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**Mission Statement:**

This magazine is dedicated to proclaiming the gospel of Jesus Christ and bearing witness to the everlasting promises of God. Our intention is to inspire the Saints to walk faithfully in the name of our Savior, bearing fruit worthy of the Kingdom of God.

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## The Fullness of the Gospel

By Chadwick Nestman

Most, if not all, Christians would agree that Paul shared a charismatic ministry that focused on the gospel of Christ Jesus. There can be no doubt that he practiced mighty prayer and fasting which brought him regularly into the presence of the Lord. This is evidenced by his deep insights, instructions, and prophecies to the Jews and gentiles of his flock. This is especially evident in 2 Timothy 3:1-7:

**This know also, that in the last days perilous times shall come. For men shall be lovers of their own selves, covetous, boasters, proud, blasphemers, disobedient to parents, unthankful, unholy, without natural affection, trucebreakers, false accusers, incontinent, fierce, despisers of those that are good. Traitors, heady, high-minded, lovers of pleasures more than lovers of God; Having a form of godliness but denying the power thereof; from such turn away. ... Ever learning, and never able to come to the knowledge of the truth.**

This message about the state of mankind is not limited to the writings of Paul but is in fact found throughout the Bible and the Book of Mormon. Indeed, the Book of Mormon is the very foundation of the Restored church, providing not only another testimony of Christ Jesus but a model of how we should live our lives in expectancy of a personal

relationship with him. When we look at church history, we find that the message of the Book of Mormon was the primary message of the missionaries. It was the message of the Book of Mormon that allowed the early church to grow from 1,000 in the early 1830s to 15,000 in the early 1840s, that is, the church sustained a growth rate between 10%-25% per year.

Doctrine and Covenants 32:1d tells us that we are in the eleventh hour, the last possible hour before it is too late and the harvest begins. The key point is that the Book of Mormon provides a fulness of the gospel, in other words, it restores the gospel as it was originally taught by Jesus but lost or altered over time.

Beginning with this issue of the *Beacon*, each book within the Book of Mormon will be highlighted. This issue uses key themes from 1 Nephi, the next issue will focus on 2 Nephi, and so on. We invite you to use this opportunity to study the books of the Book of Mormon as we progress. We also invite you to fast and engage in mighty prayer that your mind and spirit will be enriched, but more importantly, we invite you to share the message of hope, faith, baptism, laying on of hands, resurrection, and eternal life with all you come in contact.

May you be blessed and led to the Tree of Life, holding fast to the rod of iron and not wavering because of the taunts and jeers of humankind. †

This issue of The Beacon was inspired by the themes of First Nephi. Join us as we work through the fifteen books of the Book of Mormon during the next few issues. If you would like to submit an article or a testimony, contact us at [beacon@conferenceofbranches.org](mailto:beacon@conferenceofbranches.org).

# Trust and Obey

*By Chris Taylor*

History tells us that in 1886 a Presbyterian minister by the name of John Sammis was told the story of a young man who, being stirred by a sermon given by Dwight Moody in Massachusetts, stood up and bore his testimony with these words: “I am not quite sure ... but I am going to trust, and I am going to obey.” Mr. Sammis then wrote the lyrics that we sing to this day to the popular hymn “Trust and Obey.”

We have many examples in the Scriptures of very faithful servants of the Lord who were obedient to his commandments and trusted him without reservation. One of the most prominent and well known of these servants was Nephi, as depicted in 1 Nephi. It has always impressed me that even as young as he was (“exceedingly young,” he tells us in verse 47), Nephi was receptive to the Lord’s Spirit, thereby causing Nephi to intuitively believe in and obey his father Lehi. We read that Lehi told his family that they should leave their house, the land of their inheritance, their gold and silver, and other precious things—take nothing with them except for some modest provisions and tents—and depart into the wilderness, because he had been so commanded in a dream. Lehi also told his family that they must leave because Jerusalem would be destroyed and many people would perish. So, the family, consisting of Lehi, his wife Sariah, elder brothers Laman, Lemuel, and Sam, did just that. Laman and Lemuel were very skeptical, even wanting to kill their father, to say the least.

They murmured many things against Lehi and called him a “visionary man.” They did not believe that Jerusalem could ever be destroyed. A key difference between Laman and Lemuel, and Nephi, appears to be in their attitude. Verse 41 in 1 Nephi tells us that Laman and Lemuel “murmured because they knew not the dealings of that God who created them.” Verse 47 tells us that Nephi, by contrast, “had great desires to know of the mysteries of God.” Then when Lehi tells his sons that the Lord commanded him in a dream that they should return to Jerusalem, go to the house of Laban and get the records (Brass Plates), once again Laman and Lemuel “murmured, saying it is a hard thing” that Lehi asked of them. Lehi had to remind them that it was not him that commanded it of them, but the Lord. Lehi tells Nephi, on the other hand, that he will be favored of the Lord because he has not murmured.

As a co-director of 2000 Strong Adventure Camp in Texas, we are really looking forward to the beginning of our 12th camp, which will begin a few weeks after I am writing this, on July 4th. Our camp theme this year

is “We Are Made Alive in Christ Because of Our Faith.” It has always been a desire of ours to have the camp in some very meaningful way increase the faith of all those who attend. If our youth can learn to “trust and obey” like Nephi, then they will be so much more able to fend off the fiery darts of the adversary. We know that Satan can appear as an angel of light—that even the very elect can be deceived—which is why it is so important to put on the full armor of Christ every day. We know that there is a way that seems right, but its path leads to destruction. We are given examples over and over again in the Scriptures of how good and just people veered off ever so slightly in the wrong direction, and it was not long before they began to be led, unbeknownst to them, by the precepts of men rather than the doctrine of Christ and his teachings as expressed in the Scriptures.

If we do not think we are vulnerable to falling prey to the temptations of the world, we have already been deceived. And for our youth, the mists of darkness as seen by Nephi are greater and more blinding than they ever were when I was a young man. The lures of the great and spacious building are also greater and more tempting than ever. Many are drowning in the depths of the fountain in the large and spacious field. Many are wandering in strange and forbidden roads and are indeed, at least for the time being, lost.

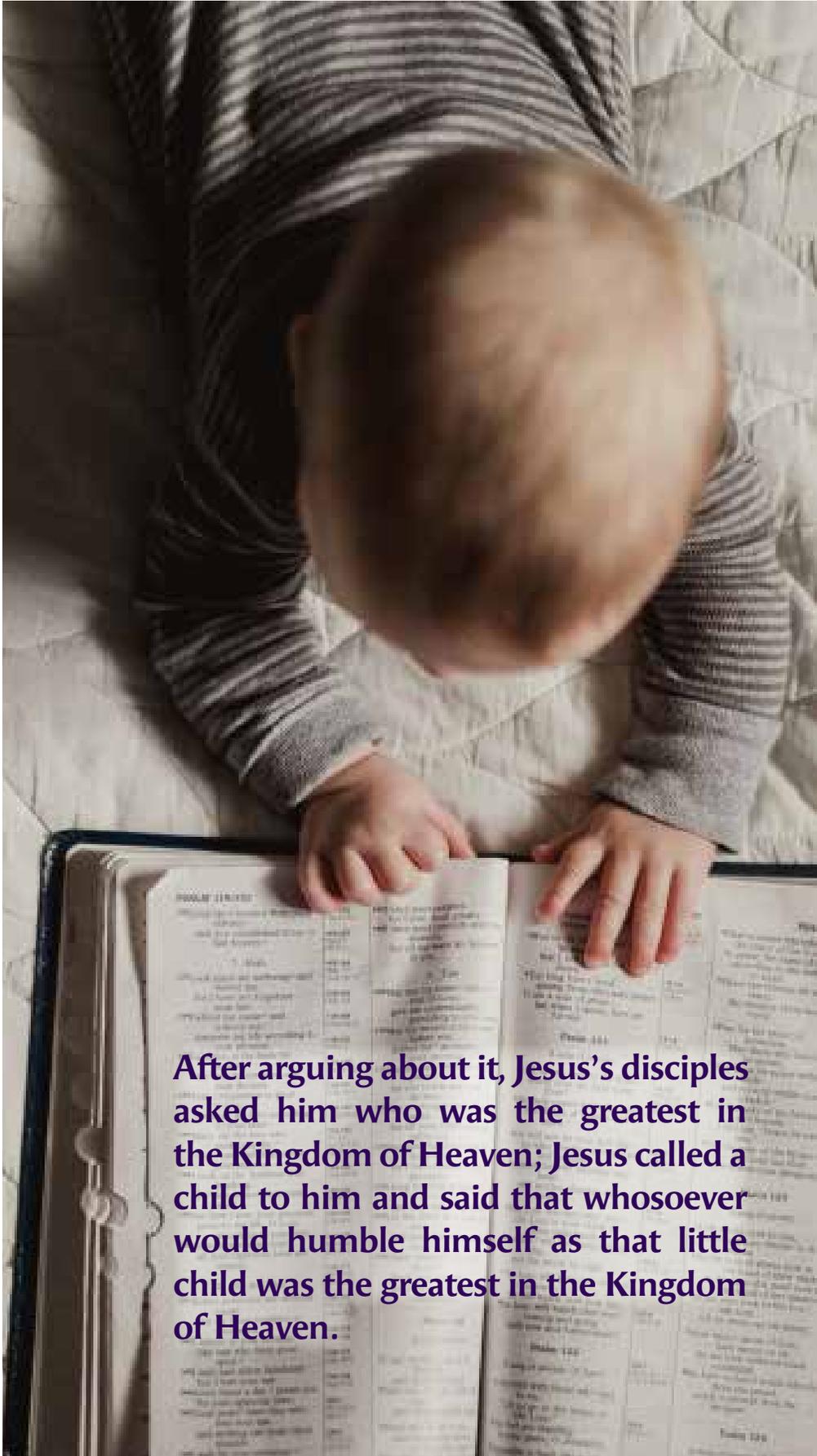
It has been said that as trusting, pure and innocent as children are when they are very young, it is too bad they have to grow up and be adults. There is some truth to that. After arguing about it, Jesus’s disciples asked him who was the greatest in the Kingdom of Heaven; Jesus called a child to him and said that whosoever would humble himself as that little child was the greatest in the Kingdom of Heaven. And he added: “Except ye be converted, and become as little children, ye cannot enter the kingdom.” In 3 Nephi the Lord tells us: “You must repent, and become as a little child, and be baptized in my name, or ye can in no wise receive these things.” Mosiah 1:119 tells us what becoming as a child really is: “submissive, meek, humble, patient, full of love, willing to submit to all things which the Lord sees fit to inflict upon him, even as a child doth submit to his father.”

Several weeks ago, I brought the morning message at our Sacrament Service at Dallas Restoration Branch. At the very beginning of that service I felt led to do something pretty bold, at least for me. As I looked out at the congregation I saw a young lady, about twelve years old, who has come to 2000 Strong Camp several times. I know her and her family well and know that she is an outstand-

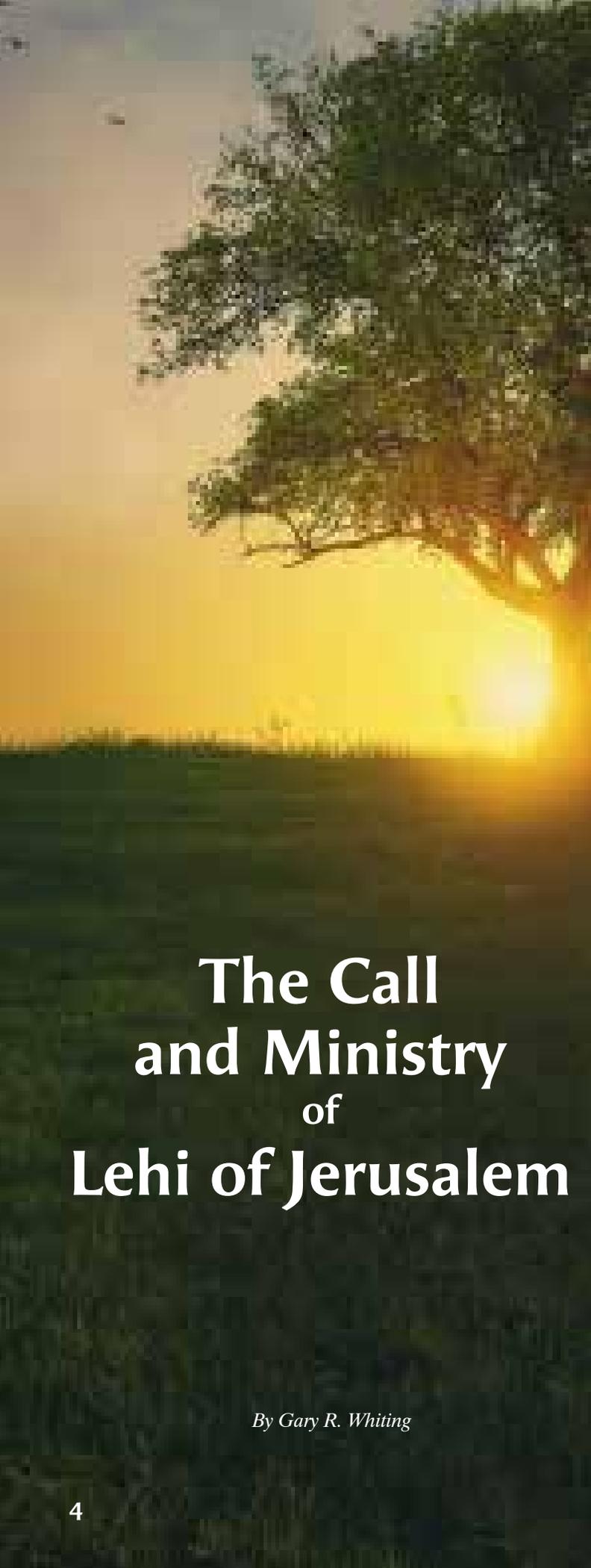
ing young lady. I called her by name and asked her if she would mind getting up and getting me a glass of water. She quietly did so, and when she returned and handed it to me, I asked her to sit on a row a little closer to the front instead of returning to where she had been sitting with her family, and she complied. After a few minutes, I told her it would be okay for her to go back to sitting with her family. Then I went on with my sermon. After concluding my remarks, I started to sit down but quickly realized that I had forgotten to explain why I had asked this young lady to do those things. I returned to the pulpit and explained that, in my mind, this was what Mosiah 1:119 looks like—this young lady did exactly what I asked her to do and never asked why or argued or “murmured.”

By and large, children will do anything we ask them to do, generally without questioning us. They will just do it because we told them to. Young children are not caught up with the complexities that come from life’s experiences. They are very innocent and trusting when they are very young. They believe us, they believe in us, so it is crucial for us to be Christ-like role models at home, in the work place, everywhere; where they can see our behavior, the language we use, the way we treat others, and thereby want to model that behavior, be like us when they grow up. So, we need to be like Christ to them.

The Lord told Nephi that if he was obedient to his commandments the Lord would lead him to the promised land, and that Nephi would know that it was by the Lord that he was led. He also said that once Nephi and his family arrived at the promised land, Nephi would know it was the Lord who had delivered them there, and it was the Lord who had brought him and his family out of the land of Jerusalem and therefore delivered them from destruction. Nephi never wavered; he exclaimed “Wherefore, I, Nephi, did strive to keep the commandments of the Lord, and I did exhort my brethren to faithfulness and diligence” (1 Nephi 5: 83). May we likewise strive to keep the Lord’s commandments and exhort our youth to do the same—to trust and obey the Lord as Nephi did! †



**After arguing about it, Jesus’s disciples asked him who was the greatest in the Kingdom of Heaven; Jesus called a child to him and said that whosoever would humble himself as that little child was the greatest in the Kingdom of Heaven.**



# The Call and Ministry of Lehi of Jerusalem

*By Gary R. Whiting*

Lehi is the patriarch of the family which played the largest role in the Book of Mormon. His descendants continue to inhabit the promised land to which Lehi was led by God. Prophecy indicates the children of Lehi will play a prominent role in the unfolding end time events in the world. Lehi, therefore, continues to be a person of influence hundreds of years after his life.

Lehi was chosen by God and led to the Americas as part of God's plan to provide for the recovery of the House of Israel in the latter days. He left Jerusalem 600 years before the coming of Jesus Christ, yet his testimony is the foundational witness of this family which yielded prophets, judges and women of stellar character, bearing sterling testimonies of Jesus Christ. It was critical to God's plan for the leader of this family to bear testimony of Jesus, the Messiah of Israel.

Lehi was not a prophet of the Old Covenant, but of the New Covenant. He lived while the Mosaic Law was in effect, but he was called to lead people to faith in the Messiah, the Law of Moses leading the way. His ministry anticipated the coming of Christ and the eventual restoration of his descendants to the Messiah in the latter day.

For the present time we do not have much detail about the call and ministry of Lehi. The only sermons that remain are those he preached to his own family. The brief knowledge we have of Lehi's ministry as a warning voice to Jerusalem is provided by Nephi in the introduction to 1 Nephi.

Jeremiah called the people of Jerusalem to repentance, saying they must yield themselves to the will of God. Babylon was camped outside of Jerusalem, the capital of Judah. Zedekiah was recently installed to the throne as the Jewish king by Nebuchadnezzar. The Jews were looking to Egypt for deliverance from the Babylonian threat, but God was telling the people to submit quietly to Babylon, repent of their sins and wait for God's deliverance.

**I spake also to Zedekiah king of Judah according to all these words, saying, Bring your necks under the yoke of the king of Babylon, and serve him and his people, and live. Why will ye die, thou and thy people, by the sword, by the famine, and by the pestilence, as the Lord hath spoken against the nation that will not serve the king of Babylon? Therefore hearken not unto the words of the prophets that speak unto you, saying, Ye shall not serve the king of Babylon; for they prophesy a lie unto you. For I have not sent them, saith the Lord, yet they prophesy a lie in my name; that I might drive you out, and that ye might perish, ye, and the prophets that prophesy unto you (Jeremiah 27:12-15).**

It was Jeremiah who taught the kings, princes and people of Jerusalem to put their trust in God, who said he would bring a day when every one of them would know the Lord and have the word of God written in their hearts.

**Behold, the days come, saith the Lord, that I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel, and**

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**with the house of Judah; Not according to the covenant that I made with their fathers, in the day that I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt; which my covenant they brake, although I was a husband unto them, saith the Lord; But this shall be the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel; After those days, saith the Lord, I will put my law in their inward parts, and write it in their hearts; and will be their God, and they shall be my people. And they shall teach no more every man his neighbor, and every man his brother, saying, Know the Lord; for they shall all know me, from the least of them unto the greatest of them, saith the Lord; for I will forgive their iniquity, and I will remember their sin no more (Jeremiah 31:31-34).**

This is the prophetic ministry that filled the ears of Lehi in the days of King Zedekiah. Lehi knew it was the word of the Lord and it moved him to pray (1 Nephi 1:4). Lehi prayed for his people, which certainly included his immediate family, but his kinsman, neighbors and friends were the subject of his intercession at this time. Lehi was convinced the Lord was speaking the truth through Jeremiah and the many prophets sent by the Lord, but nobody was listening to the messages. The people and the leaders of the Jews despised the prophets and some wanted to kill the messengers of God. As Lehi poured out his heart, he was suddenly in the presence of a pillar of fire that settled before him. Scripture says that Lehi “saw and heard” things that caused him to “quake and tremble exceedingly” (1 Nephi 1:5).

The pillar of fire is a significant term as it relates to the calling and preparation of Lehi, the prophet of God. To a Jew, this is readily recognizable as the presence of the Lord God. It was a burning bush, not consumed by the fire, from which God called Moses. Later, Moses and Israel were led by a pillar of smoke by day and fire by night for 40 years through the wilderness. Scripture teaches that these manifestations were representative of the Lord God of Israel, the very presence of the Great I AM to his people. Lehi was met by the very God of Israel who taught him many things.

After this first experience, Lehi was exhausted and overwhelmed. He was able to make it home, but he had to lay down on his bed to recover. The Lord had more to say to Lehi and soon he was again in the Lord’s presence. He was overcome by the Spirit of the Lord and was carried away in a vision. He saw God on his throne and surrounded by too many angels to count. He experienced their worship of God through song and praise. As the vision continued, his attention was drawn to the sight of:

**One descending out of the midst of heaven, and he beheld that his luster was above that of the sun at noon-day; And he also saw twelve others following him, and their brightness did exceed that of the stars in the firmament; and they came down and went forth upon the face of the earth; And the first came and stood before my father, and gave unto him a book, and bade him that he should read (1 Nephi 1:8-10).**

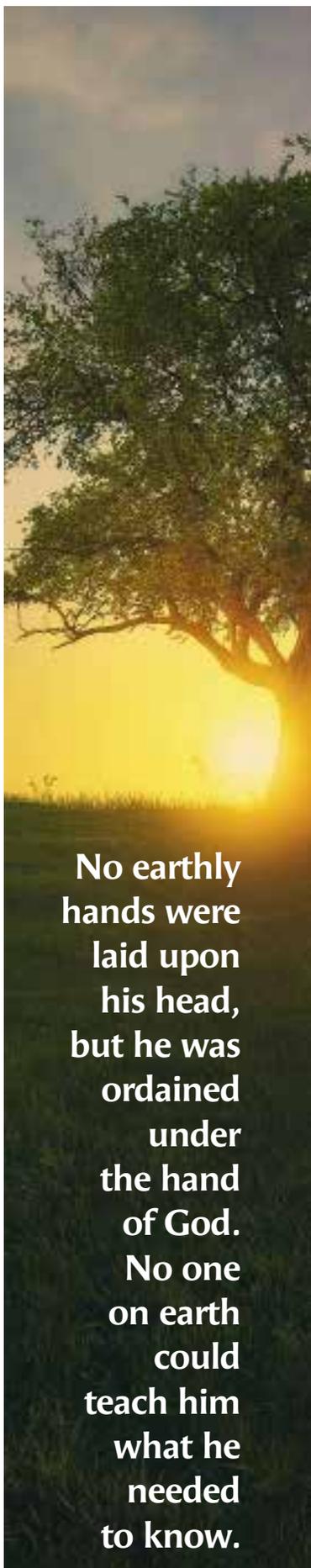
The one he saw descending out of heaven fits the description of Jesus Christ. Lehi is shown Jesus descending to the earth to minister to men and women, assisted by twelve ministers who went forth upon the face of the earth. Jesus approaches Lehi and the Messiah presented a book to Lehi which he was to read. The book more fully instructed him about the status of Jerusalem and what was about to befall the great city.

Lehi’s call to ministry is very similar to the commissioning of Ezekiel as a prophet of the Lord. In Ezekiel 2 and 3, it is written that a hand became visible to Ezekiel which had the roll of a book in it. Ezekiel was told to eat the book, which he did. The book constituted the message he was to speak to the house of Israel (Ezekiel 2:8-3:5). Lehi was also given his message in a book which he read and this was the word of the Lord he was to speak to the people of Jerusalem.

After these experiences, Lehi joined the ranks of the many prophets of the Lord preaching to the inhabitants of Jerusalem. He became one of the many voices witnessing and declaring the word of the Lord to the people. Lehi’s ministry, however, was not well received.

Lehi taught the people the things he had been taught and he testified about

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**No earthly hands were laid upon his head, but he was ordained under the hand of God. No one on earth could teach him what he needed to know.**

their sins and wickedness. Nephi wrote that Lehi called the people to repentance and prophesied about the coming of a Messiah and the coming redemption of the world (1 Nephi 1:20).

Lehi's message was repentance and obedience to the word of the Lord in preparation for the coming of the Messiah of Israel who would bring redemption from sin into the world. He taught people to believe in Jesus Christ. He was giving those Jews a chance to exercise hope in the salvation of God that was greater than preserving the Temple or the kingdom of David as the Jews hoped.

The visit by the pillar of fire and the vision of Messiah indicated Lehi was called to the work of declaring the word of God. Christ himself was training Lehi for this task. Lehi was not a Levite; he was a descendant of Manasseh, the son of Joseph who was sold into slavery in Egypt. His call and authority could not have been Levitical because of his lineage.

I believe that Lehi was ordained to the Melchisedec priesthood by God himself in these experiences. His call was after the order of the Son of God as a High Priest to serve in the name of the Messiah or Jesus Christ. No earthly hands were laid upon his head, but he was ordained under the hand of God. No one on earth could teach him what he needed to know, so the Lord came to him and taught him from on high. He was given authority to speak the words of God and he had the testimony of Jesus. It fits the example Alma described for the calling of the high priesthood of the holy order of God.

**And thus they have been called to this holy calling on account of their faith, while others would reject the Spirit of God on account of the hardness of their hearts and blindness of their minds, while, if it had not been for this, they might have had as great privilege as their brethren. Or in fine: in the first place they were on the same standing with their brethren; thus this holy calling being prepared from the foundation of the world for such as would not harden their hearts, being in and through the atonement of the only begotten Son, who was prepared; And thus**

**being called by his holy calling, and ordained unto the high priesthood of the holy order of God, to teach his commandments unto the children of men, that they also might enter into his rest (Alma 9:67-69).**

He was the first among many High Priests after the order of the Son of God found in the Book of Mormon. Although that specific title is never used in association with Lehi's name, his calling and instruction agree with what Alma taught and uniquely prepared him for the task that lay before him.

Lehi was to lead his family, and others, to a new land and establish a colony of Israel. This colony needed to be in a place free of Jewish tradition and unbelief which suppressed faith unto life and salvation. God needed an example of what could happen when a people were led by God, under the ministry and blessing of the High Priesthood and the testimony of Jesus the Messiah. In the Book of Mormon is the story of a people who faithfully kept the Law of Moses while looking forward, by faith, in the Messiah. They needed the authority to perform the ordinances (no Levitical priesthood among them) and the vision provided by the testimony of Jesus Christ to keep them in the way of faith. Melchisedec priesthood answered both requirements.

Lehi's calling and testimony formed the foundation for the story of the Book of Mormon. This book has come forth in the latter day to be the testimony of this generation's preachers and prophets. No ordinary Jew of Jerusalem could have accomplished this mission. No Levite of the day was fitted for this duty. Therefore, God called a son of Joseph to bear the light of the gospel of Jesus Christ in a new land. In this land, separated from their brethren, God prepared for the recovery of the children of Israel through an obscure Jew in a far away land. Like Joseph of old, the story of Lehi's faithfulness will be a blessing to save Israel in the latter day. Nephi thankfully told enough of his father's testimony for us to see how God set the stage for the great work of the Book of Mormon in our day. Thank God for faithful Lehi. †

# The Plates of Brass

By Chadwick Nestman

Newspapers published circa 1827 tell us that when Joseph Smith, Jr. was allowed to retrieve the golden tablets from Hill Cumorah, New York, a “gold rush” of sorts began. Treasure hunters from hundreds of miles away tried various ways to find “Joe’s” golden plates. Nothing they tried allowed them access to the plates, but they did initiate rumors that the plates really did not exist. Ever since then Restoration apologists (those who argue in defense of Restoration beliefs), have been busy writing articles, teaching classes, and delivering sermons to justify Joseph Smith, the golden plates, the translation process, and even the Book of Mormon.

The first mention of the Plates of Brass is found in 1 Nephi 1:60-67 when Lehi had a dream in which God commanded him to retrieve these records, which included the record of the Jews. It also provided the genealogy of Lehi which showed he was a direct descendent of Joseph of Egypt. These records become a lightning rod when Lehi sends his sons to Jerusalem for the second time not to gather their riches but to seek out Laban, the guardian of scriptures for the House of Joseph. These scriptures were not written on papyrus or vellum but on brass, a mix of copper and zinc. Critics of the Book of Mormon are quick to point out that the methods of making brass circa 600 B.C. were not well known, and most likely the scriptures were really made of copper. However, archeologists over the last fifty to one hundred years have discovered that brass existed in the middle east either in large copper deposits laced with zinc, or because metallurgists mistook zinc deposits for tin. Either way, producing brass was an expensive process and any object made of brass was protected and helped determine wealth. Today, enough metal plates have been recovered in archaeological sites in many countries, including some samples near Jerusalem, written about 600 B.C. that should silence critics for all time.

Why did God command Lehi to retrieve these records? One thought may be that Laban was not the correct guardian because of

unrighteousness. This thought is derived from the two experiences Lehi’s sons had in the retrieval process. The first was when Laman and Lemuel were ejected from Laban’s house because they had angered him by asking for the plates. It is likely that Laban and Lehi knew one another and circulated in the same social circles since they were both wealthy. This would explain why Laban agreed to see Laman and Lemuel. The second experience was more dramatic. In this case the brothers went to their old house and collected the gold and silver Lehi left when he followed God’s commandment to leave Jerusalem. When seeing how much gold and silver Laman and Lemuel had brought to him to buy the plates Laban not only kept their gold and silver but retained the Brass Plates, and sent his guards after them.

We are told in verses 82-83 that the Brass Plates would be instrumental in preserving language, writing, and the words of the prophets from the time of Adam to King Zedekiah (circa 600 B.C.). We are also told that a portion of the prophecies of Jeremiah were included. This is interesting because Jeremiah was a contemporary of Lehi and his writings give us a glimpse into what Lehi was experiencing before God commanded him to leave Jerusalem. We are also told that Laban, the guardian of scriptures, was a descendent and an aristocrat of the tribe of Ephraim.

Remember, Jacob adopted Joseph’s two sons Manasseh and Ephraim as his own. He then gave Ephraim the blessing of the first born of Joseph, instead of Manasseh. When the kingdom of Solomon divided into two countries, Israel in the north and Judah in the south, it was the tribe of Ephraim which became *de facto* leaders of Israel. As the leader of Israel, Ephraim would have the responsibility of keeping the official records and scripture—the Brass Plates.

Many have questioned or wondered how a tribe from the northern tribes of Israel came to reside in Jerusalem. The answer likely lies in the siege of the northern kingdom by the Assyrians beginning about 785 B.C. and ending in 722 B.C.. During the siege period, many

**Producing brass was an expensive process and any object made of brass was protected and helped determine wealth.**

people, including Lehi and Laban, could have migrated from the northern kingdom to Judah for safety, and especially those who managed their tribe's records. The period between 910-860 B.C. may be a better explanation because the king of Judah, Asa, was a righteous king who removed idolatry and enforced the Law, causing many righteous people to flee to Judah to escape idolatry.

Upon reading the Plates of Brass from the beginning Lehi prophesied:

**That these plates should go forth unto all nations, kindreds and tongues and people which were of his seed. Wherefore, he said that these plates of brass should never perish, neither should they be dimmed anymore by time; And he prophesied many things concerning his seed (1 Nephi 169-171).**

Because the Plates of Brass originated in Israel, it is reasonable that they would contain the records of key events and prophecies considered important to them. While we only know from a cursory point of view what was contained in the Brass Plates, we do know that they contained material not found in the Jewish Bible. The major additions are the records of the prophets Zenos, Zenock, Neum, Ezaias, and Joseph of Egypt. Isaiah, a key prophet for Judah and Jerusalem, was also included but with some substantial modifications only found on the copy found on the Brass Plates—not in the King James Version and the Inspired Version.

**And now behold, Moses did not only testify of these things, but also all the holy prophets, from his days even to the days of Abraham. Yea, and behold, Abraham saw of his coming, and was filled with gladness, and did rejoice. Yea, and behold I say unto you, that Abraham not only knew of these things, but there were many before the days of Abraham who were called by the order of God; yea, even after the order of his Son; And this that it should be shewn unto the people a great many thousand years before his coming, that even redemption should come unto them. And now I would that ye should know, that even since the days of Abraham, there have been many prophets that have testified these things; yea, behold, the prophet Zenos did testify boldly; for the which he was slain. And behold, also Zenock, and also Ezaias, and also Isaiah, and Jeremiah, (Jeremiah being that same prophet who testified of the destruction of Jerusalem.) (Helaman 3:49-54).**

Ezaias prophesied of the coming of the Messiah. Neum spoke prophetically of the crucifixion of the Son of God (See 1 Nephi 5:241).

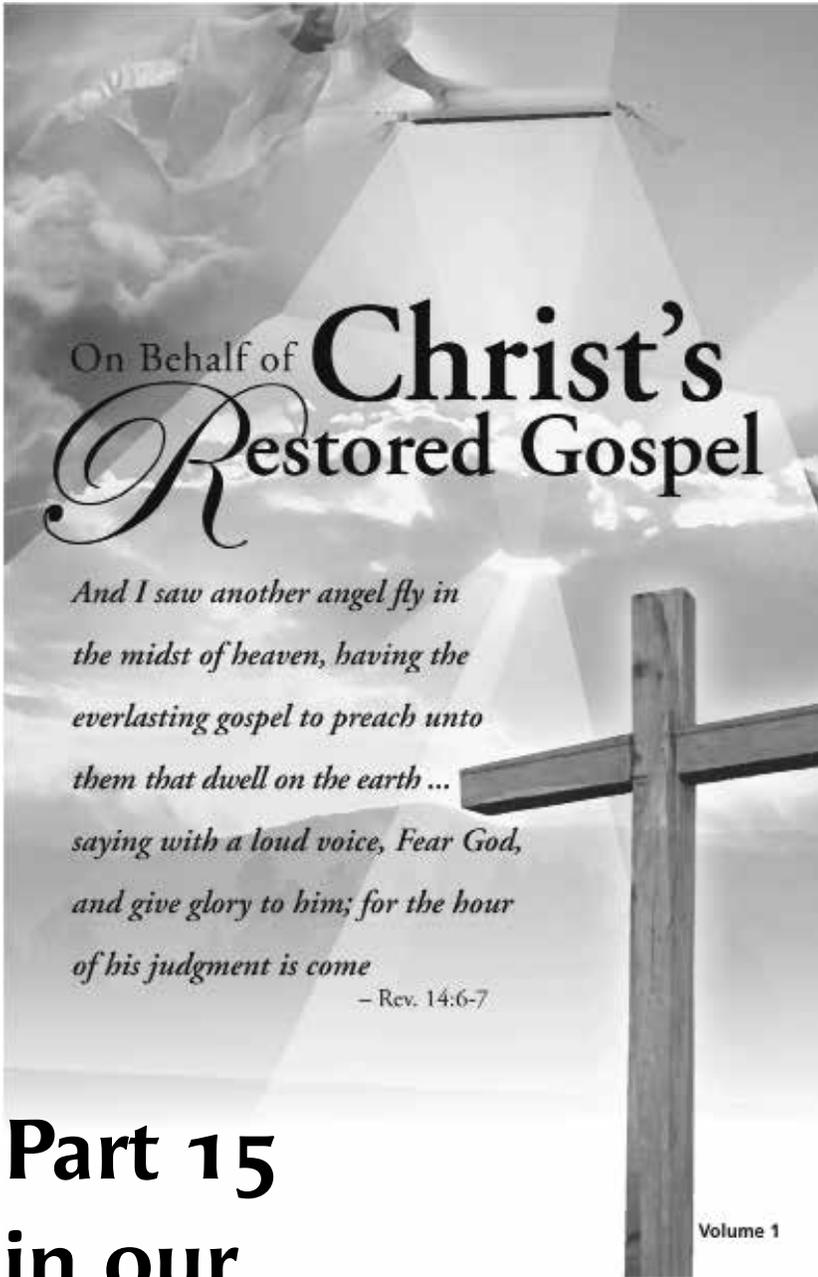
Zenock bore witness of the Savior: that redemption would come only through the atoning sacrifice and death of Christ; that destruction would accompany his crucifixion (see 3 Nephi 4:70-71); and that he would be lifted up by wicked men (see 1 Nephi 5:240-242). Because of his testimony, the people stoned Zenock to death. (See Alma 16:188-189.) The Plates of Brass contain more of the oracles of Zenos than any of the other non-biblical prophets. In addition, Nephi, Jacob, and Alma all quoted Zenos extensively. Note Mormon's words concerning Zenos and Zenock:

**Many have testified of these things [signs of the Savior's death] at the coming of Christ and were slain because they testified of these things. Yea, the prophet Zenos did testify of these things, and also Zenock spake concerning these things, because they testified particularly concerning us, who are the remnant of their seed (3 Nephi 4:70-71; italics added).**

The Brass Plates are not something we should push aside and no longer consider their importance in the salvation of mankind. Just with a few quotations which we have in the Book of Mormon we know they contain much about the gospel of Christ, possibly more than we have and know from our current scriptures. The fact that Lehi said they would never perish should be enough to get us to do what we can to have God bring them forth. It is interesting that Church History, volume 4, chapter 20, page 370 tells us that the brass plates were shown to Joseph Smith and Oliver Cowdery. They had a vision where they saw a "table (set before them) and on it the records were placed, the plates of the Nephites, from which the Book of Mormon was translated, the brass plates, the ball of directors, the sword of Laban, and other plates. What a blessing it will be to search them to read and understand the deeper mysteries of God. Just knowing how important they were to Lehi and his progeny and how they revealed the gospel to all who searched them is reason to ask God that they be brought forth for us.

Revelation has told us that to receive additional testimony of the mysteries of God, we need to change who we are and what we are. We call ourselves "Restorationists" but do we really know what that means in our daily lives? Can people see the reflection of Christ in us? Do we really strive to bring forth Zion or is it just a mirage never to be a reality? Do we really pray to God in our arising in the morning, going to bed at night, and all through the day? Is he really guiding us in our choices and actions or do we act based on our own intelligence? †

**The Brass Plates are not something we should push aside and no longer consider their importance in the salvation of mankind.**



On Behalf of **Christ's**  
*R*estored Gospel

*And I saw another angel fly in the midst of heaven, having the everlasting gospel to preach unto them that dwell on the earth ... saying with a loud voice, Fear God, and give glory to him; for the hour of his judgment is come*

— Rev. 14:6-7

Volume 1

**Part 15**  
**in our**  
**continuing**  
**series**

**Evidences that Joseph Smith Was a Prophet**

By Bob Moore

**Part 2**

**4. Saints driven from Missouri**

The same revelation that invited the adulterers in the church to repent also commanded the Saints to purchase all available lands from the courthouse in Independence westward to the Missouri state line. Insufficient contributions prevented the Saints from fulfilling this commandment. The revelation states,

**And if by purchase, behold you are blessed; and if by blood, as you are forbidden to shed blood, lo, your enemies are upon you, and ye shall be scourged from city to city, and from synagogue to synagogue, and but few shall remain to receive an inheritance (D&C 63:8e).**

Church members failed to purchase all the lands specified in the revelation. In fact, they bought only a small portion of the vast tract. As a result, they reaped the judgment promised in the cited revelation. Enemies of the church drove the Saints from Jackson County. They found refuge for a while in Clay County, but its residents asked them to leave. The state of Missouri created a new county for the Saints from the northern portion of Ray County, naming it Caldwell County, but the migration of so many church members there spilled the new settlers into adjoining counties.

Friction with non-church residents in those surrounding counties soon developed. Contrary to the advice in Joseph's revelations, the Saints began defending themselves, eventually attacking the mobs that sought their expulsion from the land. Another revelation told the Saints not to revile against those who smote them or their families, adding, "neither seek revenge" (D&C 95:5a). Church members were to patiently bear such attacks, at least three times (D&C 95:5c). Unfortunately, the Saints in and around Caldwell County ignored the divine counsel and defended themselves when driven from their homes. The Far West militia even attacked the mob that surrounded the county seat of Far West.

Meanwhile, a private society of Saints called Danites formed and secretly raided their enemies. Since the Saints chose to defend themselves by bloodshed, they were expelled from Missouri. After the death of Joseph Smith, those who supported self-defense and the Danite ideal were forced to leave the United States. They settled in the western part of the United States under the leadership of the Utah church. Their forced exodus fulfilled the prophecy that said those who shed blood would be “scourged from city to city.”

## 5. Scourged from city to city

The same revelation predicts that few would remain after the Saints were “scourged from city to city.” After the death of Joseph Smith, the church fragmented into more than twenty factions. Many of them practiced polygamy. The Reorganization began with only a few faithful Saints. While it gathered many of those scattered during what came to be called “the dark and cloudy day,” only a portion of original church members united with it. Those Saints who followed Brigham Young particularly resisted the invitation of the Reorganization. Only a few Saints under his leadership united with it. Of the approximately 150,000 to 200,000 church members at the time of Joseph Smith’s murder, certainly less than 10 percent united with the Reorganization. About 168 people attended the April 6, 1860, conference in which Joseph III accepted the prophetic office as successor to his father. Joseph’s prophecy that only a few would remain proved true.

## 6. Building of Kirtland Temple

Joseph Smith prophesied that a temple would be built in Kirtland, Ohio, by the generation in which he lived. His prophecy said,

**Verily, this is the word of the Lord, that the city New Jerusalem shall be built by the gathering of the Saints, beginning at this place, even the place of the temple, which temple shall be reared in this generation; for verily, this generation shall not all pass away until an house shall be 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 (D&C 83:2a-b).**

The first place to which church members were commanded to gather was Kirtland, Ohio. In December 1830, almost two years before the prophecy about the temple came, Joseph revealed, “A commandment I give unto the church, that it is expedient in me that they should assemble together at the Ohio” (D&C 37:2a). This commandment was repeated twice within a month (D&C 38:7b, D&C 39:4d). That gathering of the Saints to Kirtland, Ohio, began the effort to establish the New Jerusalem.

Kirtland was also the place where the prophecy about rearing the temple was given. These facts mean the words “beginning at this place” refers to Kirtland. Some suppose that the place intended for this temple

was Independence. It is the place that the church has traditionally maintained would be the site for the New Jerusalem and the building of a temple, events that are not completed. While faithful Saints still expected these anticipated events, Kirtland is the place where the temple promised in Joseph Smith’s generation was predicted. If Independence was the location meant in the prophecy, explicit wording would have said “beginning at that place.”

Since Kirtland was the place of gathering that began the effort to build the New Jerusalem and the location where the prophecy was given, it is the site on which the temple predicted to be reared in that generation would be built. The Kirtland Temple was built in Joseph’s generation and continues to stand as a testimony to the prophetic ability of Joseph Smith.

## 7. Civil War Prophecy

On Christmas Day, 1832, Joseph prophesied the U.S. Civil War, detailing that it would begin in South Carolina. It said, “Verily thus saith the Lord, concerning the wars that will shortly come to pass, beginning at the rebellion of South Carolina ... for behold, the Southern States shall be divided against the Northern States” (*The History of the Reorganized Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints*, 1:262). Twenty-nine years later, just as the prophecy predicted, the Civil War broke out at Fort Sumter in South Carolina, dividing the nation between North and South.

Critics maintain that the Civil War prophecy only reflected the fear gripping the nation about the time that Joseph received his revelation. They go to great lengths to show that the panic pervading America motivated Joseph’s prophecy and even suggest that after the fear subsided, Joseph thought his prediction false. Their criticisms miss the point. Joseph prophesied that the Civil War would happen and that it would begin in South Carolina. When both events occurred, they proved Joseph Smith’s prophecy true.

Despite the accuracy, critics maintain that the Civil War prophecy contains a series of errors. They consider the following predictions contained in the revelation additional false statements: (1) that slaves would revolt against their masters; (2) that the Native American Indians would vex the white population; (3) that the Southern States’ call for military aid would spread war to Europe and finally throughout the world; and (4) that the increased configuration would destroy all nations. These critics maintain that none of these events occurred. Their conclusion is false.

Slaves did rise up against the white masters. The revelation foretold, “After many days, slaves shall rise up against their Masters, who shall be marshaled and disciplined for war” (*The History of the Reorganized Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints*, 1:262). During the Civil War, the Union formed regiments of black soldiers, some of whom were slaves. They saw limited action. The

recent movie *Glory* portrayed the efforts of some black soldiers in the Union Army.

Indians did attack Americans moving West. The prophecy states, “It shall come to pass also, that the remnants who are left of the land will marshal themselves, and shall become exceeding angry, and shall vex the Gentiles with a sore vexation” (*The History of the Reorganized Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints*, 1:262). The Book of Mormon makes it clear in several passages (See 1 Nephi 3:190, 1 Nephi 4:16, 2 Nephi 12:2, 3 Nephi 7:28, 3 Nephi 9:51 and Mormon 3:24) that the “remnants of the land” that this prophecy mentions are descendants of Book of Mormon people. Indians resisted Western expansion throughout post-Civil War America, raiding settlements and fighting troops, for instance, in the famous 1876 Battle of Little Bighorn, in which the Sioux Indians under the leadership of Sitting Bull routed the U.S. Cavalry led by the Civil War veteran General George Custer. Geronimo directed the Apache Indians in uprisings that lasted from the mid-1870s until his capture in 1886. The Indian uprisings during the latter half of the nineteenth century fulfilled this portion of Joseph’s prophecy.

The Confederacy did ask for British help and Britain favored Confederate success. The prophecy said, “The Southern States will call on other nations, even the nation of Great Britain” (*The History of the Reorganized Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints*, 1:262). The U.S. Civil War provided Britain an unusual opportunity to extend its national interest in the Western Hemisphere, decrease enthusiasm within its monarchy for democracy, increase trade opportunities in the west, and decrease the rise of U.S. global power. For that reason, the *London Times* reported, “Excepting a few gentlemen of republican tendencies, we all expect, we nearly all wish, success to the Confederate cause” (Kevin Phillips, *The Cousins’ Wars* (New York, New York: Basic Books, 1999), 495).

Critics reject these events as fulfillment of Joseph’s prophecy. They maintain that the revelation predicted a worldwide war that would immediately develop from the Civil War. One publication states, “Even when the South did finally revolt, in 1861, although Great Britain came to its assistance, other elements of the

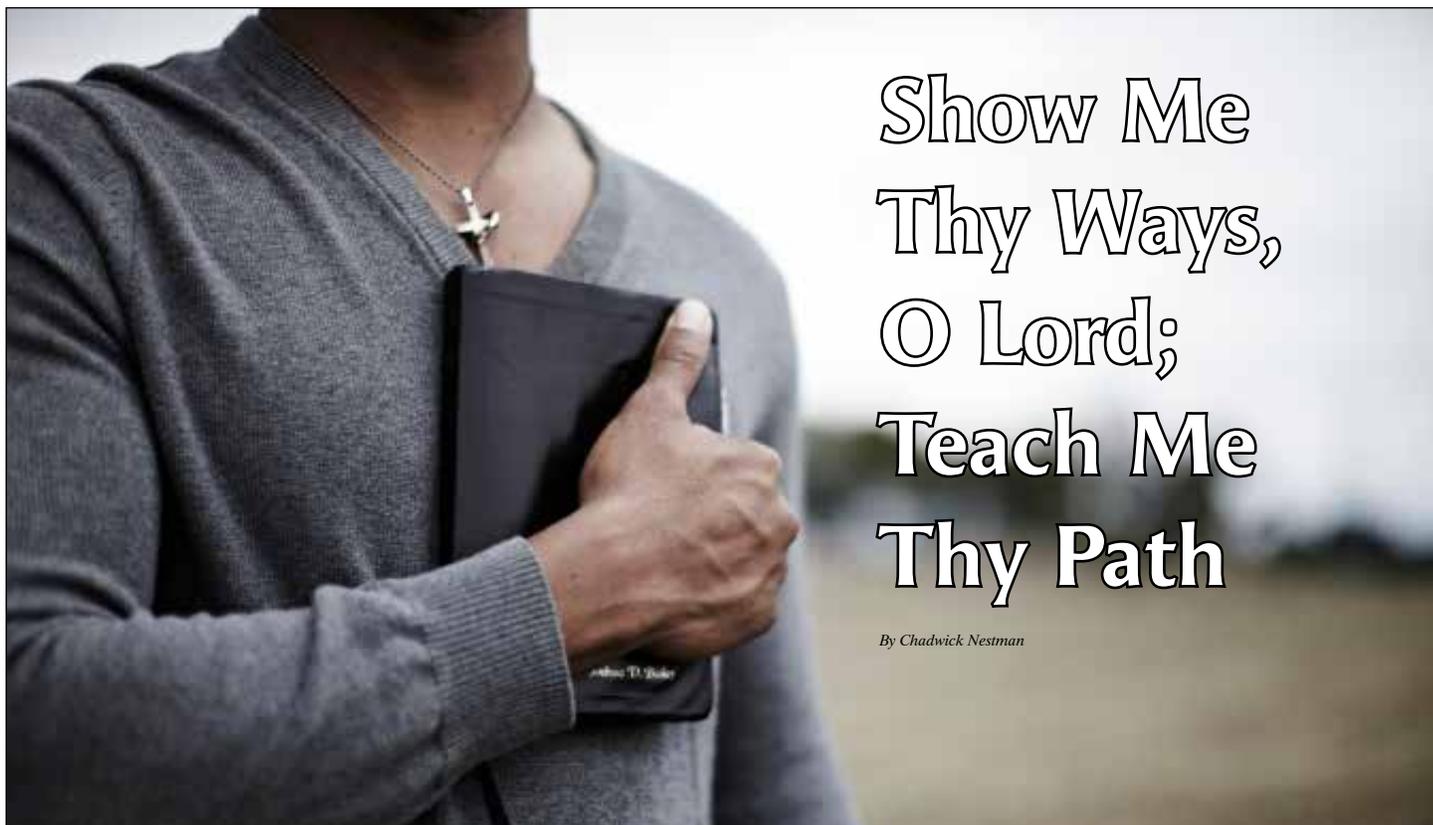
prophecy were not fulfilled: slaves did not rise up, war was not poured out upon all nations, there was no worldwide famine, plague, earthquake, etc., and there was no resulting ‘end of all nations.’” (Revealing the Truth Ministries, <http://www.revealingthetruth.org/falseprophecies.htm>. [*This link and website are inactive and no successor has been found online-Editor*]). The fact that the prophesied catastrophes have not occurred yet is proof to them that the revelation is false.

Biblical prophecies were not always immediately fulfilled. Isaiah’s prediction that Jesus would be born of a virgin (Isaiah 7:14) happened more than 700 years before the Savior’s birth. David’s description of Christ’s crucifixion (Psalm 22:1-18) occurred almost 1,000 years before the Savior’s death. Jesus’ promise to descend in clouds of glory in the sight of “all the tribes of the earth” (Matthew 24:30 KJV), although pronounced nearly 2,000 years ago, has not happened yet. All the events contained in Joseph’s Civil War prophecy do not need to be fulfilled now for the revelation to be true.

The Civil War prophecy predicts a period of increased warfare throughout the world until all nations are destroyed. It says, “And thus war will be poured out upon all nations,” adding, “Until the consummation decreed, hath made a full end of all nations” (*The History of the Reorganized Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints*, 1:262). Since the U.S. Civil War, military tactics and weaponry have vastly improved, giving present-day armies the ability to destroy the world. At least seven nations possess nuclear weapons, which, if they used them, could cataclysmically alter or even eliminate life on earth. Other nations, all in the third world, are trying to develop such weapons. Worse yet, terrorism has risen to attack innocent and peaceful victims as it tries to destroy Western civilization. These anarchists are developing access to chemical, biological, and nuclear weapons. Some states sympathetic to the terrorists are sponsoring their efforts.

Today’s terrorism has been poured out on all nations to the point that all civilized countries around the globe are presently engaged in a war against it. Joseph Smith’s prophecy that war will be poured out on all nations is being fulfilled right now. †

**All the events contained in Joseph’s Civil War prophecy do not need to be fulfilled now for the revelation to be true.**



# Show Me Thy Ways, O Lord; Teach Me Thy Path

*By Chadwick Nestman*

The full intent of God regarding the Book of Mormon is not known at this time, but it is clear from its title page that the Book of Mormon is to be of great value to Christians (Gentiles), Lamanites and the Jews:

**That they (the house of Israel) may know the covenants of the Lord, that they are not cast off forever, and also to the convincing of the Jew and Gentile that Jesus is the Christ, the Eternal God, manifesting himself to all nations (Title page of the Book of Mormon).**

It has been said that the Book of Mormon is the key-stone of the Restoration and that its loss would mean the failure of the Restoration itself. Why? Because the Book of Mormon provides clarifications and insights about the gospel of Jesus Christ not found in the Bible. For example, it leaves no doubt that Jesus is the Christ; proves that God is the same yesterday, today, and tomorrow; and exudes spiritual power and purity of doctrine to bring mankind to God. Doctrinally, the Book of Mormon clearly indicates that Jesus is the Son of God; specifies that Jesus is the Messiah promised throughout the Old Testament and explains theological ramifications of the fall of Adam and Eve while laying out the plan of salvation, and the atonement and resurrection. Further, it clearly defines the Holy One of Israel as Christ Jesus. It also explains ordinances like baptism, laying on of hands, and the sacraments. Additionally, it details the gathering of Israel and continues revelation concerning justice and mercy. Nephi summed it up nicely: “For the fullness of mine intent is that I may persuade men to come unto the God of Abraham and the God of Isaac and the God of Jacob and be saved” (1 Nephi 2:4 RCE).

A problem many of us face is that we believe that we have figured out the purposes of God. Even Albert Einstein proposed that there exists an equation that defines creation. Physicists today launch probes into deep space to analyze the elements of stars, planets, nebulae, asteroids, and so on to better understand how creation came into being. The biggest question they have is, “What caused the ‘big bang’?” In a way, we have all placed God into a box of our own making, limiting him to human standards and capabilities. Yet, in the Book of Mormon we find many tantalizing clues and hints that tell us that perhaps we do not have God figured out. Looking forward into 2 Nephi we find these words:

**Touch not the things which are sealed, For I will bring them forth in Mine own due time, For I will show unto the children of men that I am able to do Mine own work. Wherefore, when thou hast read the words which I have commanded thee and obtained the witnesses which I have promised unto thee, Then shalt thou seal up the book again and hide it up unto Me, that I may preserve the words which thou hast not read until I shall see fit in Mine own wisdom to reveal all things unto the children of men. For behold, I Am God and I Am a God of miracles; And I will show unto the world that I Am the same yesterday, today and forever; And I work not among the children of men, save it be according to their faith (emphasis added, 2 Nephi 11:143-145 RCE).**

It is by faith that we will understand the words of the Book of Mormon, just as it was by faith that those words were written. It was by faith that Nephi heeded the words

of an angel in order to obtain the Plates of Brass. It was by faith that Lehi and Nephi had the vision of the Tree of Life. It was by faith that Nephi's vision not only explained the one of his father, but added prophecy about the birth, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ; the falling away and restoration of the House of Israel; and the coming forth of the Book of Mormon. He saw many other things pertaining to the last days but was forbidden to write it because those events would be written by the Apostle John. And, it was by faith that Lehi, his family, and Ishmael and his family left Jerusalem and migrated to a new promised land, a land that would be protected and shielded by God as long as its inhabitants followed God's commandments.

It is in the context of the Plates of Brass that we find some wording differences from the Jewish Bible (Tanakh) and the KJV, differences that provide clarity and simplicity. From these plates Lehi finds out that his family are descendants of Manasseh and that Ishmael's family were descendants of Ephraim. He also finds the prophecies of Joseph which clearly support the things that Nephi saw in his vision. The Plates of Brass also contained additional prophets not found in other sources: Zenos, Zenock, and Neum. Based on the material found on the Plates of Brass, the prophecies of these prophets are as important as Isaiah—all containing the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

First Nephi is the first book in the Book of Mormon. While the first-time reader may have difficulty with word usage and grammar, a detailed study will show that these follow traditional Hebrew linguistic forms. From the very first sentence it is clear that the book serves as a source of guidance and doctrine, giving us lessons and wisdom applicable to contemporary life. Additionally, it provides the reader with a 900-1,000 year historical and cultural approach similar to that of the Bible. It also provides the revelatory foundation upon which the Book of Mormon is based—a continuing symbol of personal revelation and of God's love for and attention to the needs of each person. It declares that all mankind will be judged by the precepts and commandments of the Book of Mormon. It is evidence that God remembers every creature he has created and every covenant he has made.

**And now I, Nephi, make an end, for I durst not speak further as yet concerning these things. Wherefore my brethren, I would that ye should consider that the things which have been written upon the plates of brass are true, and they testify that a man must be obedient to the commandments of God. Wherefore, ye need not suppose that I and my father are the only ones which have testified and also taught them. Wherefore, if ye shall be obedient to the commandments and endure to the end, ye shall be saved at the last day. And thus, it is. Amen (1 Nephi 7:65-70).**

May the Lord God show us his ways and teach us the path we should take in our walk with him. May we always be mindful that we were created in his image and that we were purchased by the sacrifice of his Only Begotten Son. Also, may we remember that His Spirit resides within each of us, making us holy beings. Finally, may the words of Nephi resonate within us as we become a people of one heart and one mind. †

## Nephi Preached Isaiah

Using the Plates of Brass and his own spiritual experiences, Nephi quotes extensively from Isaiah 48 and 49. Specifically, he lists three major points in Isaiah 48:

- Isaiah declares that Judah is in a state of apostasy, and that God will not credit God's work to their idols and images. Therefore, Judah will be refined in the furnace of affliction for the Lord's sake because of wickedness.
- Israel (also referred to as Ephraim) is called by the Lord to gather Judah again that she might be redeemed. This work is yet to be completed. If Judah had not sinned she would have received the blessings of Abraham and her righteous seed would be as numberless as the sand.
- Judah is called to go forth out of Babylon to be redeemed. This redemption will take place in the last days and will be done through Ephraim.

Nephi then lists thirteen major points from Isaiah 49:

- The scattering of Israel
- The nursing of Israel by the Gentiles
- The raising of a mighty nation (many believe this is the United States)
- The scattering of the Lamanites (those who do not follow the teachings of Moses, and Nephi, that is, those who do not accept Jesus as the Son of God and the savior of mankind)
- The restoring of the gospel
- The fulfilling the covenants made to the house of Israel
- The spiritual and temporal gathering of Israel
- The destruction of all who fight against Zion
- The destruction of the wicked
- The destruction of the great and abominable church (those who reject Christ)
- The preservation of the righteous
- The destruction of churches which belong to the church of the devil
- The establishment of the millennium

## Book Review

# The Hebrew Yeshua vs. the Greek Jesus by Nehemia Gordon

By Barbra Jordison

## The Author

The author of this book, a Karate Jew, is a gifted communicator and an expert in ancient texts. Because I was already familiar with his animated style of speaking by the time I read this book, it was all the more enjoyable. Because of his upbringing by an Orthodox Rabbi father, Nehemia has a unique understanding of Judaism which allows him to explain the pressures brought to bear in a culture dominated by rabbinical mandates. This book resulted when Christians sought his expertise to answer textual dilemmas in the English book of Matthew (as translated from Greek). Prior to this, Nehemia had no reason to read the words of Jesus (Yeshua, in Hebrew). His regard for Yeshua, even though he doesn't believe him to be Israel's Messiah, grew exponentially as he studied his words as recorded in the ancient Hebrew language.

## Purpose of the Book

The first thing Nehemia was asked to shed light on in Hebrew was Matthew 23:2-3 (KJV): "The scribes and the Pharisees sit in Moses' seat: All therefore whatsoever they bid you observe, that observe and do; but do not ye after their works: for they say, and do not." Yeshua seems to be saying that the Pharisees teach with the same authority as Moses and should therefore be listened to, but in the next verses he calls them hypocrites and says their actions should not be emulated. The question that needs to be answered? What in these verses is Jesus asking the people to do as regards the Pharisees?

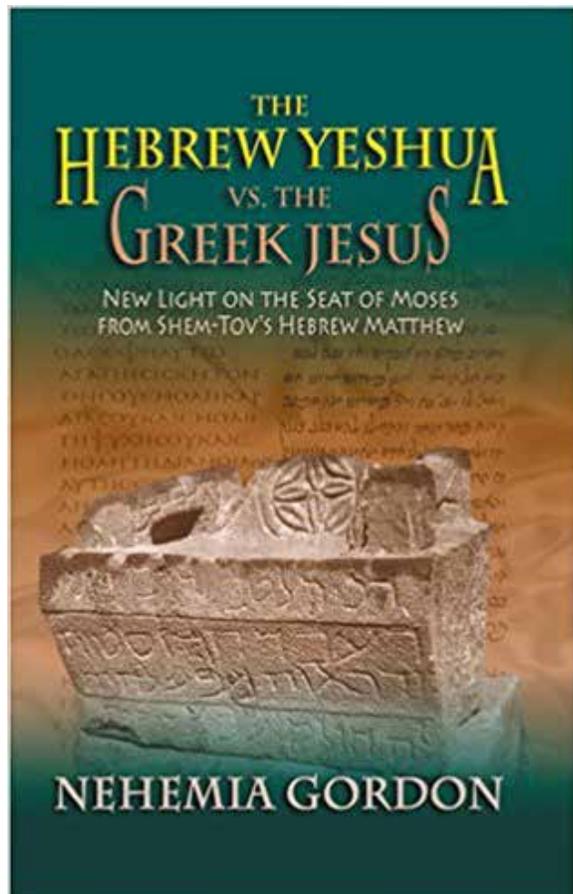
As Nehemia illustrates his search to answer questions important to Christians, he opens a window to not only the religious culture in Israel at

the time of Christ, but to the faith that Yeshua himself embraced. He demonstrates the impact the Pharisees' teachings had on the people at the time of Jesus and provides an articulate framework from which to evaluate many of our ancient scriptures. In the end he makes the case that Yeshua and his disciples were not accused of violating the Torah, but rather the 'tradition of the elders,' and that Yeshua's response to this was that it was the traditions of the elders that were transgressing the commands of God.

## Evaluation of the Book

In the course of addressing textual contradictions we find in English Matthew, Nehemia reveals modern Orthodox Rabbis are a continuation of the ancient Pharisees of Jesus' time and describes how Rabbis subscribe to five iniquities which undermine God-given laws with man-made laws and traditions that bury the truth of the teachings God intended to guide our focus to him.

As Nehemia engagingly shares how he unravels the meaning of Jesus' own words—things mistranslated and therefore lacking in clarity—you will see for yourself the value Yeshua placed in keeping the law of Moses (Torah). As Nehemia walks you through his process of extracting the fuller meaning of Yeshua's words, he simultaneously witnesses how powerfully clear the original Hebrew was in instructing the early



Christian believers in their choices—unknowingly revealing the challenge Restorationists will have in taking the gospel to Israelites practicing Orthodox Judaism today.

## Conclusion

The challenge in writing a brief review is that many lovely morsels must go unmentioned. Like a stone step that securely elevates a person for only a portion of their climb upward, this book is an easy read that will clarify more than the gospel of Matthew, but all Hebrew-based texts that make up our Holy Scriptures. Nehemia not only does a good job of remaining true to the questions asked of him, he engages the reader by illustrating his journey of discovery and granting insight into the culture, and the dilemmas of ancient and modern Israel. †

The Latter Day Saints' Beacon

# Reflections on Zephaniah

By Diener Göttes

Zephaniah was a contemporary of Jeremiah and Lehi and who prophesied during the reign of Josiah. He was not a major prophet and is often overlooked, but his message is as important as Isaiah, Daniel, Ezekiel, Nephi, and Moroni. Zephaniah understood that God's judgment was about to be imposed on Judah because of their gross idolatry and overall sin. Like his contemporaries, he prophesied across multiple ages and especially into the last days. What makes his prophecy interesting today is that he does not mince words: God is angry and because everyone (Judah and the Gentiles) is wicked and he vows to totally destroy the earth. The mention of man, beast, birds, and fish emphasizes how complete the destruction will be. (It should be noted that the order of destruction is opposite of creation, therefore making it possible for a new earth and a new heaven.)

The judgment on Judah was not only because of their idolatry but because they did not trust the words of the Lord for their safety. They established alliances with foreign powers, relied on their powerful army and fortified cities. Perhaps more symbolic to us was that they placed great value on their silver and gold. In addition, they were quick to go into other people's houses ("leap on the thresholds") to deceive and plunder in order to enrich their masters. In other words, Judah was rife with violence and injustice. Perhaps the cream on the top of their sins was their belief that God was not involved in human affairs—or as we would say in our times they were atheists and agnostics.

These sins required that God's justice be met just as described by Alma 19:92-110 (emphasis added):

*If it were not for the plan of redemption, (laying it aside,) as soon as they were dead, their souls were miserable, being cut off from the presence of the Lord. And now there was no means to reclaim men from this fallen state which man had brought upon himself, because of his own disobedience; Therefore, according to justice, the plan of redemption could not be brought about,*

*only, on conditions of repentance of men in this probationary state; yea, this preparatory state; for except it were for these conditions, mercy could not take effect except it should destroy the work of justice.*

*Now the work of justice could not be destroyed: if so God would cease to be God. And thus we see that all mankind were fallen, and they were in the grasp of justice; yea, the justice of God, which consigned them forever to be cut off from his presence. And now the plan of mercy could not be brought about, except an atonement should be made; therefore, God himself atoneth for the sins of the world, to bring about the plan of mercy, to appease the demands of justice, that God might be a perfect, just God, and a merciful God also.*

Now repentance could not come unto men, except there were a punishment, which also was as eternal as the life of the soul should be, affixed opposite to the plan of happiness, which was as eternal also as the life of the soul. Now, how could a man repent, except he should sin? How could he sin, if there was no law? How could there be a law, save there was a punishment?

Now there was a punishment affixed, and a just law given, which brought remorse of conscience unto man. Now if there was no law given, if a man murdered he should die, would he be afraid he should die if he should murder? And also, if there was no law given against sin, men would not be afraid to sin. And if there was no law given if men sinned, what could justice do, or mercy either: for they would have no claim upon the creature.

But there is a law given and a punishment affixed, and repentance granted; which repentance, mercy claimeth: otherwise, justice claimeth the creature, and executeth the law, and the law inflicteth the punishment; if not so, the works of justice would be destroyed, and God would cease to be God.

But God ceaseth not to be God, and mercy claimeth the penitent, and mercy

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a punishment?**

**Zephaniah addresses Judah without shame not only because of their sin but because they had become callused to the evil in their society—they forgot to love their neighbors as themselves.**

cometh because of the atonement; and the atonement bringeth to pass the resurrection of the dead: and the resurrection of the dead bringeth back men into the presence of God; And thus they are restored into his presence; to be judged according to their works; according to the law and justice; for behold, justice exerciseth all his demands, and also mercy claimeth all which is her own; and thus, none but the truly penitent are saved.

What, do ye suppose that mercy can rob justice? I say unto you, Nay; not one whit. If so, God would cease to be God. And thus, God bringeth about his great and eternal purposes, which were prepared from the foundation of the world. And thus cometh about the salvation and redemption of men, and also their destruction and misery; therefore, O my son, whosoever will come, may come, and partake of the waters of life freely; And whosoever will not come, the same is not compelled to come; but in the last day it shall be restored unto him, according to his deeds.

Relying on human strength, structures and resources are all worthless as protection from God’s wrath. There is no hiding from God when he comes in judgment because he will search (hunt) for the wicked and they will not be able to stand before him. Zephaniah addresses Judah without shame not only because of their sin but because they had become callused to the evil in their society—they forgot to love their neighbors as themselves. Repentance was the only option Judah had.

If Judah (and the Gentiles as represented by the listing of nations that surround Judah) repents and returns to the God who created them they will be “hidden” from the destroying angel and preserved from God’s wrath. Part of the judgment that was to be upon the Gentiles was because of their oppression to God’s elect.

Zephaniah saves his worst condemnation for the leaders of Judah: the princes, judges, false prophets and priests. These leaders have forsaken their intended function of preserving society for God, instead they are leading the people away from him. There is a complete lack of justice and the poor are neglected. Even though Zephaniah seems to be upset over the wickedness of

the people God tells him to wait because the “Day of the Lord” is soon coming at which time “all the earth” will be judged.

Why was Zephaniah so insistent to tell us of the Lord’s doing in “that day?” Perhaps he saw the people in his day and in ours as being the kind of people Paul described in 2 Timothy 3:1-7:

**This know also, that in the last days perilous times shall come. For men shall be lovers of their own selves, covetous, boasters, proud, blasphemers, disobedient to parents, unthankful, unholy, without natural affection, truce breakers, false accusers, incontinent, fierce, despisers of those that are good. Traitors, heady, high-minded, lovers of pleasures more than lovers of God; Having a form of godliness, but denying the power thereof; from such turn away. For of this sort are they which creep into houses, and lead captive silly women laden with sins, led away with divers lusts, Ever learning, and never able to come to the knowledge of the truth.**

When that “day” comes, God will bless those who turn to him; a day when God gives all those who turn to him a single pure language, perhaps the language all mankind used before the Tower of Babel. God will also bless the Jews and bring a remnant back to Jerusalem (“my holy mountain”). And there will be justice and peace in the land. There will be no shame in loving the Lord. This was the same thing promised in Joel 2:26-27.

Those who find salvation in these days will have certain characteristics. The most foundational trait is their humility, taking refuge in the name of the Lord, and will include those who are often overlooked and excluded from society. They will be committed to the Lord, seeking him in prayer, fasting and trusting his word. They will do no injustice, dishonest trading, robbing, murder, or oppression.

There can be no doubt that we live in the last days just as there can be no doubt that Zephaniah, like Lehi, Jeremiah, Isaiah and others saw our day. Yes, there is a call for each of us to repent and prepare for that great day which will soon come upon us as thief at night. We need to ensure that we have oil in our lamps and are cognizant of the signs of the times. May God bless us and keep us through the trials and tribulations to be unfolded. †

Pray for the peace of  
Jerusalem; they shall prosper  
that love thee (Psalm 122:6).

## Remembering Promises

### Preparing for the 2018 U.S. Conference

When the angel Moroni appeared to Joseph Smith Jr., the Lord began to reveal himself in new way in North America. God had plans for that great land which had been set apart to be a blessing to the faithful during the end of days. Believers were excited to participate in the work of proclaiming the gospel, sharing in the Book of Mormon's ongoing purpose, and the building up of a new Jerusalem. So fervent was the desire for that which was being revealed through Joseph Smith, that it drew people from across the oceans to "gather in" and to accept God's challenge to establish the conditions from which Zion could emerge.

The upcoming U.S. conference will call us to commit with God anew, to realize the spiritual condition and unity that will usher in Zion. In recent years we have heard strong messages from the Lord indicating his willingness to bless those who hear him. At this conference we will look at those messages, and at our status as covenant makers.

If you live in, or are visiting in the United States, we invite you to join us for the upcoming U.S. national conference (October 11-13, 2018), where we will share in classes, teaching, music and fellowship meant to stir us to remembrance of the covenants and promises we have made. †

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 Where Is the Church?  
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 Who Authored the Book of Mormon?  
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 Why Should I Read the Book of Mormon?  
 Working with Jesus  
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Call 816-252-1457, write, or visit 1100 West Truman Road, Independence, MO 64050 to order.

# Into All the World

## Randy Vick and Gary Whiting in Israel

**R**andy Vick and Gary Whiting, apostles, traveled to Israel from March 10, 2018 until March 18, 2018. The primary focus of the trip to the Holy Land was to offer prayers for the work of the gospel and the restoration of the house of Israel. There was a special emphasis on the Jews who now reside in Israel.

The trips to and from Israel were long airplane rides which included a stop in Amman, Jordan. On the flight from Chicago, Illinois, to Amman, Jordan, on Royal Jordanian Airlines, we experienced an interesting mystery. Our seat assignment was changed to accommodate a young mother with three or four children. Our new seats, on the left side of the cabin and a few rows behind first class, had three seats. The window seat was unoccupied, but the flight attendant assured us a woman would eventually sit there.

No one appeared before takeoff and after dinner was served, the seat remained empty. We were resting a good while after dinner when the flight attendant led a woman, dressed in traditional Muslim attire with a black head scarf, to take her place in our row. She sat down and went to sleep, leaving us to wonder how she arrived on the plane or where she had been. A couple hours before our landing in Jordan, a light meal was served. After the meal, the woman gathered her belongings and entered the forward lavatory. We never saw her again and we were left to speculate about who she was and where she was when not in her assigned seat.

The mystery was solved when we were told she was the mother of one of the pilots. She was in the cockpit area (we guess) with her son when she was not in the window seat. It was an interesting start to the trip.

The first night in Israel was spent in Tel Aviv. After prayer, we piled into our rental car and drove north along the coast. We stopped to see some sights along the way as we headed for Tiberias, a city on the southwest-

ern shore of the Sea of Galilee. Our trip included driving through Nazareth and Cana.

We spent two nights in Tiberias. That allowed us to travel to the very northern most part of Israel near Mt. Hermon. We drove into the northern Golan Heights, which are rugged and beautiful at the same time. This is near the area the Bible calls Caesarea Philippi. It gave us a perspective on the challenging terrain Jesus and his disciples would have traveled as they walked throughout Israel.

From Tiberias we visited Capernaum, which functioned as a base of operations for Jesus in the Galilee region. It is on the northern border of the Sea of Galilee. We also visited the area designated as Mount Beatitudes. Here Jesus is thought to have given the Sermon on the Mount. It overlooks the Sea of Galilee and the land gently slopes toward the water. At Mount Beatitudes we spent some time as far away from tourists as we could get and prayed together. This was the first of three major prayer times for us.

From Tiberias we drove south toward Jerusalem. We were prohibited from driving in the West Bank territories by our car rental agreement and had to swing to the west as we drove south. This allowed us to stop at Megiddo. This site was a place of strategic importance because it sat on a hill presiding over a vast plain known in prophecy as Armageddon.

Finding Jerusalem was easy. Driving to Jerusalem was no more difficult than reaching any U.S. city today. Driving in Jerusalem was more difficult. It is an old city with curving, narrow roads. Road signs are marked in Hebrew, Arabic and English, but we found them difficult to discern when navigating. After some challenging moments, we found our hostel and parked the car for the next four days.

We walked into the Old City of Jerusalem on our first day. This allowed us to spend time at the Western or Wailing Wall. Randy and Gary found separate locations



**Left: One of the boats used to allow pilgrims to Israel to spend time on the Sea of Galilee. This boat was preparing to dock at sunset in Tiberias, Israel. The hills of the Golan are seen in the background.**



**Right: This is a grove of olive trees standing by a gas station outside of Nazareth, Israel.**

As the mountains are round about Jerusalem, so the Lord is round about his people from henceforth even forever (Psalm 125:2).



Gary Whiting at the Western Wall (taken by Randy Vick). Note the paper wedged into the space between the stones. These are prayers written by visitors to the wall. It is a long-standing practice.



Apostle Randy Vick (black shirt and blue jeans) is praying at the Western Wall in Jerusalem.

and prayed fervently for several minutes. Our prayers were offered in the midst of several Bar Mitzvahs, hundreds of Jews praying and studying the Torah.

After the Western Wall, we walked outside the walls past the Temple Mount and to the Garden of Gethsemane. We met a Palestinian taxi driver who arranged for us to go to Bethlehem. We saw the churches over the traditional site of Jesus's birth.

The next day, we walked toward the Garden of Gethsemane at the foot of the Mount of Olives. This was the day we planned for our formal time of prayer on the Mount of Olives. We consented to the offer of another taxi driver who drove us to the top of the Mount of Olives. We had an interesting conversation with this man who was a Palestinian who said he had become a Christian many years earlier. As he gave us an informal tour, we talked about Jesus and Israel.

The driver knew about Orson Hyde and he took us to the entrance of the memorial park dedicated to the Apostle by the Mormon church years earlier. We were alone in the park and found a place to pray. This is the time of prayer both of us had felt led to have for some time prior to this journey.

We both believed it was important for us to voice to God our acknowledgment of God's promises, to recognize the faithful prayer of our brother Orson Hyde on October 24, 1841 and to ask the Lord to remember all of his covenants to the house of Israel. We had complete peace during the prayer time and sensed the Lord's Spirit while we prayed.

After the prayers we walked back to our room. That evening, a Friday, we attended a dinner to welcome the Shabbat or sabbath. We celebrated with the host, a Brazilian Jew now living in Jerusalem, three people from Germany, two from Ukraine, two from the Czech Republic and two Americans from Tennessee. It was a won-

derful time and we experienced a little of the Sabbath experience of the Jews in Israel.

Our last full day in Jerusalem and Israel, we walked to worship with a Messianic congregation in Jerusalem. We enjoyed the service and were welcomed by the members there. It was an English language congregation and was not significantly dissimilar to services in some American churches.

The sabbath afternoon was sunny and warm, our hostel had a rooftop patio with plenty of shade and fresh air. Randy and I went up there to get a drink from the kitchen and sat at a table with an elderly woman with whom we would talk for about two hours. She was a native born Jew who was visiting family in Jerusalem. Her family had been in Israel since 1925 and she had served as a paratrooper in the 1967 war. The conversation turned to God who she said she did not believe in. Her heart is burdened by the Holocaust which claimed the lives of most of her family members in Holland and she cannot understand how God could allow it. She is proud to be a Jew in Israel but is very distressed by the constant threat of war and fears for the safety of her children and grandchildren if war comes again.

We spoke with her quite a while and she agreed to read the Book of Mormon if it was written in Hebrew. Randy gave her a Hebrew copy. Our conversation eventually involved a very kind and intelligent Dutch Christian who contributed immensely to the conversation and a Canadian man we had met at the hostel on our first day who said he would read the Book of Mormon online. It was a lovely day and God blessed us with a profitable conversation to close out our trip.

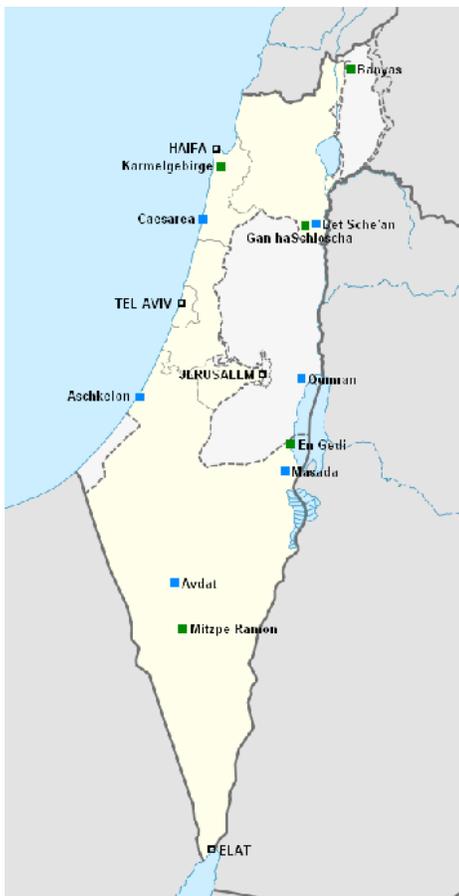
Our return to the United States came too quickly, but the schedule and our tickets demanded our departure. The return flights were uneventful. We continue to pray for and anticipate the breaking forth of God's work in the Holy Land and among all of the House of Israel. †

**If I forget thee,  
O Jerusalem,  
let my  
right hand  
forget  
its cunning  
(Psalm 137:5).**



The arch is part of the restoration work being performed at the crusader fort in Caesarea by the Sea. It is built on the shore of the Mediterranean Sea.

# Jots and Tittles



## Israel's Population 11 Times Larger than at Inception

<https://www.ynetnews.com/articles/0,7340,L-5234986,00.html>

Seventy years after its inception, the State of Israel has 8,842,000 residents—almost 11 times as many as it had at the time of its establishment, according to the Israel Central Bureau of Statistics (CBS).

Out of those 8,842,000 residents, the data shows some 6,589,000 residents (74.5% of the total population) are Jews, while approximately 1,849,000 residents (20.9%) are Arab. There are only 404,000 people (4.6%) residing in Israel who are neither Jewish nor Arab.

The data show that since last year's Independence Day, the population of Israel has grown by approximately 163,000, an increase of 1.9%. During this period, about 177,000 babies were born in Israel, some 41,000 people died, and 27,000 immigrants arrived in the state. The Central Bureau of Statistics said that the rate of population growth during the first decade of the state was more than 8% per year on average, but in the 1980s the growth rate dropped to 2%, where it plateaued.

## Yom Ha'atzmaut: Independence Day in Israel

David Ben-Gurion, who was the first prime minister of Israel, publicly read the Declaration of Independence of Israel on May 14, 1948. According to the Jewish calendar, this was the fifth day of Iyar, the eighth month of the civil year, in the year 5708. The anniversary of this date on the Jewish calendar is known as Yom Ha'atzmaut and usually falls in April or May of the Gregorian calendar.

Israel's Independence Day is not celebrated by everyone. Some Jewish groups feel that the creation of the state of Israel was undesirable or even a sin. They may display a black flag and wear mourning clothes on Yom Ha'atzmaut. In addition, many Arabs feel that the day, which they call al-Nakba, the disaster, represents a loss of national identity that they suffered when the state of Israel was created.

The idea of a modern state of Israel dates back to the ideas of Theodor Herzl, a Jewish man born on May 2, 1860, in Pest, now part of Budapest, Hungary. He cam-

paigned for a Jewish state in the Middle East and was instrumental in setting up the Zionist Organization and organizing the First Zionist Congress held in Basel, Switzerland, in August 1897. Herzl died on July 3, 1904.

Following the horrendous atrocities committed against Jewish people and culture in Europe in the run up to and during World War II, there were further calls for a Jewish state to be created. On May 14, 1948, David Ben Gurion, the first prime minister of Israel publicly read the Declaration of Independence of Israel. This event is commemorated each year on Israel's Independence Day, also known as Yom Ha'atzmaut. The day before Yom Ha'atzmaut is Yom Hazikaron. This is a solemn occasion and a day of remembrance and is officially known as "Israel's Day of Remembrance for Fallen Soldiers and Victims of Terrorism."

Yom Ha'atzmaut 2018, Thursday, April 19, 2018  
Yom Ha'atzmaut 2019, Thursday, May 9, 2019

The Lord's Prayer is addressed to our heavenly Father. The key emphasis here is on the love of God. The prayer continues, "Hallowed be thy name." Here the key emphasis is on the holiness of God. Each demands the other for completion.

The word "hallow" is of Old English origin. It comes from an Anglo-Saxon root, *halig*, meaning revered or honored. It includes adoration and praise but goes much deeper. We cannot hallow the name of God except as we walk in holiness before him (F. Henry Edwards, *Meditation & Prayer* (Independence, Missouri: Herald Publishing House, 1980), p. 141).

There are many partial truths.  
Jesus is the truth,  
the whole truth.  
—Richard Wurmbrand

Be civil to all; sociable to many;  
familiar with few; friend to one;  
enemy to none.

—Benjamin Franklin

Seekers after truth must take heed to two warnings. One given by Tertullian: "Christ did not call himself the custom but the truth." The multitude worship custom. The Christian will find himself with the minority or even alone. The second warning was given by Emerson, and it derives from the first: "God offers to every man the choice between truth and repose. You cannot have them both." —Richard Wurmbrand

Be at war with your vices, at peace with your neighbors, and let every new year find you a better man.  
—Benjamin Franklin

## Country Pearls

Country fences need to be horse high, pig tight and bull strong.

Life is not about how fast you run, or how high you climb, but how well you bounce.

Mortgaging a future crop is saddling a wobbly colt.

A bumblebee is faster than a John Deere tractor.

Words that soak into your ears are whispered, not yelled.

Meanness don't happen overnight.

To know how country folks are doing, look at their barns, not their houses.

Never lay an angry hand on a kid or an animal, it just ain't helpful.

Forgive your enemies. It messes with their heads.

On page 165 from the book, *On Memory's Beam*, Elbert Smith writes of comment made by Joseph Smith, III. Seems that Joseph Smith III may have been ahead of his time and that he saw the potential downside of using email.

In response to a question by a Brother Crumley, "Have you any parting words of counsel to give us?"

Joseph answers: "Yes. In your ministry always be sure of your evidences. Never preach anything that you do not absolutely believe to be true. And never write to a friend anything that would do harm or injury to another if your letter were to fall into the hands of a third party."

When through fiery trials  
thy pathway shall lie,  
His grace all-sufficient  
shall be thy supply.  
The flame shall not  
hurt thee, his only design  
Thy dross to consume  
and thy gold to refine.

# 2000 Strong Adventure Camp

## July 2018

By Chris Taylor

Have you ever been sitting around with a group of friends and all of a sudden it is as if everyone comes up with the same idea at the same time? Well, that's kind of how 2000 Strong Youth Camp got started.

If memory serves me correctly, it was in the winter of 2005, and several of us were having one of Carolyn Greene's (Brother Fred's wife) fine spaghetti dinners after church one Sunday. Our conversation had gone from our desire for our youth to know more about the Book of Mormon to lamenting the fact that there were no Restoration youth camps in the North Texas area. And then it was like, we should just start one ourselves. It immediately dawned on all of us at the dinner table that collectively we certainly had the experience and wherewithal to make that happen—after all, among the nine of us we had been at various times camp directors, pastors, cabin counselors, class instructors, branch presidents, district presidents, etc.—you name it, and it seemed like we had done it. A wow moment indeed! Eventually we were operating as a 501(c)3 non-profit tax-exempt entity and, as they say, the rest is history.

So, on this past July 4, the 12th annual 2000 Strong Adventure Camp began near Anna, Texas,



on the four hundred acres of prime Texas real estate that we have come to regard as sacred grounds. As camp pastor, Patriarch Fred Greene again this year provided our camp theme (“We are made alive in Christ, because of our faith”). He also

prepared daily themes, camp devotions, and taught the Junior/Junior High Book of Mormon class. Seventy Gary Metzger taught the Senior Highs, Apostles Gary Whiting and Patrick McKay taught the Young Adults, and Patriarch Ron Smith taught the Adult Class. All the classes were designed to cover the daily themes and other vital concepts in the Book of Mormon.

I truly believe that the camp is successful because the Lord is involved with the work. We pray all year for the camp—that the Lord will bless our efforts, help us raise money, send us those that he wants to be there, protect those who travel, and guide and direct our efforts. We ask him to grant us humility in our preparation, keep contention and issues that might divide us away from the camp, help us treat each other and all campers with respect and dignity, help us have a lot of fun in our activities, stay focused on all of us doing our devotions every night, and help us prepare and expect his presence at the commitment service on Sunday morning,



which concludes the camp. We have said two things from day one: 1) that if just one person benefits and is blessed, then it was worth it; and 2) if it all ends today, it was also worth it, because it's been a joyful and incredible spiritual journey.

Our formula for a successful camp is really quite simple: obey the rules (be where you are supposed to be when you're supposed to be there), have a lot of fun, make friends and renew former friendships, treat everyone right, and prepare for and anticipate the Lord's presence at the camp and especially at the Sunday commitment service. We have also adapted along the way. One of the realities of most church camps (and churches, for that matter) is that once their youth graduate high school, they don't come back and we lose them. We (I should say the Lord) found a remedy for that—we added a Young Adult component to the camp; they have their own pod of cabins with their own classes. So, college-age kids come to camp, too. Another sad reality is that when young adults get married and start having families, we begin to lose them, too. The Lord also fixed that; we added a Family component to the camp, and they, too, have their own cabins and classes. We all eat together and have campfire together, and it's still primarily a youth camp. Well, maybe a hybrid of sorts. Kind of like the relatives who come to visit and never leave. Except in this case we do not want them to. Like the Lord, we don't really want to lose anyone just because they get older and/or start a family. And the good news is, they usually want to come back just as much as we want them to come back. That's because the love of God serves as an umbrella over the whole experience, and everyone who comes knows there is something different here than out there in the world – something special.

What started out as musings over a wonderful Sunday spaghetti dinner has turned into something only the Lord could pull off. Over the course of twelve years of 2000 Strong Camps now, I am amazed and humbled when I consider the following: around fifteen hundred young people have dedicated their lives to Christ at our Sunday morning commitment services; there have been six baptisms at camp and many more after returning home from camp; there have been over two hundred hours of Book of Mormon classes taught; almost a hundred hours of campfire; over a thousand camp logs published and distributed; hundreds of Book of Mormons, Bibles, and prayer journals given away; and almost \$10,000 in camp scholarships awarded. Our God is indeed an awesome God!

As co-director (along with Elder Jerry Skotak) for the past twelve years, I can honestly say that the 2000 Strong Camp has been one of the most fulfilling and exhilarating experiences of my life. Other than a few remarks during the opening night's camp orientation, my job is to serve the camp in whatever way I can and try to stay the heck out of everybody's way! I guess in a way it's like a coach preparing his team for a football game—once the game starts, let the players play. I cannot express in words how absolutely wonderful it is to see months of everyone's hard work and preparation come together for five action-packed and spirit-filled days in July every year. We constantly see the Lord's hand at work. For example, I was handed an envelope with a check in it the day before camp started, and it was that donation that allowed three young boys to attend camp for the first time who otherwise might not have been able to.

The strong bonds and friendships that have been forged over the years are truly wonderful. When long-time camper Matt Fox graduated from college a couple of years ago, several of his camp friends drove several hours in order to attend his graduation; and one even flew in from Missouri.

Camp begins each day with flag-raising (and the Pledge of Allegiance and prayer), breakfast, morning activity (canoeing, kayaking, fishing,

## 2000 Strong Camp Youth Testimonies

*Sydney Darrah, high school junior and junior cabin counselor:* "It was so much fun! I love being a cabin counselor. The girls in my cabin were really special. It was great to see them having so much fun. They liked all the activities, especially fishing and going to the pool. And they loved doing the Banana Song at the Talent Show. But most of all I was really impressed with how they would volunteer to read Scripture during nightly devotions."

*Nikki LeDoux, college senior and junior cabin counselor:* "I was really impressed with how into it the girls in my cabin were when it came to doing the devotions at night. And they all want to get baptized—that is so great! They loved the spiritual aspect of camp and all want to come back. They said they couldn't believe how so many people have so much to offer."

*Piper LeDoux, college junior and junior cabin counselor:* "I had a very challenging year and can easily get bogged down with things that bother me and give me anxiety. But during the commitment service I just sort of was led to say that life seems a lot like driving a car—if you look in the rearview mirror all the time you can't focus on where you're going. The front windshield is so much larger than your rearview mirror—it's good to glance at the rearview mirror from time to time but in order to move forward we need to look straight ahead at Jesus."



The title for the Junior High Class was, “The Book of Mormon helps us to become alive in Christ because of our faith.” Instructors were Fred Greene, Sheila Greene Morris and (not pictured) Rex Marchant.



Under Gary Metzger’s instruction, the Senior High Class studied God’s faithfulness and his covenants to us in baptism and marriage while exploring our desire to be a part of the fullness of the Gospel contained in the Book of Mormon—the completion of God’s covenants.



The Young Adult Class, led by instructors Gary Whiting and Patrick McKay (not pictured), explored the scriptural perspective of becoming alive in Christ, the power of the atonement as described in the Book of Mormon, and Abinadi in the Book of Mosiah.

wall-climbing, archery, zipline, or arts and crafts), Book of Mormon class for all ages in their respective classrooms, lunch, rest period, second round of Book of Mormon classes, afternoon activity (tether ball, sand volleyball, games), swimming, free time, dinner, evening activity, campfire with s’mores, cabin devotions, lights out, and then get ready to do it all over again the next day! We have a DJ come one night and we provide free snow cones, and there’s a talent show another night. We usually have a football or kickball game one day that involves everyone. On the last night the camp log is presented, we show a camp video, and we provide ice cream while campers and staff sign each other’s logs.

During the opening night’s campfire talk, Brother Butch Eskridge said that when we prepare, when we anticipate, and when we expect, the Lord will bless our efforts with his presence. At that same campfire, Brother Phillip Jones reminded us that Abraham was a friend of God, and what a wonderful thing it is to be a friend of God. He told the campers that the Scriptures reveal that a true friend would lay down his life for his friends, which of course is what Jesus did for each of us. So, making new friends and renewing old friendships is a high calling indeed. Brother Fred Greene told the campers that yes, camp is all about having fun, making friends, and learning about the Book of Mormon. But more than anything, Fred said—way more than anything else—camp is about meeting Jesus; and if we wanted to meet Jesus at camp, Jesus would be there to meet us, and he encouraged each of us to meet Jesus there.

Sunday morning came, and it was time for our commitment service, where the youth and the staff are encouraged to offer their prayers and testimonies of how the Lord had worked in their lives at camp. The power of God’s Spirit was in great abundance as camper after camper poured their hearts out in prayer and testimony of God’s love. There were several prayers of administration given, and several young people made the decision to be baptized. I was able to express my fervent desire that in the ensuing months we will all do those things that will nurture God’s Spirit within us and we will continue to seek a greater relationship with and reliance upon Jesus Christ until we meet again, hopefully next summer beginning Wednesday, July 3rd, 2019. Hope to see you there! †

## Bishop's Corner

# Are You Being Fruitful or Getting Gain?

By B.A. Stuart

In the seventh chapter of 1 Nephi, events of the last days are addressed, touching upon an important element that differentiates righteous and unrighteous behavior. This element is the principle of “getting gain,” an important concept in the theology of stewardship.

**But it is the kingdom of the devil which shall be built up among the children of men, which kingdom is established among them which are in the flesh: For the time speedily shall come, that all churches which are built up to get gain, and all those who are built up to get power over the flesh, and those who are built up to become popular in the eyes of the world, and those who seek the lusts of the flesh and the things of the world, and to do all manner of iniquity (1 Nephi 7:49-50).**

Using logic and human reasoning, “getting gain” may be understood to be consistent with the principle of creating and consecration of surplus. In scripture, the concept described in 1 Nephi 7:49-50 as “getting gain” is a very specific idea focusing on accumulating wealth, power or position for self-advancement. In this context “getting gain” is often accomplished through political maneuvering, theft, murder and lying. It is life limiting and, in many cases, life destroying.

In Genesis, Cain and his descendants became involved in secret combinations or relationships through the influence of Satan to get gain (Genesis 5:16 IV). Cain is said to have murdered his brother Abel to get gain (Genesis 5:36 IV). The same theme is presented in the experience of the Jaredites and Nephite/Lamanite civilizations in the Book of Mormon. In Ezekiel it is referred to as dishonest gain (Ezekiel 22:13, 27).

Paul describes a man in Acts 16:16 who had much gain through soothsaying (the practice of pretending to predict future events) by using a woman possessed by an evil spirit.

Nephi described the sin of priestcraft in 2 Nephi 11:106-109 when a person sets himself/herself as a light to others, i.e., a person of wisdom and importance and does it only for what he/she can gain for his or her own benefit. There is no regard for others; the motivation is purely selfish. Nephi specifically uses the term “to get gain” when writing about this subject (2 Nephi 11:106).

## Fruitfulness

When God created life on the earth, he gave the same basic instruction to all living things,

**And I, God, saw that all things which I had created were good; and I, God, blessed them, saying, Be fruitful, and multiply, and fill the waters in the sea, and let fowl multiply in the earth. And the evening and the morning were the fifth day (Genesis 1:24).**

A little later, the record describes the plan of God to create man (male and female). It is written:

**And I, God, created man in mine own image, in the image of mine Only Begotten created I him; male and female created I them. And I, God, blessed them and said unto them, Be fruitful, and multiply, and replenish the earth, and subdue it; and have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over every living thing that moveth upon the earth (Genesis 1:29-30).**

The commandment to be fruitful reflects the design of the Creator. It is written that the grasses, herbs and trees were created with the ability

and purpose to produce seeds or to be fruitful. It is a design which anticipates a future, growth and multiplication. This established the principle of life arising out of life which we now observe in the world. Our experience also testifies that God has created all things to bring forth fruit/seeds abundantly.

The grasses produce many more seeds than are needed to replace the plant from which they arose. A single piece of fruit or a vegetable often has many, many seeds within it. Even the fruits with a single seed inside, such as a peach or avocado, is but one of many fruits from the mother plant. There is an abundance in fruitfulness.

Some animals reproduce by producing multiple offspring at a time, like a litter of puppies. Many others have single births, but they have multiple births. Humans usually have single births, but have the capacity to create many children.

Fruitfulness is, therefore, a designed aspect of God's creation and reflects the character of our God. The blessing of God and the instruction to be fruitful and to multiply empowers and releases the ability to fulfill the will of God.

The Lord's commandment to man (male and female) went beyond fruitfulness and multiplication (reproduction). It included the commandment to subdue the earth and to have dominion over all living things. This means that our fruitfulness does not lie in the instinctual response of the creature to the nature God provided, as is the case with rabbits and mice. It means that God has given to man (male and female) a stewardship in which man chooses and works according to the instruction of God and is responsible to God for his/her choices. Our fruitfulness is not simply measured in the

number of our offspring, but also in the work we perform as stewards of the living and true God.

In the case of an apple tree, the tree has no inherent decision-making to do. The tree simply acts in agreement to the Creator's design. It does not worry about how to move the sap from the roots to the leaves or how to regulate the photosynthesis process. The apple tree can only do the thing for which it was created, in the way it was designed to do it, and can only make apples.

Man is different. As a steward he may determine how he will be fruitful, where he will be fruitful and what fruit he will bear. He is also capable of saying, "I refuse to be fruitful." This is inherent in the command to subdue the earth and to have dominion over the rest of the living things on the earth. The stewardship and agency of man (male and female) becomes very clear in Genesis 7:39-40 where the Lord explains the gift of agency.

It is important to note the order of the commandments to man (male and female). First was "be fruitful and multiply," followed by "subdue and have dominion." It shows that the responsibility of subduing the earth and having dominion over all living things should be performed within the overall context of being fruitful and multiplying.

So far it has been shown that fruitfulness is the intent of God in creation. God creates abundantly and his intent was to fill the earth with life by creatures and humanity. Hence, in the case of man (male and female) we find also the command to replenish the earth (fill it) as part of the "be fruitful and multiply" edict.

What else can we say about fruitfulness? By observation of the world around us it is plain that life promotion is a part of fruitfulness and not life destruction. This is seen in the seed-bearing property of life which is designed not simply to preserve life, but to promote and encourage more life.

Moreover, fruit is accessible, not hidden. Apples and oranges grow on the limbs of trees where they can

easily be picked by man and can be reached by birds and insects that use them for food. Even plants that bear fruit in the ground—for example, potatoes and peanuts—bear their fruit close to the surface not deep in the earth.

Fruitfulness promotes life and abundance. It is accessible to those who need it and this may be referred to as generosity (accessible abundance). It reflects the character of our God and its manifestation in creation is in obedience to his design and will for creation.

## The Contrast

As stewards, it is important for the Saints to understand the difference between fruitfulness and getting gain. Fruitfulness follows the design of God for the life of the world. Life is abundantly fruitful. In the plant kingdom, the various varieties of trees, plants and grasses produce a lot of fruit. There is more than the quantity needed to maintain the species. The abundance of fruit is useful as food to animals, birds and humans. This fruit is accessible, or in other words, it can be easily obtained.

The riches obtained by getting gain may be abundant, but they are obtained by making another suffer unequal loss. The description of the Lamanite practices tells the story:

**[The Lamanites were] a wild, and a hardened, and a ferocious people; a people who delighted in murdering the Nephites, and robbing, and plundering them; And their hearts were set upon**

**riches, or upon gold, and silver, and precious stones; Yet they sought to obtain these things by murdering and plundering, that they might not labor for them with their own hands: Thus they were a very indolent people (Alma 12:22b-25a).**

Getting gain is the accumulation of wealth for personal advancement without regard for others. It is selfish rather than generous. It sometimes is manifest by the forceful redistribution of wealth into the treasuries of one or a select few (for example, King Noah and his priests). It destroys fruitfulness by making the fruit of others' labor unavailable to the laborers or to their neighbors. Nephi plainly shows readers of the Book of Mormon that this practice is associated with and inspired by the kingdom of the devil (1 Nephi 7:49-50).

The concept of fruitfulness is the blessing of the Lord for those who live according to his will and design. In 4 Nephi 1:21 it is written that the Lord blessed and prospered his people while they lived in fellowship with God and one other. In Zion (Genesis 7:23) and in 4 Nephi, there was no poor among them because they freely shared their fruitfulness with one another—their substance was common among them. The falling away happened when the spirit of getting gain entered into the hearts of the people and economic classes were resumed (4 Nephi 1:27-28).

Zion will be inhabited by those who are fruitful in their labors, ministry and love. It cannot be accomplished in any other way. †

**But it is the kingdom of the devil which shall be built up among the children of men, which kingdom is established among them which are in the flesh:**

**For the time speedily shall come, that all churches which are built up to get gain, and all those who are built up to get power over the flesh, and those who are built up to become popular in the eyes of the world, and those who seek the lusts of the flesh and the things of the world, and to do all manner of iniquity;**

**Yea, in fine, all those who belong to the kingdom of the devil, are they who need fear, and tremble, and quake (1 Nephi 7:49-51).**

## Restoration Women's Ministry

## Born of Goodly Parents

By Debbie Newman

**I, Nephi, having been born of goodly parents, therefore I was taught somewhat in all the learning of my father (1 Nephi 1:1).**

As women, and many of us are mothers, we understand that a good foundation laid for children is most important for a person to grow into a follower of Christ. Nephi of old knew this and declared his good foundation in his opening statement in the first chapter of 1 Nephi. His complete writings also testify that indeed he was given the understanding and teaching needed for a person seeking to please God and to follow in His ways.

What does it mean to be a “goodly parent?” Each one of us may have our own understanding of this. I will be speaking from my own experiences and my observations of parents I have admired through the years.

Proverbs 22:6 admonishes parents to “train up a child in the way he should go; and when he is old, he [the child] will not depart from it [the training].” However, I believe the translation of this verse was recorded incorrectly for the reason that everyone has the opportunity and responsibility to make their own decisions, with training or without it.

To say a child will not depart from the training sounds like a guarantee that if we train our children in the way they should go, then the child will not depart or stray from the training. I believe the scripture more correctly should read, “train up a child in the way he should go; and when he is old, it [the training] will not depart from him [the child].” As we teach and prepare our children in the ways of the Lord, instructing both in words and by example of our life lived for God, doing this *will* provide the foundation for them mak-

ing wise decisions as they grow and mature. With this understanding, we can say that a ‘goodly’ parent is a ‘godly’ parent.

Nephi gives us a clue, I believe, of what it is to be ‘born of goodly parents.’ Immediately after that statement he says, “Therefore I was taught somewhat in all the learning of my father.” That word ‘therefore’ means that because his parents were ‘goodly,’ they taught him in *all* the learning of his father. Lehi was a godly person, so he would want to teach his children the good ways of the Lord in all things concerning their life. While Sariah, Lehi’s wife, is not directly mentioned in this scripture, we do know that she was supportive of her husband when he directed the family to prepare and leave Jerusalem. She was also an influence on her children to follow the Lord’s direction. It is Lehi and Sariah’s responses to God’s directions in their life, I believe, that made them “goodly parents.” Because Lehi, Sariah and Nephi chose the ways of the Lord above all other responses, they made a difference for many generations after them, even for all mankind.

From my observations: I have had the privilege of knowing and associating with Saints I admire and hold in high regard. Why do I admire them? Because I have witness that they live in a way that exhibits a Christian walk and that they teach their children to develop a relationship with Christ and to walk obedient to God. I would say that these children “have been born of goodly parents.” They have trained up their children in the way they should go.

From my personal life: I am the ninth child of eight girls and one boy. My parents raised me in the Reorganized Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints. They taught me with discipline in both the knowledge of being a good person and citizen and also being a person God would be pleased with. During my young growing years, my mother was the girls’ leader in our branch at Olathe, Kansas. She also was a leader in organizing the youth camping program in the Kaw Valley District. I had many opportunities to grow in knowledge and in the Spirit through these avenues. My parents were regular attenders in our branch in all the activities of the branch. They also sought ways of supporting one another outside of our regular church functions. They taught me to be a responsible follower of Christ by example as well as words. They were not perfect, yet they taught me and provided avenues for me to grow in both my knowledge and spiritual understanding. I believe they were goodly parents.

The scriptures are full of examples of others that have exhibited a “goodly parent” response. I am sure you can name many in your life that you have observed as such. It would be wise for us as women (no matter our age—with children or not) to make an effort to implement characteristics that will promote such goodly parent responses in us. Let us become women of godly character, that our learning may be the quality of a “goodly parent,” as Nephi was expressing, that will make a difference in our children, and children for many generations after us.

As for me, I can declare with Nephi, that I, Debbie, having been born of goodly parents ... †

## Cornelius the Centurion

By Genie Simmons

**C**ornelius was a Roman who lived in Caesarea. He was a centurion. That means that he was leader to one hundred Roman soldiers, kind of like a captain or a major. He had power in Roman society. He also was a just man. He observed the Jewish holidays and believed in the Jewish God. He also gave to the poor, fasted and prayed often.

One day he was praying in the ninth hour, about nine o'clock, when an angel appeared before him. "What is it, Lord?" he asked.

"God knows of your prayers and alms for the poor. Now send men to Joppa and ask for Simon the tanner. He has a guest at his house, called Simon, surnamed Peter. Bring Peter here and he will teach you more about God."

Cornelius did as the angel commanded. He sent his two most trustworthy servants and a soldier to find Simon's house and Peter. They left the next day.

That day in Joppa, about the sixth hour, Peter was praying on the rooftop. He was very hungry and would have eaten except it was not ready yet. He fell into a trance. While in the trance, he saw the heavens open and a container with all sorts of four-footed animals in it. A voice said, "Kill and eat." Peter replied, "No, Lord. I have never eaten any common or unclean animal." The voice answered, "Do not call dirty what the Lord has cleaned." This experience was repeated three times. Peter did not know what to think.

While Peter was trying to understand what the Lord was telling him, there was a knock at the gate. It was the three men Cornelius sent. They were looking for the guest of Simon



the tanner, Simon surnamed Peter. "I am the one you seek." Peter said. The three men explained the mission Cornelius had asked of them. Cornelius wanted to hear the gospel Peter would teach him. Then Peter understood his experience. God is no respecter of persons. He invited the three men to come into the house and stay the night.

The next morning Peter, a few friends and the servants of Cornelius left for Caesarea. At Cornelius' house, there were family and close friends waiting for them. When Peter entered in the doorway, Cornelius bowed down and worshipped Peter.

"I am a man just like you," Peter began. "It is against the law for Jew to visit and be friendly with someone from another country. God has shown me that I should not call any person common or unclean. Why have you sent for me?" Cornelius explained his angelic visit and how he came to send for Peter.

"I see that God is no respecter of persons. He accepts all who choose him." Peter spent three days teach-

ing these people the ways of Jesus. He explained about baptism, and many were baptized. It was a wonderful three days.

Cornelius' story does not end here. When Peter returned to Joppa, he was summoned to Jerusalem. The church leaders had heard that Peter had gone to teach the Gentiles. The people in Caesarea were Gentiles, not Jews. The leaders did not believe that the teachings of Jesus were for the Gentiles. Peter explained his vision which came three times and the experience of Cornelius.

"When I got to Cornelius' house, the Spirit of the Lord fell on me and I knew that they in the house believed. How could I refuse them?" Peter explained. After the experience with Cornelius, the gospel of Jesus Christ went to Gentiles, wherever they lived. Many were baptized into the kingdom and they supported the church and the teachings of Jesus. The Jewish church became God's church.

Read the full story in Acts chapters 10 and 11. †

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## Kaye Starr Singers Coming to the Center Place

**Voices from the Dust:  
A Musical Testimony  
of the Book of Mormon**

**T**he Kaye Starr Singers, from the Wasatch Front (Utah, USA), are directed by composer Kaye Starr Heninger. The choir's mission is to assist in flooding the earth with The Book of Mormon.

On Saturday, Oct. 13, 2018, at 7:00 pm, the Kaye Starr Singers will be performing at the Stone Church in Independence, Missouri.

This musical program contains narrative and music, introducing some of the great themes and characters from the Book of Mormon. The program is alive with vibrant teachings that address modern-day issues, and features songs like "We Talk of Christ," "I'll Give Away My Sins," "Oh That I Were an Angel," "Song of Redeeming Love" and "I Will Go!"

Members in the choir declare "there is a power in the Book of Mormon that brings us all closer together and prepares our hearts and minds for the Savior's return. What a sacred trust and responsibility the Lord has placed upon us within the Restoration Family, not only to minister to one another in love and faith and humility, but to share our testimonies to all the world." †