

TEACHINGS OF THE BOOK OF MORMON

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Semester 4, Lecture 90
3 Nephi 9
Destruction and Blessings

Now we're really getting in over our heads here. This chapter nine is pretty deep stuff. See, the Lord in the aretalogy tells us that he's been doing all the destroying that's been going on here. But first of all, what is the theme of the Book of Mormon? The theme of the Book of Mormon is, of course, salvation in Jesus Christ. But what is its historical message? What is its particular message to us? Remember, Parley P. Pratt wrote *A Voice of Warning* about the Book of Mormon. What's it warning us against? Let's try out our shiny new roll. Brother Wolf, what's it warning us against? [answer inaudible]

What's the outcome we're going to try to avoid? What will happen if things go on? What's it warning us against?

"We'll fall back into personal wickedness, and we don't want to do that."

Well, that is the real calamity, you see. But what's the immediate calamity, the things we're being warned against?

"Destruction."

Exactly, you're absolutely right, but what you become is far more important than what becomes of you. What could be worse than to be a wicked person, I mean? That's the worse thing that could happen to you. Say he was a wicked person, but he broke his arm; he's a good man, but he broke his arm. He's a wicked person, but he has 20/20 eyesight, very good eyesight. What advantage do you have if you're bad, and what disadvantage if you're good? Socrates used to like to say that. Nothing really bad can befall a person if he's righteous.

But [back to] the theme of destruction. Sister Wilson, this is a guess, and you'd better guess right, too. Sister Wilson shrewdly decided to stay away and not be put to this one. Well, Brother Warren, would you make a guess as to how many times the words *destruction* or *destroy* appear in the Book of Mormon? These are useful questions with a point.

"At least one hundred."

Well, 534 times it uses *destruction*. It's just sanded with destruction. How does the Book of Mormon begin, Brother Warren? What's happening as the curtain goes up?

"The people are ripening for destruction at the beginning."

Where does it take place? Where is the scene laid, "in fair Verona where we lay our scene?"

"Are you speaking of 1 Nephi?"

Yes, right at the beginning of the Book of Mormon. Where does it begin?

"Jerusalem."

In Jerusalem, and Jerusalem is seething and just about ready to explode. Lehi gets out just in time, doesn't he? We'll ask Brother Warner this time. Brother Warner, what's happening when the curtain goes down?

"Everybody just got destroyed."

It's some scene. It's like the last act of *Hamlet*, isn't it? The stage is strewn with bodies—utter calamity and destruction. The Lamanites are no better off than the Nephites. The Nephites have been wiped out. The Lamanites are going into a long, long period of wiping each other out. It's pretty sad, isn't it? Well then, why so negative? We would always be cheerful, as Brother Waltvogel could tell us, with a name like that. Remember the first act of *Siegfried* is the "waltvogel." It sings, and it's cheerfulness itself. It's springtime, of course. So, that's a good name. We'd like to be always cheerful, wouldn't we? But do you conclude, in general, that life is not the happiest thing in the world? When you balance the books, how does it come out? Does everybody have a happy life? If so, why do we have this rich literature in books on how to have a happy life? Everybody has his formula, and it turns out that the guy who wrote the book is an alcoholic or something. It almost invariably happens. But remember, what does it say in [Shelley's] "To a Skylark"? Brother Waltvogel, that you should know, being a skylark.

We look before and after,
And pine for what is not:
Our sincerest laughter
With some pain is fraught;
Our sweetest songs are those that tell of saddest thought.

It's because we can't get out of it. And there are others, of course. You think you're enjoying yourself, as long as you're drunk, as A. E. Housman says. Remember his famous poem from *A Shropshire Lad*?

Men at times are sober;
They think by fits and starts.
And when they think they fasten
Their hands upon their hearts."

Absolutely scared stiff, you see. "Yet man is born unto trouble, as the sparks fly upward" [Job 5:7]. Do you know any work that is absolutely cheerful, that tells us that life is great and happy and all this sort of thing? I even forgot that. Oh, it was Robert Browning who wrote that [poem], wasn't it? I'm thinking of what, Sister Waddell?

The year's at the spring,
And day's at the morn;
Morning's at seven;
The hill-side's dew-pearl'd;
The lark's on the wing;
The snail's on the thorn;
God's in his heaven—
All's right with the world!

Nothing to discourage our little Pippa. Remember that poem, "Pippa Passes"? Yes, you remember the poem now. She is the original Pollyanna, isn't she? Whatever happens to Pollyanna is great, you see. But what was actually Pippa's situation? She worked in the factory at the age of eight or nine, and she had to grind away ten or twelve hours a day. She had one day off a year, and that's the day when she sang this song—everything's right with the world. It's "life is great," and she

really believed it. Of course, it's in your heart that you enjoy things. But do you envy the fate of our happy Pippa? Could you be happy under such [circumstances]. Maybe you could for one day. But then the day is over, and she'll have a happy time anticipating next year when she'll have her one day off a year. That's no exaggeration, that one day off a year. That's what they used to do in Scotland. You'd have one day off a year, and that went for Sundays, too.

So you see, it's a pretty sad show. You got Pippa right, so that's fine. Brother Van Werken, here's a good one, as we go on here. Is it the purpose of the gospel to guarantee us a happy life?

"Well, the happiness is knowing that whatever trials we go through, all will still be right in the end."

That's what happiness is. It really can do it, no matter how you suffer. You've read *The Gulag Archipelago* by Solzenitsyn who's being repatriated in Russia, they tell me now. But what could be worse than the Gulag Archipelago? Yet the point of that is, they were free there. Nobody can make you sin, make you do the wrong thing, make you be evil. It can't be done, however they try. So, of all things, the theme of *The Gulag Archipelago* was freedom. And so [that's what] we have here in the gospel. People write books, but what they're thinking of is how to have a happy life. The gospel will teach you how to lead a happy and successful life, and it lays down the principles of family and all this sort of thing. What kind of a life is the gospel preparing us for? What's the life we talk about that the gospel can give us? What life do we really want?

"Eternal life."

Yes, that's right. Well, you say, isn't a happy life here adequate? Here you have a catch-22 situation, don't you? Which person is more likely to regret the shortness of life, "our sweetest songs are those that tell of saddest thought," etc. As the Koran says, "This world is all loss." Everything is loss—and literally, everything is passing away here all the time, isn't it? We're all oxidizing, as I say. Gravitation is pulling us down. Look, it's sagging me at every point now. There's nothing I can do about it. Why worry about it? That's not the life we're thinking about. But this life is a sad one, but here we are. We want an eternal life, which will assure us that we are happy here. We want our eternal life to be a happy one. But eternal life could be miserable, and that would be pretty bad, wouldn't it? We want to make sure that it's a happy one. Are we really going to have it? Is there really such a thing? That's what this part of the Book of Mormon comes to. This comes closer to the gospel from now on than everything else, because the Lord comes actually down personally and he talks to them and visits them. Now, they are on a chatty, first-person level with the Lord himself, and he tells us that those things are real. Well, we have cause for believing they are so, that it's not imagination.

But do we have the qualities to sustain eternal life? A couple of years ago the question I asked for that final essay was, if you were guaranteed all the comforts of life for a thousand years, funded for everything you need, what would you do? How would you spend your thousand years? And you should know they were all at a loss. Nobody had a good reason why we should live a thousand years. Well, you want to live for eternity, if it's not going to last forever.

We'll skip to Brother Underwood now. Brother Underwood, a theme you find in science fiction writing is the people that can't die, the old ones, etc. Have you ever read much of Robert Heinlein? He's very interesting and sort of a fascist, but he's a vivid science fiction writer. He always gets the Mormons in somewhere in his writing. That's what the science fiction writer calls "Mormonizing." Orson Scott Card is a Latter-day Saint who writes some very good science fiction. He wins all the prizes, etc. He's a distant relative and a very close friend. Science fiction writers talk about "Mormonizing." What would they mean by that? This is relevant to what we're talking about here. We have the idea of eternal life, and we talk about it as an abstraction, etc. Now here the Book of Mormon takes us right onto the scene. We step right into the picture of

the eternities and start talking and chatting and eating together with people from the other side. That's what you would call "Mormonizing." It's giving an element of plausibility to things that happen. What is possible? See, today we have a background of space travel and this sort of thing. We can think of such things because it's in those literal terms we have in the book of Enoch. In the process of time, Enoch was taken away and he'll come back, etc. Well, I suppose you'd call this Mormonizing science fiction.

Well, I just cited the Koran message *ad-dunya kasar*. The world really is life now. We say everything is oxidizing, passing away, being dragged down, etc. Brother Towery, what is promising to be the greatest problem we have? What is the one thing our civilization is producing in unique quantities that nothing else ever has? I've lived in civilizations where they were having a hard time—in very bad times in Greece and in the Black Forest of Germany. I never heard of them wasting anything. The concept of a garbage dump would have been blasphemous. But what is the main product we produce today in our world?

"Garbage."

The end product is garbage, and that's a serious thing. It is the unsolved problem. That would include nuclear garbage, too. But it's the unsolved problem. It's a horrible thing. We're going to wallow in it; we're going to be suffocated in it. The one thing we leave, our majestic ruins, would be a few hideous reinforced concrete foundations and things like that. Even the ruins we leave will be hideous. The ancients left some ruins that were pretty handsome, you know (Egypt and Greece). But for us it's nothing but garbage. Waste disposal is the greatest problem in the world today. Of the six highest paid executives in the world, two of them are in the business of waste disposal. That's what you get paid for today, if you can handle that stuff. How do they do it? They put it on barges. And what do they do with it when it goes on barges? Well, I'm going to ask you something, Brother Towery. Have you any good ideas for disposing of this junk?

"Yes, they probably dump it in the oceans."

Is that a good idea?

"It's not a good idea."

It is not a good idea, as Brother Cousteau tells us, doesn't he. Well, years ago the Norwegian Thor Heyerdahl made his trip in the Kon Tiki. Incidentally, I had a long talk with Thor Heyerdahl once. In the middle of the South Pacific a million miles from nowhere, the garbage floated by—disposable things, the sort of things that Brother Huntsman turns out today. Indestructible and nonrecyclable, they're mounting all the time. They're cheap and convenient, and so we just go on making them. And we're smothering in it; the ocean is full of it. They [Heyerdahl's group] were in a raft, you see. They were down right at the level. On a big ship you miss a lot of that, but when you're right down floating in the stuff, you realize it's gunk clear across the ocean. And then [there is] what these tankers are spilling; they seem to be unable to contain themselves. We'll have to put diapers on all tankers now, I suppose. They can't control themselves, like so many babies. That's it, you see. So our epitaph would be this. The one would be, "they couldn't leave anything alone." And the best thing they can say about our age is, "they made a lot of money." That's what we make. The money is on paper. It isn't even on paper anymore; it's in the computer now. A blip and you've lost your fortune. This happened to me—not in money, of course. I lost two weeks' work last semester when the gal hit a wrong key on the computer and wiped everything out. So we can do that. What a passing, temporary, flimsy, brittle society we have.

Now in 3 Nephi 9:2 the Lord describes the situation. Things have hit bottom here; this is what it is. But first about this voice. Remember this voice that's heard. President Grant used to tell a story

about a friend of his who mocked the Book of Mormon. He said that was the fatal weakness of the Book of Mormon, hearing a voice that wasn't a loud voice, yet people could hear it 50 or 60 miles away. That's absurd. To be heard, a voice has to be so loud, so many decibels, of course. Then radio came along, and Brother Grant had an answer to that.

3 Nephi 9:1: "There was a voice heard among all the inhabitants of the earth, upon all the face of this land," the whole land. Now, this isn't a soft, gentle voice that's going to follow. But you'll notice an interesting thing here in this chapter in verses 2 to 12 and 13 to 22—exactly 10 verses each. That's a striking thing and quite a coincidence, isn't it? Ten verses showing the Lord's severity and the next ten showing his real nature, how men brought this on themselves, etc. Notice it divides right in the middle here. He starts out with "Wo, wo, wo unto this people." He announces himself with what we would call an aretalogy from ancient literature—where a god announces his own activities and purposes and his own glory. See, when men praise God, what do they call it? Can anybody tell us that? Brother Aldridge, we're talking about an aretalogy here, and I was going to ask you something. Well, we'll get to it.

Verses 2 to 12, you'll notice, are one theme and verses 13 to 22 are the other half, just like the first chapter of the Doctrine and Covenants. Remember, it is divided exactly in the middle—18 verses of wo upon the earth, and then in the next 18 verses the glory that's going to come, the promises and how to gain them, and what you can do about it. We don't have to suffer; it's not necessary to go through all this. And that's what we have here. Now notice here, the Lord personally takes responsibility for the great destruction that's been wrought. This sounds like the savage, vengeful, old tribal God of the Old Testament they talk about in seminaries in both Protestant and Catholic schools. He wasn't savage and tribal at all. The law as it's summed up in Deuteronomy, the whole law that they had to learn by heart, is far more humane and gentle than our laws. It's marvelous law. We won't go into that now, but it is really something—taking care of everybody, no cruelty. It's a marvelous thing. We rule that out; we don't bother to read the thing.

Here he takes personal responsibility, but he tells us in the second part how he feels about it. See what kind of a God he is. What's wrong with the critics that call him a savage old tribal god then? Well, from their point of view, he is, because if you did that sort of thing, Brother Aldridge, [people] would say that you were a savage and tribal person. If somebody wronged you or disobeyed and you went in and slash banged and destroyed them—just wiped them out, women and children, one and all—you would be considered playing pretty rough. You would be a savage person. It's not enough to say that God's ways aren't man's ways. The lesson of the Book of Mormon is "man shall not judge; neither shall he smite." Remember, that's summed up in Mormon 8:20. But God does it; God judges. He is the judge, but don't you do it. Judge not, we're told again and again. See, God does things that men don't do. He lives on a different level entirely; he sees the whole thing. It's a different thing entirely with him. It's not the way it is with us, because of our limited view of things. We're going to see more of that a little later on, and it's very striking. For example, we might call this a surgical strike. Things had gotten so bad there was nothing else to do. They had to excise all the cancer, all the infection in the body here. And so men try surgical strikes, but that's not right for them, because they don't know the situation. It's a very dangerous thing to do. You don't try a surgical strike. You don't hit to anticipate a person might strike you, so you make the first move. That has become with us a military action justification. We shoot because they might shoot. We're told, and this is very clear—the Lord says you cannot punish a person for the evil he might do. The Lord was asked again and again by Abraham, and he was asked by the apostles at Capernaum—why don't you punish these wicked people? They're beyond salvation. The Lord said, no, I'm not going to punish them; let them go their way. That's what I don't do. They have their free agency here. He said when the judgment comes, then they will be judged. But meantime, Capernaum can go on doing what it does. The Lord tells us to keep hands off, but we don't. You cannot punish a person for a crime he hasn't

committed yet, no matter how probable it may be that he will commit it. You can't do it. And, of course, that's forbidden in the Constitution, but we do practice these things today.

Brother Aldridge, we talked about extermination last time. This was not a major extermination, was it? There were lots [of people] left. There was one major extermination in the scriptures, which really wiped things out, a worldwide catastrophe. What as that?

“The Flood.”

Yes, the Flood. Now there's exactly the same situation here. That has been the main reason why men have criticized God (I wrote an article on the justification of God), not just in modern times, not just people like H. L. Mencken and the professional atheists who do that. They bring the Flood against God as the strongest proof against him. A good God would not send the Flood [according to them]. See, it flooded women, children, and everybody, etc. But again we have the revelations which make that very clear, and that is exactly the way it's going to be made clear here. We find this right at the end of the book of Moses. This follows Genesis here, and then he goes on and gives us more, though. The last two verses of Moses end up this way, [similar to] Genesis 6:11–12.

Moses 8:29–30: “And God looked upon the earth, and, behold, it was corrupt, for all flesh had corrupted its way upon the earth.” When corruption starts, it can go all the way. You can get such a thing as total corruption. The world has seen it before. You get total something, and then you've had it. So what happens then? “And God said unto Noah: The end of all flesh is come before me, for the earth is filled with violence.” Notice, who's being violent? Who is destroying things here? We've got to stop them [the Lord said]. That's all that can happen. The earth had to be purged by the Flood. They had made it clear they had no intention to reform, “And behold I will destroy all flesh from off the earth.”

We have [something related to this] in Moses 7:27–37. Boy, I'm getting so rattled because I'm writing on one thing and talking about another. Here you have it—how the Lord feels about the Flood. “And Enoch beheld angels descending out of heaven, bearing testimony of the Father and Son; and the Holy Ghost fell on many, and they were caught up by the powers of heaven into Zion.” So they were caught up. There's a shuttle service here, and there are other accounts of this same thing. The angels descend and ascend. They come down and bring people away, as the angels brought people out of Sodom and Gomorrah. They came and rescued Lot and his family. Remember, they said, get out of this town—it's going to be destroyed. Lot wanted to stay. They said, you can't stay; you've got to come. His wife wanted to wait. You can't wait; you've got to go right now [the angels said], so the angel actually grabbed them and dragged them outside the city.

Moses 7:28: “And it came to pass that the God of heaven looked upon the residue of the people . . .” They were the wicked that weren't gathered to Zion, and whether you got gathered to Zion or not was entirely your own decision, as it tells us earlier. There were missionaries. It was a crash program to preach to the people. So this is what happened with the residue of the people—God looked upon them and wept. This is how he felt about it, you see. “. . . and Enoch bore record of it, saying: How is it that the heavens weep and shed forth their tears as the rain upon the mountains?” Notice the preparations for the Flood here (it's already starting to rain) and the dramatic aspects. The whole book of Moses, you see, is archaic. This is a very old thing. This is your Enoch stuff, and it has this marvelous nature prose in it. They mix the two together. You'll see there's more to that than you think. “And Enoch said unto the Lord: How is it that thou canst weep, seeing thou art holy [God is weeping about it; he's not at all happy about this] seeing thou art holy, and from all eternity to all eternity.” We're supposed to live that we might have joy; if God himself has to cry, there's something seriously wrong here. “And were it possible that man

could number the particles of the earth, yea, millions of earths like this, it would not be a beginning to the number of thy creations.”

Now wait a minute. That’s pretty strong, isn’t it? Millions of earths like this—same material. Scientists tell us today whatever one thing is made of, they’re all made of. And that’s just the beginning of his creations. Well in this case, he should be the last person to be upset. “And thy curtains are stretched out still.” That means the creation is going on still. There’s a lot said about the curtains. They put curtains between the galaxies. They will not associate with the others. What is it they call that? Scientists have a word for that anyway. “And yet thou art there, and thy bosom is there.” Notice this idea of space—it’s marvelous. Of course, this is the book of Moses here. This is exactly what quantum physics is teaching us today, quantum mechanics. “And also thou art just; thou art merciful and kind forever. And thou hast taken Zion to thine own bosom, from all thy creations, from all eternity to all eternity [this fusing of everything]; and naught but peace, justice, and truth is the habitation of thy throne; and mercy shall go before thy face and have no end [what magnificent prose that is]; how is it thou canst weep? [this is the thing that has him absolutely stopped]. The Lord said unto Enoch [this is why he weeps]: Behold these thy brethren.” We’re going to learn here the intimate relationship that Christ has with the people. He’s going to come and move with them, stay with them, visit them, and talk with them—get to know every one of them personally, become a personal friend with each one of them. It’s quite a marvelous thing. We’re going to see more of that in a minute. Hang on.

Verse 32: “The Lord said unto Enoch: Behold these thy brethren; they are the workmanship of mine own hands, and I gave unto them their knowledge [that’s what they’d need], in the day I created them; and in the Garden of Eden, gave I unto man his agency.” What more do you want? He made them free, he gave them their agency, and they had the necessary knowledge. But with knowledge and agency still how would you know which was the right way to go? He said, well, I gave them instructions. I gave them commandments, too. “And unto thy brethren have I said, and also given commandment, that they should love one another, and that they should choose me, their Father.” Now here is this whole universe in which everything is related to everything else. We’ve got to get along together. We’re all in the same family. We don’t start fighting or trying to take advantage of each other. That would louse everything up, wouldn’t it? Absolutely. We *must* love one another if things are going to continue at all. “. . . they should love one another, and that they should choose me, their Father; but behold, they are without affection, and they hate their own blood.” People hate each other. “And the fire of mine indignation is kindled against them [here’s the anger; here’s what happening]; and in my hot displeasure will I send in the floods upon them, for my fierce anger is kindled against them.” Notice the two images of fire and water are both here: “And the fire of mine indignation is kindled against them [that’s the fire]; and in my hot displeasure [fired, kindled, hot] will I send in the floods upon them.” The other part of it, you see, because we’re in a very volcanic world. Well, now we have [knowledge of] the Atlantic rifts and all those things by which the earth was formed by volcanic fire, by the heat of the earth escaping through the oceans and cooling off. The floods stop it, you see. “And in my hot displeasure will I send in the floods upon them, for my fierce anger is kindled against them.” So it goes on. Well, you see how the Lord feels about this. It’s not his idea at all.

After the first part of chapter nine, notice this. As I said, this is an aretalogy, and he describes himself in every verse when he talks like this. Brother Barrows, they’ve had this terrible affliction and he says (3 Nephi 9:3): “Behold, that great city Zarahemla have I burned with fire [the first thing that happens in an earthquake]. And behold, that great city Moroni have I caused to be sunk in the depths of the sea; . . . that great city Moronihah have I covered with earth, and the inhabitants thereof, to hide their iniquities. . . . And behold, the city of Gilgal have I caused to be sunk, and the inhabitants thereof to be buried up in the depths of the earth.”

Verse 7: “And the 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. . . . And the city of Gimgimno, all these [other cities] have I caused to be sunk, and made hills and valleys in the places thereof; and the inhabitants thereof have I buried up in the depths of the earth, to hide their wickedness and abominations from before my face, that the blood of the prophets and the saints should not come up any more unto me against them. And behold, that great city of Jacobugath, which was inhabited by the people of king Jacob, have I caused to be burned with fire.” And so it goes. Notice, he gives an explanation here. What’s the explanation in this ninth verse? Do we find an explanation of why he did this, Brother Barrows? Notice in the verse 9, where he says: “which was above all the wickedness of the whole earth.” It had to be pretty bad to suffer that. And then he says *because*. And you’ll notice an interesting thing here that we haven’t been pointing out. We’ve been pointing out all the *I*s, but notice in every verse he says “I have caused.” Notice here in verse 9 where it says “because of their wickedness,” and in the same verse, “therefore I did cause them to be burned.” *Cause* and *because* keep going all the time here. I caused it because—they caused it in other words. “I did cause them to be burned.”

Verse 10: “I caused [them] to be burned . . . 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.” They had been making war on Him. “And because they did cast them all out, that there were none righteous among them, I did send down fire and destroy them.” Well, he gives the cause, all right. Who brought the cause on them? The *because* was theirs. Notice there are three agents acting here. Verse 2: “The devil laugheth, and his angels rejoice.” It begins right at the second verse. We have three agents in the second verse. Who are they, Brother Barrows? There are three parties acting—three members of the cast here. Who are the three parties in this short second verse? Well, there is the *I* there, the Lord, and there is *this people*, and who is the third actor? Who’s laughing and his angels rejoice?

“The devil.”

See, we have three characters; we have a triangle here to consider. “The devil laugheth, and his angels rejoice” is just the way he wants it, but he didn’t cause it. Remember, they did yield themselves, it says in the preceding chapter. They did yield themselves to the temptations. They gave up to him; he had no power over them otherwise. But now they had given in, they played the game according to his rules, the way he wanted them to. So he laughed and his angels rejoiced. And that’s a very interesting thing. This verse is in the ancient Enoch. I mean we have ancient texts of Enoch that go way back, and this passage occurs in them, too. “For the devil laugheth, and his angels rejoice, because of the slain of the fair sons and daughters of my people; and it is because of their iniquity.” There’s your *because*, you see. He laughs because he sees the people being slaughtered and everything lost, and they’re being slaughtered because of their iniquity, that they are fallen. It was their iniquity that did it, so we see the agents and the agencies here. There’s God who is trying to do everything good, who gives them everything they want [and need]. He gives them the advice and the instruction. Then there’s the devil trying to trip them up. They don’t have to yield if they don’t want to, and it’s because of their iniquity that they are fallen.

Today there’s a serious trouble in the world. It’s a good example of this very same thing, isn’t it? What is it? This is a hard one. Sister Bergeson, we have such a problem today. It’s a paradoxical sort of thing. What is that particular plague that’s worrying people and may fill the earth in a short time? It is distinguished by the fact that people practically force it upon themselves. You don’t have to get it unless you want it, almost. People, knowing about it, are willing to take the risk, so who have you to blame for this terrible plague? Everybody is going around trying to find a cure for it and saying, “This is an awful thing—this should never happen.” Well, it never should have happened, of course. But Sister Bergeson, what am I talking about?

“AIDS.”

Of course, I’m talking about AIDS. This is the way it is. Who’s to blame for that? Well, men didn’t create it; they didn’t make it. Did the devil make it? He doesn’t make anything. He can’t create anything, not even AIDS. Remember, he can neither beget nor can he create, and that’s one of the sad things about him. All he can do is tear down; all his work is negative. Well, he has to react. He has to wait until God acts, and then he reacts. He has to wait until you act, then he reacts, you see. For a long time that was our policy. We had to wait till the Russians did something; then we’d do something. Who would you say is responsible for it? If it goes any further it goes bad. They’ll say, “Oh God, why have you allowed this to happen to us?” They do that. These people feel very sad; they feel put upon. They go right along with their practices, and they feel life just isn’t being fair to them. They’re pitiful characters, you know. They’re always rather sentimental, etc. But that’s a real tragedy. So this is the situation we’re up against here.

Brother Bowen, we’ve [discussed] these first ten verses when God said “I . . . I . . . I.” He takes responsibility for the whole thing. Then when he personally appears on the scene, if you were writing a play, what would you expect to come on? You know Grieg’s *Peer Gynt Suite*, don’t you? It’s a great play by Ibsen. Well, *Peer Gynt* wanders all over the earth, but his final score is with the *boyg*, this monster voice that comes out. It’s a sort of Nordic horror. But you hear this great booming voice, like the voice of God coming from heaven in the movie *The Ten Commandments*. When you hear that sort of thing or the way he’s talking here, this terrifying voice, what kind of a person would you expect to come walking on the stage, Brother Bowen? Here he comes! It’s coming! You expect some sort of monster, some horror like Godzilla, to come out after a description like this. Well, if you’re going to interpret it that way, I mean. Here’s your cruel, savage old god, so you expect him to come blustering on like the villain in a Japanese *nō* play or a Chinese tragedy—something quite terrifying. But he isn’t terrifying at all when he comes, is he? In what form does he come? How does he appear to the Nephites when he appears? It’s the next chapter. This is a good one.

The Lord came and mingled with the people on intimate terms. This is what happened. Let’s turn to 3 Nephi 11:8. Let’s talk about the voice first of all. They were gathered around the temple. Well, it’s only fair to read the second half of that chapter. I guess we’d better do that first. Let’s go back to chapter nine here, and this is his case. There’s a case against him, you might say. Here’s your savage god destroying all these people “because of their wickedness.” Then he starts out just as he talked to Enoch. Notice verse 13: “O all ye that are spared because ye were more righteous than they, will ye not now return unto me, and repent of your sins, and be converted [and now he starts the *I*’s again, notice] that I may heal you? Yea, verily I say unto you, if ye will come unto me ye shall have eternal life. Behold, mine arm of mercy is extended towards you [all the time, you see, you have this standing offer, and if you refuse it and continue to go on and know what you’re doing, what can you expect?], and whosoever will come, him will I receive.” See, here are the *I*’s again.

Then we go down to verse 15: “Behold, I am Jesus Christ the Son of God. I created the heavens and the earth [now again we’re going to another dimension; we have no business judging what’s happened at all], and all things that in them are. 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.” Now here we get the same [apparent mystery]. It’s not a mystery at all. It’s made very clear by John. In chapters 14–17 of John, he talks about this all the time and makes it very clear what he’s talking about. And 3 Nephi in the Book of Mormon makes it even clearer, what we’re dealing with here, the nature of the Father and the Son. Here he is one with the Father, and now he wants to be one with us. He wants to be personal friends with us—not on his level but in the same universe of

discourse with him. He's going to be not only a friend and brother, he's going to come down as intimately as you please in a little while here, just as he did in his first mission.

Verses 15–16: “I am in the Father, and the Father in me; . . . I came unto my own, and my own received me not. And the scriptures concerning my coming are fulfilled. And as many as have received me, to them have I given to become the sons of God.” See, members of the family. What more could you possibly want than that? Here's a new order opening the door on eternity here. This is another thing entirely. Well, it's worth the price, isn't it? They brush that off. He gives them this offer, and they have to make a determined effort to refuse it, to turn it down. “. . . to become the sons of God; and even so will I to as many as shall believe on my name [it's still wide open], for behold, by me redemption cometh, and in me is the law of Moses fulfilled.” From this point, we are ready to go on, then. The law of Moses is fulfilled but it is not abrogated. We're going to add to it now. Just as the Word of Wisdom is fulfilled; if you observe it, you don't even have to think of it. If we go into the next world, we won't have to be reminded constantly hereafter not to be smoking cigars or drinking strong liquor or anything like that, because we won't even think of it. The law is fulfilled, so to speak. That is not the basic law for us anymore. It wasn't even in the Doctrine and Covenants.

So here we have it. Verse 18: “I am the light and the life of the world. I am Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the end.” Oh, I was going to bring along something [related to] the alpha and omega, the beginning and the end. In the earliest Christian and Jewish writings we have, instead of *alpha* and *omega*, they used *alpha* and *tau*, the last letter of the old Greek alphabet, as well as of the old Hebrew and Aramaic alphabets. Well, in all of the old Semitic alphabets it's *T* or *tau*. It begins with the cross. And *alpha* is *aleph*, of course, the same thing in Hebrew as it is in Greek. It's aleph, the beginning, the getting together, summing all things in one already at the beginning—the beginning and the end. They're described in the earliest Syriac writings as *alpha* and *omega*, the *light* and the *life* of the world. The *alpha* stands for the light that dawns and the *omega* or the *tau* stands for the life of the world, which is the redemption, which is the cross that comes at the end. But this is used not only by Greeks. Of course, it is translated into English. We know what that means because it's traditional in our language. We use it, and that's what it's supposed to convey to us, that he's the beginning and the end. That sums it all up.

Now the alpha is the *qāf*; that's the famous *qāf*. We won't go into that now, but that's the *O* that sums everything up. Omega is the big *O*, the big circle. That, according to the Pythagoreans, shows that all truth may be encompassed in a single round. That's the *omega*. But the thing is, this usage, beginning and end, alpha and omega, *A* and *T*, was very common anciently, and it belonged to the mysteries. It's archaic and begins with the idea that the light breaks and the redemption is completed with the end. The *light* and the *life* is what he's talking about here.

Verse 19: “And ye shall offer up unto me no more the shedding of blood [now he goes into the law of Moses immediately]. . . . And ye shall offer for a sacrifice unto me a broken heart and a contrite spirit.” And then notice he says here, and if you do that, I will “baptize with fire and with the Holy Ghost.” Verse 21: “Behold, I have come unto the world to bring redemption.” That's the idea. Redemption means “buying you back again.” You've made all these blunders and mistakes. To pay it off and buy you back again is what I've come for—because if you're let go, if you continue on the course which you are now on, you are lost. You can't bring yourself back again. You can't pull yourself up by your own bootstraps. It can't be done; you'll just get deeper and deeper all the time. There are interesting stories and poems about our follies. And it is so; we don't get better. So what you have to do is start at the beginning.

And throughout the Savior's mission here, he pays special attention to the children. We must be as little children. He insists on that, and he really means it. And he starts right out with it here. This is the thing that so impressed Krister Stendahl, the great Lutheran divine I mentioned the

last time. He gave a talk in an assembly here on this very subject, 3 Nephi and the little children. It's so very important. Being redeemed, you have to have a new start, because you have to enter into it. You have to do your part. All right, I'll shed all that old stuff, I'll begin, I'll listen to it [we might say]. I'll do it your way, in other words. I'll submit completely to your instruction and do what you tell me to do. That's what he wants us to do. You must come to me "as a little child, him will I receive, for of such is the kingdom of God. Behold, for such I have laid down my life."

The most emphasis on this is in what follows. To be as a little child is to be completely honest, without prejudice. You may be free of knowledge or anything else, but you're also full of wonder. That's the thing that Einstein and other people were always saying. Almost all the great physicists have made that remark. We must be as little children if we're going to learn anything at all. Remember Newton's famous remark? Brother Buss, Newton was the greatest scientist of his time, and he gave us the Newtonian system. He made one of the biggest forward steps ever made. We thought it was the biggest until others came along. But with all he gave us, Isaac Newton said he was like a little child on a seashore picking up shells, while the vast ocean of knowledge lies before him unexplored. Did he think of that just as a metaphor, the fact that there was so much more to learn than he knew? It was more than that. It was not just the knowledge he was lacking, but what does it imply as to his own state of mind, as to his own condition? When he recognizes that he's a little child, what does he mean by that? That there is a lot he has to learn? But what is the attitude of the child? Anybody? The most arrogant, conceited scientist or pseudoscientist in the world will admit that there is an awful lot he has to learn, that we're not perfect. Some people think they've made a great concession when they say "we're not perfect—nobody's perfect." You haven't made any concession at all.

It's not that, but the state of mind that Newton had. Do you know anything about Newton? A marvelous study was written by John Maynard Keynes. You economy students must read Keynes, so read Keynes' life of Newton. He wrote a biography of Newton. In his naivete and freshness, he was like a little child. He actually was, and the same thing with Einstein. He was absolutely naive in the questions he asked. He would start people laughing when he would ask such simple, childish questions, and [they were] the questions people never answered. They were too proud; they thought those things were settled, etc. Notice this business of being like a little child is no joke. The great ones are all like little children, all very naive. Remember Solon was the wisest of the Greeks. When he visited Egypt the priest of Heliopolis said to him, "Solon, Solon, you Greeks are always like children." The Egyptians had the age-old knowledge. Solon acquired the same; he studied in Egypt. That was where he started, but he carried it on to other things. Greek science is a projection. But nevertheless this childishness is no joke here, so we have to come as little children.

If people want something to do, maybe I could suggest some questions we should ask ourselves about the next [chapter]. What could we ask here? How would you solve this question here? The catastrophes hit just at the time these people were in their wickedness. They both hit bottom. Now, was that a coincidence, or was it not a coincidence? To what degree were these things controlled? Were they adjusted so it would hit them just right, or were the people led just so they would meet it? See, we have these two paths and they cross here. We get something like a sort of relativity study here. But how is it arranged? And is the same thing happening in our world? We are on a collision course; therefore it can be prophesied. But when it's prophesied, must it happen? This is a very basic problem in modern science, as you may know—whether these things can be prophesied, whether they must necessarily take place or not. We may talk about that more next time. That's the kind of question [we'll discuss]. Was it a coincidence? Then why did the Lord say "I did it." He keeps saying "I did it." Did he deliberately start cracking up the earth? Did he press a button and start those volcanoes erupting? Did he hold them back until that time? How did he do it? Of course, we don't know how he did it, but was it a coincidence? There's more than you think to the question.