

TEACHINGS OF THE BOOK OF MORMON

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Semester 4, Lecture 89

3 Nephi 7–8

Conversion

Signs and Destruction

All right, now, we're in 3 Nephi 7:14. Racing along here, we're in the next chapter already. We've done one chapter, and we've been going too fast at that. I'll call attention to verse 14. You'll notice this is a beautiful summary of the splinter group movement. There have always been splinter groups in the church in every age—among the Jews, the early Christians, etc. Verse 14 talks about the splinter groups that always take place. You're always going to find them, and they're characteristic. This is the way it happens. You notice how rich this verse is. First of all, "they were divided into tribes [you know the tribes], every man according to his family, kindred and friends." The family is the basis of all these splinter groups which Russell Rich (who just died recently) studied. He devoted his time to specializing on the splinter groups, of which there are over 100. There have been over 100 attempts to refound The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints by individuals who thought they had special revelations, and they all wither by the way without exception. But these are the characteristics they all have. First, they are formed around families originally. Then the families extend to kindred, that is, wider associations. For example, my wife is associated in various lines with polygamous groups up in Canada—all sorts of things, distantly related. Those are the kindreds, and then the friends [enter in]. Friends join the group, too. And they are all very peaceful. They want to get away and found a new Zion by themselves.

Verse 14: "They would not go to war one with another; but they were not united as to their laws." They all had different ideas about things. Invariably they always form about a strong individual; they depend on the leader. When he's gone, the group usually collapses and disappears. It says they had peace in the land; they didn't trespass against one another. But, if you disagree with them in doctrine or if you drop out or something, look out. Then they play rough, you see. "They did stone the prophets and did cast them out from among them." The prophets were among these people, but if anybody had his own idea about the doctrines and started preaching, he was kicked out. They not only kicked them out, they denounced them, like the LeBarons, etc.

I personally was very closely associated with [M. L.] Glendenning and the Order of Aaron. The Laffertys came to see me often here, and Bruce David and the Peacocks, who had a group going down in Manti, etc. They would invite me down, try to convert me, and ask me about things. These people ended in murder—the Laffertys, Bruce David, etc. They started killing people. Then the LeBarons are another example, and the Singers are very local. But way back before Joseph Smith's day Jemima Wilkinson in New York State, not far from where Joseph Smith was, preached the restoration of the gospel. They [her group] expected angels and felt the people had fallen away. But they felt that Christ had come again in the person of Jemima Wilkinson. As soon as she died, the whole thing just disappeared. Glendenning became inactive and suddenly you hear no more of the Order of Aaron. All these have just withered on the vine. As I say, there have been well over a hundred of them, and this is the way it happens. So this is quite a test for the Church, isn't it? People are still breaking off and saying, they can't do without me; I'll blow the whole thing wide open; nothing can happen, etc. Why does it go on? Well, we're going to see. It's going to tell us why this happens now, and it's very relevant to what's happening today.

This is the difference, of course, in verse 15. Here we are entering a new dimension entirely. It's Nephi who makes the difference. Notice he's impressed by the appalling spread of the turnover

[from righteousness to wickedness] here. The voice of the Lord and angels had witnessed [to him], and he had power. Well, he had been visited by angels and received power. This solves it. Unless you get this, we're just going to go on squabbling forever. The upper world, the other world, has to intervene sometime and enter into the picture. Otherwise, we're just going to go around in a circle, hold meetings, have our committees and conclusions, and fight with each other. You get nowhere. Reformation is not restoration. *Restoration* is the new word that churches are adopting now. They've adopted it only since 1960. Before that it was a dirty word. They said, "Reformation, yes, but restoration, no. The gospel was never taken away." But now, even the Roman Catholic Church is talking about *restoration*. They're restoring things.

Verse 15: ". . . and having had power given unto him that he might know concerning the ministry of Christ, and also being eyewitness [that's what I was talking about] to their quick return from righteousness unto their wickedness and abominations"—these lightning switches. He witnessed it and was impressed by it. This is introducing something more, now. The gospel is something more than a successful and happy life or something like that. No, it's an eternal life, which is a different thing entirely. People don't talk about that; they don't think of it as real, but that's the one. This is what we're talking about, the eternities. We're introducing them into the picture now.

Then he [Nephi] has powerful motivation here. From his vantage point everything is black. Remember Plato's cave? In this world we're in a dark cave. The real world, the sun, is shining from behind our backs, but we're facing the wall here. We see our shadows on the wall, and we say "That's the real world. That's the real thing." And when we get on the outside, we're absolutely dazzled—we're blinded by it. We want to get back to our comfortable real world, which is actually in the dark. That's what you have here. Verse 16: "Therefore, being grieved for the hardness of their hearts, . . . [he] went forth among them . . . to testify," to minister to them. From his vantage point they were in the cave. He was grieved to see them there, and he went forth to minister to them. *Minister* is used a lot in the Book of Mormon; you see it in verse 17 here. When Christ comes and ministers, when angels come and minister, what do they do? To *minister* is to help people, to give people something they need. But, above all, it's to teach them the words. You minister with words. "These are the words which he ministered." We have that expression used in 3 Nephi here when the Lord comes. And the angels come and minister to the children. The picture we get is that they walk among them and chat with them, comfort them, discuss things with them—talk with the children, with the people. That's a very clear picture that we have later [in 3 Nephi] that so impressed the greatest Lutheran divine today, Krister Stendahl. He gave a talk on that here in 3 Nephi, which he regarded as one of the great books of scripture, though he's the head of the Swedish Lutheran Church. He's the bishop of Lund, the top man. But anyway, 3 Nephi made an impression on him. We'll get to that [the coming of the Savior] soon enough.

But notice here that he ministered, and many of the things "cannot be written." They minister things that can be written. It's the words they minister, but they can't be written here. He says an interesting thing. You wonder why we've been taking things so slowly [because of these details]. He wouldn't write them down. If he could "a part of them would not suffice; therefore, they are not written in this book." I won't give you a part of them; you have to get the whole picture here [he said]. Won't you give us just a few of these angelic words [we might say]? No, "a part of them would not suffice," you see. You must get the whole picture here. We must see what these verses have to tell us. We haven't yet; we skipped through them. I've got a letter from the editor of a Catholic journal here. He just skipped through the Book of Mormon, for example, and there are lots of things he needs to be enlightened about. He's very nice in asking questions about it, though, very fair.

Well, he ministered these things, but these things can't be written. So that's how we study the scriptures. We don't study the scriptures in part—that would not suffice. We [shouldn't] go

through these things on roller skates; we take a little time here. “And Nephi did minister [to them] with power and with great authority.” So, we ask, does part of the Book of Mormon suffice? He’s given as much as we can take, all we need, and all that we should have, too. So that’s an important note on curriculum, isn’t it? And did Nephi’s charisma turn the tide? Absolutely not; they were angry with him. Oh, I should be asking questions here. Well, here we go. Why do you think they got angry with him? Why do you think he offended them? Why do you think he worried them? Notice what their reaction was. They didn’t say “Oh, the guy’s a nut,” and just forget about it. He wasn’t going around shooting people or anything like that. Why would they get angry with him? It says because “it were not possible that they could disbelieve his words.” He had proof. What was the nature of that proof? Oh, here we go; it’s about time. I’m neglecting my duty here. Brother Terial, what was the nature of the proof he gave them that they could not deny? You see it right here, don’t you?

“Verse 19 says and in the name of Jesus did he cast out devils and unclean spirits; and even his brother did he raise from the dead.”

And the next verse says, “The people saw it,” you see. They couldn’t deny it. They witnessed it. Of course they got angry. But what would shock them about that? What was the fatal crime of Jesus when they decided to put him to death? The high priests, the elders, and the Pharisees didn’t plot against Jesus to put him to death until what miracle?

“Raising Lazarus.”

When he raised Lazarus from the dead, that decided it. That was too much. This [news] went around, so they decided from then on that he would have to be put to death. So we have it here. They were angry because they couldn’t deny it. It was a culture shock, you see. You don’t like to be pulled out of a warm bed on a cold morning. This is a thing that made them furious. They were wild; it was just like they reacted to Joseph Smith. It would have been all right without that. They tell us now there were dozens of cults and revivals and nuts running all over the place in Joseph Smith’s day. Why couldn’t he be dismissed just like that? It was the Angel Moroni that spoiled everything, and then he turned up with the Book of Mormon. The people saw it and they were angry because they saw his power, and they couldn’t deny it.

In spite of all that, though, would you expect there would be general conversions, Brother Thomas? In the next verse, is this the expected result? Remember, the miracle stories of the Christian church from the fifth century on, the Gold Legend, etc.? They deal in the miracle stories. The apostles go everywhere in the world, and everywhere they go, all they have to do is perform a great miracle and everybody in the whole city joins the church. Peter makes a dead fish speak, and a whole city joins the church. John slides down on a sunbeam. They do it in a theatre. They wait till the people are all gathered in the great amphitheater, and then they perform these spectacular miracles, whereupon all the people are instantly converted. Well, that’s the story that [went around] in the early Middle Ages. Is that the way it works with the gospel? It didn’t work here, did it? It didn’t work at all. And why wouldn’t it work, with such miracles? “There were but few who were converted.” And what converted the only ones who were converted?

Now this editor of a very important Catholic journal writes me. He wants to know the secret of why the Mormons are able to convert so many people, as crazy as they are. He doesn’t call them “crazy.” He has great respect for this, that, and the other, but he thinks the Book of Mormon is utterly ridiculous. Why is it that people join the Church? Well, Saturday I was visited by a Russian Jew, a Soviet, who came to this country. He married a Yugoslavian girl. They’re here, and you’ve never met [people with] such strong testimonies. They’ve been in the Church for eight or ten years now and have absolutely unshakeable testimonies. He joined the Church in Soviet Russia as a Jew, you see. Well, what would convert him? What arguments would convert him? What demonstrations would convert him, or his wife, for that matter?

The firmest person I know has been a bishop and a [chaplain] in the Army. He's a stake president now. He was a fervent, practicing Moslem, but he knows the gospel is true. All the efforts that have been made to shake him are absolutely impossible. You can't do it. Imagine, people ganged up on him; he's been denounced, etc. He believes like the Brethren believe in that first edition of the *Journal of Discourses* that Muhammad was a true prophet. As his Uncle Waraka said, "To this people you are a prophet." That's what the Brethren taught in the early days in this Church. But anyway, the fact that he was a fervent Moslem did not stop him—nothing could stop him. And the fact that he got ill treatment and everything else did not stop him from becoming fervently converted to the gospel. And so it goes.

The strongest converts to the Church in my mission, the Catholic part of Germany, were the best, most fervid Catholics—priests and people like that. So, what converts these people? Well, this is it in this verse, and ten guesses to see what it is. Brother Thompson, what do you see in verse 21? What is it that converts them, after all?

"The spirit of God."

They were *visited* by the power and spirit of God. They were visited; something came down. It doesn't mean it dwells in you forever after, but you receive a visit. A visit means something coming from afar to you—something coming to you that wasn't with you before. It is the power and spirit of God that visits you, and when that comes, you forget about all your arguments. Now he was expecting me to give a long explanation—psychological, philosophical, historical, etc. on why the Church is growing the way it is. That's what this article is about that so puzzles him. And, there's only one answer, as Kresimir Cosic told me. I baptized him. He was a famous basketball player in his day. You probably wouldn't remember him. Kresimir Cosic had been here a couple of years and had seen the way some of the people misbehave here. He was world famous, a star in Europe. He participated in four Olympics, if you can imagine that, and received gold medals every time. Well, he said, "There are a hundred reasons why I shouldn't join this Church and only one reason why I should, because it's true." And so he joined. He said nothing could stop him. He's been extremely active ever since then, and that was fifteen years ago.

"What makes the other people so stupid?"

Well, what about us today? It's one of the great mysteries of the world why we're so dumb, isn't it? Here we are, everlasting spirits. Why aren't you a lot smarter than you are? I ask that question, and I know the answer perfectly well. It's my own fault. I don't have to envy anybody else or anything like that. If I'm not a lot smarter than I am it's my own foolish fault. We haven't used one-tenth of one percent of our capacity, you see. We shy away from it. We're lazy. Not only lazy, but these things are rather awesome, you see. It says angels appeared here, and what's the first reaction? We'll ask somebody else this nice trick question. Is William Thompson here? Bill, what was the first reaction when the angels came to the shepherds in the field, or to Mary in her house, or to Zacharias in the temple, or to the apostles on the mount?

"They were frightened."

They were scared stiff. They were "sore afraid," and the first thing the angel had to tell them was what?

"Don't panic."

Don't panic, I'm your friend, yes. I'm an angel come from God, and I bring good news. But why should we panic at an angel, the last thing in the world? Well, of course we do, living as we do. We're living in the depths here, and then talk about a culture shock when somebody comes like

that. It scares the daylight out of us. We're even scared by ghosts, and a ghost can't really hurt you, you know. But people turn white as a sheet when a ghost appears, because it's different. It's this culture shock. It's from another world. But when it's something lofty and infinitely above us, then we ask the rocks to cover us and the mountains to hide us rather than have to face this. Of course, the hardest test any of us will ever have to take is the judgment. Hell is a pleasure compared with having to stand in the presence of God and look in his face. Whew! You can have that, you see. This would be the worst thing that could happen [in mortality]. You'd just fold up. You'd turn to a cinder.

It's all your own doing; it's all been up to you. The Lord's going to talk a lot about that here [in 3 Nephi] when he comes. So, that was it. They were angry, and there were a few converted. Those who were converted were visited by the spirit of God. And he "did truly manifest unto the people." In these verses he baptized them, and they founded a church here. Verse 25: "There were ordained of Nephi, men unto this ministry." Let me see if we have any shrewd questions here. The baptisms, you'll notice in verse 26, started picking up on the eve of the great disaster.

Now chapter eight is psychologically a marvelous thing, isn't it? This is the great destruction. Notice how [the writer] approaches it. "And now it came to pass that according to our record, and we know our record to be true, for behold, it was a just man who did keep the record." Why does he knock himself out to convince us? And notice the second verse: ". . . if there was no mistake made by this man in the reckoning of our time . . ." He takes these first two verses to reassure us. And why do you think he does that? Brother Tolman, why do you think he puts himself out here to assure us—now what I'm telling you is the truth. We recorded this as well as we can; we're trying to be as accurate as we can here. Is he going to report an ordinary, everyday affair that everybody would take for granted? You get the impression that he is preparing us for what?

"He's preparing us for the coming of the Lord."

But the Lord doesn't come here. All hell breaks out here, you see. No, it's a terrible time. So what is he preparing us for? Why does he have to reassure us that somebody's telling the truth here? Why would you doubt this? Yes, brother?

"Because it's so unbelievable."

Yes, he's going to tell a whopper. You might not believe this, but this is what happened, you see. These things happen—that's exactly it. He has to reassure us and make sure this is exactly the way it was. Not making it up, but he says, "if there was no mistake made by this man." He makes allowance that humans make mistakes, but it was an honest man. He did the best he could keeping the record, and it was the thirty-third year, after the Lord had passed away. Then notice how psychologically he builds up here. We're getting into literature now, but what's the sense of this fourth verse? Brother Towery, what is the sense when he starts saying, "And there began to be great doubtings and disputations among the people, notwithstanding so many signs had been given." That's marvelous prose, incidentally. It's building up; there's a tension. There's an ominous hush here; you know something's going to happen. What's he preparing us for? What's going on here? Already here we get this mounting tension. And then it begins with just . . .

"He's preparing us for the greatest event that has ever happened."

Yes, but he's preparing them here for something pretty terrible, you see. The great event comes after this. It is after the same thing happens in the Old World. It is after Sinai—remember Sinai was a volcano and the earth shook and the people couldn't approach it. Any that approached were killed, and they had terrible [experiences] in the crossing of the Red Sea. After these terrible upheavals of nature, then the Lord came and spoke to Moses and established a covenant. After these terrible upheavals here, then the Lord came and established it again. And in these last days

after the great upheavals, it's the last time he will come. Then he will come again and bring Zion with him. So it follows that pattern all along here.

Well, this is the tension. First, people began to look with earnestness for the fulfilling of the sign that there should be darkness for three days. It's going to come. Verse 4: "And there began to be great doubtings and disputations among the people, notwithstanding so many signs had been given." There was a restless feeling of malaise that something was going to happen, like you have before an earthquake. Then they give the date here for a big event, the big bang, "In the thirty and fourth year, in the first month, on the fourth day of the month, there arose a great storm." It just begins with an ordinary storm. These things always begin that way. Then the storm turns to a hurricane, you notice. Where does the word *hurricane* come from? Anybody know? In Central America the *Hurcan* is the god of winds, and the word *hurricane* probably comes from the Aztec or the Toltec language. *Hurcan* was the god of the hurricanes, the great storms that sweep in from the Caribbean there. So the storm turned to a hurricane. We've all seen that happen.

Well, I've listed some things, and this is an interesting thing we'll notice here—the order in which these things are given. Remember, the Latter-day Saints have oversimplified this picture. Brother Towery, I suppose in your day they didn't teach it, but they used to tell us that the Rocky Mountains and the Andes were the results of this earthquake. Would you believe anything like that? Utter nonsense, isn't it. These mountains out here weren't formed in that way, were they? What does this describe? It describes a good earthquake, maybe 8.5 on the Richter Scale, not higher than that. Many cities were spared [away] from the epicenter. It describes everything in its proper order exactly as such an earthquake would occur. Brother, talking about these terrible things that are happening, does he give us any figures, any numbers here? He doesn't give us any figures on the Richter Scale or the Wood-Noyman Scale. It's described in what terms? Is it described in scientific, objective terms? It's described as it appeared to people; it's an eyewitness account. When this happened and that happened, these are exactly the things people would report that saw it. It's the impression it made, and there's no gross exaggeration here at all. We've seen a pretty good earthquake in San Francisco, but this is nothing. Yes, Brother?

"Going back to verse 5 when it tells the date it happened, what do you think is the calendar that they used? Would it be a Hebrew calendar?"

On the fourth day of the month—it seems to be the solar calendar they were following. They had both the lunar and the solar calendars, though. It tells us, for example, when Moroni's general, Lehi, went and murdered the Lamanite leader, Amalickiah, in his tent it was the first day of the year, and the weather was very hot. Well, of course, they were in the tropics. It wouldn't make any difference if it was in the tropics. It could have been the equinox, the first day of the year. Or it could have been the sixth of January, which is Epiphany, the first day of the year in most Christian nations in Europe. Or it could have been the 25th of December, which is the Roman first day of the year. But it has to do with the calendar and the sun and the moon. They don't match each other very well, but it has to do with the new year. It could have been the agricultural year, but they know what it was anyway. We'll find that out. Somebody could figure this out, I think, from the Book of Mormon.

This is what happened as we list the things this way. We parallel these things just to check them briefly from books on earthquakes, which we did once. This is what happens. First of all there arose this great storm, and then the usual things. Then it became a hurricane, and then there was this phenomenal thunder, this thunder out of the ground, this unspeakable noise, etc. I'd say it was about 11 on the Wood-Noyman Scale. But there were some cities which remained (3 Nephi 8:15) here; whereas, in the great Assam earthquake of 1950 the damage was total over a vast area. There was nothing that remained after that. I have an account of that here, but I'm not going to read it. We're taking the Book of Mormon events in order here. I'm going down them rapidly. We'd better put them on the board, yes: First, a great storm and a terrible tempest, the hurricane.

Then, major earthquakes are often accompanied by heavy rains, thunder, hailstorms, and violent tempests. Some specialists insist there are some indications that certain weather conditions may trigger an earthquake, as in the Japanese earthquake of 1923. It was accompanied at first by a great storm, then a hurricane, then terrible rains and thunders—then came the earthquake. And Japanese seismologists maintain that the low barometric pressure was the trigger which set off the earthquake. Well, anyway, great earthquakes are preceded by great storms.

Then there was this lot of noise, this terrible thunder, insomuch that they thought the thunder shook the earth. And that's the impression you get. Now here we're quoting from Eby's book on earthquakes and from Heck's, and others: "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. The thunder seems to shake the earth, since the sound always appears to come from the ground beneath the observer." Now that's the peculiar type of noise we're getting here. It is not ordinary thunder, you see. It says, "A terrible thunder, insomuch that it did shake the whole earth as if it were about to divide asunder." Well, how could thunder in the sky shake the earth, shaking it apart? Well, as it says here, the thunder that precedes the major earthquake comes from the ground. It's terribly loud, and it comes from under your feet. The sound always appears to come from beneath the ground. He's quoting from the official report of 1950: "In the Assam earthquake one thing is stressed in all reports—the awful rumble that heralded the outbreak of the earthquake, a deafening roar, louder than anything any of the witnesses had ever heard before." So you have this tremendous super-thundering sound coming before. Then it's time to run for cover, but where do you run? Not in the house. That's what wipes people out, isn't it?

Well, then what comes next? Verse 7: "And there were exceedingly sharp lightnings." That's what you're going to have, of course—updrafts and downdrafts with all that friction up there and all those ionized particles flying around like crazy. You're going to have these terrific exceedingly sharp lightnings. Well, the cumulonimbus is what you get here. Certainly in a cloud that high, you always get lightning and hail and all the rest of it. And we're told that the great Guatemala earthquake of September 11, 1541, which completely destroyed the old capital, was preceded by the fury of the wind. The incessant, appalling lightning and dreadful thunder were indescribable in their violence. One still unexplained phenomenon of earthquakes, we're told in a book on seismology, is that "all types of lights are reported seen. There are flashes, there are balls of fire, there are streamers."

The terrible winds at Guatemala City matched the Book of Mormon high winds and occasional whirlwinds. We're told in verses 12 and 16 that they carried some people away. They didn't carry everybody away, but there are these swift winds that carried people away. You know Parley P. Pratt's wife was carried away by a tornado in Davis County and never heard of again. They used to have those—well they still do have awful winds up there. We don't have them down here. We're blessed here anyway. We're extra good people [laughter].

In the Japanese earthquake of 1923 the earthquake reached terrific violence, and the first thing that happens when an earthquake comes is that fires break out everywhere. That's what happened here. "Fires in turn set up minor tornadoes. In the Assam earthquake strong winds raised the dust until visibility was reduced to a few feet. Verse 8: "And the city of Zarahemla did take fire." Now, the major cause of earthquake death is buildings falling in cities. Earthquakes are not really very dangerous if you're away from the town; they tell us that. It's the buildings that do the destruction. Recently in Mexico City we saw a classical example there. But what destroys the cities is the fires. The fires break out immediately, because you have fires on stoves, etc. All water mains are broken, and things start burning furiously. In this local earthquake down on the Embarcadero on the waterfront in San Francisco, the fire started out. There's no way you can control it, of course. There are fires in the house. They didn't have wires disconnected or anything, but they cook on fires and they light with fires.

So the first thing that happens in a major earthquake, everything starts catching fire, and this is what happened. Notice that the whole “city of Zarahemla did take fire” (3 Nephi 3:3). It would appear from the account of the Nephite disaster that the main cause of the destruction was fire in the cities (verses 8–11 here). “And the city of Zarahemla did take fire. And the city of Moroni did sink into the depths of the sea.” (The city of Moronihah is another thing.) This agrees with the major cities’ problem. Earthquakes are largely a city problem, mainly because the first heavy shock invariably sets fires all over the town. In the Japanese experience in 1923 (I remember the day that happened; we had a Japanese gardener, and he gave us all the details on it), wind-driven flames were shown to be more dangerous than the greatest earthquake.

Now we have the tsunami; that always follows. On the coast, cities have the tsunami. That’s the great tidal wave that invariably follows the earthquake, and it drowns the cities. “And the city of Moroni did sink into the depths of the sea.” We’re told that it was on the coast—of course it would be on the coast if it sank into the depths of the sea. This is the *tsunami*; you know that this is the Japanese word for earthquake. It’s a regular phenomenon. They always include this in the earthquake, this tidal wave sometimes 100 feet high. In the great earthquake of Lisbon that Voltaire wrote about in *Candide*, they had a brand new jetty built for the city, and 3,000 people went out to escape the fall of the buildings, etc. People went out on the new jetty. It cracked open and [the sea] swallowed the whole jetty with all 3,000 people. That was a tremendous earthquake which turned Europe into atheists. People said God should never have allowed that. The whole city of Lisbon was just wiped out. That’s [the basis of] Voltaire’s cynical story, *Candide*. Can you believe anything when God would do that? [they felt].

Verse 9: “And the city of Moroni did sink into the depths of the sea” because of this tsunami or sea wave. I am quoting from Haroun Tazieff’s book, a very good book on earthquakes called *When the Earth Trembles*. “In the winter of 372 B.C. the city of Helika in Greece disappeared beneath the sea. Not a single soul survived.” Very interesting. You see, this is what happens. And here, “The tsunami is the most spectacular and appalling of all earthquake phenomena. It almost invariably follows a major quake upon the coast.” Along with this, however, we have in the Book of Mormon recorded what seems to be a permanent submersion of coastal areas. The waters came up in the stead thereof and remained. Notice 3 Nephi 9:7. It tells us the waters came up in the stead thereof, in the place of what there had been.

The Chilean earthquake of 1960 was a “dilly.” One hundred miles of coast, thirty miles wide, sank in the sea and is still there. Not much was reported about that. Tazieff was the one who reported on it, and he was a specialist in that. He said, “We would have taken these flooded stretches, permanently flooded, for coastal lagoons 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 waters, branching into what had been the streets of a town.” We’re hearing more reports about the New Madrid earthquake of 1811 recently. “Two vast tracts of land [30,000 square miles, they tell us] were covered with fresh water, both the damming of streams and the bursting out of numerous earthquake blows or fountains, flooding the newly submerged areas.”

And, of course, you’re going to have volcanic activity with this. Central America is a string of volcanoes, as you know. When earthquakes are active, volcanoes are, because they’re caused by the same thing—namely the subduction of the Pacific plate plunging under the continental front, under the continent. That’s what produced Mount St. Helens and all the mountains along there and running down the coast here, especially in that narrow land of Central America.

Verse 10: “And the earth was carried up upon the city of Moronihah, that in the place of that city there became a great mountain.” I’ve got a picture of something here, in case you should doubt it. “In September 1538 during a tremendous storm and tidal wave, a volcanic mountain suddenly appeared and covered a town near Pozzuoli on the Bay of Naples, and ever since the mountain

has been known as Monte Nuove, or New Mountain.” Well, there it is carried up and covering the town. And there’s been a very good documentary on [KBYU-TV] Channel 11 about that earthquake and the town of Pozzuoli. It has been still ever since. But just in the last two or three years the wharf in the harbor has risen 15 feet above its former level. So things are active, and the town’s being vacated now. More things may happen.

Well, since this book was printed we have some beautiful examples of that, like Surtsey in Iceland, that prosperous fishing town. You’ve seen the lava spurting up, etc. Now there’s this huge mountain over it. It’s covered with a volcanic mountain of ash and mostly lava clinkers. And [there have been] others, like Paracutin in Mexico. That was about ten or fifteen years ago. Anyway, it was after this [book] came out. Paracutin is now something to see—it’s a real mountain. There was no mountain before. It was just a cornfield, dead level. All of a sudden there came a volcano building up, and in a year tourists were going to see a new mountain in Paracutin. So these things happen. And there was a city near it like Monte Nuovo.

And then what other phenomena do we have? We have [discussed] the volcanic phenomenon. The quakings of the earth lasted for about three hours (verse 19). Of course, the aftershocks, tremblings, and groanings continued for three days. You always get aftershocks. There had been no studies of earthquakes. What would Joseph Smith in New York know about this sort of stuff, or anybody else? . . . during which time the afflicted people carried on in a hysterical fashion—with frightful howling and lamentation for the dead. We saw that in Mexico City. And then there was this thick darkness. This was really something. They “could feel the vapor of darkness. . . . Neither could there be fire kindled . . . so great were the mists of darkness.” When we talk about God sending down fire and destroying [people], that’s volcanic activity.

Well, we recall the greatest catastrophes of modern times, Mt. St. Pierre in Martinique in 1902 and Mt. Pele in 1906. And what did the people die of—about 60,000 people from Mt. Pele? This wasn’t Krakatoa, which was practically a desert island. They died of suffocation because the air was so thick. “They 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 the people were overpowered by the vapor of smoke and darkness. They were killed by suffocation, which is also a major cause of death in earthquakes (3 Nephi 10:13). Even without volcanic accompaniments, earthquakes do kick up a tremendous dust, as you know—accompanied “by phenomenal vapors and astonishingly thick air.” In the Assam earthquake such a contamination reduced visibility to a few feet and made breathing a nightmare. According to 3 Nephi 8:21–22, however, the vapor of darkness was not only tangible, but it defeated every attempt to light candles or torches for illumination. In Thira and Krakatoa the same thing happened. It said they couldn’t light any more lights.

Then this is another one, the rising and sinking of the land. Well that’s what happens, of course. We’re talking about plate tectonics here. It mentions the rising and sinking of the land, forming new hills and valleys. There’s no mention of mountain ranges here or anything like that. The New Madrid earthquake that I mentioned, in 1811–1812, over an area of 30,000 square miles, lowered the land fifteen feet in some places and raised it six feet in others. But in the Japan earthquake in 1923, over 500 square miles, some areas were lowered as much as 700 feet and others were pushed up more than 800 feet, so you had a 1,500-foot difference. I saw that happening one day going up to Santa Barbara. There was an earthquake along the coast. We were driving, and suddenly the whole mountain just slipped down like that. We’ve seen a mountain slip down here, but it wasn’t an earthquake. But that’s what the hydrographic surveys showed after the Japanese earthquake. So the earth is cast up after. Notice, these things are mentioned after, when they had a chance to inspect the land, and they saw that it was all broken up, etc. And some cities escaped total destructions; they didn’t lie at the center of it. And so it goes.

Well, we're told here, "Central America lies in the heavy earthquake belt, as well as being both a coastal and volcanic area." This is a perfect setup for this sort of thing. We see [in 3 Nephi 8] seams and cracks everywhere. "And the highways were broken up, and the level roads were spoiled, and many smooth places became rough." Well, you could go around and make a film of this, your own documentary. It was just a big earthquake. It was not the creation of the North American continent. We're not dealing with continental drift and things like that, but this is one of the periods of destruction. In other parts of the world at the same time [these things happened]. They date almost exactly the same time, about A.D. 30. They date the great earthquake at Qumran—which is near Jerusalem, just a few miles away—[to that time]. The steps that go down to the water, in what they call the baptistery now, are split 18 inches like that. One side of the stairway drops 18 inches under the other. That was a big drop. That was a real earthquake at that time. Of course, that's a very active earthquake zone. That's the jauf, the great depression that runs right down. That's a great rift which forms the Red Sea, goes right on up through Lebanon to Baalbek and goes right up to the headwaters of the Euphrates.

Well, anyway, this is a good description. But it's preparing for something now. As we said, these things happened in the time of Christ, and there were changes in topography. It was not a time of general extermination or mountain building. There have been such times of extermination. This is important for us to know today, since the 1980s. I'm going to refer you again, just to make your flesh creep, as the fat boys says in *Domby and Son*, "I wants to make their flesh creep." This June 1989 issue [*National Geographic*] is devoted to extermination, "The March toward Extinction." This is very relevant to our particular age, because it is man that does the extinguishing, and the Lord explains that when he comes. He says, you are wiping yourselves out. So this is the situation we're in now. Well, I'll just read you the introduction here; it's pretty sensational.

I notice I've included in here a quotation from Charles Lyell's *Principles of Geology*, which was used for many years here at BYU. This is an 1892 edition that was in the library here. It was the great discovery of geologists that everything happens at a uniform pace—uniformitarianism, never any faster, never any slower. The same forces are at work everywhere with infinite slowness and gradualness. It's the secure Victorian idea of ameliorism, too. Things were getting better, irresistibly, was the expression they used. Well, this is the way it starts out here. "The philosopher at last has become convinced of the undeviating uniformity of secondary causes, and guided by this faith [you'll notice, by faith] in this principle often rejects the fabulous tales of former times, of violent upheavals and volcanoes and things on the grounds of their being irreconcilable with the experience of more enlightened ages." We just don't have those things happen. They just don't happen to nice people, you see. "They tell of terrible events, but we know better," he says. On the frontispiece of the cover it gives Pozzuoli as proof that things happen with infinite gradualness. If anything, it proves that things happen very fast.

But this is what this issue, less than six months old, of the *National Geographic* (p. 664) says. "During that same time [since the 1930s] as many as a hundred acres a minute of the world's tropical forests, among the most richly populated habitats of the earth, have been destroyed. Ecologists can only speculate about how many unnamed, unknown creatures have vanished with the trees. An estimated million species will be lost in the next 25 years [not a million animals but a million species; I didn't know there were that many]—a rate of one every 15 minutes." Every fifteen minutes a species, which has worked a long time to get going and has been around for an awful long time and has adapted itself to its environment, disappears. The whole earth is being readjusted. Something is happening; something is preparing. [We have] these great periods of extermination. "Many scientists contend that our planet is experiencing its greatest mass extinction in 66 million years. At that time the dinosaurs vanished, along with between 60 and 80 percent of other animal species [and they vanished suddenly and were replaced suddenly; that's what it talks about here]. Trilobites. Ammonites. Triceratops. Titanotheres. All were victims of at least 12 mass extinctions." There have been twelve mass extinction periods. They're outlined

and diagramed here—twelve times when almost all the life on the earth was extinguished and replaced again. Well, let's read what it says here: “. . . five of them immense.” This [the one in A.D. 33] was not one of the immense ones. This one at the time of Christ was worldwide; we know from other records. But it didn't wipe out the human race or form new continents or anything like that. This was one of the bad ones, but it was not one of the immense ones. “. . . five of them immense, that our planet has endured since the fossil record of animals began about 800 million years ago.

“Mass extinctions. The concept has hit science like a fireball during the 1980s.” You see, a few years ago we'd never dreamed of talking about a thing like this. This was going altogether too far. A few things go wrong, we lose a few trees or something like that—so what? That was the attitude certainly of my grandparents and parents who were in the lumber business and mining. They said, oh, yeah, there's always plenty left. Ha ha. Well, “the concept has hit science . . . during the 1980s.” Now we suddenly become environmentally conscious; this is a new thing. Well, it goes on here: “Paleontologists had long realized that occasionally large numbers of species disappeared simultaneously from the fossil record. . . . The causes behind those great dyings had remained obscured [but all that is changing]. Innovative geochemical techniques are coaxing subtle secrets from ancient rocks. Fossils are being reexamined. Computers are finding provocative patterns in the extinctions. In the process the rules of evolution are being rewritten.” We were so certain. When I came here at BYU, we just had it down cold. That's the only way it could have happened. It's all rewritten now, “And so is the four-billion-year history of life on the planet.”

It goes on to talk about the iridium-rich clay. Well, last week you may have seen on KBYU and KUED [a program] called “The Miracle Planet.” It was a geological thing on the forming of the planets and on the periodic destructions through meteorites, etc.: “Most scientists now concur that at least one great extraterrestrial object struck the planet” (p. 665): “ ‘In the first days after earth was hit, dust blanketed the entire world’ ” (p. 672). Like Yellowstone, the entire world caught fire: “ ‘To get the amount of soot we find, as much as 90 percent of the world's forests must have been burned [when this particular meteor struck]. . . . Winds of hundreds of kilometers an hour would have swept the planet for hours, drying trees like a giant hair dryer. Two-thousand-degree rock vapor would have spread rapidly’ ” (p. 673). This is a much bigger edition than this [in 3 Nephi]. Mass extinctions do occur. They force a new perspective on the history of life, and on the gospel, because we're talking about that, too. Remember, Brigham Young said that Adam wasn't the first man of that name who lived on the earth. He replenished the earth—who knows [what happened before], but we won't talk about that now.

“ ‘Mass extinctions change the rules of evolution,’ explains David Jablonski of the University of Chicago. ‘When one strikes, it's not necessarily the most fit that survive; often it's the most fortunate’ ” (p. 673). Then when it returned, animal life exploded across the planet, the start of the Cambrian. When it comes, it comes fast; when it goes, it goes fast. It's not this slow-paced, infinitely slow, long thing.

So, let's behave ourselves. Oh, there are some nice things, pictures and all that sort of thing. [There have been] at least six mass extinctions, but the greatest of all will probably be caused by the human race itself, and we're making it now. The upshot of this article is that the most complete extinction is this: We go around and do a thorough job, bit by bit. We don't just do a clumsy job. We don't go in with a sledge hammer. We go in, pick our way through, and wipe out species after species, ending up with ourselves. So the Book of Mormon plays rough, and it's not kidding.