

TEACHINGS OF THE BOOK OF MORMON

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Semester 2, Lecture 35
Mosiah 15–16
The Fullness of the Gospel
Human Nature

We are told that the Book of Mormon contains the fullness of the everlasting gospel. That has often been challenged. Does it have everything in it? Well, what is the gospel? What is a fullness of the gospel? The gospel, of course, is the *good news*. In Old English that's either *godspel* or *goodspel*. *Evangelium* is another word that's used. It means the *good message*. What is the good message? The good message is that all is not lost—because aside from the gospel, all is lost. Nobody else has anything to offer. You hear a lot of impressive talk today, and you see documentaries on the religions of the Far East. They are ancient and impressive, but not as ancient and impressive as the Western ones. The whole philosophy they have to offer you is, “If you don't expect anything, you won't be disappointed because you definitely aren't going anywhere.” It's true—we're not going anywhere. That's the point: without the gospel, you are helpless; 2 Nephi 9:7 will tell you what our situation actually is. He doesn't mince matters here; it's the law of entropy that's at work here. “Wherefore, it must needs be an infinite atonement—save it should be an infinite atonement this corruption could not put on incorruption.” We are doomed and fixed. As Shakespeare said, we are going,

To lie in cold obstruction and to rot;
This sensible warm motion to become
A kneaded clod . . .
The weariest and most loathed worldly life
That age, ache, penury, and imprisonment
Can lay on nature, is a paradise
To what we fear of death.

Shakespeare, *Measure for Measure*, act III, scene 1

You are going nowhere, buster! That's the whole idea here. He tells us that's the way it is—if it were not for the gospel. The gospel is the only alternate plan that was ever offered. You have legends and myths, but the Hades—hereafter of the Greeks, Germans, etc., is a very, very bleak situation. But this is different. “Wherefore, the first judgment which came upon man must needs have remained to an endless duration [this is our natural state]. And if so, this flesh must have laid down to rot and to crumble to its mother earth, to rise no more.” We would be absolutely finished. But we have the gospel, so we don't have to take that.

That's what these two chapters [Mosiah 15 and 16] are about. They are perhaps the hardest chapters in the Book of Mormon. They are the most important and the most condensed because here we are going to find the fullness of the gospel message that we need to be saved. They read like a lot of theological verbiage, but they aren't. Actually these chapters have a precision which is disturbing. It's the precision, the accuracy, the literalness that are

disturbing. They are not theological jargon at all. If we take these things seriously, we are really in for it. You've got to make a decision here. If it's all or nothing, if it's that important, you just can't fool around with it. By seriously, I mean viewing the whole discourse as factual. We are alarmed by being committed to this all the way, you see.

And yet if these things are not real, there is nothing. They are mere words. The earliest Christian apologist was not Justin Martyr; it was Aristides. He was arguing with a learned pagan who said, "Well, of course, we understand resurrection and things like that. They are to be taken allegorically, spiritually, and abstractly."

"Oh, no, there you have it all wrong. That's the whole difference," Aristides said. "If these things are not real, they are nothing. It has to be the real thing or it's nothing. You can have all the words and abstractions you want; that doesn't interest us. We are interested in really carrying on hereinafter."

Taken literally, the whole thing reads more or less like a scientific statement, but dealing with spheres that make it more like science fiction. Remember, the science fiction of yesterday is the science of today; it has been like that all the way along. The things we do today are way ahead of the science fiction of the 1920s. If it follows from that, the things that they write about in science fiction today are far behind what we will be doing in another fifty or sixty years. We can imagine the situation as this—two galaxies or two families.

Two households, both alike in dignity,
In fair Verona, where we lay our scene,

From ancient grudge break to new mutiny,
Where civil blood makes civil hands unclean.

Shakespeare, Prologue of *Romeo and Juliet*

It's a situation something like this because we have two galaxies. They are inhabited by related people, but with a difference. Those living in the one are immortal and exalted. They have it made. They achieved their status long ago, and they are there. That's the way we want to be. They are doing things that those living in the other environment cannot even imagine. Here's an interesting touch, you might say, of science fiction. If the gospel is true, everybody in the world today has a completely cockeyed view of things—completely warped and impossible. It has always been that way. If Copernicus, the smartest man, was right, then everybody in the world of his time was wrong. Everybody accepted the Ptolemaic theory. If Copernicus was right, everybody had been wrong for all those hundreds of years. Then if Newton was right, the whole world had been completely wrong on the most basic matters of time and space. But if Einstein was right and Newton was wrong, the whole world was wrong.

Either the world knows the gospel or it doesn't. That's why you have this huge gap here, and that's what these two chapters deal with. We are dealing with two totally different spheres. There is a great and yawning gulf between them, and we want to get over into the one because we think it is possible here. The plan has been given; this is the plan by which we are going to do that. But those in the other sphere have great potential. That's where we are, but it is only potential. Their superior brethren want [those in the lower

sphere] to come over and join them; they want to make that possible. We want to join them in their perfect way of life. We have visitations; we have revelations and all sorts of things—angels breaking through, etc. We want to come and join them, but we on this side have not yet qualified for it. We're far, far from it—way out of the picture. So we must be put on probation if we are going to make it at all. That's the word the Book of Mormon uses throughout, "Therefore this life became a state of probation." We are being tested every minute we are here to see how we will do. Every minute you have to make a decision, and it's never too late to make the right decision, as Ezekiel 38 says. If you have made the right decision every day of your life and suddenly decide to make the wrong decision, then you are on the way down. Then you are wicked. If you have been wicked and made wrong decisions every day of your life and finally decide to make the right ones, then you are righteous no matter what you have done in the past. It depends not on how high or low you are on the stairway but in which direction you are facing. If you are facing down, your condition is lamentable. If you are facing up, your condition is joyful—even though you may be on the bottom step facing up. It's the direction you are facing. We are subject to this test here. We haven't qualified for it [the higher life], so we are put on this time of probation to determine who, if any, can come up to the required standards. Can we do that?

In 2 Nephi 2:21 we read, "And the days of the children of men were prolonged, according to the will of God, that they might repent while in the flesh." Isn't that a break that I've been able to hang around this long? I can do some high class repenting, and it's about time, too. I can catch up on my repentance, and that's going to take a bit of doing. You repent all the time because that consists of two things, as the Book of Mormon tells us. It is *gnōthi seauton*, "knowing yourself as you are." Remember what King Benjamin said, "I would that you always remember your own nothingness." Know what you are and bring yourself around. The other part is "to endure in that knowledge." You have to keep repenting and repent every day, unless you are perfect. When can you stop repenting? When you are like the Son, full of grace and truth. Then you can stop repenting; there won't be need for anything else. You will have all knowledge, all truth, and nothing but grace. That's to be well meaning and have no ulterior motives and nothing else but pure charity. Grace is what charity is. *Charis* and *grace* are the same thing. *Caritas* is cognate with the Greek *charis*, and that's our word *grace*. Anyway, when you are full of grace and truth, then you can stop any old time.

We begin here with Mosiah 15:1, and how disturbing it is. "And now Abinadi said unto them: I would that ye should understand [this is something you have to understand] that God himself shall come down among the children of men, and shall redeem his people." That is a hard one to take; that's why they would always start stoning the prophets, etc. That's why they said he was worthy of death. Remember, this is the only crime they could charge against him: he said that God himself would come down among them. This was very disturbing. These people are less than they could be, and they've had a setback, a fall. We are [subject to] the Fall and must be redeemed and brought back. To do that he [the Father] doesn't just send an angel, or a dream, or raise up a leader because the leader would be just as fallible as anybody else. No, it is God himself that comes down, and that is really something. And while he is here dwelling in our kind of vulnerable flesh, "And because he dwelleth in flesh he shall be called the Son of God [not *God*, but the *Son of God*] and having subjected the flesh to the will of the Father, being the Father and the Son."

The Son is not second rate. He is as close as you can be without being identical [with the Father]. We talk about the rivalry between the Caesars and the Augustuses that led to the Council of Nicaea in 325, when the big fight was about [the question], “Is the Father jealous of the Son, or the Son jealous of the Father? If they are equal, then the Father is jealous of the Son. If they are not equal and the Son is lower, then the Son is jealous of the Father.” People in those days couldn’t think of it in any other terms but that because, after all, each Caesar had an Augustus ruling with him, and each was jealous of the other’s power. They were always poisoning each other and knocking each other off. And Constantine, who called the convention in 325, had gotten to the top. He had eliminated everybody, even his own family, by poisoning and other forms of murder. That’s the way you got to the top. He was the man who presided over the Christological question: Is Christ equal to the Father? You can see the terms everybody was thinking in; we’ve been loaded with that.

Well, that has nothing to do with it. Why should the Father be jealous of the Son, or the Son jealous of the Father? This is what glory is for, to be shared. The more it is shared, the greater the glory. It’s not like something else—giving out a little of it and not having as much left. No, his glory is this. “For behold, this is my work and my glory—to bring to pass the immortality and eternal life of man” (Moses 1:39). He brings them up, and then his glory is increased. Glory increases the more it is spread around. So this is a different concept. He comes down himself, but he comes as a Son. He is the Son of God. Again, we don’t argue about the Christological question, the equality, etc. In coming down here and following commandments, he identifies his will with the will of the Father. He does exactly what he is told to do because he is setting the example for us. We must do the same thing; it’s going to make this very clear here. That’s why he comes down here, and he is called the Son.

Why is the status of *Son* so important? Because he is not here to rule and reign, which is his proper calling when he returns. Remember, he says, “I will return to my kingdom and the glory I had with thee before the world was.” He lays it all aside to come here to do the will of another [the Father], to show us how it is done. We must not take over the reins. For all our free agency, we would recognize the will of the Father if we only had the wisdom. Being highly imperfect, shifting, uncertain, worried, frightened, and ignorant as we are, we must attach ourselves to someone who is none of these things. As a son to a father, we attach ourselves to the Lord. Isn’t it nice that we make all our covenants with God alone, and not with each other? We are unreliable among ourselves, not equally, but nobody is completely reliable. We are shifting, slippery, uncertain, worried, and frightened. If two such people make a contract with each other, what a slippery interface that is. Either one of them could slip, or be tempted, or fall, or lie, or anything else. It compounds the danger if you have two people like that. The covenants we make are with the Father. We don’t even make a marriage covenant between two people; each one covenants with the Father. If he [or she] breaks the covenant, he knows whom he has to deal with. It’s not a case of personal rancor, suing each other, or anything like that. We all make direct covenants with the Father. That’s a marvelous thing, you see. We are right in it there. If there is anything that can bring people together as one, it’s to have all made that same covenant because they all have it in common.

Verse 2 indicates that we do not sacrifice our own agency or intelligence at all, such as it is. But we recognize a good thing and want to be identified with it. The identification of the Son with the Father is complete. As an ardent pupil of the violin, in that respect you want to be as much like the teacher as possible. Then you can become your own master

when you have mastered all that he has to teach you. But you are eager to identify with him.

Verse 3: “The Father, because he was conceived by the power of God.” What does that have to do with it? The status of the Father goes back to another order of existence, obviously way back there. He [the Son] was conceived by the power of God, a godly power which is not of this earth and has nothing to do with this earth at all. This is a place where men dwell in perishable flesh, a condition designated as “the Son.” Not second rate, but completely dependent. They are identical species working on different levels. This is the whole point—we are identical species. We get this in 3 Nephi when the Lord goes and prays. It’s the very same thing we have in John 13–17, showing exactly how we are identical. If the Father and the Son are one, we are one with the Son; thereby, we are one with the Father exactly as they are one. Of course, the Bible says that over and over again, and people won’t believe it. They say, “John can’t be that naive; this must all be just spirit.” So they make John the most ghostly, the most spiritual, the most unreal of all the gospels. They say, “John is the great mystery.”

They hold that supreme power which belongs only to “the very Eternal Father of Heaven and of earth,” as it says in verse 4. Notice, this is connecting up to something very big indeed. They are one God, that’s why “the very Eternal Father of heaven and of earth.” If you go back to the eternities, time and space take on totally different meaning. I hope you are all reading Stephen Hawking’s book called *A Short History of Time*. It’s just a new book by the most brilliant physicist of our time. Imagine a man who cannot speak and cannot write. He is so crippled with Lou Gehrig’s disease that he can’t hold a pencil and he can hardly get a word out. He has to whisper this way, and yet he is the most brilliant physicist alive today. It’s astounding what a person can do, isn’t it. All he does is just sit and think; that’s all he can do now. He’s had that disease for many years. That’s a great book. You must get it because it will bring you up-to-date on things. It’s not clogged with equations, which would be way over my head anyway, so I really enjoy it. But notice that this is going outside of time and space. This goes out to the eternal, everlasting order of things. When you say *eternity*, you are saying something bigger than we can even realize. It goes on and on and on.

“And they are one God, yea, the very Eternal Father of heaven and of earth.” That’s a very thrilling statement to make—that we are in on that. Then the next verse tells us that the flesh is to the spirit as the Son is to the Father, or the Father is to the Spirit as the Son is to the flesh. It’s exactly alike. They both belong to the spiritual order of things. The flesh is not against the spirit but “subject to the Spirit,” we are told. When mortals become totally subject to God, they will have passed the test and are ready to go on. You have to be subject—that’s the thing. “. . . the flesh becoming subject to the Spirit, or the Son to the Father, being one God, suffereth temptation, and yieldeth not to the temptation.” This is saying that you belong to this same category. He came to the same category as you. He was tempted just as much as you are, etc. You don’t have to give in, but we all do because that was the Fall. That’s where Adam did give in. This is necessary for experience, knowing the good from the evil.

Verse 6: “And after all this, after working many mighty miracles among the children of men, he shall be led, yea, even as Isaiah said, as a sheep before the shearer is dumb, so he opened not his mouth.” He left the celestial circuit to bring us into that celestial circuit, you might say (verses 6 and 7). The Lord must come down to us to arrange for our removal to a higher realm; we can’t go up there to make arrangements. He must come to

us to give us a chance to acknowledge him, and accept the offering, and understand what the thing is. It's a sort of martialing area here. Verse 8 tells us that it is a physical breaking of confining bonds, a barrier beyond which life ceases. The bands of death have to be broken, as we are told in 2 Nephi 9:7. The second law would be in effect if it weren't for that. That's what Hawking talks about here. Why should the second law [have to] be broken? Why should it ever be there at all? They are all right back where they started, at square one, now. There's no limit to the power of whatever put us here. It could put other people in other places. As Voltaire said long ago, "Once we get a person born, the idea of getting reborn is just a technical matter." Just a matter of working out a few bugs. If you've already got him born out of nothing—all you have to do is repeat the thing.

In verse 8 it's a breaking of bands. One thinks of passing into a black hole. His [Hawking's] views on black holes are very interesting. The reverse of a black hole may be another universe just as good as this and just like it. Is there such a thing as a *singularity*? Lots of people are drawing back from that now, but we won't go into that. But this talks about breaking of the bands. You have to break through something; you have to gain a victory. There is an absolute block there, a stone wall, and you'd never get through it if somebody didn't know how. "... giving the Son power to make intercession for the children of men." He has done that; he has broken the way through and makes intercession for us. He can get us through, too, if we follow certain instructions.

It says here, "He arranges for us to emerge on the other side. He is our admission to the other order." He goes ahead as our sponsor then. This is interesting that he sponsors us. Notice verse 9: "Having ascended to heaven [he goes up there; he wants to sponsor us and get us in], having the bowels of mercy; being filled with compassion towards the children of men; standing betwixt them and justice [we haven't deserved all this; to deserve eternal life is really something; but he says we have good stuff in us, and he doesn't want it all thrown away]; having broken the bands of death [he did that], taken upon himself their iniquity and their transgressions, having redeemed them, and satisfied the demands of justice." Then he says, Now can I get them through? [paraphrased]. It will be on certain conditions that they would be glad to accept for what they are going to get out of it. So he goes ahead as our sponsor and clears the legal difficulties. There is serious doubt about whether our admission is really justified, so he generously intercedes for us. He breaks the barrier, and then he faces the problem of our legal right to go on. Do we deserve it? No. His argument on our behalf is for mercy and compassion.

There is a great wealth of ascension stories—the ascension of Abraham, the ascension of Isaac, the ascension of Paul. It was in 1878 that Haug, a German scholar, first discovered the ascensions. There is an ancient ascension text for every apostle and every prophet you can name, and every ancient hero. These are stories in which he ascends to heaven and visits, and then comes back and reports. There is a vast number of texts on this particular thing. But in the ascension texts, the person who goes to heaven is rebuffed—whether it's Abraham, Enoch, Isaac, Jacob, Paul, or Peter. The heavenly hosts say, "Look, they are human beings. They are tainted with all sorts of imperfections; we can't have them in here. That's when the Lord says, "No, I'm here to vouch for them. I'll sign for them. I'll take the responsibility for them." So then it's all right.

[On the same theme] we have the magnificent writings about the Council in Heaven in the pre-existence, when they were discussing the creation of the world. When the earth said, "Please, don't send that race down onto me. They will do nothing but defile me and mess things up. They are a horrible lot. That's the way men will behave; you can foresee

it.” They took the vote in heaven. The *Abbatôn* is a very important early writing on this. There are quite a number of writings on this subject, but this is a particularly good one, the *Abbatôn* by Bishop Timothy Alexandria. In 380 he was at a conference in Jerusalem, and he discovered this document in a great chest in the library of the Apostles, which had still been preserved in the house of John Mark’s mother in Jerusalem at that time. It’s a very old document. Well anyway, the vote went against it. This was going to be too terrible—too much suffering, too much sin, too many people damned—if they had to go through with this plan of salvation. Then there was this deadlock. Then the Lord said, “Go ahead and I’ll vouch for them; I’ll pay the price, whatever has to be paid.” Then it was that they sang the *Hymn of the Creation*—all the angels, the rest of them, and the morning stars shouted for joy because the world could now be created. It could now go on. “The morning stars sang together, and all the sons of God shouted for joy.” That was the Creation Hymn to celebrate the creation of the world. That’s what our word *poetry* comes from. *Poiēma* means Creation Hymn. It was first sung by the muses to celebrate the creation of the world—each one representing a different factor and feature of the scientific structure of it. There’s a very good book on that subject called *Die Musen*.

Let us go on. Here we are getting into the picture. As it has here, he [the Savior] intervenes with his goodness and mercy. Verse 10: “Who shall declare his generation?” This is a quotation from Isaiah. Who will sponsor this particular generation? These characters, do you trust them? Who will vouch for them? Then it says he introduces them as his *zera*^c, which means “progeny, one’s very own.” All the way through the Old Testament *seed* is freely translated that way because it means seed in many senses. This is what has happened. Now, who shall vouch for this generation? “Behold I say unto you, that when his soul has been made an offering for sin he shall see his seed.” He shall see his progeny and accept them as his very own. The next verse says who will qualify. First, the prophets and all those who follow their teachings. “Behold I say unto you, that whosoever has heard the words of the prophets, yea, all the holy prophets who have prophesied [from the beginning] concerning the coming of the Lord—I say unto you, that all those who have harkened unto their words, and believed that the Lord would redeem his people, and have looked forward to that day for a remission of their sins, . . . these are his seed, or they are the heirs of the kingdom of God.” That’s who we mean. Those are the ones who will enjoy his intercession and will become successors.

Remember, in the most famous of all the parables the sower went forth to sow his seed. Then he [the Savior] compares himself with the sower. Some accepted the seed and some didn’t. It calls to mind both the Lord as a sower who sows his seed, whose work is the planting for ages to come, and the patriarch Abraham who establishes his line. We all know that expression “the seed of Abraham.” It’s the line and it’s representative and productive. In Alma, the gospel plants the seed. He says that you must plant the seed in yourself. Our word *seminary* comes from that word. It’s a germinal planting, anything that grows and leads to more of the same. It’s used about an equal number of times for *progeny* and any productive project in the scriptures. It’s designed to be fruitful and bring forth more of the same—the on-going, expanding, life process that we see in all nature. As we are told to begin with right in Genesis, “each bearing seed after its own kind.” A *seed* is anything which is productive of more. This is the *seed* image that we get here of the parent, which is the same as the parent of such like image—Father and Son. It’s all one. Which generation is which? This is what you call *atonement*, *at-one-ment*—bringing everything together in one particular plan. This is the thing they are all obsessed with. The thing that all science has been working at is one uniform field, one uniform theory—the

GUT (the Grand Universal Theory), as Hawking says. There must be something that accounts for everything. The motion of every quark in the universe is accounted for by the same law that accounts for my reason for blowing my nose, as far as that goes—all the same. That's what *At-one-ment* in the gospel is. That's what it's talking about here—doing the thing on a level that we can grasp. They are trying to get this through the mathematical route and getting closer and closer to it, they think, but always there is the frustration that they run into. They always think they just about have it. There are some other very good books on that by Nigel Calder and others.

Again today, there's the old familiar assertion of the Sophists, "Man is in charge. There's no problem that the scientific method can't handle [this is trying to solve it by the other way]. We can now create life in any form we please." But there are two problems here that we are talking about in verses 10 and following. The first is the problem of staying alive indefinitely. You say, "Well, that's just a technical problem." But we are as far from that as ever, of course. The second problem is enjoying it. What monstrosities that must produce if you have to hang around. We have these problems: first, to get our eternal life and then to make it worth having. It's like the person who was caught in the sewer. They said to him, "Well, don't worry, we can get food down to you. You can live indefinitely there just fine." His problem isn't to be fed and stay alive; it's to get out of the sewer. If we projected our life indefinitely as we are living it here, we would just go on living in the sewer and getting worse and worse, as things are today. So there's the problem of enjoying it. This is the misery of the old ones. In science fiction that's a thing. Robert Heinlein used to write quite movingly about the old ones who have seen everything and been through everything. They have lived ages and ages and just yearn to die, the one thing they can't do. It's terrible! They've seen it all, and there's nothing. Then there's the idea of hell. If you have a real nightmare, it's where the same thing keeps repeating over and over again. You've seen it already. It won't be an unpleasant thing, but if you see it coming back again, this *dejà vu*, you think, "I'm getting schizophrenic; I'm losing my mind. Let's put an end to this. I don't want to walk in here and have a dinner and walk out; then go in and have the same dinner, and just keep doing that forever—even though I enjoyed the dinner the first time."

So that's a big problem—to make a reason for living forever. Do you have any good reason for living forever? Well, because I'm afraid of dying now. "I'm tired of living and scared of dying," as they say in "Old Man River." That's not a happy condition at all. He tells us here in verse 11 that only the healthy seed hear the gospel and believe that the Lord will redeem them if their sins are remitted, which he alone can do. He gives them life as a parent; they are his seed. The prophets are his seed. They are his productive offspring because "these are they who have published peace." There's no need for conflict if the good tidings guarantee salvation. Verses 15–18: "And O how beautiful upon the mountains were their feet!" Why the feet? Well, it's the feet that bring the message, so we have the stock phrase from Homer, those beautiful lines. [In mythology] whenever a messenger, like Hermes, received a message, immediately upon receiving the message—without any delay—to his feet he bound his beautiful slippers. *Kala pedila* is *beautiful feet*, and we get our word *pedal* from that. "They were immortal, they were golden which bore him over the seas, or over the endless expanse of the earth like a wind." His sandals are always represented as having wings. It's the winged messenger, the messenger that comes to the door, the postman who brings the good news. So it's the feet that you hail—"How beautiful are the feet of him upon the mountainside"—because he is the messenger. You can hear his footsteps. Ah, here he comes—clump, clump, clump. Well, not if he is riding on the wind, as Hermes is here. This is a theme that is very

beautifully brought out in the story of Joseph and his brethren before they went down to Egypt. We won't go into that though. He [the Savior] has redeemed his people. What a message! The poetic and romantic parts of the Old Testament are culturally aligned to the Mediterranean Minoan zone; they use that business of the feet, "How beautiful are the feet," which means "How beautiful is the one who brings the message." Without the feet he would never deliver the message. He doesn't need his hands. He could hold it in his mouth, but he has to have feet to deliver it. Well, we won't split hairs over that.

Whoever thought up such a scenario as we are going into here? Where did it ever come from? Verse 19: "For were it not for the redemption which he hath made for his people, which was prepared from [ah, ha, nobody made it up here; it goes way to the beginning and takes us to another realm entirely] the foundation of the world, I say unto you, were it not for this, all mankind must have perished." There you have what we are told; that would be the second law. But somebody somewhere had enough knowledge, wit, power, and virtue to break that—to get us out of that. It begins with a basic proposition which recognizes entropy and that all mankind must perish. Are we cheated? Here we are, "One moment and annihilation's waste." This fundamental fact was taken into consideration from the foundation of the world, and something was done about it. Otherwise, it says, we would not be here—"all mankind must have perished."

The next verse says that those in charge are neither stupid nor cruel. This was only to be a preliminary; the answer to mortality was resurrection. But how could that be arranged? The power to give life is unlimited. Synt Giorgi, the famous biologist, has written on that, and also Lewis Thomas in his book on the cell. They have written that life is an absolute—it's either there or it isn't. They point out that the power to give it is unlimited. If it is primal, it is not dependent on fortuitous combinations of circumstances. If that were so, if it were just an accident—there would be one chance in a trillion worlds that it would happen by accident. And if it can be given once, it can be given again, without limit. If you can let it happen, you can also make it happen, and if you can do it once, you can do it again. See, once you have broken the code, you are in. Somebody broke the code to this thing and broke out into the open. We talk about "the breakthrough" and "breaking the bonds." These terms are used today a good deal when they talk about breakthroughs in science and breaking codes and getting out into a whole new world. Suddenly there's a whole new possibility that we never dreamed was possible before. When we are talking about anything as fantastic as the Resurrection, don't be too fast. We accept ideas now that we never accepted in my day. If you suggested life on other worlds in astronomy with old Professor Larkin, he would order you out of the room in a temper, "Get out of here! That's fantasy, that's wishful thinking, that's fairy stories." There couldn't be such a thing as that. Now, everybody accepts it as a matter of course. Step by step we are approaching nearer to this fantastic picture that we are given, which we call the gospel, "the good message," especially in these two chapters of the Book of Mormon. So it has to be the resurrection here. "But behold, the bands of death shall be broken, and the Son reigneth, and hath power over the dead; therefore, he bringeth to pass the resurrection of the dead." How did he do it? Well, it's power and energy. There has to be some form of energy that will do it; and he has it. He knows what it is.

Verse 21: "And there cometh a resurrection, even a first resurrection; yea, even a resurrection of those that have been, and who are, and who shall be, even until the resurrection of Christ." Why does it make such a fuss about the first resurrection? We are going to be resurrected anyway. First, second—a little waiting around won't do any harm, will it? What is the difference? Well, as it tells us here, the first resurrection isn't a

time—it's a condition. You are resurrected in a different condition from what you are in the second resurrection—the condition of dwelling with God. The time isn't the important thing if you can dwell with him. The second resurrections take place on another level, too. There are others later. So to come forth in the first resurrection will be a great privilege—the condition of dwelling with God.

Verse 22: "And now, the resurrection of all the prophets, and all those that have believed in their words . . . shall come forth in the first resurrection; therefore, they are the first resurrection. They are raised to dwell with God who has redeemed them [that's the first resurrection; that's why it is so very important]. . . . And these are those who have part in the first resurrection; and these are they that have died before Christ came, in their ignorance, not having salvation declared unto them." And the children qualify for the first resurrection if they would have received it. Not all of them heard the prophets. That includes little children, who don't hear the prophets. "And little children also have eternal life."

But if they have heard the prophets, it's a different thing. "But behold, and fear, and tremble before God, for ye ought to tremble." We are not little children; we are responsible here. I have written down some trembling passages here, the shudder. Pascal wrote about the shudder when you contemplate the universe. Pascal was perhaps the greatest French scientific genius; he was certainly the greatest prodigy. "You shudder before the universe," he said. Then you remember Søren Kierkegaard. He calls it "the shudder before God." Then you have Heidegger's "shudder before death" and Sartre's "shudder before the other person." Everybody is scared stiff of something in this life. Then I was just reading something by John Eccles. He was a great authority on the brain, and he wrote about "the terror of my self-conscious life." The fact that he is self-conscious and living is such a mystery. It haunts him so that he called it "the terror." He got the Nobel Prize for this work on the brain. So everybody is shuddering about something. There is cause for alarm in neglecting such an offer of help made by such a God. The thing is that if we get by it all, it will be a very narrow squeak—this is the point—because very few are qualified. If it weren't for that margin of mercy, that tolerance, we would all be sunk. How narrow is this thing that we get by on? The chance that we will neglect such an offer of help, the chance that we will miss it, that we will be remiss and lax when we should know better is a terrifying prospect. You'll miss it all. It's like putting it all on one chance; that's Pascal's famous dicing analogy.

When such a One puts himself out for you, his kindness is not lightly rebuffed. He is kind and forgiving and may not hold it against you. He is only warning you what you are doing to yourself by this foolishness; you are missing the chance for eternal life. He says in verse 27 that he can't help you if you won't go along. Everybody is going to be given a chance. "Therefore ought ye not to tremble? [for those who would not keep the commandments] For salvation cometh to none such; for the Lord hath redeemed none such; yea, neither can the Lord redeem such [he can't even if he wanted to]; for he cannot deny himself; for he cannot deny justice when it has its claim. And now I say unto you that the time shall come that the salvation of the Lord shall be declared to every nation, kindred, tongue, and people." That is important, too; it has to be a universal thing. Everybody is going to be given a chance. The gospel doesn't just apply to those who are in the Church, who have accepted it or rejected it. Everybody is going to be given the test in one form or another. Of course, that's where the temple work comes in. The universality is a very important thing.

Verse 29: “Yea, Lord, thy watchmen shall lift up their voice; with the voice together shall they sing; for they shall see eye to eye, when the Lord shall bring again Zion.” The earth has been the scene of Zion before; Enoch’s Zion was here. There have been Zions before. Well, he is going to bring it again. This is repeated, of course, in the Doctrine and Covenants. We are all in it together, and we should enjoy it all the more being together and seeing eye to eye. Incidentally, we are all saved as individuals; we all make our own covenants with the Lord. But because we are all in it together and we all experience this together, we know what others are feeling, and we can feel with them. We have perfect empathy, so we see eye to eye in these things when the Lord brings Zion. Of course, you can put it in other words. The Lord called his people “Zion” because they were of one heart and one mind; they saw eye to eye. We’ll see eye to eye when Zion comes again. We’ll see that we are in it together, and it’s all one grand, happy family, etc.

Verse 31: “And all the ends of the earth shall see the salvation of our God.” Now Abinadi is preaching these things to King Noah. They’ve heard the scriptures. These priests he is talking to are proud of their knowledge of the scriptures. Remember, they tried to stump him with passages from Isaiah—“how beautiful upon the mountains,” etc. They know what he’s talking about, but he is explaining now what it means. Of course, this is completely beyond them. They don’t get this at all because they have just been living it up and giving their own learned interpretations of things, like the doctors in the schools.

The next chapter begins by repeating the theme of universality “when every nation, kindred, tongue, and people shall see eye to eye and shall confess before God that his judgments are just.” Well, that will be Zion indeed when it’s universal. “And then shall the wicked be cast out.” It will be a purged society then, and they will be of one heart and one mind. Those who would not participate will be simply wild at being left out, but what could they expect “because they would not hearken unto the voice of the Lord.” He wanted to redeem them, but it all depended on their agency. When the wicked are cast out, there will be weeping and wailing “because they would not hearken unto the voice of the Lord; therefore the Lord redeemeth them not. For they are carnal and devilish, and the devil has power over them.” They are under Satan’s power. In Moses 4:4 he says that all who do not obey God will be in Satan’s power. He is telling the truth, of course—you are. You have your choice between them here. We are here in a position of choice, and you can’t just hang around in limbo all the time saying, “I won’t go this way, or I won’t go that way.” Remember what [John] said to the Laodiceans. The Lord said, “I would thou wert cold or hot. So then because thou art lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I will spew thee out of my mouth” (Revelation 3:15–16). I will have nothing to do with you; I want you to be hot or cold, one or the other. “For they are carnal and devilish, and the devil has power over them; yea, even that old serpent that did beguile our first parents, which was the cause of their fall; which was the cause of all mankind becoming carnal, sensual, devilish, knowing evil from good, subjecting themselves to the devil.”

Even becoming carnal, sensual, and devilish, you are not completely sunk in evil, though you wonder about somebody like Bundy, don’t you. That’s about as far as you can go, and it shows how far you can go. None of us have gone that far, I’m sure, but we all somewhat partake of that. Everyone can share his feelings and vicious temptations to some degree because all mankind has become carnal, sensual, and devilish—but “knowing evil from good.” He knew it all along, of course. That became clear. He went all the way down, and yet all the time he knew evil from good. Because of the pious way he talked in the end, he showed that. It was just a bluff, “knowing evil from good, subjecting themselves to the devil.” You do that freely. It’s very interesting that in the valley here we have a lot of devil

cults and people like that. It's quite widespread in the country. They don't even know what the devil is. It sounds romantic to them, I suppose.

Well, this is the normal declination of human nature, and it would have been final. After all, if you are carnal, sensual, and devilish, where are you going? You are not going to pull yourself up by your own bootstraps. What can you do then? Well, we would have been sunk if God hadn't intervened. Verse 4: "They would have been endlessly lost were it not that God redeemed his people from their lost and fallen state." This doesn't come in the course of nature. Evolution no longer follows an unimpeded, unconscious course of natural selection at all. Any biologist will tell you now that it isn't natural selection anymore. Man has long been in a condition where he makes his own selection—natural selection "ceased" a long time ago with the human family. We do our own selection now, and it's a deliberate selection. How long has that been the case? Verse 4 says that mankind would have been lost, but God redeemed his people. "But remember that he that persists in his own carnal nature [that's your vicious circle; he makes himself worse; it's an obsession, like the paranoid, etc., he is not going to get out of it], and goes on in the ways of sin and rebellion against God, remaineth in his fallen state and the devil hath all power over him. Therefore he is as though there was no redemption made, being an enemy to God."

He has declared himself for the other side. Why would anybody be as foolish as that? Well, that isn't a moot question. It's fact—we don't say why. As Professor Wormuth used to say up at the University of Utah, "Mormonism is the only nonspeculative religion." We don't ask the questions, Should we be here? Should the earth have been created. It's too late to discuss that now. There's no point. We don't argue those things. It's the same thing here. When redemption is made, how could he possibly be lost? Well, it happens. It's a fact.

Verse 6: "And now if Christ had not come into the world [all being carnal, sensual, and devilish], speaking of things to come as though they had already come, there could have been no redemption." Notice that the time is relative here. He hadn't come yet, but he [the author] uses the pluperfect here because the plan was working and had been going on all along. Those who follow the prophets are qualified for it, just as those who would be here in the time of Christ. Christ had to come personally here to make it possible—to loose the bands of death. Now that is the bottom line, again. "And if Christ had not risen from the dead, or have broken the bands of death that the grave should have no victory, and that death should have no sting, there could have been no resurrection."

This is the exclusion here in verse 2. Being caught in the quicksand is a good example of [their situation]. As Homer said, "Many noble heroes were caught like rats in a trap." It was *proiapsen*. They were already sunk before the war began. They were lost and sent down to Hades. *Proiapsen* is to grab a person before their time. This is the condition we are in, and, of course, it's our character that makes us do that. The oracles of men play tricks. "They were helpless victims," he said, "and the will of God was being fulfilled." It's an inexorable law. There is no Sympathetic One with power; there is no Savior. There is none to intervene. That is the tragic situation of ancient literature, the epics, etc. We are caught, as it were, in the quicksand, and the more you struggled, the deeper you get. It won't do you any good at all because you are held down by your own weight. Our very nature itself drags us down the more we struggle because you are not going to purify yourself—you can't purge it. We must have help from outside; that's all there is to it.

That's why we have to have this. Otherwise, "Many noble souls were already doomed to hell before they even came here."

This about the resurrection is quoted by Paul, and it's elsewhere. Verse 9: "He is the light and the life of the world [there's much more to it; there's more light where this came from, he is telling us]; yea, a light that is endless, that can never be darkened; yea, and also a life which is endless, that there can be no more death." He comes as the Light into the world—not just in a special role or something like that. This comes from the eternal order of things. He is the Light and Life that has always been there and always will be there, "that is endless, that can never be darkened [whether it's on this earth or anywhere else]; yea, and also a life which is endless, that there can be no more death. Even this mortal shall put on immortality, and this corruption shall put on incorruption, and shall be brought to stand before the bar of God, to be judged of him according to their works whether they be good or whether they be evil."

Something has been added physically to make this possible, you see. This is not just spiritual. We will not dispense with our bodies because there is a resurrection. The grave has lost its victory. "If they be good, to the resurrection of endless life [this is a release] and happiness; and if they be evil, to the resurrection of endless damnation." That means *detention*. *Damnatio* means "to hold back." The Egyptians use the word *h̄tr* for *imprisonment*. This is because they went "according to their own carnal wills and desires [if they want that kind of an eternity, they can have it—you can have a carnal eternity]; having never called upon the Lord while the arms of mercy were extended towards them; for the arms of mercy were extended towards them, and they would not; they being warned of their iniquities and yet they would not depart from them; and they were commanded to repent and yet they would not repent."

Now, do these people deserve eternal damnation? Look at the situation. They damn themselves entirely. There are these steps: First, "the arms of [his] mercy were extended towards them and [they didn't want it] they would not; [This is a very eloquent passage here, incidentally.] they [were] warned of their iniquities and yet they would not depart from them; and [then] they were commanded to repent and yet they would not repent." That makes it as strong as it could be. First, mercy—I'll give it to you just out of love.

Uh, Uh, nothing doing.

All right, then a serious warning. How about that?

No, I don't want it.

Then, finally a command. I'm giving it to you, and you must do it now. I'm giving you a last chance. I want you very badly to do this.

No, I won't do it.

So they refuse the command. You notice that there is a mounting urgency and mounting importance. Finally, they deserve what they get. It's very clear here. Verse 13: "And now [in view of that], ought ye not to tremble and repent of your sins, and remember that only in and through Christ ye can be saved? [those are phases you will go through if you don't] Therefore, if ye teach the law of Moses [he says to the priests of Noah], also teach

that it is a shadow of those things which are to come.” That’s all in the law of Moses, but you have to look at it carefully; it’s buried pretty deep there. Just as you will find in the Book of Mormon better than anywhere else the whole temple ceremony. People don’t know it’s there, but it is there. Marvelous book, the Book of Mormon!

The time is up now. We’ll go faster, but these basic chapters are very important. Now the story resumes after this. It was important to linger on these two chapters because they contain an awful lot of information. When we get to Alma and Moroni, we will see that they carry on the same way. The Book of Mormon is the gospel handbook if there ever was one.