroni have I caused to be sunk into the depths of the sea [he goes down the list here]. And behold, that great city Moronihah have I covered with earth, and the inhabitants thereof, to hide their iniquities and their abominations from before my face, that the blood of the prophets and the saints shall not come any more unto me against them." In all this, keep in mind the nature of their sins. This concentrates all our attention on one person, all this storm, etc., as to the culmination of everything. He did it all. How did he direct this colossal release of energy? This tells us why. They need not cry and say, "Why did this happen to us? Why weren't we warned?" He is going to tell them fully later on why they weren't. You knew perfectly well what you were doing—you brought this on yourselves [he told them].

But as far as these major shiftings [are concerned], this was a great tectonic upheaval. It had been cooking for a long time, probably. But again, we must see these things on the background of the eternities. This is for the benefit of everybody in the long run; in the eternities they'll see why this happened. This particular dispensation was going to misbehave themselves at the very time this was going to happen. Remember, the nature of a miracle is always timing—it happens to happen at the same time. When all the biblical miracles happen, it's the timing.

Well, the Lord knows these things. [For example] a comet is on a collision course with the earth. Well, that can be predicted or prophesied. You don't know about it. Why did it happen that the people happened to be wicked just at that particular moment? That particular generation will be tested; they'll remember this. This will be a lesson for them in the hereafter—one particular generation got socked with this, and they got hit hard. They had reached a culmination. They were the worst.

Verse 6: "And behold, the city of Gilgal have I caused [notice Gilgal—round city, circle city] to be sunk, and the inhabitants thereof to be buried up in the depths of the earth." Now I was in Germany on a mission not long after World War I, and everybody was saying the same thing: "There is no God. If there was a God, he never would allow these terrible things to happen. And here God says he's causing them to happen. Well, there's something wrong here. If ever a war was brought on by the people themselves, it was World War I. They were making for that; they were determined on it for years and years, just as we are determined not to make peace. We don't want to make peace—we're very cleverly avoiding it every chance we can get. (Well, that's another story. I hope it won't be too short a one.) But he goes on and tells us he has caused it. Verse 7: "And waters have I caused to come up in the stead thereof, to hide their wickedness and abominations from before my face, that the blood of the prophets and the saints shall not come up any more unto me against them." It keeps mentioning the blood of the prophets and the saints. It had been prophesied. They had received ample warning.

Verse 8: "And the city of Gimgimno, all these have I caused to be sunk, and made hills and valleys in the places thereof; and the inhabitants thereof have I buried up . . . [there are fourteen "I's" in this section right here] . . . that great city Jacobugath, which was inhabited by the people of king Jacob, have I caused to be burned with fire"—"I caused to

be burned with fire because of their sins and their wickedness, which was above all the wickedness of the whole earth, because of their secret murders and combinations; for it was they that did destroy the peace of my people and the government of the land.”

Now look here. “The Lord giveth, and the Lord taketh away.” God can give, and above all, he gives life. Men can’t give life. Take not the life you cannot give. But men are the great takers of life. We destroy life on a massive scale, and we’re preparing to destroy it on still more massive scales right now. This is the only nation that refuses to stop making nerve gas and advancing in biological warfare. But the fact is that God gives us all these good things, and we pervert the whole thing. We spoil it. In that case, “the Lord giveth and the Lord taketh away.” He has a right to, but the Lord giveth and man taketh away. We can’t give life at all, but boy are we expert in destroying it. See, we’re the great destroyers. We bring these things on ourselves here.

Verse 10: “. . . because of their wickedness in casting out the prophets, and stoning those whom I did send to declare unto them concerning their wickedness and their abominations. And because they did cast them all out, that there were none righteous among them, I did send down fire and destroy them”—just like Sodom and Gomorrah. If there had been fifteen righteous, that would have been different. They would let me visit them, so I’ll visit them now, he says. “. . . that the blood of the prophets and the saints whom I sent among them might not cry unto me from the ground against them.” Things cannot go on just the way they are. There comes a point when future generations can’t be benefited. I mean, they don’t have a chance growing up in such a world, so it has to be brought to a halt. We can’t go on committing atrocities indefinitely anyway.

Lots of people were spared. Verse 13: “O all ye that are spared, . . . now return unto me, and repent of your sins, and be converted, that I may heal you.” Now, this is the reverse; this is what he wants. “I say unto you, if ye will come unto me ye shall have eternal life. Behold, mine arm of mercy is extended towards you [he will forgive them now], and whosoever will come, him will I receive. . . . Behold, I am Jesus Christ the Son of God. I created the heavens and the earth, and all things that in them are.” Now he introduces himself here. This is it, you see. This is the whole thing. This brings us all into the family, etc. [it’s the same thing in the book of Moses; this is God, you see]. I was with the Father from the beginning. I am in the Father, and the Father in me; and in me hath the Father glorified his name. I came unto my own, and my own received me not [as the scriptures say]. And as many as have received me, to them have I given to become the sons of God.” Notice, this is from John too here. [They are invited] to join the family and to receive redemption which cometh by the law of Moses and is fulfilled in [Christ]. From this point they are ready to go on. This is a new order that is being introduced on the earth when the Lord came down personally to introduce it.

Verse 18: “I am the light and the life of the world [that’s the total of everything]. I am Alpha and Omega [speaking their language, he would probably use aleph and taw], the beginning and the end. And ye shall offer up unto me no more the shedding of blood [he’s doing away with the law of Moses]. And ye shall offer for a sacrifice unto me a broken heart and a contrite spirit [they were in a mood to hear this now, you see]. And whoso cometh unto me will I baptize with fire and with the Holy Ghost.” They were ready for promotion now. The question is going to come up in a minute, why on earth would he give the gospel to these people who are bound to reject it? Everybody is going to reject it. Why keep plugging away at it, if they’ve shown they can’t take it? Well, you give them the full benefit of the doubt—all the time in the world. As I said, it’s a standing invitation

to the party, and you can accept it. Remember, it must be seen against a background of what's to come. This is just a brief minute here. The Book of Mormon keeps hammering away at this idea. This is preparation. It's a time of probation, and it's a time of testing. It's a very short test, but a very good one. We all have the same test. Then hereafter, this will determine where we're going for the long haul ahead. There may be other stages after this, but for now, it's very important for what we're qualifying. These are qualifying tests we're taking now. What world do you qualify for? We see what these [destroyed] people qualify for. There's no reason why they should stay around any longer. Let's clear off the stage so we can go on with the testing, so to speak.

Verse 21: "Behold, I have come unto the world to bring redemption unto the world"—to get you back again. We know we've gone away. That's what redemption is. It means buying you back again after you've been lost. This is what he wants. "Whoso repenteth and cometh unto me as a little child, him will I receive [he keeps saying little child from here on—this is very important; a little child is completely honest]. . . . Behold, for such I have laid down my life, and have taken it up again." Remember, the work is all his. Why is it all centered in one person? We know all things center in one, but this is the way it was planned in the beginning. This was the plan, that he would bear the load alone, but he would share [the glory] with everyone. He's sharing the Father's work and glory. "This is my work and my glory," the Lord says, not to make me more glorious, but "to bring to pass the immortality and eternal life of man" [Moses 1:39]. That's what it's all for. If you're going to go for eternal life, you can't go on behaving the way you are now. We have to have these shakeups, the tests, etc.

Now, there's much emphasis on this that follows about the little children and laying down his life. 3 Nephi 10:1: "All the people of the land did hear these sayings and . . . there was silence in the land for the space of many hours [dead silence]; for so great was the astonishment of the people that they did cease lamenting [they're totally receptive now] and howling for the loss of their kindred. . . . There came a voice again unto the people, and all the people did hear, and did witness of it, saying: O ye people of these great cities which have fallen, who are descendants of Jacob." Now this is the point; I talked about a standing invitation, a standing offer. It's there. Israel has refused it, and the world has refused it. The question rises, then why bother with these people who will never listen? So that they will be without excuse, as the Lord says. In other words, to resist this invitation, to resist doing what you know is perfectly right, you have to use all sorts of cleverness and sophistry and arguments and call all the lawyers in, etc. in order to reject it. You have to be very clever to do that, and they've worked at it. And he offered it to them, and they worked at a good excuse for not coming to the party.

Verse 5: "And again, how oft would I have gathered you as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings." This is a hen of anything, a sage hen that we have up in the mountains or chukars or a hen partridge—any bird that gathers her chicks. It doesn't have to be necessarily a chicken, a Plymouth Rock or something like that. Any kind of hen would gather her chickens under her wings. "O ye people of the house of Israel, who have fallen; yea, O ye people of the house of Israel, ye that dwell at Jerusalem, as ye that have fallen; yea, how oft would I have gathered you as a hen gathereth her chickens, and ye would not [see, it was all up to you]. . . . How oft will I gather you . . . if ye will repent." All is forgiven right now if you're ready. Any time, it's all there as long as you're here [on earth]. "But if not, O house of Israel, the places of your dwellings shall become desolate until the time of the fulfilling of the covenant to your fathers." And it had here. So "they began to weep and howl again because of the loss of their kindred and friends." Well, they

had a legitimate purpose for weeping in that case. They'd lost their friends and families. Remember, these are the better people, the ones who were spared. After three days of mourning, "the darkness dispersed from off the face of the land, and the earth did cease to tremble . . . [it wasn't shaking anymore], and the earth did cleave together again, that it stood . . . and the wailing of the people who were spared alive did cease; and their mourning was turned into joy."

Now, this is survival of the fittest. The more righteous of the people survived. It was selective—you can see that. Where would they naturally go? To the temple, and that was the place that wasn't shaken. The temple was still there, and that's where the righteous would go. Their own good sense would save them in that case. But this was selective migration to the temple and elsewhere. Verse 13: "And they were spared and were not sunk and buried up in the earth." What they [the Father and Son] were doing is striking the old sets. All this sudden death is quick and merciful, actually. There are marvelous things in the book of Enoch about that. Get it over as quickly as you can. When the time comes, [they] just make it a matter of hours and don't drag it over a generation with everlasting plagues and things like that, not a Thirty Years War. He says [verse 13], "And they were spared, and were not sunk and buried up in the earth; and they were not drowned in the depths of the sea; and they were not burned by fire, neither were they fallen upon and crushed to death; and they were not carried away in the whirlwind; neither were they overpowered by the vapor of smoke and of darkness." That's an important thing—suffocated, you see.

Now, if you find this puzzling or extravagant, [he gives an explanation]. It tells us in the next verse, he'd expect you to find this a difficult thing. "And now, whoso readeth, let him understand [try to get this straight, he says]; he that hath the scriptures, let him search them." They've been telling you about these things. All these things are found in the prophecies. Are they "not unto the fulfilling of the prophecies. . . . Behold, I say unto you, Yea, many have testified of these things at the coming of Christ, and were slain because they testified of these things [don't say you didn't ask for it]. Yea, the prophet Zenos did testify of these things, and also Zenock spake concerning these things [these are prophets we now know existed between Moses and Elijah]. . . . Behold, our father Jacob also testified concerning a remnant of the seed of Joseph. . . . And it came to pass that in the ending of the thirty and fourth year, behold, I will show unto you that the people of Nephi who were spared . . . did have great favors shown unto them, and great blessings poured out upon their heads [this is still the point: we are dealing with the two ways, the two roads, and we go all the way when we're on the two roads], insomuch that soon after the ascension of Christ into heaven he did truly manifest himself unto them."

Now here we come to the eleventh chapter where he comes. This is the whole thing the Book of Mormon is coming toward, and afterward it all looks back to this. We have thirty pages of Christ's words here. That's more than you find in [any gospel] in the New Testament. I notice you have 28 pages in Matthew, 16 pages in Mark, 21 pages in Luke, and 24 pages in John. But in the Book of Mormon we have 30 pages of Christ's teachings. We have a better source for the teachings of Christ. Of course, he says I'm going to teach you what I taught them there. It parallels the New Testament quite closely, but very significantly it gives more. So Joseph Smith has written the fifth gospel here. What a horrendous burden for a mortal to take that on. How would he dare do that sort of thing? Well, see what happens here now.

Well, there were a great multitude. They didn't need to be directed or summoned, you'll notice, "A great multitude gathered together . . . round about the temple [I think that would be spontaneous, wouldn't it?] which was in the land Bountiful." And they noticed the marvelous changes that went on. Everything had changed; you'd hardly recognize it. As I said, after the Assam earthquake the monks couldn't recognize any landmark. It had all changed, and it was the same thing here. Verse 2: "And they were also conversing about this Jesus Christ. . . . And it came to pass that while they were thus conversing one with another, they heard a voice as if it came out of heaven [now this is God the Father who fills the immensity of space]; and they cast their eyes round about . . . and it was not a harsh voice, neither was it a loud voice; nevertheless, and notwithstanding it being a small voice it did pierce them that did hear to the center, insomuch that there was no part of their frame that it did not cause to quake . . . and did cause their hearts to burn."

Now, here we have an interesting parallel in 1 Kings 19:10 and following. Remember, after Israel had completely rejected Elijah's mission and there wasn't a single righteous person among them—they were utterly depraved, just like the people in the Book of Mormon—then Elijah gave up. He went out by himself in the desert and said, I give up Lord, take me away. I'm finished—I've had it all. The Lord spoke to him and said, I'll take care of this. Then what happened? He wrapped his head up, and a tremendous wind and terrific storm came. Then a tremendous earthquake and a terrific blast of flame followed—all this volcanic stuff. That's the same kind of country over there, just like Central America—very active. But the voice of the Lord wasn't in any of these. After it was all over, then he heard a still small voice. Naturally, the ministries say, well, that's the voice of conscience. It wasn't the voice of conscience; it gave him specific instructions. It told him that he should go and appoint Hazael [to be] king of Syria, and he should appoint Jehu [to be] king of Israel, and that he should appoint Elisha to be his successor as a prophet. It gave him these specific instructions to keep the church going. That's what the still small voice told him. Of course, we like to think the still small voice is the voice of conscience. Well, conscience was there, but it went far beyond that, you see. The same sort of thing happened there. The still small voice came to Elijah and told him what to do. And here it is. This is the Father talking here, though.

It says [in 3 Nephi 4]: "Again they heard the voice, and they understood it not. And again the third time they did hear the voice, and did open their ears to hear it; and their eyes were towards the sound thereof; and they did look steadfastly towards heaven, from whence the sound came. And behold, the third time they did understand the voice which they heard, and it said unto them: Behold my Beloved Son . . ." This is the Father is speaking, and everything is turned over to the Son. He turns it all over to him [and says] he will speak for me. It was the same with Joseph Smith, with the apostles on the mountain, and with the baptism of Christ. "Behold my Beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased, in whom I have glorified my name—hear ye him." Listen to him, you see. Now we come to an amazing thing. You think of the great anticlimax. They have been working up toward this. This is something that would tax the imaginations of Steven Spielberg or [George] Lucas with special effects. There are no special effects at all—just a man dressed in a white robe comes down. They think he's an angel.

Some years ago I was in Cedar City visiting President Palmer who was a great Indian man. He was a member of the Paiute tribe, who had been initiated, etc. He went out to the place where he had been initiated and told me about the rites, and we went out to the various stations of the place where they do these things, etc. He told me some very interesting things about what happened, the legend and the like. Then, just a week later, I

was visiting the Hopis, and they showed me the Hopi Stone. Very few people have seen the Hopi Stone. I was standing out in the dusk. It was getting dark. Mina Lansa was in charge. See, they have a matriarchy, and she is in charge of keeping the sacred records, especially the Hopi stones. There are four of them, and this is the big one. She started saying “Come here, come here, come here,” and it was dark. I thought, what have I done now? These people are very touchy, and I may have offended someone somehow. I went into her house. It was the northernmost house in old Oraibi there, on the mesa. All the elders were sitting around the room, and there was a little kitchen table in the center with an oil lamp on it. She said, “Sit down here.” So I sat down at the table. She went into the other room and came back with something wrapped in a blanket. She unwrapped it, and that was the Hopi Stone that very few people get to see. It was beautiful, red porphyry—heavy, so big, and an inch and a half thick, highly polished, covered completely with characters on both sides.

I recognized immediately what the main theme was, and I started to talk to them about it. It showed the people holding hands. I had learned this from President Palmer just a week before; this helped me out. The people were wicked, and there was a great destruction, a great earthquake, and terrible things happened. The people were frightened, and they were totally in the dark. They didn’t know what to do, so a voice came and told them all to hold hands. So they all held hands, and then they heard a voice above them. They looked up to heaven and they saw a little point of light coming. It got brighter and brighter and brighter, and a man came down. It was *Mashiach*, the Messiah. I started to tell them this, and Mina Lansa grabbed the rock out of my hands. She said “You’re a smart man. You know a lot, but you don’t know everything.” She wrapped it up and took it out. She wasn’t going to hear any more. But they recognized it, and it caused a great hum to go on, etc. So they have this legend about the Savior who came from above (the Southwest Indians still have it) and he descended while the people were waiting in the blackness. They could see him, and he came down and taught them.

They saw a man descending in a white robe. Isn’t this an amazing thing? This is the time really to pull out all the stops and put on a tremendous show—close encounters of the fourth or fifth kind, etc. But it has none of that at all. Here are a few easily understood things he told them. He said, this is what I want you to do. If you do them, we can work together in this. Here’s what you must do; this is what you’ve been waiting for. This is why you’ve gone down in this stage of existence. This is going to start things rolling again. The world is in a bad way. Then he established an order of things which was going to exist for 200 years and produce this magnificent society that followed.

So this is the testimony [verse 8]: “They saw a Man descending out of the heaven; and he was clothed in a white robe [what could be simpler?] . . . and they durst not open their mouths. . . . They thought it was an angel.” They thought they saw an angel, the same as in the Old World. And he announced and said simply, “Behold, I am Jesus Christ, whom the prophets testified shall come into the world.” This is the center of the Book of Mormon right here, isn’t it? I can never read this without choking up. He bore the whole load. “I am the light and life of the world; and I have drunk out of that bitter cup. . . . I have suffered the will of the Father in all things from the beginning.” See, we’re all in this together. We must obey all these things. We must do all these things and go through all this. My father worked out his kingdom in fear and trembling, and I must do the same. But we’re privileged to share all the way, and this is what we get from now on. Seventeen

chapters of the teachings of the Lord follow this. We're not going to be able to get through that this semester, are we?

Verse 12: "When Jesus had spoken these things the whole multitude fell to the earth." Then notice, this is what happened. As I said, we're all sharing in it, and this is the fascinating thing here. He comes personally to them. He shows them the signs and tokens, and he introduces himself to every one of them, one by one, you see. He has no favorites here, and he doesn't introduce himself as a member of anything. There's that marvelous line in the Book of Mormon, "The keeper of the gate is the Holy One of Israel; and he employeth no servant there." (2 Nephi 9:41). He will personally talk with you and bring you in. You are just as important as anybody else in the kingdom of God, he says.

Verse 14: "Thrust your hands into my side, and also that ye may feel the prints of the nails [see, the signs and tokens] in my hands and in my feet, that ye may know [that's what a sign and a token is for, you see] that I am the God of Israel, and the God of the whole earth, and have been slain for the sins of the world." [And] . . . the multitude went forth, and thrust their hands into his side, and did feel the prints of the nails in his hands and in his feet [by which he identified it himself], and this they did do, going forth one by one"—everyone individually. That's the nice thing. He employs no substitute, no servant there. He doesn't stand on the balcony and wave his hand and say, "bless you, children" to over a million people, and that takes care of them. No, he's very personal. They "did see with their eyes and did feel with their hands [they testified, it's just as real as anything] and did know of a surety and did bear record [they all became witnesses]. . . . And when they had all gone forth and had witnessed for themselves, they did cry out with one accord." See, everyone had witnessed, but they had all witnessed the same thing, so they could cry with one accord. This is why you get this perfect unity in the Church, even though we're complete individuals, because we've all had the same experience [which makes us] all identical. This is the trend in science. All things are related, and in the gospel, of course they are. They all come together here.

Verses 16–17: "They did cry out with one accord, saying: Hosanna! Blessed be the name of the Most High God! And they did fall down at the feet of Jesus, and did worship him. [Nephi was called to come forth, and he kissed the Lord's feet.] And the Lord said unto him: I give unto you power that ye shall baptize this people when I am again ascended into heaven." Now notice, we learn in Helaman 14–15 that these people had already been baptized. The church was among them. Anyone who joined the church had to be baptized by Nephi, and they were there. But we're told that they must also repent; they must be spotless, because he's coming back to meet them tomorrow. They have to be washed all over again after they have been baptized. He says, I'm coming back; I'm going to clean you up. If there's anybody sick among you we have to straighten that all up before we begin. (Well, we'll come to that later.)

Verse 21: "I give unto you power that ye shall baptize this people. . . . And again the Lord called others, and said unto them likewise; and he gave unto them power to baptize. And he said unto them: On this wise shall ye baptize." Now here we find something we don't find anywhere else [about] baptism, this all-important ordinance. As Origen tells us, and especially as St. Basil (one of the eight great Fathers of the church) tells us, Look, we're told that they baptized in the early church, but we nowhere have a record of how they baptized. We nowhere have the form of how they did it. We know they married, but we have no marriage ceremony anywhere [they said]. Those people didn't have any records of that, and it puzzled them very greatly. Those things were not handed on, and yet these

were the ordinances. Later on, the church had to invent sacraments, which they picked up from four different sources. That's another story. But here he's actually telling you how to baptize—the words you speak, and how it is done. We all know this now. You immerse them in water, baptize them in my name, etc.

Verse 27: “Baptize in my name. . . . The Father, and the Son, and the Holy Ghost are one; and I am in the Father, and the Father in me, and the Father and I are one.” And you're going to be one with us and with each other, exactly as we are one. That comes in later. The 14th through 17th chapters of John deal entirely with that—how we can be one, how they are one, etc. This, of course, had been the subject of the greatest of all controversies in the Christian world—how God can be absolutely one, and how he could have a son, and how there can be others and yet be one. There's nothing more “one” here than Christ the way he appears in the Book of Mormon, who is the center of everything. But as he says, this is the very thing people argue about. They're going to argue about it, but you're not going to argue about this. Notice, in the next verse he tells them: “And there shall be no disputations among you, as there have hitherto been; neither shall there be disputations among you concerning the points of my doctrine, as there have hitherto been.” See, just after mentioning the mystery of the Father and the Son, which is not going to be so mysterious after all, he tells them you're not going to argue about this. You'll understand it, but don't argue about it until you have understood it. Then you won't argue about it.

Verse 29: “He that hath the spirit of contention is not of me, but is of the devil [we begin with this—there is no contention; do not contend], who is the father of contention, and he stirreth up the hearts of men to contend with anger, one with another. Behold, this is not my doctrine, to stir up the hearts of men with anger, one against another [there is no righteous anger]; but this is my doctrine, that such things should be done away. Behold, verily, verily, I say unto you, I will declare unto you my doctrine.” I'm going to do that now. Can there be any dispute about this, then?

Verse 32: “And this is my doctrine. . . . I bear record that the Father commandeth all men, everywhere, to repent and believe in me.” No disputation about this is possible: All men everywhere—not just all bad men or all people who don't belong to my church, my party, or something like that. “And whoso believeth in me and is baptized, the same shall be saved; and they are they who shall inherit the kingdom of God.” That's after this, after we go on. This big stretch that lies ahead of us, the ages. I don't know where or what they are. They're really going to be great stuff, but this is what you inherit. You're not going to inherit it here. You're not going to have it here, but you're going to inherit the kingdom of God. If you don't believe and won't be baptized, you'll be held back, dammed up or held back. The Egyptians use the same word. Every individual is fully qualified; otherwise you wouldn't be here. You're fully qualified for the test you're taking now. Otherwise, you'd be sent to some other world and some other test to be taken. That's what Origen told us. He said, the brethren used to teach that in the early church; we don't know about it any more. He was a member. He was the first and the greatest of the theologians. He's the bridge between the early Fathers and the apostles and the rest of the church. He said they used to teach that this was preparation. But the fact that you're here shows that you're responsible. The fact that you've been trusted to come here and you've asked to come here shows that you're quite qualified to understand and receive it. And if you don't [receive it], it's because you reject it.

Verse 35: “Verily, verily, I say unto you, that this is my doctrine, and I bear record of it from the Father [entirely between individuals, you'll notice]; and whoso believeth

[singular] in me believeth in the Father also; and unto him will the Father bear record of me.” Notice, he’s talking always just to the individual person, and this is the common gender—it means he and she. In Greek you use just one gender when you’re talking about people. Notice how personal and intimate this was. To you personally, this one person who believes in me, “will the Father bear record of me, for he will visit him with fire and with the Holy Ghost.” Now we go to another level here. There’s nothing here in the plural, you’ll notice. This is all in the singular—Father in the singular, Son in the singular, and you in the singular. Remember, he had just introduced himself to them one by one. “And thus will the Father bear record of me.” And then you go further than this. Everyone gets this private, individual attention here, the private treatment. As God is, man may become, so we’re in on the circuit. The Book of Mormon removes all differences step by step. The first step is when the Holy Ghost bears record. And record, *recordare*, means “to put back into the heart.” It means “to intensify in the heart, to have a knowledge and remembrance of what you had before.” This has to do with your previous existence. See, your heart is your core. To record is to stir up again in the heart. And he says this is why the Father will bear record of me, and the Holy Ghost will bear record. That will recall these things to you. That’s what a record is. “All fond records will be wiped out,” as Hamlet says.

Verse 36: “And the Holy Ghost will bear record unto him of the Father and me [here we’re still in the singular; this is his personal testimony from the Holy Ghost]; for the Father, and I, and the Holy Ghost are one [he brings that in, and you are supposed to get in on this too; you are supposed to be one too]. And again I say unto you, ye must repent [you can see now why you must repent; you can’t in your filthy condition get away with this now], and become as a little child, and be baptized in my name, or ye can in nowise receive these things. And again, I say unto you, ye must repent, and be baptized in my name, and become as a little child.” Again, what could be more emphatic? He wants us to start at square one. If you are going to go on from this point, what you do is be baptized to wash away all the filth you have, dig up the nitty-gritty. That’s what you’re doing when you repent—getting it all out of your system. Then you wash it away, and then you can start again. But you have to start again here, he said. This is the big thing now. That’s the whole thing the Book of Mormon is about, you see. It’s putting this thing on a very tangible basis; these things are real. [We need to] become as a little child. Are there no small children in eternity? Would we miss them? No, we don’t need to be. This doesn’t mean to be stupid or ignorant, but wide open. That’s why you can spoil and disillusion and abuse little children so easily. That’s why child abuse is such a horrendous sin, you see. “Wo unto them [who offend one of these little ones]. . . . It had been better for them that a millstone had been hanged about their necks, and they drowned in the depth of the sea” (D&C 121:19, 22). And offending little ones seems to have become a specialty in our age. It’s a strange phenomenon that’s come out.

But you must become as a little child. You must be perfectly clear and clean in this thing and willing to receive. And this is my rock, he says; there’s no other way, “and the gates of hell shall not prevail against them.” What gates do when they prevail is they hold you back, or they hold you out, or they hold you in. They imprison you. Gates are closed, and you can’t get by. If you are in hell, the gates will prevail against you. But if you’re built on the rock, this is the only way of making progress. The gates must be open. There’s an enormous amount written in Egyptian literature about this. The gates must be open if we’re to make any progress in the next world. Verse 40: “And whoso shall declare more or less than this . . . cometh of evil.” There are just two ways. Don’t declare more than this.

Don't add to this doctrine, or [teach] any less, you see. If you start fooling around with it and start speculating, you're building on a sandy foundation, because you can shift your stand, shift your position. It's like moving a goal post. That's what a sandy foundation is. You want it with your arguments and your reasoning "and the gates of hell stand open to receive such [then they'll receive you] when the floods come and the winds beat upon them." Then the last word to them here is that everyone must know about this. "Therefore, go forth unto this people, and declare the words which I have spoken, unto the ends of the earth." Everybody has to receive it. Now he's going to call Nephi and the rest.

I'm going to give you the subject to write on for the final. It's a very interesting subject to write on. The Book of Mormon is an unpopular messenger. Quite a few years ago a very important, very rich, very well-known member of the Church told me we'd have to get rid of the Book of Mormon. It was embarrassing. It was driving the best minds out of the Church; it was a disappointment and the like. Well, my question is this: Should the Book of Mormon be taken more seriously? Explain.