

Nephi's List

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Author's Note: This paper is intended to be a study guide. The true message of this work is to be found in the scriptural references highlighted in these pages. The author, therefore, encourages the reader to prayerfully read and ponder all passages referenced below.

A Formula For Failure

In 1 Nephi 22:23 the prophet Nephi gives a list of characteristics that, if found within any church, will cause that church to be consumed as stubble:

For the time speedily shall come that all churches which are built up to get gain, and all those who are built up to get power over the flesh, and those who are built up to become popular in the eyes of the world and those who seek the lusts of the flesh and the things of the world, and do all manner of iniquity; yea, in fine, all those who belong to the kingdom of the devil are they who need fear, and tremble, and quake; they are those who must be brought low in the dust: they are those who must be consumed as stubble; and this is according to the words of the prophet. (1 Nephi 22:23)

This prophecy is all encompassing for it includes "all churches," and is particularly interesting to us because it is found in a chapter in which the context is almost exclusively concerned with the Last Days. Nephi says that "all churches which are built up" (1) "to get gain," (2) "to get power," (3) "to become popular," (4) "and those who seek the lusts of the flesh and the things of the world," and (5) "do all manner of iniquity...must be consumed as stubble."

The Breakup of the Church Established by Alma

We are told that when a covenant people fail to live up to every covenant they make in the temple of the Lord they will be in Satan's power. We find that scenario clearly played out in the breakup of the church that Alma established (Mos 18:17). In 3 Nephi 6:14, just a few years before the coming of the Lord in great glory to the Nephites, we see that the true Church of God established by the prophet Alma "was broken up in all the land save it were among a few of the Lamanites who were converted unto the true faith." Verse 15 tells us that "the cause of this iniquity...was that Satan had great power" over them, just as is promised to a covenant-breaking people. This power that Satan had gained over them manifested itself in another list unmistakably similar to

Nephi's list in I Nephi 22:23, as seen in the subject verse:

15 Now the cause of this iniquity of the people was this--Satan had great power, unto the stirring up of the people to do all manner of iniquity, and to the puffing them up with pride, tempting them to seek for power, and authority, and riches, and the vain things of the world. (3 Nephi 6:15)

The 3 Nephi covenant people were (1) doing "all manner of iniquity," (2) puffed "up with pride," (3) seeking "for power and authority," (4) "and riches, and..." (5) "...the vain things of the world" (See also 3 Ne 6:10-12).

When we compare the two Nephis' lists we find, not unexpectedly, great consistency:

<u>Nephi's List</u> 1 Nephi 22:23	<u>Alma's Church</u> 3 Nephi 6:15
1. Gain	1. Riches
2. Power	2. Power and Authority
3. Popularity	3. Pride
4. Lusts of the flesh, things of the world	4. Vain things of the world
5. All manner of iniquity	5. All manner of iniquity

It is interesting that the "lusts of the flesh" seems to be so closely associated with "the things of the world." We usually identify "lusts of the flesh" exclusively with sexual sins, but the "flesh" can also "lust" for an abundance of fine foods and drinks, as well as for automobiles, houses, recreation and other "things of the world." This is especially true when used in a gluttonous manner. This chapter also makes it clear that this great iniquity came upon them in a very short period of time.

The Breakup of the Church Christ Established

In 4 Nephi we find the same list present in the description of the breakup of the Church that Christ established while he was among the Nephites and Lamanites:

23 And now I, Mormon, would that ye should know that the people had multiplied insomuch that they were spread upon all the face of the land and that they had become exceedingly rich, because of their prosperity in Christ.

24 And now, in this two hundred and first year there began to be among them those who were lifted up in pride, such as the wearing of costly apparel and all manner of fine pearls, and of the fine things of the world.

25 And from that time forth they did have their goods and their substance no more common among them.

26 And they begun to be divided into classes; and they began to build up churches to get gain, and began to deny the true church of Christ.

27 And it came to pass that when two hundred and ten years had passed away there were many churches in the land; yea, there were many churches which professed to know the Christ, and yet they did deny the more parts of his gospel insomuch that they did receive all manner of wickedness, and did administer that which was sacred unto him to whom it had been forbidden because of unworthiness.

28 And this church did multiply exceedingly because of iniquity, and because of the power of Satan who did get hold upon their hearts. (4 Nephi 1:23-28)

Mormon, in verse 23, names riches and prosperity as being a problem. Also pride and "the fine things of the world" are mentioned in this light in verse 24. They broke the Law of Consecration in verse 25. "And they began to be divided into classes," which always plays on a pride/popularity/power/authority theme "...and they began to build up churches to get gain" (verse 26; see also verse 30). In verse 27 they ignore or deny many parts of the original gospel of Christ which He had delivered to them and instead embraced "all manner of wickedness." In verse 28 we are told that this church became very popular and sustained tremendous growth. In an Honors **Book of Mormon** class taught at BYU and telecast on KBYU on Sundays in the Utah area, the instructor, Hugh Nibley, has commented on 4 Nephi 1:23-28:

...verse 27, and here we see that the new churches retained their traditions, of course. They were not seeking to be original. They claimed to be the old true church... We are in 4 Nephi 1:27:

'There were many churches which professed to know the Christ, and yet they did deny the more parts of his gospel.' They took some parts. They kept parts of the gospel, but they got rid of others they didn't like. Well, we do that the same way. 'They did

deny the more parts of his gospel, insomuch that they did receive all manner of wickedness.' And they went further than that. They had the gospel. They denied most of it, though, but they still had the forms and the ordinances and they administered them. They 'professed to know the Christ.' They accommodated their doctrines to the market. They supplied temple recommends on demand

*It was very popular. The church grew phenomenally as a result of this. Remember, this is the church we're talking about. This is not apostates. Give them what they want and you'll win. This is the Nehor story already. Remember, the Nehors grew like crazy. We do that today, of course. ...Verse 28 also teaches another thing-- that the phenomenal growth of the church is no proof that it's true at all, or that it's on the true path. It grew faster than anything because it was very popular. So don't use popularity as a gauge either. (**Teachings of the Book of Mormon, Semester. 4, F.A.R.M.S., p. 186.**)*

We see in verse 28 that all of this iniquity prospered "because of the power of Satan who did get hold upon their hearts." As stated above, Satan gets power over people when they fail to live up to every covenant made in the temple of the Lord.

It is curious that the Church in Alma's day and Christ's Church in 3 Nephi each lasted approximately the same number of years before breaking up. Alma's Church was started about 147 B.C. (see Mos 18) and broke up in the 30th year A.D. (3 Ne 6:14), showing that it lasted about 177 years. Christ's Church began 34 A.D. (3 Ne 12) and in the "two hundred and first year there began to be among them those who where lifted up in pride" (4 Ne 1:24) and when "two hundred and ten years had passed away there were many churches in the land" (4 Ne 1:27). Thus, this church lasted between 167 to 176 years.

Moroni's Prophecy of Our Day

In Mormon 8:34-35 Moroni tells us that Christ has shown him "great and marvelous things" pertaining to the day in which we now live. "But behold, Jesus Christ hath shown you unto me and I know your doing" (verse 35). president Ezra Taft Benson assures us that these verses are referring to us in our own day. (**A Witness and a Warning, p.20**). Then Moroni goes on to describe the conditions of our day by saying that our "churches, yea, even every one, have become polluted" because of our pride (verse 36).

36 And I know that ye do walk in the pride of your hearts; and there are none save a few only who do not lift themselves up in the pride of their hearts, unto the wearing of very fine apparel, unto envying, and strifes, and malice, and persecutions, and all manner of iniquities; and your churches, yea, even every one, have become polluted because of the pride of your hearts.

37 For behold, ye do love money, and your substance, and your fine apparel, and the adorning of your churches, more than ye love the poor and the needy, the sick and the afflicted.

38 O ye pollutions, ye hypocrites, ye teachers, who sell yourselves for that which will canker, why have ye polluted the holy church of God? Why are ye ashamed to take upon you the name of Christ? Why do ye not think that greater is the value of an endless happiness than that misery which never dies--because of the praise of the world?

39 Why do ye adorn yourselves with that which hath no life, and yet suffer the hungry, and the needy, and the naked, and the sick and the afflicted to pass by you, and notice them not?

40 Yea, why do ye build up your secret abominations to get gain, and cause that widows should mourn before the Lord, and also orphans to mourn before the Lord, and also the blood of their fathers and their husbands to cry unto the Lord from the ground for vengeance upon your heads?

41 Behold, the sword of vengeance hangeth over you; and the time soon cometh that he avengeth the blood of the saints upon you, for he will not suffer their cries any longer. (Mormon 8:36-41)

Perhaps it is time we begin to deal with these verses in a realistic manner. It has been my experience that if we deal with this at all, we claim it to either exclude the LDS Church or that it refers to a time prior to the restoration by Joseph Smith. Yet Moroni helps to clarify these verses by including us with the polluted churches when asking in verse 38 "why have ye polluted the holy church of God?" Elder L. Tom Perry has stated quite clearly in his conference talk given in October of 1992 that these verses are referring to us in the LDS Church:

He [Moroni] writes first to the members of the Church and then to

those who have not embraced the gospel of Jesus Christ. Moroni's last words to the members of the Church are written as a voice of warning. He writes as one who sees the history of his people repeating itself in the future. (Ensign, November 1992, p. 16)

Elder Perry then quotes from Mormon 8:34-38 and continues with his thought:

I guess one of the greatest mysteries of mortality is why mankind fails to learn from history. Why do those who profess to be true followers of Christ so often become victims of the enticements of the world?

...we see so many members seeking worldly pursuits contrary to the words of the Lord's prophets through the ages. Many of us are more concerned about our fine apparel, the size of our homes, and our cars and their gadgets than we are about the needs of the poor and the needy. (Ensign, Nov. 1992, p. 16)

H. Verlan Andersen, of the Quorum of the Seventy, also sees these verses as referring to us in the LDS church:

*Since there is only one 'holy church of God' on earth, and since it is being polluted, the blame therefore appears to rest upon teachers and hypocrites within that church. (**Great and Abominable Church of the Devil**, p. 171)*

Even more to the point are Hugh Nibley's remarks on these verses in Mormon 8:

...Here is our own fashionable, well-dressed, status-conscious, and highly competitive society. The 'iniquities with which it is charged are interesting, for instead of crime, immorality, and atheism we are told of the vices of vanity, of the intolerant and uncharitable state of mind: pride, envy, strife, malice and persecution. These are crimes of meanness.

...They are dedicated people...These people do not persecute the poor (they are too single-minded for that), but simply ignore their existence.

...It is important to note that these people are church builders (the unbelievers are addressed in the next chapter), and that they

include the members of the true church. --

...After the coming forth of the **Book of Mormon**, moreover, there is only one 'holy Church of God' (1 Nephi 14: 10). expression here, moreover, cannot refer to the primitive church, of which these latter-day Christians know nothing--they are not in a position to pollute it, and pollution is necessarily an inside job. And why should the true Church be any more immune to the blandishments of money and fine clothes and beautiful churches today than it was in the days of the Nephites.

...Why should they now think that all these warnings are not meant for them, but only for the wicked outsiders? It is exactly the attitude which Nephi and Samuel the Lamanite attacked with such vigor. The Book of Mormon was given to us because it was meant for us. (**Since Cumorah**, vol. 7 of H. N. Collected Works, pp. 378-379. *Emphasis added*).

As we read these verses in Mormon 8 we see Nephi's list clearly manifested. We find ourselves accused by Moroni of an excessive love of riches throughout verses 36-40, but "money" is specifically mentioned in verse 37 and getting "gain" in verse 40. We see power and authority manifested again by class distinctions, persecutions, envyings, strifes, malice and the ignoring of the poor and the needy, along with "pride" which is the dominant topic of verse 36. Also, popularity is manifested in verse 38 by our seeking the "praise of the world." The vain things of the world are listed in detail in verses 36 and 37 as well as verse 39 which describes them as "that which hath no life." Verse 36 completes our list with the phrase describing us as being involved with "all manner of iniquities."

<u>Nephi's List</u> 1 Ne 22:23	<u>Alma's Church</u> 3 Ne 6:14-15	<u>Christ's Church</u> 4 Ne 1:23-30	<u>LDS Church</u> Morm 8:34-41
1. Gain	1. Riches	1. Riches, Gain	1. Money, Gain
2. Power	2. Power, Authority	2. Power, Authority	2. Envy, Strife, Malice, Persecutions
3. Popularity	3. Pride	3. Pride, Popularity	3. Pride, Praise of World
4. Lusts of flesh, Things of the World	4. Vain things of the World	4. Fine things of the World	4. Substance, Fine apparel, Adorned churches

5. All manner of iniquity	5. All manner of iniquity	5. All manner of wickedness	5. All manner of iniquities
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Perhaps the consequences of the above comparison should concern us a great deal. It has the tendency to change the emphasis of who among us requires repentance in order to please God. We have long looked at the outward sins commonly exemplified by immorality, breaking the Word of Wisdom and general activity in the Church as the ultimate division between "we the righteous" and "they the sinners." Nephi and Moroni, however, give us a whole new order of things, a brand new list, which is really an old list, emphasizing the inward sins; sins that are quite acceptable to the world as a whole but which bring upon us the Lord's "sword of vengeance" (Morm 8:40-41).

Interestingly Mormon 8 chooses to use the more timely word of "money" instead of "riches" and the "power and authority" category in Mormon 8 is detailed and itemized rather than the general terms used in the other columns. It also becomes more specific in area 3, where Moroni suggests in verse 38 that we are not just looking to be accepted in the world and be among the popular churches of the day, but we are willing to give up virtually everything for "that which will canker" (see also D&C 56: 16) and "the praise of the world." After a heritage of persecution we seem to be willing to compromise [\(1\)](#). Our excessive clothing and church buildings seem to be singled out as specifics of "the vain things of the world", as well as the more general category of "substance" (verse 37).

The surprising thing to us in all of this is the emphasis on economics. But it should not be too big of a surprise because it is everywhere in our scriptures. The establishment of Zion, one of the first commandments in this dispensation (see D&C 6:6-7; 11:6-7), is very much an economic order based on equality as opposed to inequality (see D&C 49:20; 70:14; 78:5-7; 104:14-18; 105:2-6; Mos 4:15-27). If we were to be asked "what was the great sin of Sodom?" we would most likely answer "sexual sin." But Ezekiel 16:49-50 says:

49 Behold, this was the iniquity of thy sister Sodom, pride, fulness of bread, and abundance of idleness was in her and in her daughters, neither did she strengthen the hand of the poor and needy

50 And they were haughty and committed abomination before me: therefore I took them away as I saw good. (Ezekiel 16:49-50)

It sounds like Mormon 8 (See James 1:27)[\(2\)](#).

The Priesthood and the List

34 Behold, there are many called, but few are chosen. And why are they not chosen?

35 Because their hearts are set so much upon the things of this world, and aspire to the honors of men, that they do not learn this one lesson--

36 That the rights of the priesthood are inseparably connected with the powers of heaven, and that the powers of heaven can not be controlled nor handled only upon the principles of righteousness.

37 That they may be conferred upon us, it is true but when we undertake to cover our sins, or to gratify our pride, our vain ambition, or to exercise control or dominion or compulsion upon the souls of the children of men, in any degree of unrighteousness, behold, the heavens withdraw themselves; the Spirit of the Lord is grieved; and when it is withdrawn, Amen to the priesthood or the authority of that man. (D&C 121:34-37)

One valuable concept that the Lord has given us is that, of those of us who "hold" the priesthood almost none really possess it. The priesthood "may be conferred upon us" but when we "gratify our pride" or exercise power or authority over others "in any degree of unrighteousness", (or iniquity), "Amen to the priesthood or the authority of that man" (verse 37). Therefore "many are called, but few are chosen" (verse 34-35). In order to be chosen we cannot have our hearts set upon the vain "things of this world" or aspire to the praise of the world (verse 35) (combining the wording from Nephi's list with that of D&C 121 : 34-37 Nephi's terrible list has found it's way into the Doctrine and Covenants showing the consistency of the scriptures on this particular subject, lending emphasis to the principle being taught.

Hugh Nibley, in an article on the priesthood, has said:

Is not the priesthood everything? Not on this earth. On this earth it is nothing, and as soon as we try to use it for any kind of status, power, rule or authority it automatically cancels out.

Though some may find it hard to believe, I find no cause for boasting in my priesthood--nothing is easier than conferring it upon one, but that is only the beginning; for it to be a real power

requires a degree of concentration, dedication, and self-discipline which few ever attain to, and for the rest priesthood is not a blessing but a terrible risk.

*Very few men on earth, including those in the Church are really qualified. In terms of prestige, status, power, and authority and riches, the priesthood has absolutely nothing to offer The world laughs at it, the latter-&y saints abuse or ignore it, those who take it seriously do so in "fear and trembling." ("Priesthood", **Sunstone Magazine**, December 1990.)*

Zoramites

We are frequently advised to repent. But repent of what? Too often we think that the "bad guys" are out "there" someplace and "they" need to repent of the "big things" while "we the righteous" need to repent of the "little things". This theme is played out almost every Sunday in almost every ward. It's in our talks, our lessons and in our comments. We use our scriptures to prove to ourselves that "we" are right and "they" are wrong. We read into redundancy the verses that tell us what we already know; and ignore the passages that may prove controversial even if they may be trying to teach us something essential to our salvation. And Heaven forbid we should bring up something that told us of our sins, let alone accused us of polluting "the holy church of God".

This may remind us of the Book of Mormon Zoramites found in Alma 31. The Zoramites would allow one person at a time to take center stage in their church, "stretch forth his hands toward heaven" (verse 13-14) and thank God that He had separated them from their foolish brethren who were obviously in error, they considered themselves the elect of God, and that they would be saved while everyone else would be consigned to a lesser kingdom (verses 16- 18). After the Zoramites had said these things they would return to their homes "never speaking of their God again" (verse 23) until they gathered together the next week (verse 12). This broke Alma's heart because he saw they were caught up in riches, "all manner of fine goods" (verse 24), "boasting" and "pride" (verse 25), all manner of "gross wickedness" (verse 26), "the vain things of the world" (verse 27), "costly apparel, and their ringlets and their bracelets, and their ornaments of gold, and all their precious things...yet they cried...we thank thee, O God, for we are a chosen people unto thee, while all others shall perish" (verse 28). This perversion of the ways of the Lord (verse 11) by this highly religious people not only "astonished" (verse 19) and "grieved" (verse 24) Alma, but he considered them to be an extremely "perverse" and grossly wicked people (verses 24,

26). See also Isaiah 1:11-31.

Polluted

At some time in our repentance process we must come to terms with Moroni calling us, and our "teachers," "pollutions" and "hypocrites" (Morm 8:38). The word "polluted" as used in Mormon 8 appears to be synonymous with the dreaded "A" word (apostasy) which we only use when referring to "them." The "A" word fits quite nicely for us when describing early Judaism or Christianity; we wouldn't even have a difficult time attaching it to Alma's Church in 3 Nephi 6 or the break-up of Christ's Church in 4 Nephi. However, 1 Nephi 22:23 sets up the criteria for a polluted church and 3 Nephi 6 and 4 Nephi give us examples of a polluted church; all three situations parallel Moroni's description of the polluted "holy church of God" in our day. The word "polluted" is only used three times in the Book of Mormon outside Mormon 8. One is quoting Isaiah (1 Ne 20:11); another is referring to the awful polluted state of the Lamanites (who were in apostasy at the time) (Mos 25: 11); and the other is Ammon describing the sinful and polluted state that he, his brothers and Alma the Younger were in before their great change (by anyone's definition--apostasy) (Alma 26: 17). There does appear to be at least some justification for considering the possibility that Moroni in Mormon 8 is accusing us of being in some form of apostasy.

We are grateful to President Benson, Elder Perry, Elder Anderson, and Brother Nibley for pointing out to us Moroni's accusation. But if they are correct, and Moroni is referring to us and we have "polluted the holy church of God" and the Lord's "sword of vengeance" hangs over us (Morm 8:38, 41; compare D&C 112:24-26; 97:25-26) why isn't there more conversation on this subject? Why doesn't every lesson manual have at least one chapter that deals with these verses? Why don't we discuss it in our quorums and our classes? I would guess that fewer than 10 percent of the Church are familiar with these verses and still fewer realize that Moroni is referring here to the LDS Church. How can we correct errors we are not aware of?

Promises

Most of us remain unconcerned about prophecies of our own apostasy because we have been promised that the Church will never fall into apostasy, that our temples will remain through the millennium, that our great city will

be a haven from the storm, and that "all we have to do is follow the Brethren." We have all heard these promises and have read these scriptures and prophecies numerous times. We enjoy hearing and telling them: they make us feel good and allow us a sense of security in a world of uncertainty. But forgotten in all of this is the ever so clear and very repetitive warning of the Lord: "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). Nor do we consider the irrevocable heavenly law that was established before the beginning of this world upon which "all blessings are predicated. And when we obtain any blessing from God, it is by obedience to that law upon which it is predicated" (D&C 130:20-21). Also, "I command and men obey not; I revoke and they receive not the blessing" (D&C 58:30-32 see also: D&C 54:4; 56:3-4; 82:3-4; 97:25-27; 101:2, 39-41 105:2-6; 124:47-48; Deut 11:26-28; Josh 23:14-16; Jer 18:6-10)

I recommend that we read all of these references so that we might obtain a very clear picture of this repetitive warning from the Lord.

It may be important to note that the children of Israel in the Old Testament had all of the promises mentioned above, but they did fall into apostasy (Jer 1: 16; 2:32; 3:25); and became polluted (Jer 2:23); their temple was destroyed (Jer 7:4, 11-15, 30; 26:6-12); their great city was destroyed (Jer 4:29; 6:6; 23:39-40; Zeph 2:14-15) and their priests and pastors led them astray by telling them that all was well and that they would have peace while those outside the covenant would be chastened (Jer 2:8; 6:13-16; 23:1-2, 11, 16-17, 21-22, 32; compare 2 Ne 28;14, 20-21, 24-26, 31-32). Concerning these prophets, priests, and pastors preaching that all is well, you "shall have peace," and "no evil shall come upon you," the Lord says, "And my people love to have it so" (Jer 5:3 1; Isa 30:10). Jeremiah claims that in the Latter Days we "shall consider it perfectly" (Jer 23:20; compare 2 Ne 25:7-8) [\(3\)](#).

And what was the cause of this great destruction? Nephi's list again: they "worshipped the works of their own hands" (Jer 1: 16), "and walked after things that do not profit" (Jer 2:8, 11). They had deceitful business practices where they used subtleties and strategies to make themselves rich and looked past the fatherless and the needy. All of this in the Lord's mind surpassed even "the deeds of the wicked" (Jer 5:26-29); and, of course, they were prideful (Jer 13:9, 17) and idolatrous (Jer 1: 16; 2:8, 11). President Kimball appears to be drawing a parallel between idolatry in our day with the idolatry of the Old Testament and says:

Whatever thing a man sets his heart and his trust in most is his god; and if his god doesn't also happen to be the true and living

God of Israel that man is laboring in idolatry.

It is my firm belief that when we read these scriptures and try to 'liken them unto [our]selves,' as Nephi suggested (1 Nephi 19:24), we will see many parallels between the ancient worship of graven images and behavioral patterns in our very own experience.

...But I am afraid that many of us have been surfeited with flocks and herds and acres and barns and wealth and have begun to worship them as false gods, and they have power over us. Do we have more of these things than our faith can stand?

...If we insist on spending all our time and resources building up for ourselves a worldly kingdom, that is exactly what we will inherit.

In spite of our delight in defining ourselves as modern and our tendency to think we possess a sophistication that no people in the past ever had--in spite of these things, we are, on the whole, an idolatrous people -- a condition most -- repugnant to the Lord.

*...But when I review the performance of this people in comparison with what is expected, I am appalled and frightened...we feel that truly we are living in conditions similar to those in the days of Noah before the Flood." (*The False Gods We Worship*, **Ensign Magazine**, June 1976, p 3. *Emphasis added*).*

President Kimball's address was given in 1976. I wonder if we are better now, or worse?

We may find it interesting that our Bible Dictionary accuses the Jews at the time of Lehi and Jeremiah "of fanatical confidence in the Lord's protection." Even though the Jews could see that their world was deteriorating around them they felt that since they were God's chosen people that he would protect and preserve them. This "self-deception" was based on "superficial reforms" and the assurances of the prophets, priests, and pastors of the people. Jeremiah tried to fight this trend, almost single-handedly, by declaring that "a complete regeneration" in lifestyle was required. He develops the idea of individual fellowship with the Lord (see LDS Scriptures, Bible Dictionary: "Jeremiah", p.711).

Hugh Nibley has stated:

Is the presence of the Temple in our midst a guarantee of safety? How often have the Jews made that mistake! for the greater the blessing promised, the greater the penalty and the risk.

...What is the result of failing to live up to every covenant made in the temple? It is to be in Satan's power; there is no alternative, for you "can not serve two masters." With the first slip the sinner begins to put distance between himself and God...one who fails to live up to his covenants tries to hide first by looking for loopholes in the language of the Endowment.

*...Many have noted the strong tendency of Latter-day Saints to avoid making waves. They seem strangely touchy on controversial issues. This begets an extreme lack of candor among the saints, which in turn is supported by a new doctrine according to which we have a Prophet at our head who relieves us of all responsibility for seeking knowledge beyond a certain point, making decisions or taking action on our own. From this it follows that one must never question a manual or Lesson Book, even though it may swarm with errors and evasions. But obedience, the first step in enlightenment, is not the last. ("**Endowment History**," June 1986, unpublished manuscript, p. 74-75.)*

The Destroyer of the Gentiles

In Jeremiah 4:7 the prophet uses wording to describe the destruction of the Jews that is similar to words used to prophesy the destruction of the last days. The Lord says the destruction will come from the north and "the Lion is come up from his thicket, and the destroyer of the Gentiles is on his way."

This, of course, reminds us of 3 Nephi 20:16 and 21:12 where in our day the remnant of Jacob will go among the Gentiles as a Lion among the Flock and lead them down (see also Morm 5:22-24; Mic 5:8; D&C 87:5). But again we always assume that the "them" that will be trodden are "they, the wicked" as opposed to "we, the righteous."

Elder H. Verlan Andersen of the Seventy has said, "If Church members from Gentile nations will bear in mind that the term "Gentile" when used in the Book of Mormon includes them, the prophecies therein will have much greater meaning and be more disturbing." (The Great and Abominable Church of the Devil, p. 170). (See also D&C 109:60.) [\(4\)](#).

From the Gentiles to the House of Israel

To help show that the Gentiles referred to in the above scriptures includes the Lord's covenant people we turn to 3 Nephi 16: 10-15:

10 And thus commandeth the Father that I should say unto you: At that day when the Gentiles shall sin against my gospel, and shall reject the fulness of my gospel, and shall be lifted up in the pride of their hearts above all nations, and above all the people of the whole earth, and shall be filled with all manner of lyings, and deceits, and mischiefs, and all manner of hypocrisy, and murders, and priestcrafts, and whoredoms, and secret abominations; and if they shall do all those things, and shall reject the fullness of my gospel, behold saith the Father, I will bring the fulness of my gospel from among them.

11 And then will I remember my covenant which I have made unto my people, O house of Israel, and I will bring my gospel unto them.

12 And I will show unto thee, O house of Israel, that the Gentiles shall not have power over you; but I will remember my covenant unto you, O house of Israel, and ye shall come unto the knowledge of the fulness of my gospel.

13 But if the Gentiles will repent and return unto me, saith the Father, behold they shall be numbered among my people, O house of Israel.

14 And I will not suffer my people, who are of the house of Israel, to go through among them, and tread them down, saith the Father:

15 But if they will not turn unto me, and hearken unto my voice, I will suffer them, yea, I will suffer my people, O house of Israel, that they shall go through among them, and shall tread them down, and they shall be as salt that hath lost its savor which is henceforth good for nothing but to be cast out, and to be trodden underfoot of my people, O house of Israel. (3 Nephi 16:10-15)

In verse 10 we read, "At that day when the Gentiles shall sin against my gospel." We immediately assume that it is referring exclusively to "those sinners" who reject the message of our missionaries, as if it were not possible to sin against His gospel from the inside.

Verse 10 also gives a long list of evil deeds being done that appear to be crimes far too heinous to be inside jobs, but perhaps we should remember that just because we don't see something does not mean it does not exist (see D&C 123:10-15; Hel 6:20-24, 37-38; Ether 8:18- 26; Alma 37:21-26).

Continuing in verse 10 the Gentiles are accused of rejecting the fulness of God's gospel which will cause the Father to "bring the fulness of my gospel from among them." Rejecting the "fulness" of the gospel of the Father may of necessity be an inside job. This appears to pattern the breakup of Christ's Church in 4 Nephi 1:27 where "they did deny the more parts of his gospel" (see Nibley, page 4 above) and matches the inside corruption of Christianity and the Bible, as depicted in 1 Nephi 13, wherein "they have taken away from the gospel of the Lamb many parts which are plain and most precious; and also many covenants" (1 Ne 13:26, 24-34).

It is of significance that at the end of 3 Nephi 16:10 the fulness of the gospel is taken from these Gentiles, and verses 11-12 prophesy that this gospel will go to the house of Israel--a curiously similar scenario to Alma's Church in 3 Nephi 6:14 where the Church breaks up "in all the land" of the Nephites at the same time as the Lamanites prove faithful. This happens in both cases just a few years before the coming of the Lord in glory. President Ezra Taft Benson has pointed out:

*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. (A **Witness and a Warning**, Deseret Book, p.37.)*

Verses 13-14 tell us if we "repent and return" that we can join them. That this is referring to us will be made even more clear below, but it should be noted that it is difficult to "return" to some place you have never been. If we do indeed repent then we will be spared (see also 3 Ne 20:14-16; 21:11-29).

In verse 15 we learn again that if we do not repent (repentance appears to be the only choice--to continue as we are does not seem to be an acceptable option) we shall be tread down (back to our Lion among the flock scenario) and we will "be as salt that hath lost it's savor, which is thenceforth good for nothing but to be cast out, and to be trodden under the foot of my people, O house of Israel."

"Salt," as it is used in verse 15, confirms the idea that a covenant people is being referred to here, because D&C 101:39-40 tells us: "When men are called unto mine everlasting covenant, they are accounted as the salt of the

earth and the savor of men;" and then verse 40 repeats the punishment for breaking the covenant, "cast out d trodden under the feet of men." Elder H. Verlan Andersen, of the Quorum of the Seventy, agrees:

*We are forced to conclude that He is speaking directly to His 'covenant people' here... (**The Great and Abominable Church of the Devil**, p. 126, 171.)*

After reviewing the scriptures referred to immediately above on the relationship between the gentiles of the covenant and the House of Israel (i.e., 3 Ne 16:10-15; 3 Ne 20; 3 Ne 21), Brother Hugh Nibley has said:

*Throughout these explicit prophecies it is the Gentiles who join: 'the Lamanites and those who have become Lamanites', not the other way around. If we are to be saved we must move in their direction. (Speech given at the J. Reuben Clark Law School, B.Y.U., Provo, Utah; October 9, 1992. Published in **Brother Brigham Challenges the Saints**, Vol. 13 of Hugh Nibley Collected Works, pp. 100-101.)*

Conclusion

Elder Boyd K. Packer in an address to Regional Representatives has said:

In recent years I have felt, and I think I am not alone, that we are losing the ability to correct the course of the church. You cannot appreciate how deeply I feel about the importance of this present opportunity unless you know the regard, the reverence, I have for the Book of Mormon and how seriously I have taken the warnings of the prophets, particularly Alma and Helaman.

Both Alma and Helaman told the church in their day. They warned about fast growth, the desire to be accepted by the world, to be popular, and particularly they warned about prosperity. Each time those conditions existed in combination, the church has drifted off course. All of those conditions are present in the church today.

Helaman repeatedly warned, I think four times he used these words, that the fatal drift of the church could occur in the space of not many years. In one instance it took only six years. (Helaman 6:32; 7:6; 11:26) (See also 3 Nephi 7:8.) (Regional Representative Seminar, March 30, 1990)

As gentiles of the covenant our choices are simple--either repent or perish. The punishments indivisibly attached to the endowment assure us of that. But the question remains, "repent of what?" It is believable to me that Nephi's list may be an excellent place to begin. We must also begin to build "a sure foundation," "upon the rock of our redeemer, who is Christ, the Son of God" (Hel 5: 12) and not upon the "arm of flesh" because "Cursed is he that putteth his trust in man." (2 Ne 28:25-32; 4:34). We must strive to know God, with all our hearts, might, mind, and strength.

Mormon told his son Moroni that "the pride of this nation, or the people of the Nephites, hath proven their destruction except they should repent" (Moro 8:27) and our own Doctrine and Covenants has told us to "...beware of pride, lest ye become as the Nephites of old" (D&C 38:39). A warning that President Benson has likewise echoed to us (**Ensign**, May, 1989, p. 4). And Moroni tells us to "give thanks unto God that he hath made manifest unto you our imperfections, that ye may learn to be more wise than we have been" (Morm 9:3 I). May we heed his warning more diligently than the Nephites heeded the warning of the Jaredites.

Perhaps we should be concerned that of all the pages of scripture we have available to us, only a few chapters of the books of Moses contain the incomplete story of the people of Enoch. All else is the repetitive cycle of restoration, apostasy and destruction with the hero being the lone remnant, typified by Lehi and his family. The large collective success story is conspicuously absent from our canon of scripture. May we be the ones who repent and break the trend.

Endnotes

1. Mosiah Hancock has expressed Brigham Young's views by stating:

He (B. Y.) conversed freely on the situation of the saints in the mountains, and said that he dreaded the time when the saints would become popular with the world; for he had seen in sorrow, in a dream or in dreams, this people clothed in the fashions of Babylon and drinking in the spirit of Babylon until one could hardly tell a saint from a black-leg. (*Life Story of Mosiah Hancock*, p. 73.)

Also,

And when the spirit of persecution, the spirit of hatred, of wrath, and malice ceases in the world against this people, it will be the time that this people have apostatized and joined hands with the wicked, and never until then; which I pray may never come. (Brigham Young, *Journal of Discourses*, 4:327)

I look at this, and I am satisfied that it will not do for the Lord to make this people popular. . . .What is the reason of this? Christ and Baal can not become friends. When I see this people grow and spread and prosper, I feel that there is more danger than when they are in poverty. Being driven from city to city or into the mountains is nothing compared to the danger of our becoming rich and being hailed by outsiders as a first-class community. (Brigham Young, *JD*, 12:270-271, August 16th, 1868)

There is nothing that would weaken my hope and discourage me as to see this people in full fellowship with the world and receive no more persecution from them because they are one of them. In such an event, we might bid farewell to the holy priesthood with all its blessings, privileges, and aids to exaltation, principalities, and powers in the eternities of God...When we see the time that we can willingly strike hands and have full fellowship with those who despise the kingdom of God, know ye then that the priesthood of the Son of God is out of your possession. (Brigham Young, *JD*, 10:32)

Whether Brother Brigham would apply the above to our situation as contained in this paper is something we can only speculate on, but I see these quotes as being worth considering, especially in light of Mormon 8:38 (James 4:4).

2. Highly recommended on this subject is Hugh Nibley, **Approaching Zion**, Deseret Book/ F.A.R.M.S., vol. 9 H. N.'s Collected Works.

3.

President Joseph Smith read the 14th chapter of Ezekiel--said the Lord had declared by the Prophet, that the people should each one stand for himself, and depend on no man or men in that state of corruption of the Jewish church--that righteous persons could only deliver their own souls--applied it to the present state of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints--said if the people departed from the Lord, they must fall--that they were depending on the Prophet, hence were darkened in their minds, in consequence of neglecting the duties devolving upon themselves, envious towards the innocent, while they afflict the virtuous with their shafts of envy. (Joseph Fielding Smith, *The Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith*, p. 237-238.)

What a pity it would be if we were led by one man to utter destruction! Are you afraid of this? I am more afraid that this people have so much confidence in their leaders that they will not inquire for themselves of God whether they are led by him. I am fearful they settle down in a state of blind self-security, trusting their eternal destiny in the hands of their leaders with a reckless confidence that in itself would thwart the purposes of God in their salvation, and weaken that influence they could give to their leaders, did they know for themselves, by the revelations of Jesus, that they are led in the right way. (Brigham Young, *Journal of Discourses* 9:150. Also see Ezra Taft Benson, *An Enemy Hath Done This*, p.294.)

Six of the original twelve apostles selected by Joseph Smith were excommunicated. The Three Witnesses to the Book of Mormon left the Church. Three of Joseph Smith's counselors fell--one even helped plot his death.

A natural question that might arise would be that if the Lord knew in advance

that these men would fall, as he undoubtedly did, why did he have his prophet call them to such high office? The answer is, to fill the Lord's purposes. For even the Master followed the will of the Father by selecting Judas. President George Q. Cannon suggested an explanation, too, when he stated, 'Perhaps it is his own design that faults and weaknesses should appear in high places in order that his saints may learn to trust in him and not in any man or men'. And this would parallel Nephi's warning, put not your 'trust in the arm of flesh'. (2 Nephi 4:34). (Ezra Taft Benson, *An Enemy Hath Done This*, Bookcraft, p. 290.)

We can tell when the speakers are moved upon by the Holy Ghost only when we, ourselves, are moved upon by the Holy Ghost. In a way, **this completely shifts the responsibility from them to us to determine when they so speak**....The church will know by the testimony of the Holy Ghost in the body of the members whether the brethren in voicing their views are moved upon by the Holy Ghost; and in due time that knowledge will be made manifest. (President J. Reuben Clark, *Church News*, July 31, 1954. Also see Benson, *An Enemy Hath Done This*, p. 295. Emphasis added.)

The time will come when no man or woman will be able to endure on borrowed light. (Heber C. Kimball as quoted in Orson F. Whitney, *Life of Heber C. Kimball*, 1888 edition, p. 461.)

4. For a thorough discussion of the term "Gentiles" as used in the scriptures see Avraham Gileadi, chapter on "Gentiles of the House of Israel", *The Last Days*, Deseret Book/Covenant Books.

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