

# CHAPTER ONE

## A Bridge to the Greater Things

**F**or those who diligently seek greater light and knowledge, the Lord holds out glorious blessings. Seeking an understanding of the mysteries of God is not optional for any who desire to attain eternal life. Those who do not seek "are not brought into the light, but must perish in the dark." (2 Ne. 32:4.) The Lord warned, "...From them that shall say, We have enough, from them shall be taken away even that which they have." (2 Ne. 28:30; Matt. 25:29.) Each individual chooses for himself either the path of seeking greater light until he receives a fullness, or the path of ignoring or rejecting the light he has received until he is "taken captive by the devil, and led by his will down to destruction." (Alma 12:10,11; Matt. 25:21,29,30.) The former path is strait and "narrow, and few there be that find it;" while the latter path is "broad..., and many there be that travel therein, until the night cometh, wherein no man can work." (3 Ne. 27:3; Matt. 7:13,14.)

As a theme of his Presidency, our prophet has made it abundantly clear that the Book of Mormon is of utmost importance and that we must be more diligent in reading and heeding its messages. He has declared that the Church is under condemnation because the membership has treated it lightly.<sup>5</sup> (D&C 84:54-58.) While the Book of Mormon is a stepping stone for some, to others it becomes a stumbling block. The Lord proclaimed, "As many as shall hereafter come to a knowledge of this

work" -- referring to the Book of Mormon -- will be judged according to how they respond to it. (20:13.) "Those who receive it in faith, and work righteousness, shall receive a crown of eternal life; but those who harden their hearts in unbelief, and reject it, it shall turn to their own condemnation." (20:14,15.)

**Q.** What is this "condemnation"?

**A.** Mormon said that the Book of Mormon as we have it, is but a probationary foretaste of what the Lord desires us to have. Speaking of our day, he said, "...If it so be that they shall believe these things [the Book of Mormon] then shall the greater things be made manifest unto them." (3 Ne. 26:9.) On the other hand, he added, "...If it so be that they will not believe these things, then shall the greater things be withheld from them, *unto their condemnation.*" (26:10.) This condemnation has to do with the greater things. As darkness is the absence of light, condemnation is the absence of greater things. There are shades of darkness as well as of condemnation.

President Benson explained that this condemnation will be lifted to the extent that we repent.<sup>6</sup> Nephi said that the greater things would not come forth to the world "in the day of the wickedness and abominations of the people...." (2 Ne. 27:8.) Christ invites us to remedy this, saying, "*Come unto me*, O ye Gentiles, and I will show unto you the greater things, the knowledge which is hid up because of unbelief." (Ether 4:13.)

**Q.** What are the "greater things" that the Lord longs for us to have?

**A.** The essence of the answer to this question may be found in chapters three, four, and five of Ether. There, Moroni identified the things which the brother of Jared saw as, "greater things." In fact, he stated, "there never were greater things made manifest than those which were made manifest unto the brother of Jared." (Ether 4:4; 4:8,13.) After the brother of Jared beheld a marvelous vision, the Lord commanded him to record it and seal it up. (3:27.) This record came forth among the Nephites "after Christ truly had shown himself unto" them. (4:1,2.) But then, because they later "dwindled in unbelief," the Lord commanded Moroni to "hide [this record] up again in the earth." (4:3,5.) Moroni concluded this narrative about the brother of Jared's writings by saying, "And now I, Moroni..., have told you the things which I have sealed up..., " (5:1, 3:27, 4:5.) Moroni was the one to complete the work of compiling the plates; he placed the plates in the hill Cumorah; he was the one who delivered the plates to Joseph Smith; he knew what the sealed portion contained. From these passages we can conclude that the "greater things" currently being withheld from us are contained in the sealed portion of the Book of Mormon.

Nephi also spoke of the sealed portion. He said of its contents: "...The book shall be a revelation from God, from the beginning of the world to the ending thereof." (2 Ne. 27:7.) His second description was essentially the same: "...They reveal all things from the foundation of the world unto the end thereof." (27:10.) This matches Moroni's description, in which he said the brother of Jared beheld "all the inhabitants of the earth which had been, and also all that would be..., even unto the ends of the earth." (Ether 3:25.) Isaiah, in prophesying of the coming forth of the Book of Mormon, spoke of a sealed portion as well. (Isa. 29:11,18; compare 2 Ne. 27:6-24 and JS-H 1:64,65.) He concisely called the book, "***the vision of all.***" (Isa. 29:11.) All of these accounts con-

sistently depict the sealed portion as prophetic in nature: laying out in a all plainness a panoramic history of the world, from beginning to end.

In addition to the sealed portion of the Book of Mormon, many other "sealed" records will be coming forth. (1 Ne. 14:26; 2 Ne. 30:16-18; Rev. 10:4.) What a glorious day it will be when the Lord sees fit in his wisdom to bring forth these hitherto sealed records. In that day when Satan is bound, and "shall have power over the hearts of the children of men no more," then "all things which have been revealed unto the children of men shall...be revealed." (2 Ne. 30:18.) When that day of righteousness comes, "the words of the book which were sealed shall be read upon the housetops...." (27:11.) By then, the wicked will have been swept off from among the people. "Wherefore...wo be unto him that rejecteth the word of God!" (27:14.)

The Lord empowered the brother of Jared "that the things which he wrote were mighty even as [God], unto the overpowering of man to read them." (Ether 12:24.) If we would like to be prepared to receive this greater light and knowledge, we should more diligently strive to understand that which has already been given. The condemnation that rests on the children of Zion is due to neglecting not only in word but also in action that which is now available. (D&C 84:57.) Can we ever "truly [see] with our eyes" the *vision of all* contained in the sealed portion in all clarity, if we have not first attempted to develop such a vision in our mind's eye -- or as Moroni put it, "with an eye of faith"? (Ether 12:19.) Parallels are designed to assist us in that worthy pursuit. The *vision of all* is sketched -- like a prophetic blue print -- in the history of the Book of Mormon. Our response to that which we have received will determine whether we will receive the greater things, or be cut off. (See Table 1.)

**Table 1**  
**THE CHOICE**

Greater Things	Cut Off
receive	reject
hearken	harden
greater portion	lesser portion
overcome the world	be overcome
brought into the light	perish in the dark
all things revealed	blindness of mind
peace	chains of hell
life eternal	destruction

**References:**

1 Ne. 14:7; 2 Ne. 28:30; Alma 12:9-13; 3 Ne. 28:34,31-35; Ether 12:35; D&C 20:13-15; 50:8,14,18; 98:12; 133:62,63.

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The key compilers of the Book of Mormon had a brilliant understanding of the greater things. Ether, Mormon and Moroni had access to all the writings of the brother of Jared, mentioned above, as well as other sacred records. Nephi did not have access to those writings, but he saw such a vision first hand--as did Moroni and Ether.<sup>7</sup> (1 Ne. 11-14; Morm. 8:34,35.)

In recounting the history of their people to us, the compilers had the task of carefully selecting the events of their day that best fit the pattern that had and would evolve in the house of Israel's trek through time. Having the *vision of all* engraved in their hearts and minds, and having an inspired, first-hand understanding of their own day, these prophet-compilers were in a position to be able to do this. Because their panoramic tour was of divine origin, they were able to highlight and expound the things that would be of greatest eternal significance to us.

Like so many other prophets, these four Book of Mormon prophets were solicitous concerning our day: the most critical segment in the history of mankind. They not only understood *what* would happen, but they knew *why* those things would happen. They yearned to be able to tell us more. Much more. "The Spirit stoppeth my utterance," was their sorrowful refrain. (2 Ne. 32:7; Ether 13:13.) At one point, Mormon "was about to write" everything that was

"engraven upon the plates of Nephi" for us. (3 Ne. 26:11.) This record included the teachings of Christ to his people when he expounded "all things, even from the beginning" to the end -- of which our current record does not even contain "a hundredth part." (3 Ne. 26:3-6.) Mormon was desirous, "but the Lord forbade it, saying: I will try the faith of my people." (26:11.)

The Lord gives "unto the children of men line upon line, precept upon precept, here a little and there a little..." (2 Ne. 28:30.) To give His children the *vision of all*, all at once, would be contrary to God's ways, causing people to choke on the savory meat while they are yet unweaned babes. While wickedness abounds in the world, the Lord will not allow the sealed portion to come forth. (2 Ne. 27:8.) At the same time, he has promised the obedient, "...If it shall so be that ye shall believe these things [the Book of Mormon] then shall the greater things be made manifest unto you" (3 Ne. 26:9.)

**Q.** How can the Lord bless the faithful and yet restrict the hardened of heart from obtaining the same blessing and stumbling thereon?

**A.** Mormon reassured us that the portion of the ancient record we now have "is *expedient...*" (*Ibid.*) Its purpose is "...to try [our] faith." (*Ibid.*) One barrier that has always existed, which bars the wicked from understanding and yet blesses the righteous, is the fact that "the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned." (1 Cor. 2:14.) Thus Nephi could speak with great "plainness; in the which...no man can err..." and still many do err. (2 Ne. 25:7; 28:14.) If a person errs, he errs unto himself (Prov. 5:22), for the Lord "doeth nothing save it be plain unto the children of men; and he inviteth them all to come unto him and partake of his goodness; and he denieth none that come unto him..." (2 Ne. 27:33.) By "sealing," as it were, this *vision of all* in the history of the Book of Mormon, via parallels, the Lord has

provided a means for the obedient to receive greater things while they who harden their hearts receive them not, unto their condemnation. When Jesus' disciples asked him why he spoke in parables, "He answered and said unto them, Because it is given unto you to know the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven, but to them it is not given." (Matt. 13:11.)

The parallels have been there all along, but it has not been until more recently that they have come forward in commentaries, books, seminars, and conversations. Since the time that President Benson mentioned the concept of parallels in a General Conference, there seems to have been a great surge in the proliferation of this general concept. In the April Conference of 1987, he declared, "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."<sup>8</sup> He then proceeded in his address to point out various conditions that existed anciently, drawing from references in the books of Helaman and 3 Nephi. He relegated the task of interpretation to the listener -- following the pattern Jesus set when teaching in parables -- leaving it up to us to search it out and think it through. This is reminiscent of when Jesus told his disciples, "I have yet many things to say unto you, but ye cannot bear them now." (John 16:12.)

**Q.** Can we expect our prophet to speak plainly when his previous messages have been ignored by so many who profess devotion? (See Ezek. 33:29-33.)

**A.** At the conclusion of the opening address of the last General Conference at which our Prophet addressed the Church in person, he remarked:

"Moses never entered the promised land. Joseph Smith never saw Zion redeemed. Some of us may not live long enough to see the day when the Book of Mormon floods the earth and when the Lord lifts His condemnation. But, God willing, I intend to spend all my remaining days in that glorious effort."<sup>9</sup>

What are we doing to further this quest? How are we measuring up to his charge: "You must help with this burden and with this blessing which He has placed on the whole Church, even all the children of Zion"?<sup>10</sup>

In emphasizing the Book of Mormon as he has, President Benson has given us the key to learning the things he would teach the whole Church if they were ready. His voice has been silent recently, but the message he would loudly proclaim is immortalized in the golden leaves of the Book of Mormon. To the meek it extends bountiful enlightenment, while to the hypocrite the gate of divine understanding is closed.

This "condemnation" -- the sealed portion of the Book of Mormon being withheld from the world -- "resteth upon the children of Zion, even *all*." (D&C 84:56.) While the record containing the *vision of all* is being withheld from us collectively, individually we can, and are invited to obtain the *vision of all* first-hand. Prefacing his account of when he saw that vision himself, Nephi promised, "...He that diligently seeketh shall find; and the mysteries of God shall be unfolded unto them, by the power of the Holy Ghost." (1 Ne. 10:19; Matt. 7:7,8.) His father had just beheld such a vision (15:29), and "Nephi was desirous also that [he] might see, and hear, and know of these thing..." (10:17). He said that the "power of the Holy Ghost," by which these mysteries are made known, "is the gift of God unto *all* those who diligently seek him...." (*Ibid.*)

The prophets of old who beheld such marvelous things should be considered by us as *models*, not men peculiarly blessed because they had a specific mission from God. They were men of God because they kept his will, and became powerful instruments in his hands as a result of their diligence and humility. We too should seek this same course. (Num. 11:29.) When enough people have allowed the Lord to purify their lives, and the proud and wicked have been purged out of their midst, the sealed records will be able to

come forth to them as a whole. This will be Zion.

Accenting his admonition to seek the mysteries of God, Nephi then reminds us that these things are of no small consequence. Immediately after teaching that "all those who diligently seek" God will have the "mysteries of God...unfolded unto them," Nephi concludes, "Therefore remember, O man, for all thy doings thou shalt be brought into judgement." (1 Ne. 10:17,19,20). He reminds us that those who have different intents will perish. "Wherefore, if ye have sought to do wickedly in the days of your probation, then ye are found unclean before the judgment-seat of God; and no unclean thing can dwell with God; wherefore, ye must be cast off forever." (10:21.) While his message is a heavy one, he did not shirk from proclaiming it: "The Holy Ghost giveth authority that I should speak these things, and deny them not." (10:22.)

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## Notes for Chapter One:

5. Ezra Taft Benson, A Witness and a Warning, Deseret Book, SLC, Utah, 1988, pp. vii,viii.

6. Ezra Taft Benson, A Witness and a Warning, Deseret Book, SLC, Utah, 1988, pp. vii.

7. There are no strong indications in the standard works that Mormon -- the primary compiler -- ever actually saw the *vision of all* with his own eyes. What it does say is that he made the record "according to the knowledge and the understanding which God" had given him. (W of M 1:9.) Herein is probably an important lesson. If Mormon could compile the Book of Mormon with all its divine brilliance and power, encoding in its pages hidden lessons of great value, then we should be able to unravel those lessons through the same divine Spirit without needing to first behold the actual vision ourselves. It is the author's opinion that the Lord granted Mormon the privilege of beholding the marvelous vision after he completed the work of compiling, even though Mormon would have warranted the privilege much earlier.

8. *Ensign*, May 1987, p. 4-7.

9. *Ensign*, Nov. 1988, p. 6.

10. *Ibid.*