

Gospel Doctrine Lesson 10: He Inviteth All to Come unto Him

(2 Nephi 26-30)

LESSON GOAL: To help us understand that through the Restoration of the gospel and the teachings of the Book of Mormon, the Lord will cause truth to triumph over evil.

To experience and learn from a well-done introduction to the Book of Mormon, please Google this:

BYUTV A New Day for the Book of Mormon.

The video is 51 minutes long and includes the public's reaction to the Book of Mormon, a thoughtful and sensitive retelling of the history of Joseph Smith receiving the plates and translating them, and several scholars analyzing the Book of Mormon itself. This can be your Sabbath exploration of the gospel.

President Ezra Taft Benson: "It is not just that the Book of Mormon teaches us truth, though it indeed does that. It is not just that the Book of Mormon bears testimony of Christ, though it indeed does that, too. But there is something more. **There is a power in the book that will begin to flow into your life the moment you begin a serious study of the book.** You will find greater power to resist temptation. You will find the power to avoid deception. You will find the power to stay on the strait and narrow path." (CR, Oct 1986)

President Ezra Taft Benson: "The Book of Mormon exposes the enemies of Christ. It confounds false doctrines and lays down contention. It fortifies the humble followers of Christ against the evil designs, strategies, and doctrines of the devil in our day. The type of apostates in the Book of Mormon are similar to the type we have today. God, with his infinite foreknowledge, so molded the Book of Mormon **that we might see the error and know how to combat false educational, political, religious, and philosophical concepts of our time**" (CR, Apr. 1975, 94–95).

Robert J. Matthews: This particular segment of Nephi's writings is **only a part of Nephi's larger prophecy** and is heavily influenced by his intense interest in the writings of Isaiah. (2 Nephi 11 is an introduction to the messages, with a brief statement of the overall message and the reason for using Isaiah to teach it. 2 Nephi 12-24 contains the message. 2 Nephi 25- 29 is Nephi's explanation of what he has told us). Nephi used plainness in describing two forces at work in the world: **the work of God** and **the influence of the devil**. This is the general theme of all scripture.

The battle presented in these scriptures **began during our pre-earthly existence**. This was not a war just of words and debate and forensics. It was a war of misdeeds, lies, hatred, pride jealousy, remorse, envy, cursing, blasphemy, deception, theft, cajoling, slander, anger, and sins of almost every kind that are also known in mortality. The issues were so well defined that coexistence was not possible. Those who wholeheartedly supported Lucifer's rebellion became like him; and after having sinned beyond the possibility of reclamation, they were cast out of heaven and placed (as spirits) upon the earth, never to be born with a body of flesh and bone." (*Studies in Scripture*, 7:147-148)

And the war between the forces of good and evil continues into mortality

1. Nephi prophesies of the Savior's ministry among the Nephites.

Nephi looks forward to the coming of Christ

2 Ne. 26:9-10: But the Son of Righteousness shall appear unto them; and he shall **heal them**, and **they shall have peace with him**, until three generations shall have passed away . . . And when these things have passed away a **speedy destruction cometh unto my people**;

2 Ne. 26:12-13: And as I spake concerning the **convincing of the Jews**, that **Jesus is the very Christ**, it must needs be that the **Gentiles be convinced** also that **Jesus is the Christ**, the Eternal God; And. . . **he [Jesus Christ] manifesteth himself unto all those who believe in him** . . .

But Nephi also sees the results of this ongoing war within his own people

2 Ne. 26:5-6: And **they that kill the prophets, and the saints**, the depths of the earth shall swallow them up, saith the Lord of Hosts; and mountains shall cover them, and whirlwinds shall carry them away, and buildings shall fall upon them and crush them to pieces and grind them to powder. And they shall be visited with thunderings, and lightnings, and earthquakes, and all manner of destructions, for **the fire of the anger of the Lord shall be kindled against them**, and they shall be as stubble, and the day that cometh shall consume them, saith the Lord of Hosts.

THE SPIRITUAL CONDITION OF THE GENTILES IN THE LAST DAYS—2 Nephi 26:

- Lifted up in the pride of their eyes (v20).
- Stumble spiritually because of the "stumbling block" (v20).
- Preach for religious doctrine their own ideas gained through their own wisdom and learning (v20).
- Preach for financial gain (v20).
- Deny the miracles and power of God (v20).
- Be filled with envy, malice, and strife (v21).
- Support secret combinations from the devil (v22).

2 Ne. 26:22: And there are also secret combinations, even as in times of old, according to the combinations of the devil, for he is the founder of all these things; yea, the founder of murder, and works of darkness; yea, and **he leadeth them by the neck with a flaxen cord, until he bindeth them with his strong cords forever.**

Ted Gibbons: I tried to buy some flax thread one day here in Orem. The lady at the counter told me it was nearly hopeless. She said something like this: **“Flaxen thread is so fragile that it is almost useless, unless one is willing to work very carefully by hand. A sewing machine will not function with so fragile a thread.”**

And yet **Satan leads the Gentiles about with a “flaxen cord.”** He is ever so careful and so subtle. We may know when the first loops of flax encircle our necks, but we feel no fear. It is only flax, and we can break it any time we want to. And so the number of strands of flax increases, imperceptibly and slowly. We hardly notice that the movies and TV shows we see this year are more degraded than those we watched last year. **We become less and less shocked by obscenity or vulgarity; common standards of modesty and decency seem less critical than they did to our ancestors.** (Copyright © 2004 by Ted Gibbons tedgibbons@yahoo.com)

But in the midst of this terrible, subtle danger, and these rampant iniquities among the Gentiles, the Lord’s invitations, in the form of questions, are constant:

1. “Behold, doth he cry unto any, saying: **Depart from me?**” (2 Ne. 26:25)
2. “Hath he commanded any that they should **depart out of . . . houses of worship?**” (2 Ne. 26:26)
3. “Hath he commanded any that **they should not partake of his salvation?**” (2 Ne. 26:27)
4. “Behold, hath the Lord commanded any that **they should not partake of his goodness?**” (2 Ne. 26:28)

2 Ne. 26:29: He commandeth that there shall be no priestcrafts; for, behold, priestcrafts are that men preach and set themselves up for a light unto the world, that they may get gain and praise of the world; but they seek not the welfare of Zion.

Bruce R. McConkie: “Priesthood and priestcraft are two opposites; one is of God, the other of the devil. When ministers claim but do not possess the priesthood; when they set themselves up as lights to their congregations, but do not preach the pure and full gospel; when their interest is in gaining personal popularity and financial gain, rather than in caring for the poor and ministering to the wants and needs of their fellow men -- they are engaged, in a greater or lesser degree, in the practice of priestcrafts.” (*Mormon Doctrine*, 593).

2. Nephi testifies of the coming forth of the Book of Mormon.

But in the midst of this iniquity, “the Lord God Shall bring forth unto you the words of a book”:

2 Ne. 27:6: And it shall come to pass that **the Lord God shall bring forth unto you the words of a book**, and they shall be the words of them which have slumbered [died].

2 Ne. 27:7, 9: And behold the book shall be sealed; and **in the book shall be a revelation from God**, from the beginning of the world to the ending thereof. . . But the book shall be delivered unto **a man** [Joseph Smith], and he shall deliver the words of the book, which are the words of those who have slumbered in the dust, and he shall deliver these words unto **another** [Martin Harris] . . .

JOSEPH SMITH HISTORY 1:63-65:

63 Sometime in this month of February, the aforementioned **Mr. Martin Harris** came to our place, got the characters which I had drawn off the plates, and started with them to the city of New York. For what took place relative to him and the characters, I refer to his own account of the circumstances, as he related them to me after his return, which was as follows:

64 “I went to the city of New York, and presented the characters which had been translated, with the translation thereof, to Professor Charles Anthon, a gentleman celebrated for his literary attainments. Professor Anthon stated that the translation was correct, more so than any he had before seen translated from the Egyptian. I then showed him those which were not yet translated, and he said that they were Egyptian, Chaldaic, Assyriac, and Arabic; and **he said they were true characters.** He gave me a certificate, certifying to the people of Palmyra that they were true characters, and that **the translation**, of such of them as had been translated, **was also correct.** I took the certificate and put it into my pocket, and was just leaving the house, when Mr. Anthon called me back, and asked me how the young man found out that there were gold plates in the place where he found them. I answered that an angel of God had revealed it unto him.

65 “He then said to me, ‘Let me see that certificate.’ I accordingly took it out of my pocket and gave it to him, when he took it and tore it to pieces, saying that there was no such thing now as ministering of angels, and that if I would bring the plates to him he would translate them. I informed him that part of the plates were sealed, and that I was forbidden to bring them. He replied, ‘I cannot read a sealed book.’ I left him and went to Dr. Mitchell, who sanctioned what Professor Anthon had said respecting both the characters and the translation.”

3. Nephi prophesies that Satan will spread false doctrines in the last days.

2 Ne. 28:3-5: For it shall come to pass in that day that **the churches** which are built up, and not unto the Lord, when the one shall say unto the other: Behold, I, I am the Lord's; and the others shall say: I, I am the Lord's; and thus shall every one say that hath built up churches, and not unto the Lord—And they shall contend one with another; and their priests shall contend one with another, and **they shall teach with their learning, and deny the Holy Ghost**, which giveth utterance. And **they deny the power of God**, the Holy One of Israel; and they say unto the people: Harken unto us, and hear ye our precept; for behold **there is no God today, for the Lord and the Redeemer hath done his work, and he hath given his power unto men;**

In 2 Nephi 28, Nephi describes the characteristics of the sectarian churches of the last days:

- They declare, 'I am the Lord's' (v. 3)
- They deny the Holy Ghost (v. 4)
- They deny the power of God (v. 5)
- They teach false doctrines (v. 12)
- They have become corrupted because of pride (v. 12)
- They rob the poor (v. 13)
- They wear fine clothing (v. 13)
- They persecute the meek and the poor (v. 13)
- They have all gone astray save it be a few (v. 14)
- They revile against that which is good (v. 16)

M. Russell Ballard: "Therefore, let us **beware of false prophets and false teachers**, both men and women who are self-appointed declarers of the doctrines of the Church and who seek to spread their false gospel and attract followers by sponsoring symposia, books, and journals whose contents challenge fundamental doctrines of the Church. Beware of those who speak and publish in opposition to God's true prophets and who actively proselyte others with reckless disregard for the eternal well-being of those whom they seduce. They rely on sophistry to deceive and entice others to their views. **They 'set themselves up for a light unto the world, that they may get gain and praise of the world; but they seek not the welfare of Zion'** (2 Ne 26:29)" ("Beware of False Prophets and False Teachers," *Ensign*, Nov. 1999, 62).

Nephi wrote of the people of the last days:

2 Nephi 28:7-8: Yea, and there shall be many which shall say: **Eat, drink, and be merry, for tomorrow we die;** and it shall be well with us. And there shall also be many which shall say: Eat, drink, and be merry; nevertheless, fear God—**he will justify in committing a little sin;** yea, lie a little, take the advantage of one because of his words, dig a pit for thy neighbor; there is no harm in this; and do all these things, for tomorrow we die; and **if it so be that we are guilty, God will beat us with a few stripes, and at last we shall be saved in the kingdom of God.**

Satan shall rage in the hearts of men in the last days:

2 Ne. 28:20: For behold, at that day **shall he [Satan] rage in the hearts** of the children of men, and **stir them up to anger against that which is good.**

Marvin J. Ashton: "It should come as no surprise that one of the adversary's tactics in the latter days is **stirring up hatred among the children of men. He loves to see us criticize each other, make fun or take advantage of our neighbor's known flaws, and generally pick on each other.** The Book of Mormon is clear from where all anger, malice, greed, and hate come [2 Ne 28:20]. By the looks of what we constantly see depicted in the news media, it appears that **Satan is doing a pretty good job.** In the name of reporting the news, we are besieged with sometimes graphic depictions--too often in living color--of greed, extortion, violent sexual crimes, and insults between business, athletic, or political opponents." (*Ensign*, May 1992, 19).

2 Ne. 28:21: And others will he pacify, and **lull them away** into carnal security, that they will say: **All is well in Zion;** yea, Zion prospereth, all is well—and thus the devil cheateth their souls, and leadeth them away carefully down to hell.

Spencer W. Kimball: "We have discussed elsewhere that other class of people who are basically unrepentant because they are not 'doing the commandments.' **They are Church members who are steeped in lethargy.** They neither drink nor commit the sexual sins. They do not gamble nor rob nor kill. **They are good citizens and splendid neighbors, but spiritually speaking they seem to be in a long, deep sleep. They are doing nothing seriously wrong except in their failures to do the right things to earn their exaltation.**" (*Miracle of Forgiveness*, pp. 211-2 as taken from *Latter-day Commentary on the Book of Mormon* compiled by K. Douglas Bassett, p. 160)

Bruce R. McConkie: "**Spiritual deafness** describes the state of those who are lacking in spirituality whose spirit ears are not attuned to the whisperings of the still small voice of the Spirit. Similarly, **spiritual blindness** is the identifying mark which singles out those who are **unable to see the hand of God manifest in the affairs of men**, Such have 'unbelief and blindness of heart' (D&C 58:15); **they are 'hard in their hearts, and blind in their minds'** (3 Ne. 2:1)." (*Mormon Doctrine*, 184).

2 Ne. 28:22: And behold, others he flattereth away, and telleth them **there is no hell**; and he saith unto them: **I am no devil, for there is none**—and thus he whispereth in their ears, until **he grasps them with his awful chains**, from whence there is no deliverance.

Spencer W. Kimball: "My young folks, since the Lord said, 'Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect' (Matthew 5:48), **it would be well if all of us would take frequent inventory** to see if hidden away under the rugs and in the corners of our lives there might be some vestige of hypocrisy and ugliness or error. Or could there be hidden under the blankets of personal excuse and rationalization some small eccentricities and dishonesties? Are there any cobwebs in ceilings and corners which we think will not be noticed? Are we trying to cover up the small pettinesses and the small gratifications we secretly allow ourselves-rationalizing the while that they are insignificant and inconsequential? **Are there areas in our thoughts and actions and attitudes which we would like to hide from those we respect most?** Are we certain that all of our innermost secrets are kept confidential? The Lord revealed in 1831, 'The rebellious shall be pierced with much sorrow; for their iniquities shall be spoken upon the housetops, and their secret acts shall be revealed.' (D&C 1:3.)
"Would a frequent house cleaning be in order for all of us?" (BYU Speeches, February 25, 1964, p. 21)

Richard C. Edgley: "We cannot say we will sow a few wild oats in our youth or that we will just dabble a little around the fringes of sin. **There are no fringes of sin. Every act, good or bad, has a consequence.** Every good act improves our ability to do good and more firmly stand against sin or failure. Every transgression, regardless of how minor, makes us more susceptible to Satan's influence the next time he tempts us. **Satan takes us an inch at a time, deceiving us as to the consequences of so-called minor sins** until he captures us in major transgressions. Nephi describes this technique as one of pacifying, lulling, and flattering us away until Satan 'grasps [us] with his awful chains, from whence there is no deliverance' (2 Nephi 28:22)" (Conference Report, Oct. 1994).

4. Nephi teaches about the importance of the Book of Mormon.

Five great reasons for the marvelous work of the Book of Mormon last days. Each begins with the word *that*:

2 Nephi 29:1-2: BUT behold, there shall be many--at that day when I shall proceed to do a marvelous work among them, ***that*** I may **remember my covenants** which I have made unto the children of men, ***that*** I may set my hand again the second time **to recover my people**, which are of the house of Israel; And also, ***that*** I may **remember the promises** which I have made unto thee, Nephi, and also unto thy father, ***that*** I would **remember your seed**; and ***that*** **the words of your seed should proceed forth out of my mouth unto your seed**; and my words shall hiss forth unto the ends of the earth, for a standard unto my people, which are of the house of Israel;

Four reasons for the Book of Mormon:

1. Know ye not that there are more nations than one? Know ye not that I, the Lord your God, have created all men, and that I remember those who are upon the isles of the sea; and that I rule in the heavens above and in the earth beneath; and **I bring forth my word unto the children of men, yea, even upon all the nations of the earth?** (2 Ne. 29:7)
2. Know ye not that the testimony of two nations is a witness unto you that I am God, that I remember one nation like unto another? Wherefore, **I speak the same words unto one nation like unto another.** And when the two nations shall run together the testimony of the two nations shall run together also. (2 Ne. 29:8)
3. And I do this that I may prove unto many that **I am the same yesterday, today, and forever . . .** (2 Ne. 29:9)
4. For **I command all men**, both in the east and in the west, and in the north, and in the south, and in the islands of the sea, that **they shall write the words which I speak unto them**; for **out of the books which shall be written I will judge the world, every man according to their works, according to that which is written.** (2 Ne. 29:11)

5. Conclusion

Much more of Nephi's commentary was for the Gentiles (and we are cultural Gentiles even though our lineage is of Israel) than for the Jews or the Lamanites. **Nephi knew that we would be the recipients of his work, and he sent us a message—an appeal to repent and return to the Lord, to forsake evil and iniquity of every kind and to embrace the sweetness of the Gospel of peace.**

He has extended to us the shelter of the covenant.

2 Nephi 30:2: For behold, I say unto you that as many of the Gentiles as will repent are the covenant people of the Lord; and as many of the Jews as will not repent shall be cast off; **for the Lord covenanteth with none save it be with them that repent and believe in his Son, who is the Holy One of Israel.**

May we turn away from the world, may we reject the precepts of men, may we awake to our jeopardy, and rejoice in this marvelous work that the Lord has done among us.