



BRIGHAM YOUNG UNIVERSITY • PROVO, UTAH

## Transcript

The following transcript represents the views of the speaker and not the Neal A. Maxwell Institute for Religious Scholarship, Brigham Young University, or the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.



LEB-VT2

Foundation for Ancient Research & Mormon Studies

E. Dale LeBaron

# **The Savior's Ministry to the Nephites: A Millennial Prototype**

TRANSCRIPT

F.A.R.M.S. BOOK OF MORMON LECTURE SERIES

© 1995 Foundation for Ancient Research and Mormon Studies

**Fair Use Copying Notice:** These pages may be reproduced and used, without alteration, addition, or deletion, for any nonpecuniary or nonpublishing purpose without permission.

## The Savior's Ministry to the Nephites:

### A Millennial Prototype

E. Dale LeBaron

When the angel Moroni first appeared to the young Prophet Joseph Smith, he told young Joseph that God had a work for him to do, and further, that the work would begin the preparatory work for the second coming of the Messiah. He was further told that the gospel would be preached unto all nations, that a people might be prepared for the millennial reign. The book that Moroni delivered to Joseph, and the other revelations of the Restoration, make it very clear, that one of the greatest responsibilities incumbent upon this dispensation is to prepare a people for the Savior's second coming.

Recently, in a talk given at Brigham Young University, Elder Joseph B. Wirthlin said, "Perhaps you will have greater opportunities but will face increased challenges and problems than any other generation before you. Your most important opportunity will be to help prepare a people to meet the Savior at his second coming." The Book of Mormon not only has a divine mission to bring people to Christ, but also to prepare people for Christ. President Ezra Taft Benson has done more to inspire the Church to study and use the Book of Mormon than any other prophet in this dispensation save the Prophet Joseph Smith. President Benson has said, "In the Book of Mormon we find a pattern for preparing for the Second Coming."<sup>1</sup> The Book of Mormon happens to be the only record that we have that contains an account of a people preparing for and experiencing the coming of the

---

<sup>1</sup> Ezra Taft Benson, *A Witness and a Warning: A Modern-day Prophet Testifies of the Book of Mormon* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1988), 20.



resurrected Savior. Of the great value of this record and how it has paralleled our own day, President Benson has said:

I have been reading again the marvelous account in the Book of Mormon of the visit of the resurrected Savior to the American continent. I have been deeply impressed with the beauty and power of this scriptural account in 3 Nephi, and with its great value for our time and our generation.

The record of the Nephite history just prior to the Savior's visit reveals many parallels to our own day as we anticipate the Savior's second coming. The Nephite civilization had reached great heights. They were prosperous and industrious. They had built many cities with great highways connecting them. They engaged in shipping and trade. They built temples and palaces.

But, as so often happens, the people rejected the Lord. Pride became commonplace. Dishonesty and immorality were widespread. Secret combinations flourished. . . . There were but few righteous among them. . . . The people as a whole rejected the Lord. They stoned the prophets and persecuted those who sought to follow Christ.

And then the God of nature intervened, even Jesus Christ.<sup>2</sup>

The Lord has provided this record so that we might come to know our Savior and see how we personally can prepare to experience what the faithful Nephite people experienced. As to how this Book of Mormon can help us in our own personal preparation for the Savior and his second coming, President Benson has 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 Bountiful and thrust their hands into the wounds of his hands and feet."

Further, the Book of Mormon is the only record we have that gives an account of the resurrected Savior personally ministering to the faithful in a millennial type experience, describing what he did and citing what he said. Imagine having a

---

<sup>2</sup> Benson, *A Witness and a Warning*, 37–38.

preview of what it would be like to live when the Savior returns to this earth and personally ministers to the faithful. What a sacred insight into a most sacred experience. In light of the caution that the Lord has given to his prophets and others of us in regard to speaking about sacred events, what a priceless gift this record really is. It would seem that perhaps the Savior has parted the veil slightly, and shared with us a prototype of what our future experiences might be like if we are faithful. Regarding the priceless value of this record of 3 Nephi, President Benson stated, "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."

The Doctrine and Covenants, the handbook of the Restoration, also has a mission to prepare the world for the Savior's second coming. In section one, which is the preface to that book, the Lord states 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). In explaining the relationship between the Book of Mormon and the Doctrine and Covenants, President Benson taught that "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."

This presentation considers some significant events from the Book of Mormon account of the Savior's visit to the Nephites and corresponding prophecies from the Doctrine and Covenants regarding the Second Coming. It also examines additional messages from the Book of Mormon that, if applied, will help us to prepare to meet the Savior. First we'll discuss events from the Book of Mormon and corresponding

prophecies in the Doctrine and Covenants. By examining these scriptures, we can see the divine hand which has prepared these two books and how the Savior's ministry to the Nephites is indeed a prototype of his second coming and his millennial reign.

**Number one: The Lord raises up prophets to warn the people of pending destructions.** In the Book of Mormon the Lord assures us that "never hath any [people] been destroyed save it were foretold them by the prophets of the Lord" (2 Nephi 25:9). In the last dispensation the Lord raised up the Prophet Joseph Smith to prepare a people for the second coming of the Savior and to warn the world of pending destruction. In the preface to the Doctrine and Covenants, the Lord said, "Wherefore, I the Lord, knowing the calamity which should come upon the inhabitants of the earth, called upon my servant Joseph Smith, Jun., and spake unto him from heaven, and gave him commandments" (D&C 1:17). It is significant to note that the Lord uses his divine program, not the world's ways, in addressing the problems of the world.

Some thirty-five years ago in the general conference of the Church, Elder Spencer W. Kimball said the following in reference to the divine appointment of the Prophet Joseph Smith: "When theologians are reeling and stumbling, when lips are pretending and hearts are wondering and people are running to and fro seeking the word of the Lord and cannot find it, when clouds of error need dissipating and spiritual darkness needs penetrating and heavens need opening, a little infant is born."

**Number two: We must know the signs and watch for them.** In the Book of Mormon, the prophet Mormon records that as the time for the Savior's coming drew near, "the people began to look with great earnestness for the sign which had been given by the prophet Samuel. . . . And there began to be great doubtings and disputations among the people, notwithstanding so many signs had been given" (3 Nephi 8:3-4). Mormon adds a sobering and prophetic warning to us: "And now, whoso readeth, let him understand; he that hath the scriptures, let him search them, and see and behold if all these deaths and destructions . . . are not unto the fulfilling of the prophecies of many of the holy prophets" (3 Nephi 10:14). In our dispensation the Lord has warned us: "For the time is at hand; the day or the hour no man knoweth; but it surely shall come" (D&C 39:21). Continuing, the Lord said, "Gird up your loins and be watchful and be sober, looking forth for the coming of the Son of Man, for he cometh in an hour you think not" (D&C 61:38). Continuing, the Lord said, "And they shall look for me, and, behold, I will come; and they shall see me in the clouds of heaven, clothed with power and great glory; with all the holy angels; and he that watches not for me shall be cut off" (D&C 45:44). And then, in conclusion, the Lord states, "The coming of the Lord draweth nigh, and it overtaketh the world as a thief in the night—Therefore, gird up your loins, that you may be the children of light, and that day shall not overtake you as a thief" (D&C 106:4-5).

Why will many be unprepared for these events? Because they ignore the prophets and because the destructive events, while they increase in frequency and power, blend together, and little regard is given to them. In October 1992 general

conference, Elder M. Russell Ballard said, "Recently, I read a newspaper article that cited 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. [Note this was given in October 1992.] Already, almost as many major earthquakes have occurred during the 1990s as during the entire decade of the 1980s."

In light of this tremendous increase in one of the signs of the times, are people flooding to their churches and turning their lives more towards God? Hardly. Why not? Nearly thirty-five years ago in another general conference, President Joseph Fielding Smith testified, "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." To us the Lord has said, "He who hath faith to see shall see. He who hath faith to hear shall hear" (D&C 42:49–50). However, with the warnings, there is hope, for the Lord has promised that if we are prepared, we shall not fear. Elder Marion G. Romney counseled the Saints, "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'."

In February 1992 President Howard W. Hunter's life was threatened prior to giving a talk at Brigham Young University. He then gave a powerful message of vision and hope in which he said, "Despair, doom, and discouragement are not acceptable views of life for a Latter-day Saint. Even in the most severe of times, anciently or in modern times, those problems and prophecies were never intended to do anything but bless the righteous and help those who are less righteous move toward repentance. However, it requires a living faith to see the signs of the times, and to endure them." Elder Bruce R. McConkie has said, "We do not know when the calamities and troubles of the last days will fall upon any of us as individuals or upon bodies of the Saints. He simply tells us to watch and be ready. We can rest assured that if we have done all in our power to prepare for whatever lies ahead, he will then help us with whatever else we need. We do not say that all the Saints will be spared and saved from the coming Day of Desolation, but we do say there is no promise of safety and no promise of security except for those who love the Lord and who are seeking to do all that he commands. It may be for instance, that nothing except the power of faith and the authority of the priesthood can save individuals and congregations from the atomic holocausts that surely shall be."

**Number three: Survival or destruction is determined by how people respond to the Lord's prophets.** Following the Lord's prophets becomes a matter of temporal as well as spiritual survival; it is, in fact, the criteria by which the Lord identifies the righteous from the wicked at his coming. Following the destruction of the wicked, to the Nephites, the voice of the Christ declared:

Wo, wo, wo unto this people; . . . it is because of their iniquity and abominations that they are fallen! . . . Because of their wickedness [and

note, what was the criteria to determine wickedness?] in casting out the prophets, and stoning those whom I did send to declare unto them concerning their wickedness and their abominations. (3 Nephi 9:2, 10)

Then, regarding those who were spared, Mormon states, "And it was the more righteous part of the people who were saved" (3 Nephi 10:12). Again, what criteria determined righteous?

It was they who received the prophets and stoned them not; and it was they who had not shed the blood of the saints, who were spared. . . . Whoso readeth, let him understand; he that hath the scriptures, let him search them, and see and behold if all these deaths and destructions . . . are not unto the fulfilling of the prophecies of many of the holy prophets. (3 Nephi 10:13-14)

The above account suggests that the Nephites spared prior to the coming of the Savior were those who were living a celestial law ("they who received the prophets") and those who were living a terrestrial law ("they who had not shed the blood of the saints"). Hence, we can conclude that those who were destroyed at this time were those living a telestial law. In our day the Lord warned, "The day cometh that they who will not hear the voice of the Lord, neither the voice of his servants, neither give heed to the words of the prophets and apostles, shall be cut off from among the people" (D&C 1:14). Regarding the Second Coming, President Joseph Fielding Smith taught, "When the reign of Jesus Christ comes during the Millennium, only those who have lived the telestial law will be removed,." In this dispensation the Lord revealed the following: "Every corruptible thing . . . that dwells upon all the face of the earth, shall be consumed" (D&C 101:24). But all that does not come under this awful edict shall remain; therefore, the honest and the upright of all nations, kindreds, and beliefs who have kept the terrestrial or celestial law will remain.

**Number four: Physical destructions have a spiritual message.** To escape or survive, we must turn to Christ. Samuel, the Lamanite prophet, warned the Nephites: "Nothing can save this people save it be repentance and faith on the Lord Jesus Christ. . . . And if ye believe on his name ye will repent of all your sins, that thereby ye may have a remission of them through his merits" (Helaman 13:6; 14:13). In this dispensation the Lord has declared and described the polarization of the wicked and the righteous in these words: "And there shall be men standing in that generation, that shall not pass until they shall see an overflowing scourge; for a desolating sickness shall cover the land. But my disciples shall stand in holy places, and shall not be moved; but among the wicked, men shall lift up their voices and curse God and die" (D&C 45:31-32).

In 1978 President Spencer W. Kimball made the following warning to the Saints in a general conference: "The forces of good are clearly and continually under attack. There are times when it seems the world is almost drowning in a flood of filth and degradation, and I want to cry out, 'Hold on! Hold on to what is right and true; therein is safety. Don't let yourself be swept away.' " President Kimball then relates an experience that he had in 1946 when he visited Hawaii shortly after a huge tidal wave had devastated the Honokaa coast. Homes and churches were destroyed; streets were strewn with bathtubs, refrigerators, and damaged autos. There was debris everywhere. More than one hundred people lost their lives, and thousands were injured and homeless. He heard of many stories of suffering and heroism.



One woman told of how she had received a phone message from friends to flee because a tidal wave was approaching. She looked out into the ocean and saw a monstrous wave approaching like a mountain. She and her husband picked up the baby and ran for their lives up the hill. They called for their two little girls who were off playing in some trees, but they could not rouse them. These two little sisters saw the wave just before it crashed upon them. They were wise enough to go to a large tree, put their arms around that tree and hold onto each other's hands tightly for their very lives, and then hold their breath. The wave crashed over them, and they were able to hold on and hold their breath until the water receded. Then they ran up and joined their parents, and together, the family watched as their home was destroyed under the pounding of the waves. Then President Kimball said:

We too are faced with powerful and destructive forces unleashed by the adversary. Waves of sin, wickedness, immorality, degradation, tyranny, deceitfulness, conspiracy, and dishonesty threaten all of us. They come with great power and speed and will destroy us if we are not watchful, but a warning is sounded for us. It behooves us to be alert and to listen and flee from the evil for our eternal lives. Without help, we cannot stand against it; we must flee to high ground or cling fast to that which can keep us from being swept away. That to which we must cling for safety is the gospel of Jesus Christ. It is our protection from whatever force the evil one can muster.

An inspired Book of Mormon prophet counseled his people [President Kimball said], 'Remember that it is upon the rock of our Redeemer, who is Christ, the Son of God, that ye must build your foundation; that when the devil shall send forth his mighty winds, yea, his shafts in the whirlwind, yea, when all his hail and his mighty storm shall beat upon you, it shall have no power over you to drag you down to the gulf of misery and endless wo' (Helaman 5:12).

**Number five: Jesus testifies of his atoning sacrifice.** As the Savior descended to the Nephites, he declared:

Behold, I am Jesus Christ, whom the prophets testified shall come into the world. And behold, I am the light and the life of the world; and I have drunk out of that bitter cup which the Father hath given me, and have glorified the Father in taking upon me the sins of the world, in the which I have suffered the will of the Father in all things from the beginning. (3 Nephi 11:10–11)

He then invited them saying:

Arise and come forth unto me, that ye may thrust your hands into my side, and also that ye may feel the prints of the nails in my hands and in my feet, that ye may know that I am the God of Israel, and the God of the whole earth, and have been slain for the sins of the world.

And it came to pass that the multitude went forth, and thrust their hands into his side, and did feel the prints of the nails in his hands and in his feet; and this they did do, going forth one by one until they had all gone forth, and did see with their eyes and did feel with their hands, and did know of a surety and did bear record, that it was he, of whom it was written by the prophets, that should come. (3 Nephi 11:14–15)

At his second coming the Lord will be heard to say, "I have trodden the wine-press alone, and have brought judgment upon all people; and none were with me" (D&C 133:50). In Jerusalem the Jews shall look upon the Lord and say:

What are these wounds in thine hands and in thy feet?

Then shall they know that I am the Lord; for I will say unto them: These wounds are the wounds with which I was wounded in the house of my friends. I am he who was lifted up. I am Jesus that was crucified. I am the Son of God.

And then shall they weep because of their iniquities; then shall they lament because they persecuted their king. (D&C 45:51–53)

**Number six: The Lord is in their midst; he is their lawgiver, and Satan has no power.** Through his ministry, Jesus gave the Nephites his law and his doctrine. He said, "Verily, verily, I say unto you, that this is my doctrine, and whoso buildeth upon this buildeth upon my rock, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against them" (3 Nephi 11:39). "And ye know the things that ye must do in my church; for the works which ye have seen me do that shall ye also do" (3 Nephi 27:21). The

impact of the Savior's ministry among the Nephites, along with the destruction of the wicked, launched the Nephites into a celestial society, which continued for nearly 200 years. The record states:

There were no contentions and disputations, . . . and every man did deal justly one with another.

And they had all things common among them; therefore there were not rich and poor, bond and free, but they were all made free, and partakers of the heavenly gift. . . .

And there were great and marvelous works wrought by the disciples of Jesus, . . . and all manner of miracles did they work among the children of men;

And the Lord did prosper them exceedingly in the land; yea, insomuch that they did build cities again. . . .

The people of Nephi did wax strong, and did multiply exceedingly fast, and became an exceedingly fair and delightful people. . . .

There was no contention in the land, because of the love of God which did dwell in the hearts of the people.

And there were no envyings, nor strifes, nor tumults, nor whoredoms, nor lyings, nor murders, nor any manner of lasciviousness; and surely there could not be a happier people among all the people who had been created by the hand of God. . . . They were in one, the children of Christ, and heirs to the kingdom of God.  
(4 Nephi 1:2-3, 5, 7, 10, 15-17)

To those who participate in the ushering in of the millennial era, the Lord has promised: "For the Lord shall be in their midst, and his glory shall be upon them, and he will be their king and their lawgiver" (D&C 45:59). Further, he states, "Satan shall be bound, that he shall have no place in the hearts of the children of men. . . . And the earth shall be given unto them for an inheritance; and they shall multiply and wax strong, and their children shall grow up without sin unto salvation" (D&C 45:55, 58).

The above six concepts recorded in the Nephite record and the corresponding prophecies in the Doctrine and Covenants relating to the second coming of the Savior illustrate that these two latter-day books of scripture are to be one in

preparing a people to meet the Savior. These passages are only some of the significant scriptures that illustrate this principle, and they are not intended to be an exhaustive listing of the same.

Now I would like to go to the second part of this presentation and focus on what I refer to as additional messages from the Book of Mormon to help us better prepare.

These are unique to the Book of Mormon and focus on some of the significant lessons that we can be taught—and again, they are only some of many. The Book of Mormon provides a treasury of additional insights into exactly what we must do to prepare to meet the Savior.

**Number one: We must teach and help prepare others.** Many might expect that if they were spared and survived the destructions that will occur at the second coming of the Savior, they would be ecstatic and jubilant, they would celebrate, they might give high fives to one another or hug one another. But we notice something completely different in 3 Nephi. Initially, the more righteous who were spared were sorrowful, not jubilant. Their sorrow for loved ones lost far overshadowed any joy that they might have reflected upon regarding their own survival. The record states that after the destruction of the wicked, there was “howling and weeping among all the people continually. . . . In one place they were heard to cry, saying: O that we had repented before this great and terrible day, and then would our brethren have been spared. . . . And in another place they were heard to cry and mourn, saying: O that we had repented before this great and terrible day; . . . then would our mothers and our fair daughters, and our children have been spared” (3 Nephi 8:23–25). They felt guilt for not having helped others repent and prepare for the Savior’s coming. Note

how the Doctrine and Covenants and the inspired leaders of this Church plead with us to strengthen our families, to share the gospel with them and with our friends, and to express love and concern for one another.

**Number two: We all need to repent and be converted.** Because we are spared at the time of the Savior's coming may not necessarily mean that we're worthy to be with Jesus and in his presence. In 3 Nephi the voice of Christ declared, "O all ye that are spared because ye were more righteous than they, will ye not now return unto me, and repent of your sins, and be converted that I may heal you?"

What is the meaning of the terms *converted* or *conversion*, as it is used in the scriptures? Some years ago Elder Marion G. Romney explained it in this way:

Membership in the Church and conversion are not necessarily synonymous. Being converted, as we are here using the term, and having a testimony are not necessarily the same thing either. A testimony comes when the Holy Ghost gives the earnest seeker a witness of the truth. A moving testimony vitalizes faith; that is, it induces repentance and obedience to the commandments. Conversion, on the other hand, is the fruit of, or the reward for, repentance and obedience. Of course one's testimony continues to increase as he is converted. Conversion is affected by divine forgiveness, which remits sin. The sequence is something like this, an honest seeker hears the message, he asks the Lord if it is true, the Holy Spirit gives him a witness. This is a testimony. If one's testimony is strong enough, he repents and obeys the commandments. By such obedience he receives divine forgiveness, which remits sin; thus he is converted to a newness of life; his spirit is healed."

President Benson explained the power of Christ in this process. He said, "One must be spiritually born again to gain exaltation and eternal life. The Lord works from the inside out; the world works from the outside in. The world would take the people out of the slums. Christ takes the slums out of people, and then they take themselves out of the slums. The world would mold men by changing their

environment. Christ changes men, who then change their environment. The world would shape human behavior, but Christ can change human nature."

**Number three: We must develop greater faith.** After Jesus administered to the multitude and taught them many things, including the teachings of the Sermon on the Mount given in the New testament, and many other teachings, he then said to those of the Nephites gathered before him that he was going to return to his Father. However, he counseled, "I perceive that ye are weak, that ye cannot understand all my words which I am commanded of the Father to speak unto you at this time. Therefore, go ye unto your homes, and ponder upon the things which I have said, and ask of the Father, in my name, that ye may understand, and prepare your minds for the morrow, and I come unto you again" (3 Nephi 17:2-3). The thought of him leaving brought tears to the eyes of the faithful Nephites. Jesus was filled with compassion towards these great people, and he said:

Have ye any that are sick among you? Bring them hither. Have ye any that are lame, or blind, or halt, or maimed, or leprous, or that are withered, or that are deaf, or that are afflicted in any manner? [Today he might add such things as cancer, or AIDS, or other terminal diseases. And then he said to them:] Bring them hither and I will heal them, . . . for I see that your faith is sufficient that I should heal you. (3 Nephi 17:7-8)

Note that the people had sufficient faith to be healed from any type of disease or malady, but they did not have sufficient faith to understand all that Jesus needed to teach them. The principle of faith, and learning by faith, may well be one of the least explored areas in our lives. In the Doctrine and Covenants, the Lord instructs us to "seek learning, even by study and also by faith" (D&C 88:118). President Harold B. Lee has taught us, "Let no one think that learning by faith contemplates an easy

or lazy way to gain knowledge. From heavenly instructions, one may readily understand that learning by faith requires the bending of the whole soul, through worthy living, to become attune to the Holy Spirit of the Lord, the calling up from the depths of one's own mental searching, and the linking of our own efforts to receive the true witness of the Spirit." It may require this type of learning in order to understand such doctrines as the Atonement, or the covenants made in the endowments of the temple, or eternal marriage, or some of the messages of the prophets.

Elder Bruce R. McConkie is an example of learning by faith. President Ezra Taft Benson describes Elder McConkie as a Nephi who "provided the entire Church with an example of gospel scholarship." Elder McConkie was bombarded with gospel questions throughout his life, and he observed on one occasion, "People eternally ask me questions that they ought to figure out for themselves. I don't have any more obligation than they do to know the answers to these things, and they have the same sources to look to that I do." Through his lifetime of searching and living gospel principles, Elder McConkie testified on one occasion, "I have a perfect knowledge that Jesus Christ is the Son of the living God, and that he was crucified for the sins of the world."

**Number four: We must become as Christ.** At the conclusion of the Savior's teachings and ministering to the Nephites, he gave a crowning admonition when he said, "What manner of men ought ye to be? Verily I say unto you, even as I am" (3 Nephi 27:27). In our day, the Lord has commanded, "Sanctify yourselves that your minds become single to God, and the days will come that you shall see him; for



he will unveil his face unto you, and it shall be in his own time, and in his own way, and according to his own will" (D&C 88:68). The promise that the pure in heart shall see God is being fulfilled in the lives of faithful Latter-day Saints as they meet the challenges of mortality with faith in Christ. President Benson taught:

Let us read the Book of Mormon and be convinced that Jesus is the Christ. Let us continually reread the Book of Mormon so that we might more fully come to Christ, be committed to Him, centered in Him, and consumed in Him.

We are meeting the adversary everyday, [President Benson continues.] The challenges of this era will rival any of the past, and these challenges will increase both spiritually and temporally. We must be close to Christ, we must daily take His name upon us, always remember Him and keep His commandments.<sup>3</sup>

As we come unto Christ, daily feast upon his words, and bear with patience and faith the trials, sufferings, and challenges of life, we see the Savior in ways that might not be possible otherwise. Let me illustrate this with an experience. A few years ago, I observed a very dear friend struggle as his eternal companion's health declined. Much prayer, fasting, and ministering was done in her behalf. He spent many days at her bedside in the hospital. As I visited with him there, he said, "This is the most painful thing I've ever done. I've come to know things that I have never known before, but I'm not sure that I really wanted to learn them." A few months after her passing, he spoke in a stake conference and explained how this painful experience had brought him closer to his eternal companion and to the Lord, by relating the following poem:

I asked God to take away my pride,  
And God said, "No."  
He said it was not for him to take away,  
But for me to give up.

<sup>3</sup> Benson, *A Witness and a Warning*, 58.



I asked God to make my suffering child whole,  
And God said, "No."

He said her spirit is whole,  
Her body is only temporary.  
I asked god to grant me patience,  
And God said, "No."

He said that patience is a byproduct of tribulation.  
It isn't granted, it's earned.  
I asked God to give me happiness,  
And God said, "No."

He said that he gives blessings.  
Happiness is up to me.  
I asked God to spare me pain,  
And God said, "No."

He said suffering draws you apart from worldly cares,  
And brings you closer to me.  
I asked God to make my spirit grow,  
And God said, "No."

He said I must grow on my own,  
But he will prune me to make me fruitful.  
I asked God if He loved me,  
And God said, "Yes."

He gave me His only Beloved Son who died for me,  
And I will be in heaven some day because I believe.  
I asked God to help me love others as much as He loves me,  
And God said, "Ah, finally you have the idea."

Such an experience not only helps one to see God in one's life, but it brings one to more fully know him and to feel a profound gratitude for precious eternal covenants, companions, and families.

**Number five: Experiencing the love of Christ brings joy and desires for worthiness.** The experiences and feelings of the Nephites as they were ministered to by the Savior are beyond our abilities to comprehend. Mormon explained this as he wrote:

The eye hath never seen, neither hath the ear heard, before, so great and marvelous things as we saw and heard. . . . No tongue can speak, neither can there be written by any man, neither can the hearts of men conceive so great and marvelous things as we both saw and heard Jesus speak; and no one can conceive of the joy which filled our souls. . . . So

great was the joy of the multitude that they were overcome. (3 Nephi 17:16–18)

By including the account of Christ's visit to the Nephites, it seems that the Lord does, in fact, part the veil slightly so that we can have a brief glimpse into what it would be like to actually be with him. President Benson has said that "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." Prayerful study of this account will increase our desire and our hope for such an experience. In our day the Lord has promised, "Be faithful and diligent in keeping the commandments of God, and I will encircle thee in the arms of my love" (D&C 6:20). Only those who have this experience will be able to understand fully what the promises really mean.

The following dream was related by President George F Richards in a general conference: "In this dream I was in the presence of my Savior as he stood in midair. He spoke no word to me, but my love for him was such that I have not words to explain. I know that no mortal man can love the Lord as I experienced that love for the Savior unless God reveals it to him. I would have remained in his presence, but there was a power drawing me away from him. As a result of that dream, I had the feeling that no matter what might be required of my hands, what the gospel might entail unto me, I would do what I should be asked to do, even to the laying down of my life, if only I can be with my Savior and have that same sense of love that I had in that dream. It will be the goal of my existence, the desire of my life."

The message of 3 Nephi to each one of us is that if we live worthily, we can enjoy experiences similar to those of the Nephites. It is my witness that the scriptures and

the Lord's prophets help to convey God's love for each of us personally. In 1978 while presiding over the South Africa Johannesburg Mission, Sister LeBaron and I were privileged to participate in an area conference where President Spencer W. Kimball presided. (Also in attendance were President N. Eldon Tanner, Elders Gordon B. Hinckley, Neal A. Maxwell, and James A. Culmore.) President Kimball met with our missionaries the morning after his arrival. That was a glorious experience to be in the presence of the Lord's prophet. He hugged each missionary and shook hands.

As we were taking our seats on the stand, President Kimball indicated that he wished to sit between Sister LeBaron and myself, that Elder Hinckley would sit on my other side. I realized, as we sat there, how honored indeed we were to be with the Prophet, to have the presence of the Lord's prophet there. But as that thought came and left, then another thought occurred to me. I wondered—knowing that he's the prophet and can see through me and discern my many weaknesses—I wondered, if he were going to correct one of my greatest weaknesses, which one might he focus on, since there are so many?

As I sat there and reflected upon that thought, I felt President Kimball pulling on my arm, indicating that he wanted to whisper something to me. Then I thought, "Uh oh, I wonder which one it's going to be." As I leaned over to him, I heard him whisper, "I am learning to love you more all the time." As I heard and felt that expression of love, a lump formed in my throat and tears in my eyes, and I felt such a deep gratitude for that message and the strength that it brought to me. Later on during the meeting, he did that once again. He pulled on my arm and said to me,

"President LeBaron, I want you to know that I love you." As I drove President Kimball and the other Brethren back to the hotel and helped the prophet out of the car, he embraced me and said to me, "Never forget, I love you. You will never forget that, will you?" As I drove back to the chapel to pick up my wife and family, I had tears in my eyes. That evening I recorded in my journal the following: "What a most memorable morning. I felt so unworthy to have such a great desire to be worthy of his confidence, his love, his leadership. I realized that after this morning I can never be the same. I must be more worthy, more dedicated, more faithful, and more loving."

As the power of President Kimball's love gave me greater desire to become more Christlike and greater hope that this really could be, the continued study of the Savior's ministry to the Nephites has had a similar impact on my life. From this study and discussion, hopefully we have seen, as President Benson has testified, in the Book of Mormon we find a pattern for preparing for the Second Coming. Because of the importance and power of 3 Nephi, which focuses upon the coming and ministry of Christ to the Nephites, President Benson has said the following:

Remarkable events occurred on that glorious day and the days that followed. It is clear that 3 Nephi contains some of the most moving and powerful passages in all scripture. It testifies of Jesus Christ, His prophets, and the doctrines of salvation. What a blessing it would be if every family would frequently read together 3 Nephi, discuss its sacred contents, and then determine how they can liken it unto themselves and apply its teachings in their lives!

Third Nephi is a book that should be read and read again. Its testimony of the resurrected Christ in America is given in purity and beauty. . . .

I testify that 3 Nephi is a true account of the resurrected Christ's visit to ancient America and contains His teachings in their pristine truth. I testify that Jesus is the Christ and that He stands at the head of His Church today, even The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.

I testify that He will come again in power and great glory and that He will leave nothing undone for our eternal welfare.

May we daily be the manner of men He is and thus be prepared to meet and dwell with Him."<sup>4</sup>

As President Benson and the prophets of this dispensation have testified, I also witness and testify of the truth of these things. I have felt them; I have seen them.

In the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

---

<sup>4</sup> Benson, *A Witness and a Warning*, 42–43, 45.