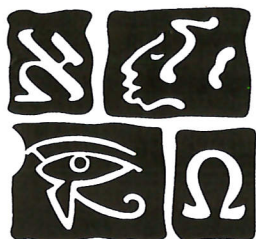




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The Book of Mormon: A Pattern in Preparing a People to Meet Christ

Summary:

Dale LeBaron counsels us to draw on the power of the Book of Mormon and the words of Christ's representatives to discover the Lord's pattern for preparing for the second coming. This preparation entails knowing the signs of the second coming, knowing the patterns of destruction, believing that despite persecution righteousness will prevail, heeding the counsels of the prophets, and studying the ministry of Christ and the teachings about his return.

Transcript
Book of Mormon, Teachings

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The Book of Mormon:

A Pattern in Preparing a People to Meet Christ

E. Dale LeBaron

I appreciate the privilege of meeting with you today to speak about a subject that I feel very deeply about and one that I feel is of great import. I sense, keenly, the need for our Heavenly Father's spirit to direct my remarks that it might convey not only the message, but the feeling of the importance of this message. I'd like to focus on how the Book of Mormon is uniquely prepared to help prepare a people for the coming of the Savior. In the beginning of this dispensation when angel Moroni visited with the Prophet Joseph Smith and instructed him, the angel informed Joseph that this work that was about to commence would begin the preparatory work for the second coming of the Messiah, and that the gospel would be preached unto all nations, that a people might be prepared for the Millennial reign.

It seems, from the statements given by the Lord and his representatives in this dispensation, that one of the greatest responsibilities incumbent upon this dispensation is in fact to prepare a people for the Savior's second coming. President Joseph F. Smith has stated that "we live in a day in which the Lord our God has set his hand for the last time to gather out the righteous and to prepare a people to meet the bridegroom when he comes to reign over the Earth, even Jesus Christ."

President Ezra Taft Benson has also stated that "the Book of Mormon and the Doctrine and Covenants both have unique roles in this particular mission." He stated, "These two great books of latter-day scriptures are bound together as

revelations from Israel's God for the purpose of gathering and preparing his people for the second coming of the Lord." The Doctrine and Covenants is, of course, the handbook of the Restoration. Throughout the Doctrine and Covenants, the Lord speaks about the gathering of his people, the preparation of a people for the Second Coming, and the signs and prophecies to precede the event. In section 1 of the Doctrine and Covenants, which is, of course, the preface to that book, the Lord declared that the Doctrine and Covenants is a "voice of warning . . . unto all people . . . unto the day when the Lord shall come" (D&C 1:4, 10). Two days after that revelation, the appendix, or section 133, of the Doctrine and Covenants was revealed. These scriptures were to help people prepare for the coming of the Lord "who shall come down upon the world with a curse to judgment; yea, upon all the nations that forget God, and upon all the ungodly among you" (D&C 133:2).

It's understandable that the Doctrine and Covenants, which is given in this dispensation, would have a major focus upon preparing a people for the coming of the Savior. But how about the Book of Mormon? How would that book be of value? Indeed, the Book of Mormon, although a book prepared fourteen centuries before this dispensation commenced, was uniquely prepared so that this book, the Book of Mormon, could in fact be a most valuable instrument in this entire process.

In fact, the Book of Mormon contains a history of a people who had the challenge of preparing for the coming of the resurrected Savior. And they experienced his coming, and the wicked were destroyed, the righteous were spared, and those who were spared witnessed his coming and his visitation and ministration among them.

The Book of Mormon is a unique book that contains, in effect, an exact parallel of what we ourselves are preparing for.

Now, how has this book been prepared in such a way that it would be of value to us? It's important to understand that the book's preparation is every bit as significant as its translation so that this book can and is a valuable instrument in helping a people prepare for the coming of the Savior. This is a continued theme through the Lord's latter-day prophets. As recent as 1992, in an address given on the campus of Brigham Young University, Elder Joseph B. Wirthlin said to the students, "Perhaps you will have greater opportunities but will face increased challenges and problems than any generation before you. Your most important opportunity will be to help prepare a people to meet the Savior at his second coming."

Now, in order to understand the way in which the Lord helped to prepare a book that would be effective in this most important item on his agenda, can we appreciate that he did this by preparing the prophets who would, in fact, prepare the record? There were four main prophets who had direct responsibility in preparing the record that we now have and refer to as the Book of Mormon: the first two prophets who wrote in the book, Nephi and Jacob, and the two prophets who concluded it, Mormon and his son Moroni. Nephi wrote more of his own words in that record than any other prophet who wrote in the Book of Mormon. His brother Jacob followed suit. All of the records that we have in the present Book of Mormon—save less than eight pages—were prepared and put together by Nephi and Jacob or Mormon and Moroni. As preparation for that task, these four prophets had two common experiences from the Lord that were particularly significant in preparing

them for that assignment. First of all, all four of these prophets were personally ministered to by the Savior. You have Nephi, in 2 Nephi 11:2–3, speaking about Isaiah, stating, “And now I, Nephi, write more of the words of Isaiah, for my soul delighteth in his words. . . . For he verily saw my Redeemer, even as I have seen him. . . . And my brother, Jacob, also has seen him as I have seen him.” Mormon, in the latter part of the Book of Mormon, states, “I, being fifteen years of age and being somewhat of a sober mind, therefore I was visited of the Lord, and tasted and knew of the goodness of Jesus” (Mormon 1:15). His son Moroni, as he abridged and recorded the book of Ether, wrote, “And then shall ye know that I have seen Jesus, and that he hath talked with me face to face, and that he told me in plain humility, even as a man telleth another in mine own language, concerning these things” (Ether 12:39). All four of these prophets were ministered to by the Savior.

The second important criterion, or qualification, for these prophets was that they be seers, that they have the power of seership. That power is described in the book of Mosiah 8:17; we read, “A seer can know of things which are past, and also of things which are to come, and by them shall all things be revealed, or, rather, shall secret things be made manifest, and hidden things shall come to light, and things which are not known shall be made known by them, and also things which shall be made known by them which otherwise could not be known.” Each one of these four prophets were also qualified as seers, in that they saw the past and the future with great clarity. You have Nephi’s words in 2 Nephi 25:21–22: “Wherefore, for this cause hath the Lord God promised unto me that these things”—meaning this

record—"which I write shall be kept and preserved, and handed down unto my seed, from generation to generation . . . Wherefore, these things shall go from generation to generation as long as the earth shall stand; and they shall go according to the will and pleasure of God; and the nations who shall possess them shall be judged of them according to the words which are written." In other words, this record was going to be handed on down through time to the very end of time. These prophets knew that, and they bore record of that.

Nephi, we are told in 1 Nephi 14:24, was privileged to observe the events from the beginning to the end of the world: "The things which this apostle of the Lamb shall write"—meaning John the Beloved, who was to write the events of prophetic history into the future—"are many things which thou hath seen; and behold, the remainder shalt thou see." He was given this promise by a heavenly messenger. Then in verse 28 of that chapter, Nephi records, "I, Nephi, am forbidden that I should write the remainder of the things which I saw and heard; wherefore the things which I have written sufficeth me; and I have written but a small part of the things which I saw." Nephi therefore was privileged to see the beginning to the end of the world and the events that would precede the coming of the Savior. Jacob, of course, was also privileged in that, as he records in his seventy-seven verses in the allegory of Jacob in chapter 5 of his book, he portrays the Lord's dealings with his children from the beginning to the end of the earth. This is a great prophetic record, and one recorded by and revealed to a seer.

Mormon, of course, had the heaviest responsibility in terms of the preparation of the record, because most of it was abridged by him. In regard to that assignment, he

declares, "The things which are upon these plates pleas[e] me, because of the prophecies of the coming of Christ," yet in the next verse, he writes, "I cannot write the hundredth part of the things of my people" (Words of Mormon 1:4–5).

Periodically, Mormon makes the notation in the Book of Mormon that he could not write one hundredth part of all that he had available to him by way of the records of his people. That's an important thing to note because, out of the less than one percent that he selected out, how did he know what to choose? Let's continue.

In Mormon 3:16, again, Mormon points out that he sees with clarity the last days, as he said in verse 16, "I did even as the Lord had commanded me; and I did stand as an idle witness to manifest unto the world the things which I saw and heard, according to the manifestations of the Spirit which had testified of things to come." Mormon continues, "Therefore I write unto you, Gentiles, and also unto you, house of Israel. . . . Yea, behold, I write unto all the ends of the earth; yea, unto you, the twelve tribes of Israel. . . . And I write also unto the remnant of this people. . . . And these things doth the Spirit manifest unto me; therefore I write unto you all"

(Mormon 3:17–20). He was writing a record that was going to be for some future generation down through the stream of time. His son Moroni makes it even more clear and graphic, as the statement in Mormon 8:34–35, which has been often quoted by President Benson, reads, "Behold, the Lord hath shown unto me great and marvelous things concerning that which must shortly come, at that day when these things shall come forth among you. Behold, I speak unto you as if ye were present, and yet ye are not. But behold, Jesus Christ hath shown you unto me, and I know your doing."

This book, the Book of Mormon, is a unique book, the only book we know of that was prepared and written for a future generation, this generation. It was prepared for us and preserved and translated by the gift and power of God. But the way in which it was prepared and the way in which the Lord prepared those who prepared it is every bit as great a miracle as the way in which it was translated. President Benson, in 1975 April general conference, declared, "The Book of Mormon was written for us today. God is the author of the book. It is a record of a fallen people compiled by inspired men for our blessing today. Those people never had the book; it was meant for us. Mormon, the ancient prophet after whom the book is named, abridged centuries of records. God, who knows the end from the beginning, told him what to include in his abridgment that we would need for our day."

Let me draw your attention to a chart that illustrates Mormon's abridging methods and how this particular record was uniquely prepared (see figure 1). As you look at that chart, you notice that in beginning of the record written by Nephi and Jacob, there were quite a number of pages during the first century or first century and a half. We have there Nephi's writings, and Jacob's writings, and on down to the Words of Mormon. But then you go for several centuries with hardly any record at all. And then, the major portion of the Book of Mormon begins about 150 B.C. and goes through the time of the resurrection and the ministry of Jesus Christ to the Nephites and Lamanites on the American continent. You notice how the bulk of the Book of Mormon was the account of God's dealings with those people who were striving to prepare themselves for the coming of the Savior. Indeed, this is a unique record.

Let me now give some practical examples of how this record was prepared and how various portions of it were designed to help us in the preparation for the coming of the Savior. I could title this section "The Coming of Christ to the Nephites: A Pattern for His Second Coming." To introduce this, let me share with you an experience I had some time ago when I was watching the television program following the news in which Ted Koppel was interviewing the police chief of the Los Angeles Police Department following the Los Angeles riots. In this particular interview, Mr. Koppel was showing the police chief footage of the police department members standing idly by, most of whom were armed but not doing anything to either interfere with or to prevent the looting, the beatings, or any of the chaos that was occurring. And as I was watching this and seeing that nothing was being done to prevent this carnage, my mind went back to the previous day when I was reading from chapter 13 of the book of Ether about the account of the Jaredite nation's collapse. In the last verse of that chapter, verse 31, are these haunting words: "All the people upon the face of the land were shedding blood, and there was none to restrain them." As I thought about that when I read it, I wondered, "How could that be that none could restrain them?" And yet, as I watched this footage of the Los Angeles riots, I felt a chill. And the question in my mind was: "How far are we from no one restraining those who are robbing and looting and beating and those who are killing?" Indeed, the Book of Mormon has a timely message of warning to us about the events we are now moving into.

I have chosen to break this discussion up into a few categories (see figure 2). Now, please understand that this is not any kind of exhaustive work, nor is it

anything that is that profound or difficult. I submit that each one of you could do some of your own research and exploration about other related topics and titles. The first category that I would like to refer to is that of "Signs." It seems that in the Book of Mormon and in the prophecies of the events to precede the coming of the Savior to us, the Lord indicates that there will be many signs, many events that we can observe to know that this hour and day is getting close. In the Book of Mormon, however, there is a particular description of why these signs are used and why they are important to the Lord and his children. Let me just refer you to that description, given in the book of Helaman 14:28. These words of Samuel help us to understand why the Lord gives signs of the events that precede his coming. Samuel stated, "That they might believe." He quotes an angel in verse 28: "The angel said unto me that many shall see greater signs than these, to the intent that they might believe." That is the bottom-line reason. Then he continues, "That these signs and these wonders shall come to pass upon all the face of this land, to the intent that there should be no cause for unbelief among the children of men . . . that whosoever will believe might be saved, and that whosoever will not believe, a righteous judgment might come upon them; and also if they are condemned they bring upon themselves their own condemnation" (Helaman 14:28–29).

First and foremost, the Lord wants to save his children. The events are given to warn us, to have us respond so that we can grow and prepare for the events before us. It's interesting that, as we go on in the record, the adversary did everything he could to discount those signs. We read, for instance, in 3 Nephi 1:22, that "lyings were sent forth among the people, by Satan, to harden the hearts, to the intent that

they might not believe in those signs and wonders which they had seen.”

Obviously, the adversary wanted to do everything he could to interfere with and thwart what the Lord was trying to accomplish. In 3 Nephi 2:1, it reads, “The people began to forget those signs and wonders which they had heard, and began to be less and less astonished at a sign or a wonder from heaven, insomuch that they began to be hard in their hearts, and blind in their minds, and began to disbelieve all which they had heard and seen.” There’s an important warning for us. It’s important that we recognize that these same kinds of patterns are going to follow in our day. I find it interesting that in 1966 April general conference, you have President Joseph Fielding Smith, then President of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, making this declaration: “The words of the prophets are rapidly being fulfilled, but it is done on such natural principles that most of us fail to see it.” Indeed, that’s true. We can look around us and observe that many of the signs that have been given of the events to precede the coming of the Savior in our day are increasing in frequency and in power, but we are less and less affected by them, and basically, we go about our way and pay little heed or regard. In 1992 October general conference, Elder M. Russell Ballard gave a talk entitled “The Joy of Hope Fulfilled” in which he spoke about the signs and the frequency of them, and he used one particular example, that of earthquakes, which of course is one of the prophecies of an event that will be repeated many times before the coming of the Savior. In this talk Elder Ballard said, “I read a newspaper article that cited the statistics from the U.S. Geological Survey indicating that earthquakes around the world are increasing in frequency and intensity. According to this article, only two major earthquakes—earthquakes

measuring at least 6 on the Richter Scale—occurred during the 1920s. In the 1930s the number increased to five, then decreased to four during the 1940s. But in the 1950s nine major earthquakes occurred, followed by fifteen during the 1960s, forty-six during the 1970s, and fifty-two during the 1980s. Already, almost as many major earthquakes have occurred during the 1990s as during the entire decade of the 1980s. This talk, keep in mind, was given in October 1992. Then he states, “The world is experiencing violent disorders both physical as well as social.”

Prior to the Savior giving a significant teaching and testimony during his ministry, he would oft preface it, or conclude it with the words, “He that hath ears to hear, let him hear. He who hath eyes to see, let him see.” In D&C 42:49–50, Christ uses these words in our day: “He who hath faith to see shall see. He who hath faith to hear shall hear.” Indeed, one of the great challenges we face is exercising the faith to see clearly as the Lord sees. He is directing us to see and to hear, to hear his words through his warnings from his prophets.

Let me give you an example of a group of people who were faced with one of these destructive forces. In 1976 a group of Latter-day Saints in Idaho experienced a devastating flood referred to as the Teton Dam flood. An earthen dam holding back seventeen miles of water suddenly gave way on a balmy Saturday morning. There was no warning. Immediately below that dam were 7,800 people living within just a short distance. Further down the valley there were another 35,000 people living within close proximity. Almost all of these people were Latter-day Saints. The flood came so suddenly that the experts from the federal government who came to survey the damage projected that, based on their studies and given the density of the

population, the amount of water that was released, and the rate at which that water went down the valley, they expected that 5,300 people would likely have lost their lives. Miraculously, only six people were drowned. Of those six, one was fishing immediately below the dam when the water was released—he had had no chance of surviving; two others disregarded the warnings; and three others chose to return for belongings or property of wealth that they felt that they just could not live without—and they proved to be right.

Of those who died and of those who were spared, Elder Boyd K. Packer, a member of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles who had the responsibility of directing the work to try to help the people who lost their homes—there were virtually 800 homes that were totally destroyed and another 800 homes and churches and schools and businesses that were severely damaged—Elder Packer stated, “Only six died by drowning—six of about 35,000. How could there be such terrible destruction with such little loss of life? Because they were warned. They didn’t have very long, but they were warned. Every man who was warned, warned his neighbor.” Then he concluded, “It was a miracle of tremendous proportions. As Latter-day Saints we learn to heed warnings.” Indeed, that is what it’s about in terms of preparing for the coming of the Savior.

In section 29 of the Doctrine and Covenants, verse 7, the Lord declared, “Ye are called to bring to pass the gathering of mine elect; for mine elect hear my voice and harden not their hearts.” Now, there’s an important message there. You notice that the Lord does not say, “Mine elect hear my missionaries,” or, “Mine elect hear my

prophet." He says, "Mine elect hear my voice and harden not their hearts." As those who represent him speak under the power and inspiration of the Holy Ghost, those who listen by that same Spirit hear the Lord speaking to them, and be they nonmember listening to missionaries or members listening to leaders, they hear the voice of the Lord and harden not their hearts.

In our day the Lord has warned us about an interesting disease. In D&C 95:5–6, he warns us that "there are many who have been ordained among you, whom I have called but few of them are chosen. . . . They who are not chosen have sinned a very grievous sin, in that they are walking in darkness at noon-day." That's an interesting analogy. What is he speaking about? What does the metaphor mean? He is talking about the dispensation of the fullness of times—today, when we would have more revelation, more keys, more powers, more spiritual blessings, better communication by which to hear the word of the Lord than ever in the history of the earth. There's never been a people on the planet who have had so readily available to us the messages of the Lord's prophets, past and present, as we have today. It is noon-day, and so those who choose, as members of the Lord's church, to ignore all of this light and understanding are compared to walking in darkness at noon-day.

It's rather ironic that Latter-day Saints are the only people on earth who can suffer from "spiritual anorexia". We have an overabundance of revelation available. Having spent some time in Africa, I have found that the disease of anorexia is unknown over there among those people who are struggling, many starving. They are trying to provide a meager existence to survive. They don't

know about anorexia. Only where there's an abundance is that disease known to mankind.

In 1989 April general conference, President Ezra Taft Benson, giving a powerful discourse he entitled "Beware of Pride," said, "The Doctrine and Covenants tells us that the Book of Mormon is the record of a fallen people. Why did they fall? This is one of the major messages of the Book of Mormon. Mormon gives the answer in the closing chapters of the book in these words, 'Behold, the pride of this nation, or the people of the Nephites, hath proven their destruction' (Moroni 8:27). And then, lest we miss the monumental Book of Mormon message from that fallen people, the Lord warns us in the Doctrine and Covenants, 'Beware of pride, lest ye become as the Nephites of old.'" (D&C 38:39). And then President Benson said, "This message has been weighing heavily on my soul for some time. I know the Lord wants this message delivered now." And then he warned the entire world, beware of pride. If you look at this particular cycle—as it's titled "The Nephite Cycle: Mormon's Warning for Us Today" (see figure 3)—we recall the Lord said to Lehi that if they kept his commandments, the people would prosper in the land. You notice on this cycle that as the people were righteous, they were blessed and prospered. But that was one condition that they didn't seem to be able to endure, as it soon led to pride, then to wickedness, then to destruction and suffering, and then, they were humble and repented, and then they were righteous, and then they moved through that cycle again and again and again. It seems in some instances that they almost break a track record in going around that cycle, in repeating that process over and over again—so often, in fact, that periodically you have Mormon,

the prophet/editor, inserting his editorial and inspired comments, as for example, in Helaman 12. Notice that as you read these words, you can identify readily that Mormon is speaking directly to us as he begins:

And thus we can behold how false, and also the unsteadiness of the hearts of the children of men; yea, we can see that the Lord in his great infinite goodness doth bless and prosper those who put their trust in him.

Yea, and we may see at the very time when he doth prosper his people, yea, in the increase of their fields, their flocks and their herds, and in gold, and in silver, and in all manner of precious things of every kind and art; sparing their lives, and delivering them out of the hands of their enemies; softening the hearts of their enemies that they should not declare wars against them; yea, and in fine, doing all things for the welfare and happiness of his people; yea, then is the time that they do harden their hearts, and do forget the Lord their God, and do trample under their feet the Holy One—yea, and this because of their ease, and their exceedingly great prosperity.

And thus we see that except the Lord doth chasten his people with many afflictions, yea, except he doth visit them with death and with terror, and with famine and with all manner of pestilence, they will not remember him. (Helaman 12:1–3)

The phrases *And thus we see* or *And thus we can behold* are powerful warnings from the pen of Mormon to us. He's not speaking to his people; they have already fallen. He is, in fact, speaking to us.

Let's now focus upon the category of "Destruction." This is, perhaps, the largest category of those that we will consider, but it is one that I will spend the least time on. Indeed, the coming of the Savior is a great and a dreadful day. It's dreadful for the wicked, as the wicked will be destroyed. But the Lord does not want us to be troubled over these things. He wants us to be aware of the destructions that have been prophesied of so that we can prepare emotionally, temporally, and spiritually, particularly, and so that we can escape these destructive powers. One of the great

talks on this subject, entitled "Be Not Troubled," was given by Elder Marion G. Romney, a member of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, in the Saturday morning session of 1966 October general conference. Elder Romney said, "The fact that the Lord recounted these predictions to the Prophet Joseph Smith in 1831," referring specifically to the predictions that would come and be fulfilled before the second coming of the Savior, the same predictions that he had given to his disciples on the Mount of Olives prior to his ascension. Then Elder Romney said, "Because the Lord had given these to the Prophet Joseph Smith, surely emphasizes their importance to us, and since the disciples were troubled when they were but being told of these calamities to come far in the future, it is no wonder that we are troubled as we witness their occurrence." Then Elder Romney gave some counsel that I feel is particularly pertinent in regard to these troubled times and the warnings of these destructions: "Not only do I hope that we are familiar with these coming events, I hope also that we keep the vision of them continually before our minds. This I do because upon a knowledge of them and an assurance of their reality and a witness that each of us may have part therein rests the efficacy of Christ's admonition 'Be not troubled.'" We may be in troubled times. We may not know what the future holds, but we certainly should know who holds the future. And we have promise of protection and blessing and direction as we live worthy of these promises and follow the admonition of the Lord and his servants.

The next category is that of "Righteousness." Many things are contained in this particular category. Can we appreciate that this is a great and a dreadful day—a great day because of all that needs to be accomplished? What a marvelous time in which

we live. Because of the advancement that the Lord has brought upon the earth of communication and travel, we have means whereby missionaries can go out in tens of thousands throughout the earth, and the work can move forward, and we can be a part of all that needs to happen in preparation for the coming of the Savior. In preparing a people for that coming, indeed, there is much to do, and we have the privilege as well as the knowledge of what that preparation must be.

Let me draw your attention to the next category, "The Living Prophet," and emphasize an important principle that is paralleled both in the Book of Mormon as well as in the Doctrine and Covenants. One of the messages that comes through loud and clear to us through both of these records is how vital it is that we listen to and give heed to the messages of the Lord's living prophets. For instance, in 3 Nephi 9, you have the voice of the resurrected Christ speaking to these people, and he is outlining the various cities that were destroyed and identifying the reason for their destruction. The voice of Christ speaks about the cities Laman and Gad and Kishkumen being destroyed "because of their wickedness" (3 Nephi 9:10). Now, what constitutes wickedness before the Lord at the time of his coming? Christ says it is "because of their wickedness in casting out the prophets, and stoning those whom I did send to declare unto them concerning their wickedness and their abominations."

If you move over the page to 3 Nephi 10, you have Mormon's comments, in verses 11–12, about those who were spared: "And thus far were the scriptures fulfilled which had been spoken by the prophets. And it was the more righteous part of the people who were saved." What constitutes righteousness? "It was they who

received the prophets and stoned them not" (3 Nephi 10:12). Then Mormon concludes, "Whoso readeth, let him understand; he that hath the scriptures, let him search them" (3 Nephi 10:14). Can't we see, as we come to the time of the coming of the Savior, that following the Lord's living prophets becomes not just a matter of spiritual survival, but that, indeed, it becomes a matter of temporal survival as well, separating the righteous from the wicked?

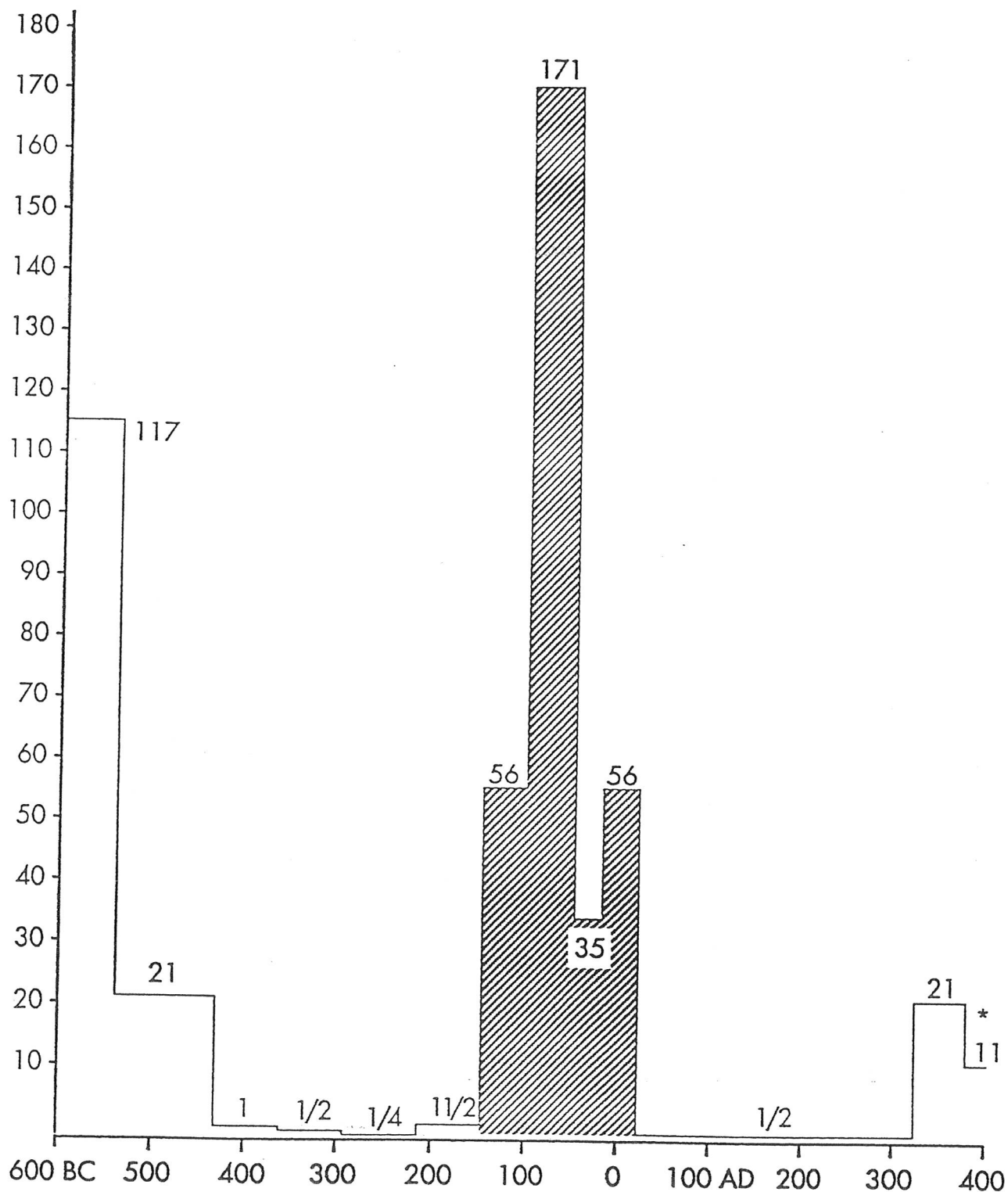
Now I would like to go the last category of "The Coming and Ministry of the Savior" to the Nephites. This is a particularly unique segment of the Book of Mormon. We have already indicated how this book was uniquely prepared, that it is the only record that we know of of a people who were prepared or had the challenge of preparing for the coming of the Savior and who experienced his coming. But it is also the only record that we know of of a people who actually witnessed that coming and experienced his ministry and his interactions with them, personally and as a people.

Let me share with you some statements by President Benson to put this in its context. President Benson, in 1986 October general conference, said, "By careful study of that time period we can determine why some were destroyed in the terrible judgments that preceded his coming and what brought others to stand at the temple in the land of Bountiful and thrust their hands into the wounds of his hands and feet." You have, in 1966 October general conference, Elder Marion G. Romney stating, "There would be a people who, through acceptance and obedience to the gospel, would be able to recognize and resist the powers of evil, build up the promised Zion, and prepare to meet the Christ and be with him in the blessed

Millennium. And we know, further, that it is possible for every one of us who will to have place among those people." Indeed, this particular segment of the Book of Mormon (i.e., 3 Nephi) is one of the rarest and greatest treasures. In speaking about this particular record of 3 Nephi, which gives the account of the Savior's ministry among these people, President Benson said, "Read the Book of Mormon account of Jesus Christ coming to the American continent and the Savior inviting the people to feel the marks in his hands, feet, and side. If that account doesn't shake you, then you are unshakable. It is one of the sweetest accounts and one of the greatest things to build a testimony I think you will ever read." Indeed, as you read of the Savior's ministry to these people, you can, through that record as we read it in the spirit in which it was recorded, begin to feel the love of the Savior for you as well as for them. And we can begin to feel a greater desire to experience that love in our own lives through becoming more like him. Indeed, the great message of the Book of Mormon comes from the Savior's lips to those people in 3 Nephi 26:27 when he asks them the question, "What manner of men ought ye to be?" Then he answered it by saying, "Even as I am."

I express to you my witness and knowledge that this record is divine. It is not only true, but it is urgent, it is important, it is vital to our lives as we face the challenges before us that will, as President Benson indicated, exceed anything that has preceded us in challenge. It is a time when we have a great need to draw upon the power and the strength of the Book of Mormon. It has been divinely and uniquely prepared by the Lord through his appointed prophets who helped prepare a record that could assist you and me in preparing ourselves not only to come to

Christ, but to be with him, which we may yet experience either through his coming to us or through our returning to him, to which I testify and express my deep gratitude and love for my Savior and for the record that helps me to feel his love for me in ways that otherwise I may never feel. In the name of Jesus Christ, Amen.



*This does not include the book of Ether.

MORMON'S ABRIDGING METHODS: RATIO OF PAGES TO YEARS

Figure 1.

THE COMING OF CHRIST TO THE NEPHITES: A PATTERN FOR HIS SECOND COMING

Scripture References to Christ's
Coming to the Nephites and
conditions preceding it

Events

Scripture References to the
Second Coming of Christ and
conditions preceding it

SIGNS

1. Helaman 14:2-6, 20-27; 3 Nephi 8:2-23	Great signs in heaven and on earth	Doctrine & Covenants 45:39-42; 29:14, Joseph Smith-Matthew 1:33
2. Helaman 14:28-31	Purpose of signs: To save mankind— all left without excuse	Doctrine & Covenants 29:11, 14-17; 39:23-24 45:16, 31-39, 49-50 63:6-7; 68:9-11
3. Helaman 16:12-23 3 Nephi 1:4, 15-22; 2:1-3	As prophecies are fulfilled people become more evil	Doctrine & Covenants 45:26-33; 112:23-24 Joseph Smith-Matthew 1:38-43
4. Helaman 16:15-22 3 Nephi 7:15-26; 8:4	Increased skepticism concerning Christ's coming	Doctrine & Covenants 45:26 2 Peter 3:3-4

WICKEDNESS

5. Helaman 13:21-23 3 Nephi 6:11-13	Pride is the basis of wickedness	Doctrine & Covenants 29:9; 64:24; 38:39
6. 3 Nephi 6:17-18; 7:7	People willfully rebel	Doctrine & Covenants 64:34-36; 112:24-26
7. 3 Nephi 6:23; 7:14	People reject the Prophets	Doctrine & Covenants 1:14, 135:1-7; 133:71-72 136:35-36
8. 3 Nephi 6:11-14	Pride and evil in the Church	Doctrine & Covenants 38:39; 41:1; 50:2-4; 63:63; 98:19-22

Figure 2.

DESTRUCTION

9. Helaman 11:1 3 Nephi 3:4	Wars and rumors of wars	Doctrine & Covenants 45:26, 68; 63:32-33
10. Helaman 10:18; 11:4	People killing one another	Doctrine & Covenants 45:33, 68; 63:33; 130:12
11. Helaman 13:13-14	People saved or destroyed based on how they received or reject the righteous	Doctrine & Covenants 99:4; 109:39-41; 84:92-97
12. Helaman 10:6; 12:3	Plagues, Pestilence, Famine	Doctrine & Covenants 43:25; 84:96-97; 87:6; 45:31 29:18-19 Joseph Smith-Matthew 1:29
13. 3 Nephi 6:25-30 7:7-9; 9:9	Secret combinations destroy society and government	Doctrine & Covenants 38:28; 42:64; 123:13-14 Moroni 8:34-40 Ether 8:20-25
14. Helaman 14:23, 26 3 Nephi 8:5-6; 10:14	Tempest, Great Storms, Thundering, Lightnings	Doctrine & Covenants 43:20-25; 87:6; 88:88-91
15. 3 Nephi 8:6-19	Earthquakes and great disturbances	Doctrine & Covenants 45:26, 33, 48; 49:23; 29:13 43:18, 25; 88:88-89
16. 3 Nephi 8:20-23 10:13-14	Vapor of smoke and darkness	Doctrine & Covenants 45:40-42; 29:14; 34:9
17. Helaman 14:21-23 3 Nephi 8:23; 9:8	Mountains made low as a valley, valley becomes great mountains	Doctrine & Covenants 49:23; 109:74
18. Helaman 14:24; 15:1 3 Nephi 8:8-14; 10:7	Cities destroyed, houses left desolate	Doctrine & Covenants 84:114-117
19. 3 Nephi 8:1-18 9:1-12	Wicked destroyed at His coming	Doctrine & Covenants 29:9; 63:34; 87:6-8; 136:33-36
20. 3 Nephi 8:23-24 10:8	Great mourning and weeping	Doctrine & Covenants 45:53; 87:6; 29:15; 112:24

Scripture References to Christ's
Coming to the Nephites and
conditions preceding it

Events

Scripture References to the
Second Coming of Christ and
conditions preceding it

RIGHTEOUSNESS

21. Helaman 3:24-30; 10:14-17 3 Nephi 2:10; 6:20; 7:15-26	Gospel preached to all people	Joseph Smith Matthew 1:31; Doctrine and Covenants 1:1-14; 58:64-65; 112:28-30; 133:37
22. Helaman 6:1-5 3 Nephi 2:14-16	Lamanites become righteous	Doctrine & Covenants 49:24
23. 3 Nephi 3:22-26 4:4-16	Righteous to gather together	Doctrine & Covenants 29:7-8; 115:6; 49:25; 43:23-30 45:43, 68-69
24. 3 Nephi 4:30-33	Righteous are divinely protected	Doctrine & Covenants 62:6; 45:70-71
25. Alma 1:25-28 3 Nephi 6:12-13	Righteous are persecuted	Doctrine & Covenants 99:1; 101:32-38; 123:1-10
26. 3 Nephi 1:4-8; 8:3	Righteous look to signs of Savior's coming with faith	Doctrine & Covenants 39:23-24; 68:9-11; 106: 4-5 45:39-40, 43, 57 Joseph Smith-Matthew 1:29

THE LIVING PROPHET

27. 3 Nephi 8:25; 9:10 10:12	Receiving or rejecting living prophets a matter of life or death	Doctrine & Covenants 1:14, 36-38; 45:32; 133:57-71
28. Helaman 16:14 3 Nephi 7:18	Angels minister to prophets	Doctrine & Covenants 20:6, 10, 35; 27:16; 43:25 136:37
29. 3 Nephi 10:12-14	The righteous are prepared for Christ's coming by following the prophets	Doctrine & Covenants 21:4-6, 9; 45:32; 124:45-46 1:11-39; 84:36-38

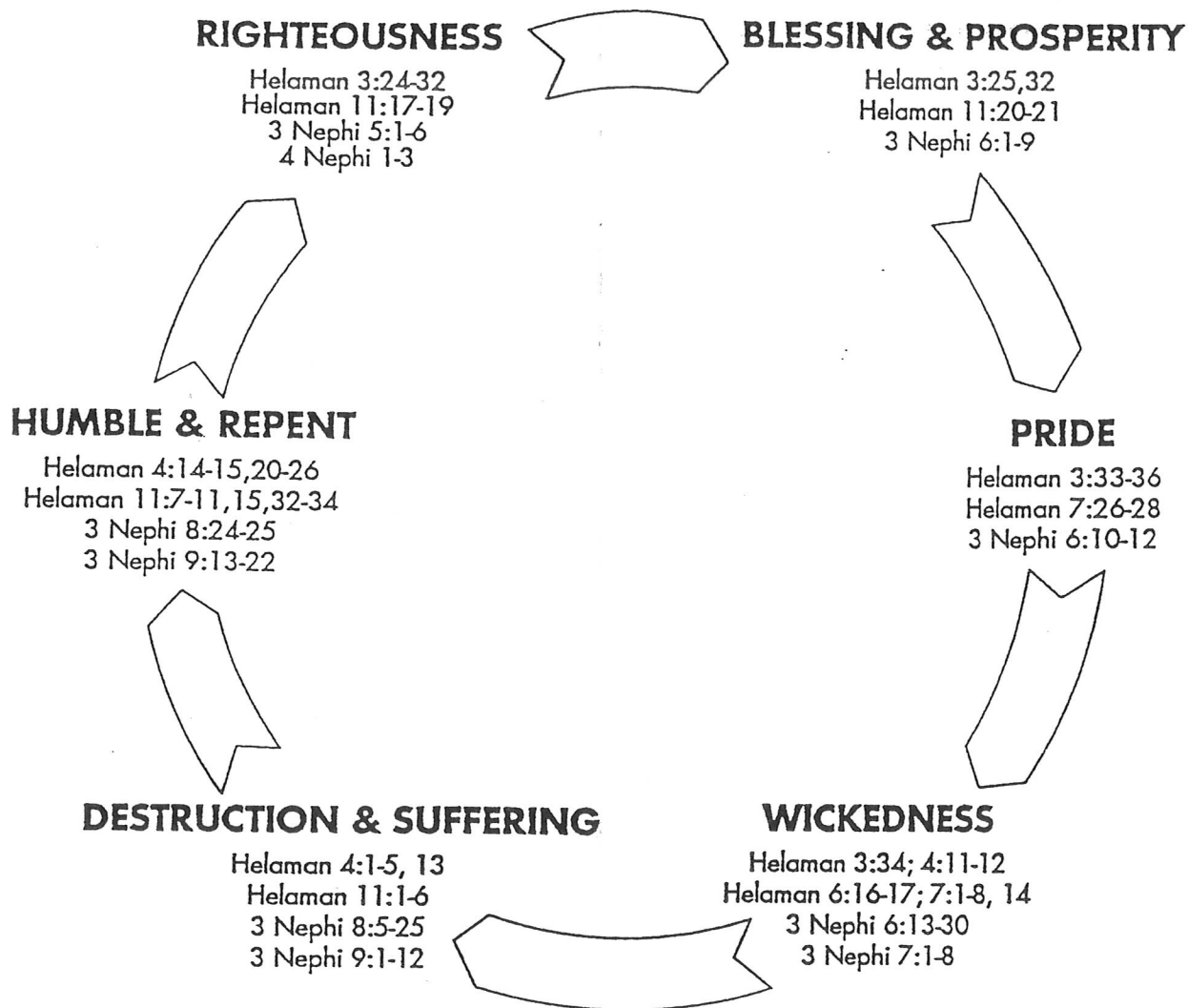
Scripture References to Christ's
Coming to the Nephites and
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Scripture References to the
Second Coming of Christ and
conditions preceding it

COMING AND MINISTRY OF CHRIST

30. 3 Nephi 8:24, 25 10:14, 18-19	Christ comes as a thief in the night	Doctrine & Covenants 39:21; 61:38; 106:4-5
31. 3 Nephi 11:8	Christ comes down from heaven in glory	Doctrine & Covenants 5:19; 29:11; 133:42-49
32. 3 Nephi 9:13 10:11-19	Only the righteous are preserved	Doctrine & Covenants 29:11; 35:21; 45:56-57 63:34-35, 54 Moses 7:61
33. 3 Nephi 11:1-11	Christ appears at temple	Doctrine & Covenants 42:36; 36:8; 133:2
34. 3 Nephi 11:14-17	Christ displays the wounds of his body	Doctrine & Covenants 45:51, 52 Zacharia 13:6
35. 3 Nephi 11:8-12	Jesus appears as a man like unto ourselves	Doctrine & Covenants 130:1-2
36. Helaman 14:25 3 Nephi 23:9-14	The righteous are resurrected at Christ's coming	Doctrine & Covenants 43:18; 45:44-45; 63:49 88:95-102; 133:56
37. 3 Nephi 11:9-11	Jesus testifies of his atoning sacrifice	Doctrine & Covenants 133:50-51
38. 4 Nephi 1:1-6, 15-17	People become children of Christ—Satan has no power	Doctrine & Covenants 45:55-58
39. 4 Nephi 1:7-10, 23	Righteous who are saved increase and are prosperous	Doctrine & Covenants 45:58
40. 3 Nephi 10:18-19 Chapters 11-28	The Lord is in their midst and is their lawgiver	Doctrine & Covenants 38:22; 45:59; 133:25



**THE NEPHITE CYCLE:
MORMON'S WARNING FOR US TODAY
(HELANAN 12:1-6, 23-26)**

Figure 3.