

Nephi's Vision of the Last Days

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It's a thrill to be with you, brothers and sisters, to discuss some major features of the Book of Mormon. In many ways Nephi sets the whole gospel picture, providing a theological and prophetic view of the Book of Mormon with his vision of Christ coming into the world, and it is far too little understood.

We sing about the iron rod and certainly we need to hold to that rod, and that rod is not merely a theological rod. That rod is the testimony of Christ, it's the revelation of Christ in our lives. It's the knowledge of him as the Son of God and by the appointment of the Father as our God and our Father.

So as the Book of Mormon says on the title page, that book is here to prove to both Jew and Gentile that Jesus is the Christ, the Eternal God, manifesting himself unto all nations. Unless we understand that particular slant or orientation or emphasis in relation to Christ, then we really don't understand the Book of Mormon, because he is far more than our elder brother. He is Lord, God, and Father by the appointment of that exalted Being, whom we call Man of Holiness.

The prophetic picture of Nephi begins with his father, the patriarchal order. If you turn to 1 Nephi, chapter 9, you have an account of Lehi's dream. And in his dream he sees the tree of life, and he sees the rod of iron, these are prominent features to the dream, but as we unfold the vision or dream given to Lehi we find that it has a focus, and that focus is on Christ. For example, in 1 Nephi, chapter 10, verse 4 after Lehi has recounted his dream or vision in the previous chapter, then he prophecies concerning the birth of Christ, and he says: "Yea, even six hundred years from the time that my father left Jerusalem, a prophet would the Lord God raise up among the Jews – even a Messiah, or, in other words, a Savior of the world."

Nephi, by his desire to see the things that his father saw, and by his faith in the realization of that desire, he was given a similar vision. Then there is an elaboration on the centrality of Christ in that vision. And it all focuses on a sign or a symbol, and the sign or symbol is the tree of life. The tree of life, primarily, is Christ. And secondarily, it's the love of God, which is shed forth on the world, and through the world. And that love coming from the Father, implanted in mortality through the conception and birth of Christ, is revealed in the person of Christ, and made manifest through Him, through his person

and through His teachings and through His gospel.

As Nephi's vision opens in 1 Nephi, chapter 11 he is told in verse 7: "And behold this thing shall be given unto thee for a sign ..." The word sign is important. "... that after thou hast beheld the tree which bore the fruit which thy father tasted, thou shalt also behold a man descending out of heaven, and him shall ye witness; and after ye have witnessed him ye shall bear record that it is the Son of God."

Then he is told to look in verse 8: "And it came to pass, that the Spirit said unto me: Look! And I looked and beheld a tree; and it was like unto the tree which my father had seen; and the beauty thereof ..." He is talking about a tree as a symbol and as a sign. He is talking about an object, if I can put it that way. He wasn't merely talking about the infusion of love. He is talking about an object, and that object is a symbol or sign. "... the beauty thereof was far beyond, yea, exceeding of all beauty; and the whiteness thereof did exceed the whiteness of the driven snow."

Verse 9: "And it came to pass after I had seen the tree, I said unto the Spirit: I behold thou hast shown unto me the tree which is precious above all."

Verse 10: "And he said unto me: What desirest thou?"

Verse 11: "And I said unto him: To know the interpretation there ..."

Then Nephi is asked the question in verse 16: "... Knowest thou the condescension of God?" The term condescension, what does it mean? It comes from the primary word condescend. It means to come down. It means to come down from a higher to a lower level. It means to humble oneself or to take a lower position, than, otherwise one might have. It's a condescension, and there are several expressions to the doctrine of condescension within the gospel. Sometimes Latter-day Saints don't quite study these key words. It's like the doctrine of reconciliation, the doctrine of justification, the doctrine of sanctification, and we pass them by without getting a clear definition and meaning, and then we miss the significance of the doctrine that is associated with them.

Verse 16: "... Knowest thou the condescension of God?"

Verse 17: "And I said unto him: I know that he loveth his children; nevertheless, I do not know the meaning of all things."

Verse 18: "And he said unto me: Behold the virgin ..."

Condescension of God is the fact that the Father, Himself, entered into mortality by and through His relationship with Mary. And that through him an Only Begotten Son was born in this fallen mortal state, that's a condescension.

There is another feature to the doctrine of condescension, which is that this divine being, whom we call Jehovah, who is the creator and redeemer of the world, who is the God who revealed the law and truth to Moses and the ancient prophets, is the God of Abraham, and the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob, to use Nephi's words in 1 Nephi 19:10.

This divine being condescended to come down into mortality and dwell in mortality and be like men. The term "like" is important. No Nephite prophet ever called Christ a man. He is "like unto a man." For example, in Alma 34 as Amulek talks about the need for an infinite sacrifice:

Alma 34:10: "For it is expedient that there should be a great and last sacrifice; yea, not a sacrifice of man, ..." In other words, Christ was not a man. "... neither of beast, neither of any manner of fowl; for it shall not be a human sacrifice; ..."

Therefore, Christ was not human. We are talking as Abinadi would talk in Mosiah 15:1: "... I would that ye should understand that God himself shall come down among the children of men, ..." As we find it expressed, for example, in Matthew 1:23: "... his name was to be called Emanuel, which being interpreted is, God with us." Then Amulek goes on and says, "... for it shall not be a human sacrifice; but it must be an infinite and eternal sacrifice."

Note, for example, how King Benjamin expresses it in the 3rd chapter of Mosiah, where we have his great testimony and statement concerning the atonement of Christ, where Christ shed blood at every pore for the personal sins of men. The focus is there, rather than on the Calvary aspect where he paid the debt of Adams transgression. But he says in Verse 9: "And lo, he cometh unto his own, that salvation might come unto the children of men even through faith on his name; and even after all this they shall consider him a man, and say that he hath a devil, ..."

If you will follow through the Book of Mormon, you'll find that is the emphasis. Let me repeat, no Nephite prophet ever called Christ a man. He is that divine being, Jehovah, who came to earth and was empowered by the nature, not only of his being as a great spirit personage tabernacled in flesh, but by reason of the infusion of divine attributes and powers that he received from his father in conception. He had life in himself, on the same principle and in the same way that the Father has life in himself, as he says in John 5.

On that basis, he had the capacity not to make merely a sinless sacrifice, but to make an infinite sacrifice. And there is a difference. Sinlessness? Yes. Sinless is necessary? Yes. But infinite, infinite is the emphasis of the Book of Mormon prophets.

So there is a condescension on the part of the Father and there is a condescension on the part of

Christ. This is a part of the doctrine of condescension and there are other expressions of it in the gospel plan.

Nephi goes on, having been told about condescension, in vision of the virgin Mary. He sees her, that she is caught away in the spirit. In other words, she is transfigured and taken to the presence of God. Christ is conceived, not on earth, he is conceived in the midst of everlasting burnings. He is conceived with the divine powers of Deity in him. As he says in John's testimony, he was sanctified in conception before he was born. So He came to mortality, born above the power of the fall. Born, born again, if I can put it that way for those who know the meaning of the doctrine of rebirth. Then when Nephi sees this, then he says:

1 Nephi 11:20: "And I looked and beheld the virgin again, bearing a child in her arms.

Verse 21: "And the angel said unto me: Behold the Lamb of God, yea, even the Son of the Eternal Father! Knowest thou the meaning of the tree which thy father saw?"

What does he say? First you will see a tree and it's a sign and it's a symbol and then you will see a man, or a personage that we would call a man, who will come to earth and he will be the Son of God. So when he asked, "... Knowest thou the meaning of the tree which thy father saw?" Then Nephi says:

Verse 23: "... Yea, it is the love of God, which sheddeth itself abroad in the hearts of the children of men; wherefore, it is the most desirable above all things."

Then Nephi goes on and says that he looked, Verse 24: "And I looked, and I beheld the Son of God going forth among the children of men; ..."

Love isn't just an attribute. Love is the expression of the soul of a divine being and that kind of love we call charity is not just the kind of love that Jesus has. The kind of love that we call charity is an endowment. It is an endowment in which Christ infuses into us his love, the emotions of his being, the purity, the power of humility and of sincerity, and of genuine concern for others. It's an infusion, it is the love that is spread forth upon the human family.

Moroni puts it this way in verse 46: "Wherefore, my beloved brethren, if you have not charity, ye are nothing, for charity never faileth. Wherefore, cleave unto charity, which is the greatest of all, for all things must fail –

Verse 47: "But charity is the pure love of Christ, ..."

In my book I put a circle around the word "of." Why? Because it's not just love like Christ, it's actually His love. It's the pure love of Christ "... and it endureth forever; and whoso is found possessed

of it at the last day, it shall be well with him.”

Verse 48: “Wherefore, my beloved brethren, pray unto the Father with all the energy of heart, that ye may be filled with this love, which he hath bestowed upon all who are true followers of his Son, Jesus Christ; ...”

Charity is a bestowal, it’s an endowment, it’s an infusion of the recipient by the powers and attributes of the spirit, which manifest the attributes of Christ. Remember Nephi said, that he had been filled with the love of God to the extent it was literally to the consuming of his flesh. We are talking about an endowment, and that endowment comes when a person has 100% desire and commitment to Christ, then he is filled with that kind of love.

Next, Nephi sees this great vision of Christ, and this becomes the center of the whole prophetic picture. As the vision unfolds, it has three features, three main divisions. One concerns the Nephites; the second concerns the gentiles or what we would call people of western civilization; and the third has to do with the cleansing of Zion and the endowment of the faithful of Zion in preparation for the great building of Mount Zion and the Second Coming of the Lord.

With the three divisions in this program Nephi’s states concerning the first of these in 1 Nephi, chapter 10. He speaks of his people, the House of Israel, and recounts his father speaking of Israel with the simile of the olive-tree and its branches that are broken off, and the scattering of Israel.

1 Nephi 10:14: “And after the house of Israel should be scattered they should be gathered together again; or, in fine, after the Gentiles had received the fulness of the Gospel, ...” Now that brings it down to our day. “... the natural branches of the olive-tree, or the remnants of the house of Israel, should be grafted in, or come to the knowledge of the true Messiah, their Lord and their Redeemer.”

The Lord deals with them in the sense of their scattering and then the great hope of Israel in the latter- day, that there would be a renewal of that covenant that the Lord made with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, and the fulfillment of it, by the great gathering of Israel – not merely temporally if I can make this point of clarification but the gathering of Israel spiritually.

Let me put it this way, the gathering of Israel is not merely to a temporal territory, but the gathering of Israel is to the temple primarily. And even more significant, the gathering of Israel to the Holy of Holies, to receive the fulness of priesthood and the Endowment of Glory, with the cloud by day, the pillar of fire by night. That’s the great goal.

Nephi, for example, had seen this vision, but he can’t personally write what he saw being told by the Lord that John the Revelator would later write the details of the last days and Christ’ second coming

as he had been fore-ordained to write it. Nevertheless Nephi knew Isaiah, the great prophet of Zion, that singular person whose concentration, and his interest, and his spiritual desires literally focused on Zion and hardly anything else.

Isaiah's focus was on Zion. He knew, for example, when Zion was built that Israel would be redeemed. He knew when Zion was built and Israel redeemed the Lord would come in his glory and power to usher in the peaceful era of which he speaks in Isaiah 11 and other places.

So Isaiah knew these things and his focus was on Zion. He was a great prophet of Zion in all time. Nephi knowing that Isaiah had these visions, and had written many things about the latter-day Zion, Nephi includes chapter after chapter, in fact there are more than twenty chapters of Isaiah in the Book of Mormon.

In 2 Nephi chapter 14, for example, he talks about the objective to be achieved in the building of Zion in the last days. And it's not merely to get more converts into the Church as important and valuable as that is. It's rather instead to sanctify people and raise them spiritually to where there can be a cloud by day and a pillar of fire by night over every dwelling place in Mount Zion.

Isaiah says in 2 Nephi 14:4: "When the Lord shall have washed away the filth of the daughters of Zion, and shall have purged the blood of Jerusalem from the midst thereof by the spirit of judgment and by the spirit of burning.

Verse 5: "And the Lord will create upon every dwelling place of mount Zion, and upon her assemblies, a cloud and smoke by day and the shining of a flaming fire by night; for upon all the glory of Zion shall be a defence."

That great goal, brothers and sisters, will be achieved before Christ comes in his glory in the clouds of heaven. That great goal is the challenge that we as Latter-day Saints have. We have the challenge of missionary work. We have the challenge pertaining to the various programs of the priesthood, temporal and welfare and other kinds of things. But the great supreme challenge is to sanctify our lives, establish them on the sacred covenants of the House of the Lord, and get the full blessings of the House of the Lord to the point that finally there is a cloud and smoke by day, the spirit being so concentrated and brilliant.

There are three major divisions to Nephi's vision. One relates to Israel and he is told concerning the rebellion and the scattering and the eventual promise of redemption to Israel. Then he deals with the Gentiles. As he deals with the Gentiles, he makes explanations concerning them, but specifically in 1 Nephi 13 you have the great vision of Nephi concerning the latter-day Gentiles. It is focused on America

and the discovery of America by that singular personality known as Christopher Columbus.

He says in 1 Nephi 13:12: “And I looked and beheld a man among the Gentiles, who was separated from the seed of my brethren by the many waters; and I beheld the Spirit of God, that it came down and wrought upon the man; and he went forth upon the many waters, even unto the seed of my brethren who were in the promised land.”

The coming of Columbus was by and through divine means. Recently, within this decade, there has been brought forth and translated into English a book that Columbus wrote personally, called the Book of Prophecies. Interestingly this thing has lain for 500 years on a shelf in a monastery and was never translated into until 1991.

In the interim period, our historians and secularist educators and so forth have portrayed Columbus in about every way but the right way. The right way is that the basic cause behind the discovery of America was spiritual. Columbus put it this way, and I am quoting statements from the Book of Prophecies.

“Our Lord with provident hand unlocked my mind, sent me upon the sea and gave me fire for the deed. Those who heard of my adventure called it foolish, mocked me, and laughed, but who can doubt but what the Holy Ghost inspired me.”

“I attest that He, the Holy Spirit, with marvelous rays of light consoled me through the holy and sacred scriptures, a strong and clear testimony, encouraging me to proceed and continually without ceasing for a moment, they inflamed with a great sense of urgency.”

One historian has this to say about Columbus, having read the book. “There is no doubt that the admiral’s faith and communion with the Holy Spirit were the integral parts of his personality, central to the development of his discovery and his global plans.”

Another historian puts it this way: “Without the spirits enlightening power and influence, he might not [have] been able to sustain the single-minded persistence it took to win support for the enterprise.”

So, Columbus guided by the Lord in a very powerful manner was the instrument for the discovery of America.

Nephi goes on and says in Verse 13: “And it came to pass that I beheld the Spirit of God, that it wrought upon other Gentiles; and they went forth out of captivity, upon the many waters.”

Note the mention of captivity.

Verse 14: “And it came to pass that I beheld many multitudes of the Gentiles upon the land of promise; ...” and he goes on to say:

Verse 15: “And I beheld the Spirit of the Lord, that it was upon the Gentiles, and they did prosper and obtain the land for their inheritance; ...” and then he goes on:

Verse 18: “And I beheld that the power of God was with them, and also that the wrath of God was upon all those that were gathered together against them to battle.”

Verse 19: “And I, Nephi, beheld that the Gentiles that had gone out of captivity were delivered by the power of God out of the hands of all other nations.”

They did humble themselves and the power of the Lord was with them.

There's both what may be called a positive feature spiritually in the sense of spiritual causation, and there is a negative situation, there's a captivity situation. It's just simply a historical fact that arbitrary power in England was never more fully made manifest and applied in the history of England so much as it was from about 1600 on through the pilgrim and puritan colonization. So they did come out of captivity. But as one historian put it: “The existence of one cause for them coming did not negate the existence of another.” So there were explosive factors in sense of the temporal situation, but there is also the divine, the spiritual power that enlightened them.

One of the great personalities in American history was a Frenchman by the name of Alexis de Tocqueville. He came to America in the early 1830's from France, extensively to study the American penal system and became fascinated with American society. He wrote a three volume work, which is now a classic, called Democracy in America. If you haven't read it, you need too. It's one of the great classics of American history.

De Tocqueville was close enough to the foundation period and the spiritual features of the foundation period. We have long since departed from that. We are trying, today, to get God out of everything, and to not only separate church and state, but to separate the state from God or the God from the state. But de Tocqueville was in that period of time.

Among other things in his classic work, he quoted the American clergyman, Cotton Mather, on “What motives lead the Puritans to seek a refuge beyond the seas.” Then he quotes Mather saying:

“Briefly the God of heaven served as it were a summons on the spirits of his people in the English nation, stirring up the spirits of thousands that never saw the faces of each other, with a most unanimous inclination to leave all the pleasant accommodations of their native country and go across the terrible ocean into this distant land.”

In his preface to Cotton Mather's *Magnalia Christi Americana*, John Higginson who wrote the preface said of early colonist: "It has been deservedly esteemed one of the great and wonderful works of God in this last age, that the Lord stirred up the spirits of so many thousands of his servants to transplant themselves into a distant land in America, in a way of speaking, seeking first the Kingdom of God. The colonization venture to those then who undertook it was a redemptive journey (as one historian puts it) toward a new heaven and a new earth in America."

So America was discovered by divine means. And it was colonized by divine means. Now there is a very, very important factor. And that is that the new civilization, and let me underscore the word NEW, the new civilization that had been built up and that was transplanted to America had a spiritual foundation.

When I was in Syracuse, years and years ago, in the fifties working on my doctoral degree, I wrote my doctoral dissertation on the Prophet Joseph Smith, which was a wild and interesting story, one of the great experiences of my life. But in respect to the general course work and the general knowledge required for the doctoral degree, I was required to know about everything that you could know of western civilization from the Renaissance to the American Civil War period.

When I set up the program myself at the time, I thought that was a little too much, and I wanted to get a degree on Mormonism and I couldn't do that, but if I wrote a dissertation on Joseph Smith that would come close to it. And if I studied America from the colonial period up to the civil war that would give me the educational background needed to see the restoration of the gospel in the historical context in which it took place.

A few months after that, after having set it up for the colonial time to the civil war, I happen to be in the graduate office and took a look at my program, and somehow and some way, someone put in there the requirement to take it back another four hundred years or so to the Renaissance period. Well I exercised the anguish of Ephraim and the red bloodedness of Ephraim, but it didn't do any good.

So I had to spend considerable extra time acquiring knowledge, because when it comes to the examination period for a doctorate you write as fast as you can write all day long for over a week on questions that are posed to you. And when that is over, then you have an oral exam where they invite the specialist in the field and they ask you anything they can ask you. And you have to come out with shining colors, otherwise you don't get what you are after in terms of your degree. So by adding these four centuries this required a lot of extra time.

When I came back from my doctorate I began teaching at Ricks College as head of the religion

program, but then they cut Ricks College to a two-year college. We anguished on that, because we had a nice little home and a twenty-five-acre farm outside of Rexburg. I didn't want, however, to be locked into a two-year level college because I had research interests. So, after a special blessing by a dear friend of mine, a blind patriarch, the Lord gave me the counsel to come to BYU in Provo.

When I came here I concentrated on early Mormon thought because that's what they wanted me to do. I have written most of that I have written and published in that particular area. About twenty years ago, I felt the need and had some spiritual guidance in the process of going back to my original doctoral work. And for the last twenty years I've been concentrating on a program, it will be a multi-volume work on the origins of America. I've spent every day for most of that twenty years, early in the morning until I bugged out in the afternoon, the walls fade in and out on me, working on that project. And I haven't given birth to anything yet, but we're working on it.

I see the value of whoever had that inspiration to put me clear back to the Renaissance, because the beginning of America goes back to the Renaissance. And somehow, some way, I suspect the Lord might of had His hand in that. But the things I want to talk about is the basis of the new civilization that came to America. That new civilization was a new type of Christianity. It's as different in its intrinsic character and nature as North America is from South America in culture and civilization.

That North America feature did not come from Protestantism. It did not come from Anglicism. It did not come from Puritanism. It came from what some historians call a single tradition that has been long neglected. And that single tradition went back in origin to Christ. Not just the historic Christ, the living Christ. The revelatory Christ. The Christ with whom you can commune. The Christ who can be part of your life by and through the Holy Spirit. And with that center in Christ, then the focus was on getting the Holy Spirit in their lives. So they had the light of the spirit. You can get the light of the spirit through studying the scripture and that's the theme they followed.

The scriptures as the apostle Peter said were given when holy men of God spoke as they were moved upon by the Holy Ghost. And the powers of the spirit associated with scripture are living powers. The word is a living thing. Alma, for example, in Alma 32 likened the word to a seed. And he said you plant the seed. A seed everyone knows, spring time comes and you see that a seed has a principle of life associated with it, and you put it in the ground, and you give it the proper nourishment and sunlight and warmth, and principle of life will spring forth. Similarly, Alma says, let's try an experiment and you plant the seed, the word, in your life and it will begin to enlighten your mind, it will begin to expand your sole. He says, "Oh then is this not real. He says, "Yea it is real because it is light, and that which is light is discernable."

These people back in that early period did not have the gift of the Holy Ghost that we have. But you can get the influence of the Holy Ghost by and through the study of the word. And you can get it through faith. Here is how the Prophet Joseph Smith expressed it in “Teachings” page 199 as he talked about the situation with Cornelius, the Gentile convert.

“There is a difference between the Holy Ghost and the gift of the Holy Ghost. Cornelius received the Holy Ghost before he was baptized, which was the convincing power of God unto him of the truth of the Gospel, ...” Then he says further: “... but he could not receive the gift of the Holy Ghost until after he was baptized ...”

The point is you can receive the Holy Ghost by and through sincere faith. That’s what Moroni 10:4 is all about, getting a testimony of the Book of Mormon. You ask God the Eternal Father in the name of Christ with a sincere faith, genuine interest and desire, and he will manifest the truth of it unto you by the power of the Holy Ghost. You can do the same thing for the New Testament. You can do the same thing for the Old Testament. You can get a revelation through the Holy Ghost that scriptural works regardless of which book they are contained in are true.

These people did that. There was a group beginning with John Witcliff, the morning star of the reformation, in England, and the Layards who succeeded him. Coming on into English history, that’s one branch of this line that call a single tradition. There are others on the continent who built this program up. It goes back, for example, to Renaissance times, and in that period there was a very interesting personality by the name of Girolamo Savonarola. He was a monk. He was one of the most fascinating men I have ever read in history. That man spoke purely and totally in nothing but scripture. He fasted and prayed and studied diligently. He had the capacity of mind. He lived back in the days of Michelangelo and others.

Michelangelo, for example, had a collection of his works and he read them every night. When Michelangelo painted the famous scene on the ceiling of the last judgement, he had the works of Savonarola right by him. He translated the works of Savonarola into that beautiful portrayal of the last judgment.

Savonarola, one of the unique personalities, emphasized the powerful effects of the spiritual renewal and the need to get a spiritual renewal in our lives. He cited the Apostle Paul. When you’ve got a little time, more than casually, read very carefully 2 Corinthians 3, where Paul tells you what the true New Testament is. The true New Testament is not a written word. The true New Testament is the writing by the finger of God upon the heart and the soul. Revelatorily, that’s the New Testament.

Paul taught this and Savonarola explains it: “The holy gospel which contains the whole perfection of the spiritual life was not written upon tables of stone or such like material, nor upon parchment or paper, but upon human hearts by the finger and power of the Holy Spirit.”

Then he emphasizes what Paul says to the Corinthians in 2 Corinthians 3:2: “Ye are our epistle written in our hearts, known and read of all men.”

People are epistles, not the paper, not the book.

Verse 3: “Forasmuch as ye are manifestly declared to be the epistle of Christ ministered by us, written not with ink, but with the Spirit of the living God; not in tables of stone, but in fleshly tables of the heart.”

That is to say, gentle, tender, impressionable.

One of the men who was there was an Englishman by the name of John Colette, another one of my ideals in history. Colette, prominent in England, his father a mayor of London, spent time studying in Europe, particularly at Florence, Italy, about the time America was discovered. Savonarola was riding high at that time, in his greatest prominence. Colette picks up that doctrine and brings it to England and begins to propagate it saying:

“True quickening to life comes by the spirit of Christ and He is the parent of righteousness. A righteousness which consists in bearing one another’s burdens in love and which is the fulfilling of the law of Christ. If the Spirit of God be present with the true Church, he says, then from his essence, which is one with the Father and the Son, there flows a spiritual being into all the members of the Church. By this influx they are in the first place begotten again to a spiritual being and in the next are sustained therein. Thus the act of that essence of God in us is our spiritual being in Him.” Then he says, “Our minds are illuminated to faith by Christ. By Christ, also, our wills are kindled in charity to love God and our neighbor, in which is a fulfillment of the law.”

This doctrine of spiritual renewal was propagated not only by Colette but by the great Erasmus, who probably had as much influence as any one man ever had in history by his publications. He was a convert to Colette and his doctrines. He published and spread the doctrines widely throughout Europe. As a result, then, with his teachings and those of others, we had that great experience that we call the protestant reformation burst upon the scene, like red hot lava. It just literally bursting with spiritual power.

Unfortunately, however, Luther, while he stood at the head of that program and had integrity enough to stand against papal influence, nevertheless became infatuated with Augustinian piety and with

the doctrines of determinism. As a result he turned the whole reformation off track.

There was a group of men, though, who didn't go with him. They are called site-currents to the reformation. They are referred to as the continental spiritual reformers. These men not only taught this doctrine, such as I have given you here, but they built upon it. And they were harassed by Luther and Calvin and by others, many of them just literally had to move from place to place, literally to survive. Their writings finally found their way into England, beginning about the year 1600.

Just about this time that the spiritual principle of getting a testimony as we would call it got underway. Getting the spirit of the Lord in your life began to be built up by a group of spiritual reformers coming out of Cambridge University. With that came the separatist who broke with Puritanism and moved more toward the spiritual idea. But you have then, like the confluence of two rivers, one from Europe and one from England come together beginning around the year 1600 and finally blossoming in the 1630's and 40's and 50's in what was called the "age of Christ and the spirit."

There was a spiritual factor there that I have never seen. There was erratic elements to it, but there was also substantive elements on the part of more mature people. And that spiritual factor was powerful enough, so that literally hundreds of free churches were organized. They thumbed their nose, if I can use that term, against the Archbishop and against the bishops who were trying to tell them how to run their religious program. They said we are enlightened by the spirit of the Lord in our lives. And that spirit is the spirit of freedom. That spirit is a spirit of personal dignity and respect. That spirit conveys a sense of unalienable rights and that's where the American doctrine of unalienable rights came from. That spirit enlightens our mind to what they called right reason. Right reason was reason enlightened by the Holy Ghost. They got that spiritual power in their lives, and as a result they repudiated all man made religious and political organizations, and they organized their own free individual churches and that's where democracy was born.

In the early 1640's the puritan revolution came along and they deposed Charles the First from his throne. They set about to organize a new political government for England. These liberal people, and these are the true liberals, true liberals have their center in Christ – the others we now today are circumventors. They want to do it the secular way.

But these true liberals took those free principles that they had learned about, which they had practiced, and which they enjoyed and had some affinity to and experience with in their free churches. They decided to use those principles to create a new political system. So they wrote a document called The Agreement of the Free People of England. Had that document been put into operation it would have established an order of government that would have given every person his freedom and his unalienable

rights and established justice in the land. The only problem is, there wasn't enough of them to command a majority of the people.

So as a result, the pendulum swung back and Charles the Second was put on the throne in 1660. There was a repudiation of these free ideas. But the free ideas were loose in the world. They were perpetuated throughout the world. They were divested from their spiritual foundation and made the basis of what we call the European enlightenment in a secular effort to reform around the three chevrons of liberty, equality, and fraternity.

But as they came to America, not in the colonization of the people who came here, but those more free ideas that were given birth in the 1640s were picked up politically by men like John Locke, the great Englishmen who wrote the two treatises on government as a defense against the glorious revolution of 1688 and 1689. That document became the basic political philosophy of a group of leading minds in America. Jefferson had it memorized and when he wrote the Declaration of Independence he quoted passage, after passage, after passage from the second treatise.

In the meantime, there was a group of men who perpetuated these new ideas that had been born. These ideas of freedom, human dignity, government by consent, covenant society, unalienable rights, divine law, etc., all these things. They were perpetuated by three generations of Englishmen we call the English Commonwealth's Men. Rather interestingly, also, the writings of these men were simply put on the shelf until about 1960, where they were finally brought out. They were never even referred to by historians prior to that, even in footnotes.

But these men perpetuated these ideas, and when we study the polemic literature, the argumentative literature of the American Revolution, then you find that even above men like John Locke and Count Montesquieu and others. Algernon Sidney who was on more of the philosophical binge. But even more than them, the polemic literature of America in the Revolutionary period quoted the writings of the English Commonwealth's Men.

As a result, by the planting of America, of people who are prompted by the spirit of the Lord, and then the enlightening power of the spirit of the Lord finally built and modified things, so that the puritan allegorically of Massachusetts was finally overcome by the spirit of freedom. Then we have a birth of a government of the people, by the people, and for the people. That's what we had and in that sense then, it came back to a spiritual foundation.

We need to talk about, not only the Gentiles in order to see where we came from as a people, but about the prophetic picture that leads from here on. Let me just underscore that fact that this new

civilization was born in the 1640s and extended to America. This new civilization had its center in three things: (1) Christ, the living Christ; (2) the Holy Spirit, and peoples communion with Christ through the Holy Spirit; (3) and then thirdly, the free principles that they found in the New Testament.

America did not come from the Greeks or the Romans. America did not come from the philosophers. America came from Christ, and peoples' communion with him through the Holy Spirit and the freedom that the spirit brought into their lives, and the open union that it brought, and the ideas of personal dignity and unalienable rights, and the desire for mutual covenant, and mutual contract. American came, from the free principles they found in the New Testament church, that's where America came from.

We are critically out of line today from and out of gear with our foundations. And to me, if I can put it this way, we're getting pretty close to being on schedule for the realization of Mosiah 29, verse 27. Remember the good King Mosiah talked about government, and a free government, and then he says in verse 27: "And if the time comes that the voice of the people doth choose iniquity, then is the time that the judgments of God will come upon you; yea, then is the time he will visit you with great destruction even as he has hitherto visited this land."

And I site, for example, the address that President Gordon B. Hinckley gave at the priesthood session last conference. I ask you to read again President Faust's – First Presidency Message in January, the January Ensign. The first part of it is very, very important, because he is talking about the same kind of thing that gave birth to America, getting a personal relationship with Christ. Then he indicates at the conclusion that we are headed for serious times. Very, very serious times.

With that, let me turn to the prophetic picture, and let's get to 1 Nephi, chapter 14. In this chapter Nephi is shown a time that is still future to our day. It is put in context with both the Gentiles and Israel. For example, in verse 5: "... Thou hast beheld that if the Gentiles repent it shall be well with them; and thou also knowest concerning the covenants of the Lord unto the house of Israel; and thou also hast heard that whoso repenteth not must perish."

Verse 6: Therefore, wo be unto the Gentiles if it so be that they harden their hearts against the Lamb of God."

Verse 7: For the time cometh, saith the Lamb of God, that I will work a great and a marvelous work ..."

That work hasn't been done yet. I love the Book of Mormon. It's the greatest miracle of modern times. But you need to read closely, the historical literature concerning its origins and what Moroni said

about it. I am talking about statements in the Messenger and the Advocate in 1834 and 1835. You find that Moroni didn't define the Book of Mormon as the great and the marvelous work. He defined it as a preparatory publication leading to the great and marvelous work.

The great and marvelous work, if you read the Book of Mormon carefully, is that great program of establishing Zion, the new order of the kingdom in its fulness, and it will turn the Gentile world upside down. It will be a marvelous work that will not only establish a standard of spiritual righteousness and truth, but it will also establish a standard of social justice, and of economic justice and equality, and of true political freedom and dignity. Now that is the great and marvelous work as the Book of Mormon defines it. But you will have to go to the book, study it out and see if that's what it is talking about.

So he is saying that the Lord will do a great and a marvelous work among the children of men. This period of time in which he speaking, is a period where there has been such a separation between righteous and wicked interest in the world, that you finally come to a point of division. The division is of such a nature that those who will not choose the right way will finally be brought down to destruction, both temporally and spiritually.

1 Nephi 14:7: "... a work which shall be everlasting, either on the one hand or on the other – either to the convincing on them unto peace and life eternal, or unto the deliverance of them to the hardness of their hearts and the blindness of their minds unto their being brought down into captivity, and also into destruction, both temporally and spiritually, ..."

We've never experienced that, the majority of the people have rejected it, but we haven't experienced the end results. The reason is that we haven't come to that point where the Lord's work is going to be so significant and prominent. The elements of corruption will be on the other hand so manifest that you have a division. So Nephi sees this great division he says:

Verse 10: "And he said unto me: Behold there are save two churches only; the one is the church of the Lamb of God, and the other is the church of the devil; wherefore, whoso belongeth not to the church of the Lamb of God belongeth to that great church, which is the mother of abominations; and she is the whore of all the earth."

The great and abominable church is not an ecclesiastical organization. The great and abominable church is everyone who doesn't belong to the church of the Lamb. The church of the Lamb is not exactly synonymous with the LDS Church. There are members in the LDS Church who belong to the other church. If you study Nephi's vision, you'll find that is the only conclusion you can take.

The church of the devil is everyone who doesn't belong to the church of the Lamb. The church of

the Lamb in Nephi's vision is a church that is so faithful and diligent that they are finally endowed with the power of God in great glory. That's the church of the Lamb of God. It's that organization and this is the one of which he is speaking. Then he goes on says:

Verse 11: "And it came to pass that I looked and beheld the whore of all the earth, and she sat upon many waters; ..." The word waters scripturally means peoples. It comes from a revelation from Isaiah. "... and she sat upon many waters; and she had dominion over all the earth, among nations, kindreds, tongues, and people."

Verse 12: "And it came to pass that I beheld the church of the Lamb of God, and its numbers were few, because of the wickedness and abominations of the whore who sat upon many waters; nevertheless, I beheld that the church of the Lamb, who were the saints of God, were also upon all the face of the earth; and their dominions upon the face of the earth were small, because of the wickedness of the great whore whom I saw."

This vision that Nephi is seeing couldn't take place or couldn't be a vision of the situation of things until after World War II. Why? Because prior to President George Albert Smith's administration, when people were converted in foreign lands, they came to America. President George Albert Smith made the change and President David O. McKay, who succeeded him in the prophetic office, and implemented that change. We see a doctrine and a philosophy, stay where you are. Stay where you are. Build up stakes in those areas.

Then we are seeing a marvelous phenomenon that's going on today. The building of temples throughout the world. This program has at least, as I understand it, two features. One feature is making temples available to every Latter-day Saint throughout the world. That's a very vital and important reason because not only should they be available, we need to build our lives on the temple. The temple is the eternal foundation. The covenants of the temple are the things that build Zion. And you build them on the temple.

Then the second great purpose is fulfilled as we see the further statements of Nephi's vision. And that has to do with the endowment of glory that is going to come to Zion. He says, for example, in verse 13: "And it came to pass that I beheld that the great mother of abominations did gather together multitudes upon the face of all the earth, among all the nations of the Gentiles, to fight against the Lamb of God."

This situation seen in its proper context, there is a division of sentiment so that if you don't belong to the church of the Lamb, you belong to the other group, and the other group is motivated by the

spirit and power of the adversary. And you finally have a situation where circumstances come about so that the program of the adversary finally unleashes its forces against the saints. This is called the era of warfare against Zion. And it is the most significant and prominent prophetic picture of the last days in the Book of Mormon. Unfortunately, we simply as a people, have not understood it.

The warfare against Zion, is an era, and I'm not talking about the media. I'm talking about the artillery. I'm talking about warfare against Zion. And that warfare, if you understand that prophetic picture correctly, will begin with the warfare of the American Gentiles against the saints, primarily here in the west. We are setting on the very threshold of this division of things.

This deterioration of spiritual and moral values, is where you can't sustain that which is true, without being some kind of odd-ball. With that we are in a situation where we are pushing things for a world order that basically secularistic and humanistic in nature. It will cause us to scrap the constitution. And to become a part of a world economy. We do need a world government, no doubt on that, but we need to repent and do it the Lords way.

When those issues then come, Nephi's vision in 2 Nephi, chapter 30 is coming back to this. Isaiah's prophecies are to explain this as well, the whole picture of the Book of Mormon centers on this warfare period. It becomes the key of understanding of the Isaiah passages, and it becomes the key of understanding of the Book of Revelation.

Nephi says in verse 10: "For the time speedily cometh that the Lord God shall cause a great division among the people, and the wicked will he destroy; and he will spare this people, yea, even if it so be that he must destroy the wicked by fire." That's the vision of things, and Nephi having seen this says:

1 Nephi 14:14: "And it came to pass that I, Nephi, beheld the power of the Lamb of God, that it descended upon the saints of the church of the Lamb, ..."

That doesn't happen, my brothers and sisters, just because the wolf is at the door. That happens because the saints are committed to Christ, and get their lives in proper alignment with him and establish their lives on the sacred covenants of His holy house, including the endowment of glory.

This is the beginning, what Nephi sees is the beginning of the rise of Zion as a true and full ensign and standard in the latter-days. It's the beginning of the endowment of the saints with glory and power. And it's not merely by announcing that we are going to build a temple in Jackson County. Isaiah says Zion shall be redeemed with judgment and her converts with righteousness. But we pay to heed to that.

Nephi says in verse 14: “And it came to pass that I, Nephi, beheld the power of the Lamb of God, that it descended upon the saints of the church of the Lamb, and upon the covenant people of the Lord, who were scattered upon all the face of the earth; and they were armed with righteousness and with the power of God in great glory.”

Elsewhere the Book of Mormon talks about this as the arm of the Lord being made bare before all nations. In ancient times there was one nation in which, according to biblical history, the arm of the Lord was made bare. And that nation was the nation of Egypt. The Lord came out in judgments and he manifested His power as a cloud by day and a pillar of fire by night in the preservation of His people.

There is going to be, if I can put it this way, little Egypts all over the world. And that is part of the great program of the last days, and it is preceded or accompanied by this warfare period and the sanctification of the saints and their endowment with glory and power.

Nephi says I verse 15: “And it came to pass that I beheld that the wrath of God was poured out upon that great and abominable church, insomuch that there were wars and rumors of wars among all the nations and kindreds of the earth.”

When they make war against the saints, then the Lord will not sustain the Gentiles on this land. You will see mobocracy accelerated, you’ll see lawlessness, you’ll see zeal without knowledge, you’ll see wild and erratic activity, and you will also see a tremendous increase in natural disasters. That’s the prophetic picture of things that the prophecies reveal. And this because they reject the prophets, they reject the saints and they make war against them.

In verse 17 Nephi gives a very important statement, which is in many ways is one of the more important statements in chapter 14.

1 Nephi 14:17: “And when the day cometh that the wrath of God is poured out upon the mother of harlots, ...”

That’s after they have made war against the saints, and then they begin to fall apart at the seams, and they turn one against another. In this land it is state against state and county against county – that kind of thing. After that Nephi says:

Verse 17: “And when the day cometh that the wrath of God is poured out upon the mother of harlots, which is the great an abominable church of all the earth, whose founder is the devil, then, at that day, ...”

That’s a point of reference. When that time comes, something else is going to take place.

Verse 17: "... then, at that day, the work of the Father shall commence, in preparing the way for the fulfilling of his covenants, which he hath made to his people who are of the house of Israel."

He doesn't say in that day he is going to gather Israel. He says, in that day he is going to prepare the way for the fulfilling of those covenants. Therefore, what does it take to prepare the way for the fulfilling of his covenants to gather Israel. Turn, for an example, to Section 84. Here is an early revelation that announces the gathering.

Verse 2: "Yea, the word of the Lord concerning his church, established in the last days for the restoration of his people, as he has spoken by the mouth of his prophets, and for the gathering of his saints to stand upon Mount Zion, which shall be the city of New Jerusalem."

Mount Zion is Zion upon her mount. What does the word mount mean? It's synonym for mountain and that's not a bad analogy. But what does it mean when you use the term, for example, in relation to the police force of Canada? The Royal Mounted Police. It means they are sitting on something. They're not walking around. They are sitting on something. If you are going to mount a vase, what do you do? You prepare the proper pedestal and you put it on it.

Therefore, what is Mount Zion? Mount Zion is Zion established upon her mount. Sitting upon her mount. What is her mount? The answer is the temple of the Lord and its sacred program of covenants and of what the scriptures call the Holy Order, leading to the fulness of the priesthood given to a man and his wife jointly. And then, leading, also, to the endowment of glory as the Lord says is Section 124:39. That it is the beginning of the revelations of Zion and all her municipals. Where there is the cloud by day and the pillar of fire by night. This has its center in the temple and so what's the second purpose for the building of temples today throughout the world? So every saint can have access, yes, but the era of warfare isn't too far down the road.

When the power of God is poured out in great glory upon the saints of the Lamb throughout the world, it's because the saints center their lives in the temple, and the fuller program of the temple is opened to them with its endowments of the spirit. The Lord is preparing this and says, for example, that the gathering of the saints to Mount Zion is also a gathering spiritually, because he talks about the house being built unto the Lord and a cloud shall rest upon it, which cloud shall be even the glory of the Lord, which shall fill the house. That's the idea.

What does it take to prepare for the gathering of Israel. Not just physically speaking, and not merely to get their temple covenants, as we have it. But to get the fulness of priesthood and the endowment of glory. What does it take to do that? It takes two things. Number one, the sanctification,

not of the in-actives in the Church, but of the active people in the Church. An era of refinement will come, the refiner's fire program. And secondly, it takes the cleansing of this land, because the gathering of Israel is going to be to Mount Zion, the city of the New Jerusalem with all her related cities of Zion. That's the gathering of Zion.

In order to do that, if the American Gentiles do not repent, and this is 3 Nephi 21, then the Lord will come out in judgement against them. As a result there will be a cleansing of this land, so as the Lord says in 3 Nephi 21:19: "... all lyings, and deceivings, and envyings, and strifes, and priestcrafts, and whoredoms, shall be done away."

That will prepare the way for the gathering of Israel, because the gathering of Israel really hasn't started yet. The gathering of Israel is to Mount Zion. The gathering of Israel is to the Land of Zion. The gathering of Israel is to the New Jerusalem program. The cleansing that's necessary will be a cleansing of the righteous in order to bring them in the sensitivity of their hearts and their souls and their commitment to the point they can be worthy of the powers of the spirit, which Nephi sees will be poured out upon them. When that take place you run this scenario through of the program of cleansing.

And it has two major features, the warfare against Zion, and the second aspect of it will be the coming of what the scripture call the latter-day Assyrian against this land. When that takes place there is going to be a cleansing, and those saints who come out faithful and true to the Lord, they may be setting out in the west desert with their 72 hour kits run out three weeks ago, but they will be endowed with the gifts of the Spirit. They will have Pentecost in their midst and Jesus, himself, will begin to make his personal appearance among them. When that cleansing is finally through and the judgments are over and the powers of the Assyrian are driven from this land, then we will go back to Jackson County, and we will build the New Jerusalem. When we do, we will inaugurate a program of great conversion.

Let me just say two or three things about Isaiah. Nephi sees that the vision that he was given would also be given to John the Revelator. John was foreordained to write it. Now if you want to understand the Book of Revelation, and Joseph Smith called it the plainest book that God ever caused to be written. Believe me, if you see it in the right light it is plain, but if you try to see it in cross purposes and don't see it in the right light, then it is very difficult to see and to understand. But if you see it in the right light and have the keys of understanding, then you put 1 Nephi 14 in front of the Book of Revelation.

You read the warfare against Zion theme. Then you go, for example, to Revelation chapter 6, which is an overview of the whole scenario of the last days. Then chapter 7 opens up with the choosing of the 144,000 high priests of the Holy Order, who mission it is to bring people into the Church of the

Firstborn, according to the Prophet Joseph. That will take place after the return of the ten tribes as a body, and Moroni indicated that will take place after the saints have been endowed with glory, then the ten tribes as a body will open. And when that is done, then the six thousand year period of time, or under the sixth seal will be concluded, then the Lord will open the seven seal.

The seventh seal begins with a space of about a half an hour of silence in heaven, which is the Lords time, computed in time on earth that's about 21 years plus. It's during this period of time when heaven is pained, but it is silent, because there's got to be a work. And when the fifth angel says to the four destroying angels: Rev. 7:3: "... hurt not the earth until we have sealed the servants of God in their foreheads."

The Prophet Joseph Smith put it this way in Teachings, page 321: "Four destroying angels holding power over the four quarters of the earth until the servants of God are sealed in their foreheads, which signifies sealing the blessings upon their heads, meaning the everlasting covenant, thereby making their calling and election sure." That's where you get the full sealing powers of the temple. And that has got to be done before the judgments.

So there is a period of time with this great task force that we call the 144,000 high priests of the Holy Order. That's the temple order, that's not the ecclesiastic or institutional church order. That's the order of the temple of God. It's their ministry, if you read Section 77, to gather people into the Church of the Firstborn, which is the called, elected, and made sure Church. When that is done, then Christ will come suddenly to His temple to put the capstone on. Read Teachings, page 340, if you want to read what the Prophet says about that.

The capstone being put on, then you have a body of people who are actually kings and priests on earth. Then we are ready for Adam-ondi-Ahman and then the coming to the Jews, and the conversion of the Jews, and finally, the coming of Christ in His glory to the world. It's that program and we need to see that orientation.

To get to that, Nephi's vision is not only a key to the Book of Revelation, it's a key to the Books of Isaiah. If you don't read Isaiah in light of 1 Nephi 14 and understand it in that light, then you've missed it. Much of the literature on the last days and the second coming, though it may be good on other things misses that vital point.

When we talk about Isaiah there are two or three keys. Number one, Isaiah writes to all tribes of Israel in all generations of time with a focus on the last days. So Nephi could tell his people, yea, read Isaiah and liken it unto yourself. And then, the prophetic picture focuses of the last days. So there is a

multiple fulfillment.

Isaiah is fulfilled more than one time, but the great and ultimate fulfillment of Isaiah is in the last days. Doctor Adam Clark in his commentary says: “The mode universally adopted in the prophetic writings makes the things present or which are shortly to be accomplished, types or representations of things to be fulfilled on a larger scale in distant futurity.” So you have Isaiah, for example, talking about something, and it applies to Israel anciently, but the real fulfillment is the last days. That symbolism is important and the different aspects of the symbolism. We all know when you use the word Babylon you are talking about either way back in history or modern circumstances, and you translate it according to the implied meaning of it.

There are terms scripturally that you use. For example, the term Jerusalem is not just a city. Jerusalem is in actuality a symbol of that city from which the Lord’s prophets minister his kingdom in the earth. And so there is a Jerusalem in Palestine and there’s a Jerusalem in America. What’s the one in America called? SLC (Salt Lake City). Nephi can’t put this vision all down, so he puts Isaiah in his writings.

Nephi, in 2 Nephi 13 for example, puts in the whole of the third chapter of Isaiah. Note how it begins. Verse 1: “For behold, the Lord, the Lord of Hosts, doth take away from Jerusalem, ...” i.e. SLC. It was fulfilled back there but you’ve got the second time around that its fulfilled. “... and from Judah, ...” The land in which Judah is located, i.e. America. So Isaiah 3 is talking, in its real ultimate fulfillment, about our city and our land. In this he says some very unsavory things. I’ve heard President Joseph Fielding Smith apply this.

Isaiah says in verse 16: “Moreover, the Lord saith: Because the daughters of Zion are haughty, and walk with stretchedforth necks and wanton eyes, walking and mincing as they go, and making a tinkling with their feet –.” And that’s the liberal program of the modern culture.

Verse 17: “Therefore the Lord will smite with a scab the crown of the head of the daughters of Zion, and the Lord will discover their secret parts.”

Verse 18: “In that day the Lord will take away the bravery of their tinkling ornaments, and cauls, and round tires like the moon;”

Verse 19: “The chains and the bracelets, and the mufflers;”

Verse 20: “The bonnets, the ornaments of the legs, and the headbands, and the tablets, and the ear-rings;”

Verse 24: “And it shall come to pass, instead of sweet smell there shall be stink; and instead of a

girdle, a rent; and instead of well set hair, baldness; ..." Isaiah is talking about atomic fallout. "... and instead of a stomacher, a girding of sackcloth; burning instead of beauty."

Verse 25: "Thy men shall fall by the sword and thy mighty in the war." This is the era of the warfare against Zion.

Verse 26: "And her gates shall lament and mourn; and she shall be desolate, and shall sit upon the ground." That is talking about modern day Mormonism and modern day America. But it is hid away in the understanding of the symbols.

Let's turn to one other. Nephi is talking about that time in the future where the saints come out of this era of judgment and begin to emerge from it. He says:

1 Nephi 21:12: "And then, O house of Israel, behold, these shall come from far; and lo, these from the north and from the west; and these from the land of Sinim."

Verse 13: "Sing, O heavens; and be joyful, O earth; for the feet of those who are in the east ..." Isaiah is talking about the latter-day saints in the last days as those in the east. So in that term he is talking about Zion in our time. He says: "... and the feet of those who are in the east shall be established; ..."

In other words, you finally get through and Zion is built and established upon her foundations, spiritually, economically, socially, politically. "... and break forth into singing, O mountains; for they shall be smitten no more; for the Lord hath comforted his people, and will have mercy upon his afflicted."

But then he steps back and he talks about this period before this deliverance comes. He says:

Verse 14: "But, behold, Zion hath said; ..." Past tense, hath said. "... the Lord hath forsaken me, ..."

Why would they say that? We say everything is onward and upward. But when the warfare against Zion comes and you're sitting in the west desert, then what do you say? The Lord hath forsaken me. "... and my Lord hath forgotten me – but he will show that he hath not."

Verse 15: "For can a woman forget her sucking child, that she should not have compassion upon the son of her womb? Yea, they may forget, yet will I not forget thee, O house of Israel."

Verse 16: "Behold, I have graven thee upon the palms of my hands; thy walls are continually before me." These are temple symbols, by the way.

Verse 17: "Thy children shall make haste against thy destroyers; ..." This is a time of deliverance,

and there are going to be those that destroy Zion. “Thy children shall make haste against thy destroyers; and they that made thee waste shall go forth of thee.” They got out of the picture.

Then he talks about the great influx of people that finally come to Zion and we’ve never seen a conversion situation such as he is depicting here. He says:

Verse 18: “Lift up thine eyes round about and behold; all these gather themselves together, and they shall come to thee. And as I live, saith the Lord, thou shalt surely clothe thee with them all, as with an ornament, and bind them on even as a bride.”

Verse 19: “For thy waste and thy desolate places, and the land of thy destruction, shall even now be too narrow by reason of all the inhabitants; and they that swallow thee up shall be far away.” Those that brought Zion into bondage. Read Section 103 starting with verse 15, where Zion has to be delivered out of bondage in the redemption.

Verse 20: “The children whom thou shalt have, after thou hast lost the first, shall again in thine ears say: The place is too strait for me; give place to me that I may dwell.” Then he talks about two groups of children of Zion. One, the beginning children, and Zion is going to lose a good deal of those. And then he talks about the children that shall be given after that.

Why would she lose a good deal of the initial group? We are talking about our time, 1999 Mormons on this one. Because there are many of us who haven’t forsaken Babylon. We are doing the Zion thing in the Babylon way. We are not really where we ought to be spiritually, and we will not survive the cleansing. And then he says:

Verse 20: “The children whom thou shalt have, after thou hast lost the first, shall again in thine ears say: The place is too strait for me; give place to me that I may dwell.”

Verse 21: “Then shalt thou say in thine heart: Who hath begotten me these, ...” These new converts, where did they come from? “... seeing I have lost my children, and am desolate, a captive, and removing to and fro? And who hath brought up these? Behold, I was left alone; these, where have they been?” Then the Lord answers:

Verse 22: “Thus saith the Lord God: Behold, I will lift up mine hand to the Gentiles, and set up my standard to the people; ...” What is that standard? It is that group of people who are endowed with the power of God in great glory. The Lord is going to set up a standard and that standard is going to be spiritual. It’s going to be the cloud by day, the pillar of fire by night. It’s going to be the true practice of Christian principles among a body of people who enjoy the gifts of the spirit and among whom Jesus will begin making his appearance. And so he is going to set up a standard. And he says: “...and they

shall bring thy sons in their arms, and thy daughters shall be carried upon their shoulders.”

Verse 23: “And kings shall be thy nursing fathers, and their queens thy nursing mothers; they shall bow down to thee with their face towards the earth, and lick up the dust of thy feet; and thou shalt know that I am the Lord; for they shall not be ashamed that wait for me.” This is a different situation than we are in now.”

Verse 24: “For shall the prey be taken from the mighty, ...” The prey is Zion, shall be taken from the mighty, and the mighty are these forces that over whelm her. “... or the lawful captives delivered?”

Verse 25: “But thus saith the Lord, even the captives of the mighty shall be taken away, and the prey of the terrible shall be delivered; for I will contend with him that contendeth with thee, and I will save thy children.”

Verse 26: “And I will feed them that oppress thee with their own flesh; they shall be drunken with their own blood as with sweet wine; and all flesh shall know that I, the Lord, am thy Savior and thy Redeemer, the Mighty One of Jacob.”

Can you see that picture in the transition that’s required? When the Gentiles make war against the others, and we will finally conclude on this one. Then this will be followed by the coming of another major situation. One of the symbolic words of scripture is Babylon. Another one is Assyria. Babylon depicts the grandeur of the world of ancient times and applies that to the Gentiles culture of modern times.

The Assyrians were a militarist power north of Israel who came into the land, subjugated the northern kingdom, with their capital at Samaria in 722 B.C. And also came down and plagued Jerusalem, but the great prophetic vision of the Assyrian is yet to be duplicated.

Let’s conclude on an insight in 2 Nephi, chapters 7 through 10. This gives you the scenario historically as a symbol of another scenario of like nature to take place among the saints in the latter-day. In 2 Nephi, chapter 20, which is Isaiah 10, he speaks of the Assyrian:

Verse 5: “O Assyrian, the rod of mine anger, and the staff in their hand is their indignation.”

Verse 6: “I will send him against a hypocritical nation, and against the people of my wrath ...” Where is there a hypocritical nation on earth? Do you see things clearly? “I will send him against a hypocritical nation, and against the people of my wrath will I give him a charge to take the spoil, and to take the prey, and to tread them down like the mire of the streets.”

Verse 7: “Howbeit he meaneth not so, neither doth his heart think so; but in his heart it is to

destroy and cut off nations now a few.”

Read 3 Nephi, chapter 21, the passage that Jesus takes out of Micah, verse 14: “... I will cut off thy horses out of the midst of thee, and I will destroy thy chariots;” and all that one. It’s right out of Micah 5, and if you read Micah clearly you find that it is talking about the latter-day Assyrian. And Jesus puts the whole passage in 3 Nephi, chapter 21 and applies it to the Gentiles if they don’t repent.

In Isaiah he goes on, and says for example, 2 Nephi 20:24: “... O my people that dwellest in Zion, be not afraid of the Assyrian; he shall smite thee with a rod, and shall lift up his staff against thee, after the manner of Egypt.” Like Pharaoh did with the Israelites in Egypt.

Verse 25: “For yet a very little while, and the indignation shall cease, and mine anger in their destruction.”

Verse 26: “And the Lord of Hosts shall stir up a scourge for him according to the slaughter of Midian at the rock of Oreb; and as his rod was upon the sea so shall he lift it up after the manner of Egypt.” In other words, he is going to deliver the saints like he delivered the Israelites out of Egypt.

Verse 27: “And it shall come to pass in that day that his burden shall be taken away from off thy shoulder, and his yoke from off thy neck, and the yoke shall be destroyed because of the anointing.” And that refers to the temple.

Can you begin to see that picture? If I had another two hours I would really like to get into this. But we don’t and I can talk longer than you can listen. And I can see by the glaze of your eyes that we are at that point.

Let me conclude with my testimony of the gospel and the Book of Mormon. The Book of Mormon is a miracle. There are two sealed books. One we don’t have yet and the other we have here and it is sealed because we read it superficially. We don’t understand who Christ is in the Book of Mormon. Christ the Eternal God manifesting himself to all nations. We really don’t understand the doctrine of the fall and the Atonement and the gospel as it is contained in the Book of Mormon. We teach it superficially, tritely. And we certainly don’t understand the prophetic picture or we would be shaking in our shoes. It’s like President Hinckley said, the future is going to be a great day to those who hold the course. We are going into the twenty-first century and it’s going to be the greatest century of this earth’s history. And the greatest century of all centuries in Christ’s creations. All of them, believe me I know what I am talking about. We are going in the twenty-first century as a marvelous period of time, but it’s going to shake and rattle and we are going to lose a lot of saints, who are more “aints” and “complaints.”

And those who are saints are going to be refined, purified, and brought up as Joseph said, a man must suffer to come up on Mount Zion. There is a cleansing action that's necessary. The Book of Mormon gives us the key to that if we read it correctly. If we read and study it correctly. It's a sealed book in many, many ways. I bare you may testimony that it has more to say about modern times than any other document that I know of. It's a marvelous thing in the light that it reveals.

May the Lord bless us, my brothers and sisters to see and understand. I want you to know that I know there is a God in Heaven, I know better than I know that I am a live that Jesus is the Christ, that Joseph was his Prophet. I know that by experiences that reach up beyond the veil, with a perfect knowledge, with an understanding that comes revelatory so that God does live, and this is his work and He is opening up even now an era of time that will be one of the most glorious periods of time in this earth's history, but we need to wake up, get to the temple, get our lives founded on its sacred covenants, and establish our lives in diligence upon the programs of his gospel, which I pray we will do, in the sacred name of Jesus Christ, amen.