



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.



Clyde Williams

Mormon

A Witness with a Warning (Part 1)

and

"Thus We See"

The Teachings of Mormon (Part 2)

Summary:

Clyde Williams examines the identity of the prophet Mormon and highlights his varied roles and valiant qualities. He lived in a society filled with symptoms of departure from a Christ-centered culture. Mormon testifies that the Book of Mormon witnesses to the truth of the Bible. He knew the power of faith, hope, and charity. Mormon felt the responsibility to teach the consequences of unrighteousness and plead for repentance.

Transcript
Book of Mormon, Teachings

FARMS
Brigham Young University
P.O. Box 7113
University Station
Provo, UT 84602
1-800-327-6715
(801) 373-5111
www.farmsresearch.com

\$3.00

WIL-T1



Other FARMS publications on similar topics:

"Moroni: The Man and the Message" by Byron Merrill (MER-T1)

"The Book of Mormon: A Pattern in Preparing a People to Meet Christ" by E. Dale LeBaron
(LEB-T1)

"The Book of Mormon, Designed for Our Day" by Richard D. Rust (RUS-90)

"Ten Testimonies of Jesus Christ from the Book of Mormon" by John W. Welch (WEL-T2)

"Last Call: An Apocalyptic Warning from the Book of Mormon" by Hugh W. Nibley (N-LAT)

The Prophetic Book of Mormon, volume 8 of The Collected Works of Hugh Nibley (N-08)

For a complete listing of FARMS publications,
call 1-800-FARMS-15 for a FARMS catalog.

© 1996 by Clyde Williams

Transcript of a lecture given at the FARMS Book of Mormon Lecture Series.

Mormon: A Witness with a Warning (Part 1)

Clyde Williams

As we begin our discussion today of the prophet Mormon, I think the most important thing for us to do is to turn to 4 Nephi and get some background about the environment and setting in which Mormon comes into play here in the Book of Mormon. Turn with me to 4 Nephi. While you are turning there, let me just give you the background.

You will remember that the Savior has appeared and visited the people from time to time, and there has been a period of righteousness, which is described in 4 Nephi 1:16: "Surely there could not be a happier people among all the people who had been created by the hand of God." Notice the dates at the bottom of the page. This happiness and this period of what might be called a Zion society that existed among the Nephites lasted for approximately 165 years. This was a time in which there were no wars or contentions, and it was a time where there was peace. They were living the law of consecration. There were all kinds of wonderful blessings. It sounds like a place where I would like to live; I suppose all of us would want to live in such a society. One of the hard things for me to understand—and I am sure it must have been for Mormon, as he read about this spiritual society later—is how this could all be lost. How could we lose such a glorious society? Who would want to fall away? You will notice, looking at verse 20, that there is a small part of the people who begin to revolt from the church and begin to be Lamanites, not too far after this. Look at the top of the page, in verse 24, and notice that the year is the 201st year. Remember, the Savior came at about A.D. 35, so it has been about 165 years. Now notice that in the next three verses, there are at least six major things that are happening that contribute to the decline and downfall of the Nephite society at this time. Help me pick those out.

Beginning in verse 24, what things do you see there that are leading to the decline of this nation?

[Student answer:] Pride.

Pride is a major factor. What goes hand in hand with the pride?

[Student answer:] Costly apparel.

Costly apparel and the worldliness that comes with that—the riches. What about verse 25? What is happening here?

[Student answer:] They stopped living the law of consecration.

Yes. They have no more common substance. They have stopped living the law of consecration. That is a major spiritual setback for them. And then look at verse 26. What else has happened here?

[Student answer:] They've divided themselves into classes.

Yes. Now, this is not talking about religion classes, obviously; this is talking about social classes. They have divided themselves, you see, and there begins to be this separation and disparity that we see so much of in our own society today. What else is going on here?

[Student answer:] The church is no longer teaching truth. It is more interested in getting gain for itself.

Yes. And notice that they begin to build up churches. So there are other churches that are being built up, and as you have said, their purpose is to get gain. Finally, along with this building up of other churches, what is happening here?

[Student answer:] They are denying the church of Christ.

Absolutely. They are denying the true church.

All of this is happening, and it's coming rather rapidly now. We are just going to quickly set the stage so that we can have a feeling, when Mormon comes on the scene, of what his environment is like. What is the society? What has been happening? What is he being born into? Notice, if we jump down here to verse 29, we see that there is another church that has sprung up. Now, there are many, but there is one that is particularly in opposition to the church of Christ. They persecute the true church. Remember, there are the three Nephite disciples who have been promised that they will live until Christ comes. Notice what they are going to do with those three. In the next several verses it tells what they are doing to them. What are some of the things

they are going to try to do to get rid of these three living witnesses of Christ's ministry?

[Student answer:] Put them in prison.

Yes. What else?

[Student answer:] They sought to kill them.

Yes. They were seeking to kill them, to put them in furnaces of fire. If that didn't do it, they would put them in dens of wild beasts, and so on and so forth. They were trying to get rid of the evidence—these three living witnesses—if you will.

In verse 35, we'll see that there is a great division that occurs with the people. They begin to be divided and separated, as they were once before, as Nephites and Lamanites. Those who reject the gospel are referred to as the Lamanites, and they begin—notice the key phrase—to “wilfully rebel” (verse 38). Further, we see the decline. (Notice that we are moving along many years here. We started at A.D. 201 when we saw this decline, and we are going to end up around A.D. 321. So, all this is happening in a period of about 120 years.) Notice, in verse 40, the wicked have become more numerous than the righteous, or the people of God. And then in verse 42, what else is happening among these people that is going to further lead to their decline?

[Student answer:] Gadianton robbers.

Yes. We have all kinds of secret combinations of Gadianton that are springing up. It is not too much longer after this, we'll notice over here in verse 46, that the Gadianton robbers have spread all over the land and have taken control, and there are none, save the disciples, you see, those who are true followers of Christ, that are righteous. It has become a state of total wickedness.

Now, it is in this setting in which Ammaron, who was the record keeper around A.D. 320, has to hide up some of the sacred records. Remember that there are lots of stacks of plates here that he has been keeping charge of over the years. He has to go hide those because of the fear that the wicked people will take them and destroy them. They are certainly not in favor of these things being preserved.

It is in this setting and this kind of circumstance that Mormon is going to come into the world. Now, try to imagine yourself. Think of a young child being born. Approximately A.D. 311 is when Mormon is going to be born. This is the society, the environment, the conditions under which he was born, with much wickedness, including Gadianton robbers running the show. This is not exactly a prime condition in which to be born.

What I would like to do in the next few minutes is to take some time and go back to look for information about Mormon. We won't learn this just from the book of Mormon, because Mormon has left us other clues in various places throughout this Book of Mormon. Let's look, first of all, at what we know about Mormon's father. Look in Mormon 1:5. What do we know about his father?

[Student answer:] His father's name was Mormon also.

[Student answer:] He's a descendant of Nephi.

Okay, so his name is Mormon, and he's a descendant of Nephi. He has moved his family down toward Zarahemla. That is about all that we really know. There are some things we will be able to learn if we think carefully and look at some other verses. We have to put two and two together here. Otherwise, we really don't know any more than this.

Now, we know that Mormon's name is Mormon, right? We are talking not about his father, but about the writer of this little book, the one who has been the compiler of this entire book up to this point. Let's go back to 3 Nephi 5 and see what we can learn about this young man, Mormon, as he gives us some clues.

By the way, while you are turning there, we might just add this little thought: We have one little clue given us about the meaning of the name Mormon. The Prophet Joseph Smith recorded that the word *Mormon* means "more good."¹ I am sure that names may mean something about what we hope is going to happen. More good, you see, would come from someone like Mormon.

¹ Joseph Fielding Smith, comp., *The Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1976), 300.

Look carefully in Mormon 5:12. Let's review here. What do we learn about Mormon and about his name here?

[Student answer:] He was named after a place called Mormon.

Right. Does anyone remember in their study what we have learned about this place called Mormon? What happened there that made it significant?

[Student answer:] It was where Alma did his baptisms.

Okay. Which Alma? Alma the Elder. He was a wicked priest of King Noah's court at one point. He repented when he heard Abinadi's message, remember, and then he slipped out of the community and began to come back quietly among the people of King Noah and preach the message of Abinadi. Then people began to gather with him at a place called Mormon, the waters of Mormon, where they were baptized. (Most of that we read in Mosiah 18.) I think we just need to know that it was a place that was beautiful; it was a place that these people could go to establish the church anew among them. Now, I say all this and then have to ask this question: How does Mormon know he is named after this place called Mormon? It doesn't tell us here. We're going to have to make an assumption. How could he possibly know that he was named after this place? Where could he have learned it?

[Student answer:] Would it have been written down somewhere?

Maybe someone wrote it down. He probably would learn about this place in his studying, no question. We'll talk about that in a minute. But how would *young* Mormon, as a boy, know? Who could have told him why he was named what he was named?

[Student answer:] His father.

Yes. It has to be from his parents. His mom and dad have to have told him that. Who else is going to tell him why he was named that? No one else is going to know that. So, even though it doesn't state that here, we have to know that that is the case. Now, what does that tell us about his parents? That they would choose this name and tell him about this place—what does that tell you about his parents?

[Student answer:] They were totally righteous.

I'd have to say that that is not too much of an assumption to make. They knew that they wanted a son who would be reminded of this great event in hopes that maybe there could be another experience like that that happened at Mormon a long time ago with Alma. They hoped he would remember this place and that he would strive to revive the church anew and to live up to these principles and standards. There is a good lesson about what we name our kids and about helping them understand the meaning and importance of names. Although we don't know very much about Mormon's parents, we have to assume they really cared about their son; it is from them he learned about this place.

Now, think about this: Where would Mormon have learned further about this place?

[Student answer:] When he abridged the records, he would have read about it.

Yes. Would there have been any way for him to have learned about it before that time? We have already mentioned one way—his parents teaching him—but how would *they* have known about this place? Let's turn to Alma 63:12; I think this will give us an additional clue. I turn here because this is one of the best places I know of to indicate that they had some things besides just this set, or sets, of metal plates. "Now behold, all those engravings which were in the possession of Helaman were written and sent forth among the children of men throughout all the land, save it were those parts which had been commanded by Alma should not go forth." So, what does that tell us that might help us in trying to understand what Mormon could have come to know as a young man?

[Student answer:] They had records with them.

Yes, they had records with them, the plates, but did they have something else here?

[Student answer:] They had their own scriptures.

Yes, they had been written down. In other words, there were copies of the scriptures that were written down and accessible among the people. Perhaps they were not quite as bound and fancy as we have today; nevertheless, the

only sets of scriptures were not the heavy metal plates that had been kept by the record keeper. There were copies. And notice, they were copies of everything except those things that had been forbidden to go forth (that would have had to do with the brother of Jared's vision and so on).

So, those things are being distributed, and it seems to me that obviously Mormon Sr. and his wife would have had access to those records, because they were righteous. Certainly these copies would have been proliferated even more during the time of that righteous period in 4 Nephi. So, there were copies available that they had kept and maintained and used to teach their children. These are copies Mormon could have used when he was a young boy. I used to think that his original acquaintance with these records would have been when he got them at age twenty-four. In reality we have to come to the conclusion that he has had previous exposure to them, has been made aware of many of these great stories, and is looking forward to learning even more, perhaps, in some of the more-detailed accounts. Well, that is about all we can say there.

Let's go to the next point. We know that Mormon, later on when he is married, has a son. We don't have any details of that part of his life. I suspect at this point he is writing very little, but he does have one son we know of. He names his son Moroni. We all know that. I think what I would like to have us think about for a minute, Why does he name his son Moroni? Again, we have to read between the lines here. I think we might ask ourselves if there are some clues in the text as to why.

[Student answer:] Captain Moroni was living at a time of great wickedness and stood up for what he believed to be true, and Mormon knew that his son was born in a time more wicked than the time Captain Moroni had been born in. He probably had hopes for his son to stand up for righteousness and the things that he believed to be true.

If I were going to tell bedtime stories to my son and my son was Mormon Jr., I think one of the things I would like to read about would be Captain Moroni, , because he was such a faithful person in times of continual decline and warfare. It would seem to be an ideal place to go back and share the

courage and so on. Now, we know a little bit about how Mormon felt about Captain Moroni. Let's read Alma 48:11-13:

And Moroni was a strong and a mighty man; he was a man of a perfect understanding; yea, a man that did not delight in bloodshed; a man whose soul did joy in the liberty and the freedom of his country, and his brethren from bondage and slavery;

Yea, a man whose heart did swell with thanksgiving to his God, for the many privileges and blessings which he bestowed upon his people; a man who did labor exceedingly for the welfare and safety of his people.

Yea, and he was a man who was firm in the faith of Christ, and he had sworn with an oath to defend his people, his rights, and his country, and his religion, even to the loss of his blood.

Now, if we were going to go back through that—we won't take the time to do that now—you would notice that there are probably seven or eight remarkable qualities of this Captain Moroni listed: He was a strong and mighty man, with perfect understanding, who didn't delight in bloodshed, but did delight in liberty and freedom, and had a firm testimony and faith in Christ. All these qualities are so essential. Can you kind of see how not only would Mormon Sr. feel about this man as he may have read, but certainly how Mormon Jr., the prophet whom we are really talking about today, must have been moved by these accounts? So, Mormon was wishing that somehow in his day and time there could be another righteous Captain Moroni who might help to bring his people back around to rally as it were to liberty and to Christ.

Let's read one further verse here, verse 17: "Yea, verily, verily I say unto you, if all men had been, and were, and ever would be, like unto Moroni, behold, the very powers of hell would have been shaken forever; yea, the devil would never have power over the hearts of the children of men." I don't know what kind of epitaph you would want written on your tombstone, but if that could be said about me, what more could I ask? The very powers of hell would have been shaken if all men could be and ever would be like unto Captain Moroni. Now, again, we can't prove this conclusively, but I think these expressions by Mormon of how he felt about Moroni just seemed to lend credence to the fact that he has named his son Moroni after this Captain

Moroni, and that he has this great desire to see that his own son might rise up and have influence like Captain Moroni did upon the people in his own time. That is all we are going to say about this. We need to move on to the next point.

We have established at least the names of the individuals with whom we are dealing. Let's now go back to 3 Nephi 5. We have already read in the book of Mormon and found out that Mormon Sr. is a descendant of Nephi, so I just had us skip over and look at chapter 5:20. You will notice that Mormon says—and he says this not in a prideful way, but I think to help people realize that it matters to him—"I am . . . a pure descendant of Lehi." In my mind, what is being said in that statement is that he has a heritage to live up to. He is a descendant of Lehi, and he wants to live up to that heritage, he wants to follow Lehi's example and follow his footsteps. There is a great lesson to each of us. We need to be living in such a way that we can establish a righteous heritage for our own children and grandchildren. We want them to be able to look back and say, "We would like to be like our great grandfather (or grandmother) and those who have preceded us." So, we know that Mormon is a pure descendant of Lehi.

Now, let's look here in Mormon 5:13. What other responsibility does Mormon have?

[Student answer:] He is a disciple of Christ.

Okay. To me, this phrase means he's not just a follower. The fact that he says, "I have been called of him" helps us distinguish between the twelve apostles in Jerusalem and the twelve disciples, as they are called here in the New World. I believe that what this is telling us—and this is just my personal feeling—is that Mormon has been called with that apostolic calling and is and has become a disciple with that authority to go out and to declare the words of the Savior among his people. So, he has that important call.

Now let's go back to chapters 1 and 2 of Mormon and look at two other things about this young prophet Mormon. Look at Mormon 1:15 and 2:1, where we learn two more things about Mormon and his heritage and responsibilities. What's happened to him here?

[Student answer:] At age fifteen he was visited by the Lord.

Here's a young man who has had an appearance from the Lord when he was fifteen—not unlike Joseph Smith. All right, what else?

[Student comment:] It just seems like the Lord uses the younger people when the world is in a time of sin, because Joseph Smith was also that age when he was visited by the Lord.

Why might that be? In many cases, particularly when there is a time of apostasy, such as is the case here, why do you think the Lord would turn to someone young? Surely you would think he would want a more-seasoned veteran. Why do you think he would do that?

[Student answer:] Because they are more willing and receptive to his work, because they haven't been conditioned by the world to think a certain way, and they are just more open to his teachings.

[Student answer:] They just haven't been indoctrinated by other people.

[Student answer:] Young people also have more time. If he could called some old person, they may only have five years. But Joseph Smith had twenty-three years before he died.

Thank you. If you took the analogy of the clay on the table, the clay is not hardened. He can mold and shape and take Mormon and make of him what he needs of him. In other words, God can make him the instrument He needs him to be—if Mormon is willing to be yielding and responsive, which it appears he is. He has been prepared by his parents to do such a thing. Thank you. Those are good comments, and they are really important to our understanding of Mormon and why he was called.

What other thing is there in chapter 2 about his life and his responsibilities?

[Student answer:] He was already a military leader.

Yes. He was a military leader at age sixteen. Let's come back and talk about that in a minute. He is now the chief captain of the Nephite armies. That is a remarkable thing in and of itself. There is one other thing, before we leave this introduction of Mormon, that I think we ought to focus on, and that is found in 3 Nephi 26:12: "Therefore I, Mormon, do write the things which have been

commanded me of the Lord. And now I, Mormon, make an end of my sayings, and proceed to write the things which have been commanded me." So, looking at that verse, what does it tell us about the writing that Mormon is going to do during his career?

[Student answer:] Everything that he writes or includes in this record was commanded.

Yes, and I believe that is very important for us to realize—that while Mormon is the editor and the one who is going to be putting this record together, he would not presume to put things in that the Lord did not want. If he were to start including things that sound great and really good to him and yet the Lord would object, he wouldn't include it. He is writing the things that the Lord is commanding him to write.

Let's summarize what we have done to this point. It seems to me that there are five—well, there is one more thing we need to look at before we look at these five characteristics. Let's go back to Mormon 3:16: "And it came to pass that I utterly refused to go up against mine enemies; and 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." This is a little hard to pick out, but as you look at this verse, what is one of Mormon's responsibilities, as he understands it? What does he have to stand as, or stand for, among these people? Can you see it there?

[Student answer:] A witness.

Yes, a witness. At this point he says an "idle witness," because he is going to be a witness of their destruction. (We'll talk about that later.) That is part of his role—to stand as a witness, to record and to testify and to witness of these things.

Now that we have discussed that, there are five things we see here that we could outline as the roles of Mormon. What are his roles or functions have been that we have discussed so far? We may have to think back a bit. What are his roles among these people now, or in his life?

[Student answer:] To keep records of the things the Lord commanded him.

He is a record keeper of sacred records. That is one. Thank you. What else? He is an editor and author in part of that record keeping. What else?

[Student answer:] He is a military leader.

Yes, he's a military leader, the chief captain of their armies. Okay, what else?

[Student answer:] He is a witness of Jesus Christ.

I guess you would say he is a witness in several ways. He is a witness of the Savior; he's a witness of the destruction; and he is a witness to them that if they don't repent, this is what will happen. So, he is a witness. What else? He had a son by the name of Moroni. So what else is he?

[Student answer:] He's a father.

Let's not forget that. This is not given a lot of detail, but just with some of the things we see when he writes to his son, he must have been a good and faithful father, although that is not all recorded for us. I don't think that was an insignificant calling to Mormon. He is a righteous father. And the last one, we've kind of hit around this, but we go back to 3 Nephi 5. Remember, we are told that he was called as a disciple. So, he is a religious leader. He is an apostle or disciple, if you will, among his own people.

Well, those seem to be the five roles. Let me review those: He is a father; he's a religious leader; he's a military leader; he's an editor, author, and record keeper; and he is a witness to these people.

Now, understanding that, let's go back to the book of Mormon. I want to look at the first two chapters. I want you to just search here with me. Let's see if we can find what has happened to Mormon by the time he is sixteen. We have reviewed some of this, but we have not reviewed all of it. Let's look in chapters 1 and 2. What do we know about him? By the time he is sixteen, what has occurred in his life?

[Student answer:] The last record keeper has come to visit him and brought the plates and demanded his trust.

How old was he when Ammaron came to him the first time?

[Student answer:] Age ten.

How many ten-year-olds do you know? I don't have any ten-year-olds now, but I had a ten-year-old a few years ago. I am thinking of a particular one who is now serving a mission, so he can't get even with me if I tell a little story about him. His hero was Bob Hope. He loved Bob Hope. We'd have family home evening, and it was so difficult because he would want to crack jokes left and right. We'd have to say, "Just hold off. After family home evening, we'll give you funny time." He would and we were able to survive. I thought, "He's a ten-year-old. Give him knowledge about the plates, and he would probably be up there cashing them in for money to go to the candy store." What does the fact that when Mormon was at age ten, Ammaron came to him and told him that he was going to be the record keeper tell us about Mormon? Ammaron tells him that he is not going to get the records yet. In fact, when does he tell Mormon he is going to get the records? Look carefully. It tells you in verse 3.

[Student answer:] When he is about twenty-four years of age.

What does that tell us about young Mormon, if he can come and tell Mormon this at that young age?

[Student answer:] He is mature for his age.

Yes. In fact, he is described in the last phrase of Mormon 1:2 like this: "I perceive that *thou art a sober child, and art quick to observe.*" He is an unusual young man. That is going to be important in a minute, so you remember that.

What else is he seeing? Look through the next several verses. By the time he is fifteen, what else has he been made aware of? Look at verse 13. What does he see here?

[Student answer:] He saw there was wickedness all over the land, even so much that miracles had stopped.

Do you think he would want to be exposed to all of this stuff? I doubt it. Not being the kind of young man he is. But even so, because of his society, he has been forced to see that there is so much wickedness around him. Think about that as it relates to us and our society. But here he is amongst all this wickedness. You mentioned something else that he had witnessed. Verse 13 says that the Lord would take away the beloved disciples, so now he sees that

they are withdrawn. They are no longer ministering to his people because of the people's wickedness. He is aware of that, apparently by the time he is fifteen. We have already mentioned the fact that he has been visited by the Lord. That is over here in verse 15. What else has happened?

[Student answer:] Verse 16 says that he has already become a prophet.

He was going out to preach, and what was unique about this was that he went out to preach and warn the people in general and what happened?

[Student answer:] The Lord forbade him.

Yes. The Lord forbade him, because of their wickedness. This isn't to say that there are not still some who are righteous and that he is unable to preach to them, because later on we learn that we have some of his discourses and writings. But at least to this point, to the general people, he has been forbidden, because they are willfully rebelling and because of the hardness of their hearts.

And then, as we have already mentioned, he has become, in Mormon 2:1, the military leader. Think about this. All of this by the time he is age sixteen! We mentioned before that there was something unique about Mormon being called as the military leader at age sixteen. I want to ask you this question: Why would they choose Mormon to be their military leader? Was he just a big hulk of a guy, and so they thought that he just looked like the he-man? Why would they choose him to be their military leader?

[Student answer:] Because they knew he was righteous, and even though they weren't righteous themselves, they still saw that in him.

Thank you. I think you are exactly right. Isn't that interesting? We see this in our own society. It is kind of like saying, "We want so-and-so with us, because he'll be sober and can drive." We choose someone and acknowledge or recognize or put significance on what their righteousness or principles give them and yet, seeing all of that, are not willing to change and adapt them or incorporate them into our own lives. This has to be the tragedy. They can see in Mormon, even at age sixteen, a remarkable and unusual capacity to lead and to be a righteous individual and to have greater power than they themselves possess, yet, even seeing that, they are so far gone spiritually that

they are not willing to change their own lives to become like him. Well, I think that somehow we need to recognize that there are, in our own lives today, dangers that this might happen.

I took the time to have us go through and look at all of this information about Mormon before he was age sixteen. Here he is, having seen the Lord, having been given the command to take care of the records, having seen all of these wicked things taking place, having the option to try to preach among this people, having been their military leader, and so on. The thought that has come to me is that, and one of the reasons this book, this account—particularly these two chapters—is here is one of the great lessons. We need latter-day Mormons; that is, we need people like Mormon. Every one of us needs to become like Mormon.

Now, what is it that Mormon is doing? I might demonstrate it in this way: I have three little circles here that I have drawn and have put some words on them. One says "Age"; one says "Environment"; and one says "Desire." The problem with all of us, as we come into this world, is that each of these three factors has an influence on us. Sometimes when we are young, our age can overshadow what we really desire to do. And a lot of times our environment becomes predominant; it dictates what we become and what we do. In the case of Mormon, what does he have to do? I mean, he's young, so that could be a challenge for most of us. You know that when we are young teenagers, that isn't usually the time we are the most righteous in our lives. So, he's got problems with his age, right? How about his environment? Wicked! Does environment overcome the average person? Absolutely! So what has to happen is that somehow he has to have enough desire to be righteous to allow it to overcome his youth and his environment and to allow it to be the predominant factor in his life. And that is what Mormon does.

That is exactly what has to happen with young people in the world today. We have so much in our environment that could bring us down, that could put us in a situation where we are being overcome by the influences in the world, and a lot of this hits us when we are very young. Satan is not stupid! He is, in essence, making childhood disappear. He is trying to expose all of

the adult “secrets and wickedness” at a very early age, in hopes that youth and environment will overcome any desire of righteousness. Then the youth will falter, just as they did in the time of Mormon. Again, I say, we need to have more latter-day Mormons, people who are like unto Mormon, whose desires are like his were.

I want to do something at this point that will perhaps help us to see a rather rapid yet significant overview of this little book of Mormon. We are going to go through and follow what I call “signposts on the road to the decline of the Nephite nation.” We are going to do this, again, by reviewing some things that we have already discussed. We are just going to start quickly back in chapter 1. As we go along, in addition to pointing out the things that are happening leading to the further decline during Mormon’s lifetime, I am also going to point out how old Mormon is at certain places. You will see that this is a very rapid decline. Mormon is not writing very much here, and he will tell us why. He says, “I am not writing with a whole lot of detail here.” We’ll point that out as we come.

We start back in Mormon 1:13. You will notice, as we have already mentioned here, two things that are happening: we have wickedness prevailing, and of course, the beloved disciples have been taken. What else is happening here in verse 13 that we haven’t mentioned. What else is happening that leads to or is part of this decline?

[Student answer:] Miracles and healing.

Yes. The miracles are ceasing. When there is no faith, then there are no healings or miracles happening, you see. So, the healings and miracles have ceased among the people.

Now go to verse 14. There are two more things that are happening here—you have to catch the very bottom of that page, and then as we turn the page, what is happening here as a part of that decline?

[Student answer:] The gifts of the Spirit have ceased.

The gifts of the Spirit have virtually become unknown among them. What else? This other is kind of right along the same line here, but it is simply that “the Holy Ghost did not come upon any, because of their wickedness and

unbelief" (v. 13). So, not only have they lost the gifts of the Spirit, but the Holy Ghost is not able to bear witness to these people, because of their wickedness, because they have become so full of unbelief and wickedness.

Now, let's go to Mormon 1:16. Why is all this happening? Verse 16 says that it is simply because they have willfully rebelled. Now when we say "willfully rebelled," what are we saying?

[Student answer:] They knowingly rebelled.

Yes. This is not in ignorance. This is not accidental. This is knowingly and willfully coming out in rebellion against the things they have known. When we do that, and the Spirit withdraws, and that gives the adversary much more power and influence. All of this is happening while Mormon is fifteen. In addition to this, as we describe the wickedness prevailing, look down here at verse 19, if you will. This gives us a little better description of some of the wickedness going on. What kinds of things are happening? What have we got occurring?

[Student answer:] We have sorceries, witchcrafts, and magic.

Think about our own society today. Think of the sorceries. Here we have all kinds of tools of the devil, where people are involved in all kinds of satanic worship, with sorceries, witchcrafts, and magic. All of this gives power to the evil one upon the entire face of the land. This is the circumstance when Mormon is just about to turn sixteen.

Now let's go to Mormon 2:8: "But behold, the land was filled with robbers and with Lamanites; and notwithstanding the great destruction which hung over my people, they did not repent of their evil doings; therefore there was blood and carnage spread throughout all the face of the land, both on the part of the Nephites and also on the part of the Lamanites; and it was one complete revolution throughout all the face of the land."

As this is happening all around them, Mormon is about age twenty. The way we are able to determine this, of course, is that we know from the dates given to us that it is about A.D. 311 when Mormon is born, and then following the little clues to the dates that are given to us, we are able to determine how old he is and to see how rapidly this account is taking place. He is just giving

us a bare surface skim. Well, while he is in this state, age twenty, and we have the wickedness, destruction, blood and carnage, and handing over the disciples, there comes a time where Mormon begins to get a little bit of hope. His hope, if you will look, is centered around what begins to happen in Mormon 2:11, 12, and 13. Take a look at those. Let's get a feel for what is going on by reading verse 12: "And it came to pass that when I, Mormon, saw their lamentation and their mourning and their sorrow before the Lord, my heart did begin to rejoice within me, knowing the mercies and the long-suffering of the Lord, therefore supposing that he would be merciful unto them that they would again become a righteous people."

So, when he sees this lamentation and sorrowing going on, his thought is, "Maybe they are finally going to repent. They have been humble enough. They are going to turn back to the Lord." But, to his great disappointment, as you see in the next verse, verse 13, he says: "But behold this my joy was vain, for their sorrowing was not unto repentance, because of the goodness of God; but it was rather the sorrowing of the damned, because the Lord would not always suffer them to take happiness in the sin." They couldn't have their cake and eat it too. They couldn't have all this wickedness and not have any consequences. One of the next steps in the decline of the nation is that people begin to become sorrowful, not because they need to repent, but because they begin to die because they get a disease, and they wish they could have kept up their lifestyle, or because they have this hardship, or because this problem occurs, you see. All of this is part of the challenge when people are so overcome with wickedness.

Let's go to Mormon 2:26. At this point, as we look at this, Mormon is about thirty-four years of age. Notice what else has happened to the people? What has taken place that is leading further to the decline of these people?

[Student answer:] There have been wars, and the strength of the Lord is not with them.

They were left to themselves, and the Spirit of the Lord did not help to sustain them any further. Now turn to Mormon 3:9. Mormon is about fifty-one years old here. Notice how quickly we are moving through his life. We are

just moving along and going from point to point. In verse 9, he says: "And now, because of this great thing which my people, the Nephites, had done, they began to boast in their own strength, and began to swear before the heavens that they would avenge themselves of the blood of their brethren who had been slain by their enemies." The Nephites had begun to boast of their own strength. They had been successful in battle, and they are boasting in their own strength, swearing that they are going to avenge themselves. This is the time when Mormon refuses to be their military leader. Notice his two reasons: (1) they are boasting of their own strength and are not relying on God, and (2) they are seeking to avenge themselves. So, he utterly refuses to be their leader.

We should just mention, as we pass through this, why Mormon is going so quickly, why he is just giving us little bits here. I am going to slip back, if you will, to Mormon 2:18 and look at the top of the page. He said, "Upon these plates [that is, this small abridgment he is making] I did forbear to make a full account of their wickedness and abominations [in other words, on the other set, he did make a full account, but on this one he didn't], for behold, a continual scene of wickedness and abominations has been before mine eyes ever since I have been sufficient to behold the ways of man." So, he is trying to spare us from the terrible anguish and problems with which he has been confronted.

The Nephites begin to seek to take revenge. We turn now to Mormon 4:11. If you will look here at this time, again we see that it is almost impossible to describe the horrible scene of blood and carnage. Every heart is hardened, and people are delighting in the shedding of blood. It is my feeling that what is recorded in a letter from Mormon to his son Moroni in Moroni 9 likely fits right here. Let's go to Moroni 9:5 and see what is happening among these people. You will see how it fits the description given here in Mormon 3: "For so exceedingly do they anger that it seemeth me that they have no fear of death; and they have lost their love, one towards another; and they thirst after blood and revenge continually." Notice what it says. What have they lost? Their love one towards another. When you lose the Spirit, you lose the ability

to love. Love is a gift of the Spirit, and they have lost their ability to love. When people lose their ability to love, what do they do? Turn the page. The Lamanites have also lost this, and they have been really atrocious. We won't read the description of what they are doing, but from verse 8, it seems that the atrocities of the Lamanites are exceeded by what the Nephites do. In verses 9–11, it says:

Many of the daughters of the Lamanites have they taken prisoners; and after depriving them of that which was most dear and precious above all things, which is chastity and virtue—

And after they had done this thing, they did murder them in a most cruel manner, torturing their bodies even unto death; and after they have done this, they devour their flesh like unto wild beasts, because of the hardness of their hearts; and they do it for a token of bravery.

O my beloved son, how can a people like this, that are without civilization—

Verse 20 says that they are “without principle, and past feeling.” They have stooped to such an extent that they could deprive people of their chastity and virtue and then torture and kill them in the most inhumane manners. Think about some of the trends we see in our own society, as people begin to lose love. We see violence and the indiscriminate killing that is going on. We begin to recognize that we may be headed on some similar paths here.

Let's go back to Mormon 4:12 and look at the description that is given: “And there never had been so great wickedness among all the children of Lehi, nor even among all the house of Israel, according to the words of the Lord, as was among this people.” There was tremendous deprivation of the Spirit. These people had lost their love and had become without civilization. When we come to Mormon 4:16, we learn that Mormon is now sixty-four years old.

[Student question:] When you were talking about this, how would you compare it to the last days?

Well, I guess we'd have to say, as the Savior suggested, as it was in the days of Noah, so shall it be at the coming of the Son of Man. I suspect there will be wickedness like unto this at some places here on earth before the Savior comes. The difference is that we know there will be righteous people who will

be preserved, who will be keeping the commandments, and who will be coming unto Christ and will thereby avoid much of that that, unfortunately, the Nephites didn't avoid, because they had become so wicked and had rejected Christ.

[Student question:] Will it be more wicked at the last days than at this time?

I don't think it could be *more* wicked, because this sounds pretty wicked to me. But it may be *as* wicked. I don't know how it could be much more wicked. I can't think of it being worse. I hope it couldn't be worse. This sounds pretty bad to me.

Now, let's just quickly look here in Mormon 5. Mormon repents of his oath and once again becomes their leader. It is my own opinion that he does this not because he has any hope (verse 2 says he was without hope) and not because he feels he was wrong in what he did, but I think he has come to the point that he feels it is a forgone conclusion that destruction is going to occur, so he says, "I will come with you, and I will die with you as a part of my witness to what is going to happen." At this point, then, we are going to skip some of the things in chapter 5 and go to Mormon 6 to look quickly at the destruction that actually occurs.

They come to Cumorah. There had been much destruction along the way. As we read the description here in chapter 6, we see that there were about 230,000 people who were destroyed. It was a tragic day, and it is at this point that we have Mormon lamenting after this tremendous battle, in Mormon 6:17: "O ye fair ones, how could ye have departed from the ways of the Lord! O ye fair ones, how could ye have rejected that Jesus, who stood with open arms to receive you!" He laments, in verse 22, that they had not repented before this great day of destruction had come upon them.

It is my witness to each of you that Mormon faced such a tragic circumstance and yet was faithful to the end. He is an example worth following. He is one that we could seek to emulate in our lives. He is an example that we could use as we teach our own children. We need to be more like Mormon, who was able to rise above his environment and be faithful and

true, even when all the world around him was rejecting and turning away from those important principles. It is my hope and prayer that each of us would strive to do that. I bear testimony that Mormon is real, that his life is a powerful example. Next time we will talk about some of his writings. We are going to talk more about his role as record keeper and see the great teachings he gave that not only can help us, but will bless our lives if we will follow them.

I leave that testimony with you, in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

"Thus We See": The Teachings of Mormon (Part 2)

Clyde Williams

This is our second lecture on Mormon. Last time, as you remember, we spent time discussing the background of Mormon—his life, his birth, and history, as well as some of his roles and experiences he had in his life. We discussed five major roles he had in his lifetime. Let me just review those. In my mind, he was, first and foremost, a father. He was also a religious leader of the people; a military leader (and that at a very young age, as you recall); an editor, author, and compiler of records; and a witness not only of Jesus Christ, but of the destruction and that that would happen to his people. We spent some time going through and outlining some of the steps that went along the road to the decline of the Nephite nation, which were chronologically arranged for us by Mormon as he saw these things unfold. This destruction was much to his dismay, and he was almost helpless in his efforts to try to stop it.

We left off just concluding last time with Mormon 6. I would like to go back there just for one moment. We are going to proceed today and talk about some of the teachings of Mormon, but let's bridge the discussions by returning to Mormon 6. Remind yourself of this experience as he sees the final destruction. There had been millions destroyed, and in this final battle, at least 230,000 of the soldiers were killed and only a few survived. Mormon now looks over this scene with his son Moroni, having been wounded himself, and laments what has happened to his people. I am not going to take the time to go through and read all of this, but notice, beginning with verse 16 and scanning to the end of chapter 6, how he describes his soul being rent with anguish and how, to him, it is astounding. He asks over and over, "How could you have fallen?" He knows the whole history. He knows what these people once had. And it is just an amazement to him, as I think it is to us as we read the whole account of the Book of Mormon, how a people who had once been so delightful and faithful and committed to Christ could, over a mere span of a couple of hundred years or less, find themselves come to a point of total

destruction. And yet, Mormon knows they are gone and left into the hands of the Lord.

Now, before Mormon seals up his portion of the record or ceases to write, he writes Mormon 7 as an account to the people in the latter days, particularly to the Lamanites, that they might be able to receive encouragement from Mormon. Look with me, if you will, at Mormon 7:8 and 9. Notice what he says. He tells them to repent and be baptized and to lay hold on the gospel of Jesus Christ, and then he draws a comparison between the Book of Mormon and the Bible. Look carefully. He says: "Lay hold upon the gospel of Christ, which shall be set before you, not only in this record but also in the record which shall come unto the Gentiles from the Jews [that is, the Bible; the gospel is set forth there], which record shall come from the Gentiles unto you. For behold, this is written for the intent that ye may believe. . . ." The Book of Mormon has been written that we may believe the Bible. One of the purposes of this book, Mormon is telling us, is to help people in the latter days believe the Bible—not to take away from or replace the Bible, but in fact to establish its truthfulness.

Many people today have begun to denounce the authenticity of the Bible as a historical record or to suggest that Jesus Christ is not the Son of God, the Redeemer, the Messiah. The Book of Mormon was put here, as Mormon indicates, that we may believe that Christ really is what he is presented to be in the Bible. That is so important. We see the need for this second witness of Christ that is outlined for us. Mormon clearly indicates for us that that is his purpose, for he says: "If ye believe that [the Bible] ye will believe this [the Book of Mormon] also; and if ye believe this ye will know concerning your fathers [again, he is talking to the Lamanites]" (v. 9). Mormon's final encouragement to the Lamanites is in verse 10. He tells them to believe in Christ, to be baptized with water and with the Holy Ghost, and then to follow the example of the Savior. If you will do that unto the end, he says, then "it shall be well with you in the day of judgment."

That concludes the writings of Mormon, and I think it is a fitting testimony. But it is also an important principle that we see even more today

than perhaps it was in Joseph Smith's day, when the book first came off the press. It is so important to establish the truthfulness of the Bible, because it is under attack by many in the scholarly world today.

Now let's talk about the teachings of Mormon. That is what I'd like to spend our time on today, if we could. Mormon, in his role as an author and editor and then really as a prophet or religious leader, teaches his people. Let's go back to Mormon 1 again. Let's look for just a moment at verse 4, and then we will look at Mormon 2:17 and 18. Remember, Ammaron comes and speaks to Mormon when Mormon is ten years of age, and he instructs Mormon at this time that when he is twenty-four, he is going to get the plates. Notice what Mormon says he is going to do with these plates. We are looking now at Mormon 1:4: "And behold, ye shall take the plates of Nephi [the larger account] unto yourself, and the remainder shall ye leave in the place where they are; and ye shall engrave on the plates of Nephi all the things that ye have observed concerning this people." So, part of his calling will be to finish a complete outline of the history as he observes it in his time. We don't have that full and complete record; remember that he has indicated that. Turn back to Mormon 2:17-18. He tells us, in the middle of verse 17:

And now, the city of Jashon was near the land where Ammaron had deposited the records unto the Lord, that they might not be destroyed. And behold I had gone according to the word of Ammaron, and taken the plates of Nephi, and did make a record according to the words of Ammaron.

And upon the plates of Nephi I did make a full account of all the wickedness and abominations; but upon these plates I did forbear to make a full account of their wickedness and abominations, for behold, a continual scene of wickedness and abominations has been before mine eyes ever since I have been sufficient to behold the ways of man.

Notice that he has mentioned two records. He is keeping a full account on what he calls the plates of Nephi (i.e., the large plates), and then upon these plates (i.e., this smaller, or abridged, edition that will become the Book of Mormon), he is making a shorter account. He said that he withheld himself from making the full account. Part of the reason—and this is really sobering as you look at that verse—is that a continual scene of wickedness and

abomination has been before his eyes since he was even old enough to understand the ways of man. I wonder how many of our young people today are facing something similar to this. They don't have to go out and look for it; it is just all around them. Even as we watch the news, see commercials, see what is happening in our neighborhoods—there is just almost, in many cases, a continual scene of wickedness and abominations that we are being exposed to without even seeking it.

[Student question:] Could there be another Sodom and Gomorrah?

Well, I suspect that this became something like that, and as we read in the prophetic statements, we will likely have at least some of those same sins with like results, from what we read and understand is going to happen when the Lord comes.

So, we see this type of tragedy. Mormon wants to spare us; he doesn't want to weigh us down and depress us. He has indicated in these two accounts that (1) he has written it all, and (2) he has written this more abbreviated account. This smaller record that he is writing comes from two sources. Let's go to 3 Nephi 5:14–17 and see what those two sources are that he identifies for us:

And it hath become expedient that I, according to the will of God, that the prayers of those who have gone hence, who were the holy ones, should be fulfilled according to their faith, should make a record of these things which have been done—

Yea, a small record of that which hath taken place from the time that Lehi left Jerusalem, even down until the present time.

Therefore I do make my record from the accounts which have been given by those who were before me, until the commencement of my day;

And then I do make a record of the things which I have seen with mine own eyes.

There are two or three things that we learn in those verses. Let's look at the last two first, verses 16 and 17. Mormon says he makes his account from two sources here—from records and from the things he has seen. All the prophets and record keepers who have preceded him have written things down, and he is going through all those. By inspiration, he is culling out those things that the Lord wants him to write, and that is one of the sources. The other, he says, are things he has seen with his own eyes. Now, that probably means things that

he observed during his lifetime, but I have also wondered—it doesn't state this—if the Lord also gave him some prophetic view of some of these experiences, like Nephi and others had. Regardless, there are those two sources—those who have written before him, and from his own personal eyewitness experience of these events.

Back in 3 Nephi 5:14, if we look carefully, we notice that he tells us another reason he was compelled to make this shorter record and give it to us. He says: "And it hath become expedient that I, according to the will of God, that the prayers of those who have gone hence, who were the holy ones, should be fulfilled according to the will of God." Obviously, we know it was God's will that the little record be made, but what does that second part, "the prayers of those who have gone hence, who were the holy ones, should be fulfilled," mean?

[Student answer:] I think of the earlier prophets They prayed that the Lamanites would one day get the gospel, and that they would understand.

Exactly! Let's just look at one example of that. I am turning clear back here to the book of Enos. You remember that Enos, as he was called to be the leader of the people, had to get his own understanding that the Lord approved his course of action; then he was concerned about his own people, the Nephites; and then he was concerned about the Lamanites. And then in Enos 1:13 he makes the plea "that the Lord God would preserve a record of [his] people, the Nephites; even if it so be by the power of his holy arm, that it might be brought forth at some future day unto the Lamanites, that, perhaps, they might be brought unto salvation." What he is saying, "We weren't successful in getting the Lamanites to return, so I am praying that the Lord will make sure that this record comes forth at some future day and that maybe then someone will be able to help these people." It was because of the prayers of Enos and Nephi and Alma and Helaman and others, you see, that the Lord preserved a portion of their record to help touch the hearts of people in the latter days. That is what Mormon is saying. He was commanded by the Lord, in response to the prayers of those faithful ones who had preceded him, that

he make this record, even a small record that gives us this account that we are so privileged to have and to possess.

We talked about this a little bit last time, but let's go back to 3 Nephi 26 for just a moment and review just a little bit about the way Mormon put this record together. It is just the simple principle that we discussed in verse 12. Let's look at a little larger portion of it here. Let's look at verses 9 through 11:

And when they shall have received this, which is expedient that they should have first, to try their faith, and if it shall so be that they shall believe these things then shall the greater things be made manifest unto them.

And if it so be that they will not believe these things, then shall the greater things be withheld from them, unto their condemnation.

Behold, I was about to write them, all which were engraven upon the plates of Nephi, but the Lord forbade it, saying: I will try the faith of my people.

Remember, the writing goes on, and Mormon says in the next verse, "I . . . do write the things which have been commanded of the Lord." Notice that Mormon is saying there were times when he wanted to write something, but the Lord told him not to write it now. He said that this is what the Lord wanted us to have. This is a classic example, in my mind, that what we have here is not just Mormon's optional choosing, but it is as the Lord directed. He said, "This is good, this is not," or, "This is what I want them to have." It's not that it is not good—I am sure they were all good things that Mormon wanted put in—but this is what the Lord wanted us to have now. He said, "I don't want them to have this at this point."

What we have written in Mormon's account are the things that the Lord actually commanded him to write. Can I just suggest to you that this illustrates one little principle about Mormon: He is a prophet who can keep confidences. The Lord basically says to him, in verse 9, "I am going to try the faith of my people, and there will be things withheld, and if they are faithful, then we'll give them more later on." Mormon could have thought, "Yeah, but I've got to tell somebody about this," and he could have gone ahead and written it. But he was willing to keep confidence. The Lord said, "No," so he didn't do it. I think that is a lesson we need to learn as well. The Lord can't

trust us with wisdom and knowledge that is only for us if we are going to go out and try to tell others when it is not our right to do so or if the Spirit doesn't prompt us to do that. In this case, Mormon was willing to hold this back in this respect.

Mormon indicates that the Book of Mormon is going to come forth at a particular time and circumstance. Let's go to Mormon 5:12-15:

Now these things are written unto the remnant of the house of Jacob; and they are written after this manner, because it is known of God that wickedness will not bring them forth unto them; and they are to be hid up unto the Lord that they may come forth in his own due time.

And this is the commandment which I have received; and behold, they shall come forth according to the commandment of the Lord, when he shall see fit, in his wisdom.

And behold, they shall go unto the unbelieving of the Jews; and for this intent shall they go—that they may be persuaded that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of the living God; that the Father may bring about, through his most Beloved, his great and eternal purpose, in restoring the Jews, or all the house of Israel, to the land of their inheritance, which the Lord their God hath given them, unto the fulfilling of his covenant;

And also that the seed of this people may more fully believe his gospel, which shall go forth unto them from the Gentiles; for this people shall be scattered, and shall become a dark, a filthy, and a loathsome people. . . .

Let's go back and look at this. Notice, it has been written to come forth when?

[Student answer:] In His time.

In the Lord's due time. What is the due time of the Lord? Well, when the Lord says it is right. When he knows it is the correct time, it will come. One thing we can understand is that the Lord is never late. He may not fit our time schedule and our desire and our time frame, but the Lord is never late. He is always on time. When it comes forth, it will be the right time. It is going to come forth in his wisdom, you see.

There are two or three groups here that the record is going to help. In verse 14 it says the Book of Mormon is supposed to help who?

[Student answer:] The unbelieving of the Jews.

Yes! The unbelieving of the Jews, so they could be persuaded in Christ. It is also going to go forth to help all of the house of Israel—not just the Jews. And then its purpose is also to help who? Look at verse 15. The seed of this people in the latter days. Who would that be? The Lamanites. It will go forth to help the Lamanites that they might come to believe more fully in the gospel. So, what has been outlined for us simply is that the Book of Mormon is going to come forth in the latter days, and its purpose is to help the house of Israel, the Gentiles, and the Lamanites to believe in the gospel and to believe in Christ. That is its purpose.

Can I suggest to you that one of the things we should see from all of this is that probably no one will have a clearer view of the whole history of the Nephite people than does Mormon. Now, even though he doesn't perhaps have all the visions—and we don't know that; it is just not recorded—Nephi does. Mormon has the privilege of reading all the records of all these historians during his lifetime. So he has a great view of the history of these people, and that qualifies him not only to write this record, but to speak in terms of what lessons we should learn from them.

Now let's talk about the teachings of Mormon. The first category of teachings I want to deal with I am going to call "editorial flags." These editorial flags are often referred to as the "thus we see" statements. He doesn't always use the words "thus we see." He may use "thus we may discern" or "by this we can see." But the idea is there. He flags throughout much of his writing to point out, "Here's an important principle that we ought to learn or gain." Let's just look at four or five of those and get a flavor for some of these as they are spread throughout the writings that Mormon has put together for us.

What I am going to do here, to make this just a little bit quicker, is to give these four or five references and have each of you look up a different one, review it, and then just summarize for us what that particular passage speaks about. We're looking to see what "thus we see" principle we can take out of these passages. We'll look at the passage together, and you can share your ideas with us.

Alma 24:29–30 is the first one.

[Student response:] After people have already had a knowledge of righteousness and have had the Spirit and known the truth and then they fall away, or they disobey, then it is worse than if they had never known the truth, because they become completely hardened.

Thank you. We see then, in this account, there were cases of former Nephites who had become apostate, and as you summarized for us, they become more hardened and obstinate in their feelings towards the truth because the adversary seems to take control. That is an important principle for all of us to learn. It's not just about them. If any of us rebels against the truth, the likelihood is that we are going to become more hardened.

Alma 30:60 is the second one.

[Student response:] Here it talks about Korihor and his fate. It tells what he “who perverteth the ways of the Lord” will have in the end—that is, the devil will fail him, and he will be dragged down to hell, because the devil does not keep his promises.

Thank you. There are many people, like Korihor, who have found themselves polluting the right ways of the Lord, and ultimately, the adversary deserts them and leaves them to their own destruction. In the case of Korihor, he is trampled to death, loses his life, and was just left to his own devices. Often, we may find ourselves suffering with some kind of terrible demise or unfortunate circumstances. Satan doesn't sustain us like the Lord will.

[Student comment:] I think that could be likened to the Lord when he said, “I, the Lord, am bound when ye do what I say; but when ye do not what I say, ye have no promise” (D&C 82:10). That is a good example of how the Lord and Satan are so different. If you follow the Lord, if you do what he tells you to, he will do his part. If you follow Satan, he will leave you to your own devices.

Thank you! I couldn't have said that better.

Alma 46:8–9 is the third one.

[Student response:] Basically, this passage says how quickly the children of men forget the Lord their God and how quickly and easily the children of

the Lord are led away. Here it talks about Amalickiah and those who followed him, forgetting how much the Lord had blessed them and falling into sin.

That is a good warning. If we think that we would never fall, we need to realize, as Mormon is summarizing here, that it can be so easy for people to stumble and fall and be led away. Thank you.

Alma 50:19 is the next one.

[Student response:] Well, what Mormon is saying here is that when the Lord says something will happen if certain requirements are met, it will happen. His words are spoken by the prophets. When the Lord spake unto Lehi, he said that as long as children are obedient, they will be okay. But as soon as they stop being obedient, they will be cut off from the presence of the Lord. That is what happened here when Laman and Lemuel broke off.

Thank you. It is both comforting and also could be, if we are not doing too well, unnerving to know that the Lord verifies his words. He says, "If I've declared it; it's going to happen." Mormon is trying to say, "Look, I've seen all this history, and I'm here to tell you that from what I have read and seen, if the Lord says it's going to happen, it is going to happen. So believe him." That is a very important principle that Mormon teaches in this setting and reaffirms to us.

Helaman 3:28-30 is the next one.

[Student response:] In this rather long passage, it says that the Lord God will lead men to salvation and that heaven is open to all. So, if we lay hold upon the word of God, we will be able to sit at the right hand of God with Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, and all the other holy prophets.

Thank you. In the verses just previous to this, there have been many converts to the church. So, at this point, it has been Mormon's attempt to tell us, "Anybody who wants to can lay hold of this word, and it will help them to overcome all the traps that the adversary is going to lay for them and will help to get them across this narrow chasm."

I think of an experience I had some years ago down in Southern Utah. There is a little road between Boulder and Escalante. Some people have

called it "Devil's Backbone." It is straight cliff on both sides of the road. It's one of those roads that I wanted to hug to the middle of while I drove on it; I did not want to go to either edge. And I prayed that I would not meet a semi or a truck coming the other way. (There are semis that come along that road!) My biggest concern was, How in the world did they build this thing? How many people died building this road? That is exactly what I thought. It is really an experience. I have thought about this very road as Mormon talks about leading them across this narrow course of the everlasting gulf of misery.

In a real sense, we have a narrow course to follow, and what Mormon is telling us is that anybody who wants to can lay hold upon the word of God. That is what he is presenting to us here, and He will lead us across that path and will bring us to the other side safely. I think we can all get a mental image of that. Whether it is a tightrope walk or a narrow road with cliffs on both sides—whatever it is, we just want to get to the other side and say, "Whew, I made it." I guess that is how we feel when we get in the presence of our Heavenly Father—if we have been faithful. It will be a great thing to be there, and we will be so grateful that we have made it.

Helaman 2:13–14 is the last one.

[Student response:] Mormon is referring to the final destruction of the Nephites, and he says that Gadianton is the cause of the whole destruction.

Thank you. Here is a person—Mormon—who has 20/20 hindsight vision, because he has already witnessed what is going to happen at the end. Coming to this point as he is writing the record, he says that you're going to see that what this Gadianton begins, this idea of secret combinations, is going to end up being, by the time you get to the end of this record, one of the major factors in the downfall of the Nephite people. Well, that's a warning for us. We have secret combinations in our own day and time. We don't have the time to go in and discuss all of that, but you know that we have them all around us—in drug cartels, in gangs, in the Mafia—you name it. They are all around us. So we need to be aware and be on the alert and not allow them to get power over us.

So, one aspect of teaching that Mormon does is by using the “thus we see” concept all the way through the writings. Let’s move to Helaman 12, because this whole chapter becomes a “thus we see” lesson, in a sense. The whole chapter is inserted by Mormon in Helaman 12. For the sake of time, we are not going to read all of this, but let’s just look for a moment at the principle he is going to try to outline for us. It is one that could be summarized in this little chart that I have prepared. You have probably seen something like this before. The simple idea, as we see this, is that the Lord blesses people when they are righteous, and they begin to prosper. The danger is, when they begin to prosper, they begin to trust in their own flesh, their own wisdom and knowledge, and begin to reject God. The Spirit withdraws from them, and they have some kind of social upheaval, or war, or destruction that occurs. Finally, they are brought down to the depths of sorrow and humility because of that destruction, and then they begin to repent. And so we go in a cycle. We see this many times in the Book of Mormon. We see it in the Old Testament. We see it everywhere there is recorded scripture, really. Look at how Mormon describes this process here in Helaman 12:2–3:

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.

What a tragedy is described here. We might call this a description of human frailty—this prosperity cycle that we just seem to go through again and again. We could probably demonstrate this with almost any period of history and with any civilization. We see this very pattern. If they are good and righteous, the Lord blesses them. Then when they begin to forget the Lord

and become wicked, they begin to be humbled because of the problems that are brought upon them.

[Student comment:] I find that even in my own life, when things are going really well, I will forget to thank the Lord as much as I should. Then when things are going wrong, I tend to say, "Heavenly Father, I really need your help right now," and then I will come back up. This principle is put in the Book of Mormon to help us in our own lives. We need to be aware of that.

Thank you. I think that is so true.

I want to look in the next verse at two words, *quick* and *slow*. It is good to be quick, and it is good to be slow—but in the right order. If you get it reversed, you have problems. Mormon is saying how foolish and vain and evil and devilish people are, and how quick they are to do iniquity and how slow to do good. They are quick to listen to the words of the evil one, you see, and, it says down in verse 5, slow to remember the Lord and his counsels. They have it just in reverse. We need to be slow to do iniquity and slow to listen to the evil one. We need to be quick to do good and quick to listen unto the Lord. This is part of the problem of why this tragic cycle occurs—when we begin to get quick in the wrong things and slow in the right things. Let's remember this. That is a great lesson that Mormon teaches.

Well, that is all the time we can afford to spend there, and we could do more, but that just gives you another feel for these great little insertions that Mormon gives us all the way along through the record.

Now I'd like to have you turn to Moroni 7. You remember that Moroni inserts three accounts into his little book here in the Book of Mormon. One of them is a discourse from his father, and the other two are epistles from his father. We have already mentioned something about Moroni 9. We won't be talking about chapter 8 here today. But in chapter 7, we find Moroni's great discourse on faith, hope, and charity. Let's take a little time and go through the important principles outlined therein.

As we begin this, we should remind ourselves of something. Occasionally people ask the question, Why does some of this sound familiar to things that I may have read in the New Testament? Think about this. Why would Mormon

be in a position to write some things that might sound like things we have heard in the New Testament? Can you guess? Let's see what we can come up with on this.

[Student answer:] The Lord, when he gave them his gospel in the New World, told them the same things that he told his disciples in the Old World.

Yes. Remember, in 3 Nephi 26, Mormon said that he couldn't write even an hundredth part of what was recorded. That tells us how much Mormon read of it. He read it all! He read it all, but he couldn't write but a part of it. Part of what we see here, in many cases, is a reflection of what he read from the Savior's words, which He gave to those people when He was here, but which were not all recorded, because of space and time, for us here. I don't know for sure, but I'd guess that if anybody would have access to those words, it would have been Mormon. And then, because of its impact upon him, it would be reflected in his writings to us. Maybe that is why I think there is no question as to why some of these things have that familiar ring. Mormon he is drawing upon what he read from the Savior to give this great discourse on faith, hope, and charity.

Notice, when he begins to speak, and in Moroni 7:3 and 4, he speaks about "peaceable followers" and those who have a "peaceable walk." I wondered about those terms, *peaceable followers* and *peaceable walk*. I wanted to understand that. There is a footnote about that in your scriptures. It references Doctrine and Covenants 19:23. Turn there, for I think it defines for us what a peaceable walk or a peaceable follower of Christ would be. "Learn of me, and listen to my words; walk in the meekness of my Spirit, and you shall have peace in me." Notice the characteristics. If we are going to be peaceable followers, we learn of Christ, listen to His words, and walk in the meekness of His Spirit. (I like that description, particularly that last one.) That is the way we become a peaceable follower of Christ.

Now, the next principle we see is in Moroni 7:6-11. It has to do with doing the right things for the right reason. Suppose that there's a person who is giving a gift. Mormon says that if a man, being evil, gives a gift and prays unto God, except it is with real intent, it doesn't profit him anything. And so,

Mormon says, in verse 8, if we give a gift and we do it grudgingly, it is counted unto us as if we had retained the gift, for we are not doing it with real intent, it says in verse 9. Is Mormon's purpose to us to say that if you are not going to pray with real intent, if you are not going to pay your tithing with real intent, if you are not going to give your offerings with good intent, don't do it? What is he trying to say to us? Should I stop paying my tithing or praying until I can do it with the right intent? Is that what he is trying to say? If not, what is he trying to say to us? He is trying to say, "Change your attitude. Keep doing it." It's like Brigham Young used to say. When you don't have the spirit of prayer, then get on your knees, and stay there until you get that spirit. We need to get our attitude right so that we can give each gift and make our religious performances in the right way and with the right attitude.

Moroni 7:12 and 13 talk about basically two different influences or spirits that we have to discern. The first is God, it says in verse 12. The good cometh from God. The second is from the devil. The devil is an enemy to God, and he entices and invites us to do sin and evil continually. Verse 13 says that that comes from God invites us to do good continually. There are two opposing forces working on us. There really isn't any neutral ground here. People think they are neutral but in reality have given themselves over to one or the other. They just don't recognize it. It is a reality. We have to learn how to let the Spirit of the Lord influence us. Mormon is going to give us a great description of the Spirit of Christ and its influence in our lives. Let's look at verse 13, and then we'll look at verses 16-19. Let's see what principles we can learn about the Spirit of Christ. What does it do for us, or how do I get it? It will entice us to do good. Verse 13 says that. It also talks about it in verse 16. What else?

[Student answer:] Every man is given the Spirit of Christ. We all have an instinct to do what is right.

Thank you. Notice that it is given to *all* mankind, to *all* of us. Let's look for other things here in these verses. Besides the fact that it will persuade us to do good and that it is given to all men, what else will it persuade us to do? Look at verse 16.

[Student answer:] To believe in Christ.

That is right. It will also inspire us to love and serve God. It will, as verse 18 tells us, do what else?

[Student answer:] It will help us not to be judgmental.

In fact, it will help us have a light by which we may judge so that we may discern between good and evil. It will give us that ability. Finally, in verse 19, we are told that we should seek or search diligently in the light of Christ. It has been provided for us that we might search by that light. Now, if you have ever gone out to hunt for something and you don't take a light with you, it is really tough, but if you take a light, you can see more clearly. The light of Christ is there to help us search amidst all the philosophies of the world for that which is right and good and true.

Now, in order to summarize a little more clearly what is being said in the rest of this chapter, I think we need to look at the concept of faith. We are going to see, for example, the word *faith* is used twenty-two times in the last part, from about verse 25 to the end of the chapter. Much of what is being said here by Mormon has to do with this principle of faith.

Let me go back. I skipped one idea that I want to mention. I think it is important for us to understand. It has to do with the Spirit of Christ. What is the Spirit of Christ and the Holy Ghost? That concept came into my mind. I wondered about that several times, and as I thought and searched about it, the statement made by Charles W. Penrose, a general authority and eventually a member of the First Presidency, said this some years ago:

"The gift of the Holy Ghost." What is it? It is a greater and higher endowment of the same spirit which enlightens every man that comes into the world; a greater power given unto us as an abiding witness, to be a light to our feet and a lamp to our path; as a restraint against sin, to guide us into all truth, to open up the vision of the mind.¹

The point that I would suggest to you here is that perhaps the difference between the light of Christ and the Holy Ghost might be like one being a flashlight and the other, a searchlight. One is a brighter or more sure witness

¹ Charles W. Penrose, *Journal of Discourses* (14 January 1883), 23:350.

that comes to individuals. When we come into the Church and are baptized and receive the right to the gift of the Holy Ghost, we can have, if we are living worthy, a brighter light to help us and to enable us to discern between right and wrong. In order to understand that, let's go to these last verses, Moroni 7:25–39. We said that we were just going to say something about faith here. We don't have time to go through all these passages, but notice that it is by faith that we can lay hold on every good thing (see v. 25). It is in faith that we have power to do whatsoever is expedient to do what the Lord would want us to do (see v. 33). In verse 37 it tells us that by faith miracles are wrought, and it is by faith that angels appear and minister unto men. If these things have ceased, it is because of our unbelief.

The point that I want to make from all this is that one of the aspects of faith is that it is power. Faith gives us power. It isn't just a mere belief. It actually gives us power to discern right from wrong, power to lay hold of the good things and set aside the evil things, power to be able to have the Spirit of the Lord to bless us, even in case of being able to perform miracles. Faith gives us power to help in all the work of the Lord. This power is not unlike that given to angels. Look at verse 31. Here the ministry of angels is described, and I think that we can take this and apply it, in a way, to what missionaries do when they go out to preach. Look at that verse. We will see three particular keys that are part of the calling of an angel that fit into what a missionary does.

Notice, the first one is to call men to repentance. Angels have been sent on the earth to do that; missionaries are also sent to call men to repentance. The second one is to fulfill and do the work of the covenants of the Father. The Lord has made covenants and promises, so angels come to restore the keys and bring blessings, but missionaries also go out and help gather people to the fulness of the gospel. So they perform that function. The third one is to prepare the way among the children of men by declaring the word of Christ unto the chosen vessels. Angels come to those whom the Lord has selected to reveal light and knowledge, but missionaries also go throughout the world trying to find people who will respond. There is an interesting parallel between the role of an angel and the role of a missionary. (Now, I know that

some of you young women may think that young man you are waiting for is an angel too.) But in reality, there are parallels between their roles and responsibilities to those of angels.

In the latter part of this chapter, Moroni 7, you will notice that the theme shifts somewhat from faith toward hope and then to charity. There is a passage here that can be a little bit confusing. We talk about needing to have faith. Look at Moroni 7:40. He says: "And again, my beloved brethren, I would speak unto you concerning hope. How is it that ye can attain unto faith, save ye shall have hope?" You have to have faith, he says, to get hope. Now look down at verse 42: "Wherefore, if a man have faith he must needs have hope; for without faith there cannot be any hope."

It appears that there is a contradiction here, but in reality, we are talking about two different things. We are speaking about two kinds of hope. There is a hope that leads unto faith, and there is a hope that leads unto salvation. Let me explain. You go out as a missionary. You come to someone and begin to teach them the gospel. They hear about these principles, and inside their hearts something begins to say, "Oh, I hope this is true. It sounds true. It rings with my heart. I hope it's true." That is the hope that leads unto faith; that is how they will have the faith to do what you have asked them to do—to give up certain practices, to obey certain commandments, to become more obedient. That will lead them, eventually, when they become more obedient and see the results, to feel happier, because their lives have changed. They feel different. They have a hope that leads unto salvation. They now have an evidence of the faith they had before, because the missionaries said, "If you will do this and this and this, this will happen." And when it does, they think, "There is hope for me. I can make it." So, there is a hope that leads to faith, and then there is a hope that leads unto salvation.

What should you hope for? Look at verse 41. You are going to hope, through the atonement of Christ, to have a glorious resurrection. If I am not a Christian and I don't believe in Christ or am not sure about his experience and what I am doing in my life, then somehow I come to recognize that, in my own particular circumstance, I need to have faith that any of this exists. Once I

begin to apply the principles of the gospel, that faith begins to come. After it comes, then I start to have hope that I can make it. I know the atonement is real. I know Christ is going to come. I just have hope that I can make it. I know it is possible, because he has made it possible.

How am I going to make it? Well, look at Moroni 7:43: "And again, behold I say unto you that he cannot have faith and hope, save he shall be meek, and lowly of heart." That is a grand key. We have to be meek and lowly of heart, and there is none that is acceptable before God, save the meek and lowly of heart. If I want to be acceptable before my Heavenly Father, regardless of my status or station in life, I have to become meek and lowly. Thus, that builds on this final principle, which is charity.

Charity is defined for us by Mormon in a simple little phrase. What is charity? Look at verse 47.

[Student answer:] The pure love of Christ.

The pure love of Christ. It's not just what we take over and donate to the poor. That may be part of it, but it is a pure love of Christ. Measuring sticks that will help me know if I have charity or how much charity I have are found in verse 45. Do I suffer long? Does that mean that if I am not going through enough suffering, I need to more pain inflicted on me? No. It means when I have difficulties, do I endure them well? Am I kind? Do I envy other people? Am I puffed up? Do I seek my own pleasure and glory? All those are characteristics that we could use to measure how much charity we have in our lives.

Maybe most important is the question, How do I get this charity? Look at verse 48. There are two keys here. Look carefully. How do I get charity?

[Student answer:] Pray for it.

Pray. That is the right answer, but I would add: "Pray . . . with all the energy of heart." We have to want it so badly that our teeth ache. And then it is bestowed on all those who are true followers of the Father's Son, Jesus Christ. If we come to possess that, then we can, as Mormon records here, see the day when Christ comes. We will be like him. We will have acquired these

attributes of faith, hope, and charity and will become purified even as Christ is pure.

In conclusion, turn to Moroni 9 and look at verse 25. Here is one of the final bits of counsel that Mormon gave to his son Moroni; this counsel fits all we have said here: "My son, be faithful in Christ; and may not the things which I have written grieve thee, to weigh thee down unto death; but may Christ lift thee up, and may his sufferings and death, and the showing his body unto our fathers, and his mercy and long-suffering, and the hope of his glory and of eternal life, rest in your mind forever." That, I think, is Mormon's message for us. May we be faithful in Christ. Let us not be weighed down by the things we see around us in the world today that are so disheartening, but let us have this hope of eternal life in our minds forever.

I bear witness that Mormon was indeed a true prophet of God. He lived. He has written under inspiration for the benefit of all of us. If we will learn to take what he has written, along with the counsel from other prophets of the Book of Mormon, and apply it in our lives, we will find that the Lord will indeed bless us and help us to have this peace of mind and to be able to be like the Savior when He comes. I bear that testimony to you in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.