

# CHAPTER TWO

## A Preview of the Temporal and Spiritual Parallels

So far we have developed an abstract analysis of the concept of parallels and their validity. With this foundation, the next step is to begin building a framework. Before delving into a detailed enumeration of some of the parallels, it would be good to take a brief glance at this *vision of all* as foretold in Book of Mormon history.

### Temporal Parallels

An easily discernable parallel is between Christ's visit to the Nephites and the Second Coming. In both instances, great and terrible destructions of the wicked precede the Lord's appearance in His glory. The joyous and peaceful era that followed the Savior's ancient advent foreshadows the Zion civilization that will thrive during the millennium. The final battle at the end of the Book of Mormon record is a likeness to the concluding conflict that will flare at the end of millennium.

The parallels between Book of Mormon history and the latter days are not limited to the period immediately surrounding the Savior's coming. Turning back to the books of Omni and Mosiah, we find reflections of the birth of the American nation. The emphasis on American history is fitting, for the United States of America is "the Lords' base of operations in these latter days" -- the beacon set upon a hill.<sup>11</sup>

Not only has the gospel gone forth from her borders to the nations of the earth, but the hallowed principles of her government have inspired leaders of numerous other nations to adopt similar institutions. Whether or not the Christian inhabitants of this land have amply fulfilled their duty to be the saviors of men, it is nonetheless a nation of manifest destiny, and the Lord has been able to bring about many mighty works through her. (D&C 103:9; 3 Ne. 16:15; D&C 98:5,6.)

The parallels go on. Just as the Holy Ghost inspired Columbus to sail for America, the Lord guided King Mosiah (I) through the wilderness to a new land, Zarahemla. (Omni 1:12,13.) Shortly after that, the Lord strengthened the Nephites so they could repel the armies of the jealous and angry Lamanites, who came against them from their former land. (Omni 1:24; Mosiah 1:13.) This mirrors that time when the Lord extended his arm in blessing the American Colonizers with a miraculous victory against tremendous odds, winning their independence from their mother country. In this same general period of Nephite history, king Mosiah (2) set up a new system of government, which parallels the inspired document brought forth by our Founding Fathers: the Constitution of the United States. (Mosiah 29.) The six most fundamental principles of the Constitution<sup>12</sup> can be identified in that Nephite system of the reign of the judges.

The restoration of the Church is paralleled in Book of Mormon history also. Like Joseph Smith, Alma was also considered the founder of Christ's church among the people of his day. (Mosiah 29:47.) The persecutions and the monumental missionary work that followed are similar as well. Also in this period of Nephite history, the Jaredite records came forth. The Nephites regarded this account of the previous inhabitants of the land to be of great value. (Mosiah 28:19.) This foreshadowed the coming forth of the Book of Mormon in the latter days.

Early in the book of Alma is an account of a civil war which presaged America's Civil War. In the latter portion of that book, several Nephite-Lamanite wars bear unusual likenesses to World Wars I and II.

The book of Helaman contains many sobering resemblances to latter-day (and apparently, imminent) conditions. Anciently, the laws of Mosiah became corrupt, and a secret combination rose to great power, gaining sole management of the government. (Hel. 4:22; 6:39,40.) In his last formal address to the Church -- President Benson declared: "A secret combination that seeks to overthrow the freedom of all lands, nations, and countries is increasing its evil influence and control over America and the entire world."<sup>13</sup> Another phenomenon that marked this period in ancient history was that "they who chose evil were more numerous than they who chose good...." (Hel. 5:2.) We, as well, seem to have arrived at such a point today, especially in the United States.<sup>14</sup>

As a result of the Nephites' wickedness during this period, the Lord allowed chastening destructions to come upon them. (Hel. 15:3.) Part of that chastisement entailed the Lamanites attacking the mighty, and supposedly unconquerable, city of Zarahemla in a surprise attack. (Hel. 1:16-20.) Might we, in this equally proud land, be headed for a similar scenario? There are ominous indications and innumerable prophecies that suggest that our nation is

indeed also headed for such a chastening destruction.

In this same era of Book of Mormon history a dramatic transition took place. The Nephites, who had been a highly favored people of the Lord, became increasingly wicked. Meanwhile, the more part of the previously pagan Lamanites were converted to the gospel. Their righteousness eventually exceeded that of the Nephites'. (Hel. 6:34:34-36.) This bears resemblance to the latter-day turn-about that Christ prophesied would take place. He warned that when the Gentiles, as a people, would reject the fullness of the gospel, the gospel would be taken from them and brought to the house of Israel. (3 Ne. 16:10,11.) In conjunction with this turning point, the Lord will make bare his arm in removing the long-held religious and political yokes from the house of Israel. (2 Ne. 20:27.) In Book of Mormon times, the Lord showed forth marvelous manifestations, and the Lamanites' bonds of false religious tradition and government-imposed oppression were broken. (Hel. 5:51.)

In Third Nephi, all of the righteous, both among the Nephites and the Lamanites, gathered together into one place. They did this to protect themselves from the ravages of a secret combination. (3 Ne. 3:13,25.) Might this foreshadow that time in the latter days when the Saints will participate in building a New Jerusalem and in the gathering of the Lord's people to that place, while the world plummets further into turmoil? (3 Ne. 21:23,24.)

Again in this period of Book of Mormon history "many highways [were] cast up" and "many old cities [were] repaired." (3 Ne. 6:7,8.) This seems to be a mirror of the latter days when a great highway will be cast up as the lost Ten Tribes come down from the North. (D&C 133:26-32.) It may also reflect that time which is prophesied, when the house of Israel will inhabit the desolate cities of the Gentiles. (3 Ne. 22:3.)

Just before the calamitous destruction that preceded Christ's appearance to the Nephites, the forces of a secret society

combined against the people of the Lord in a pact to destroy them. (3 Ne. 6:30.) Could this be a parallel of that time just before Christ's second coming when all nations -- because of the penetrating influence of yet another secret combination -- unite against the Jews? (Zech. 14:2; 2 Ne. 24:29 = Isa. 14:29.)

Parallels in the Book of Mormon to Israel's sojourn are not limited to the latter days, during which the Lord gathers his covenant people a second time. (Isa. 11:11, 12.) In reviewing the history in the first part of the Book of Mormon, we find significant parallels to the first gathering, which occurred anciently through the instrumentality of Moses. (Jer. 16:14,15.)

Like the Israelites, Lehi's people were directed by the Lord to leave a wicked city. He led both groups through a wilderness and brought them to a land of promise. Once in the promised land, the Lord blessed and prospered them. (2 Ne. 5:13.) A division arose, and two main kingdoms emerged. (2 Ne. 5:5,9.) Eventually the people grew wicked--despite the tireless efforts of many prophets to reclaim them. (Enos 1:23; Omni 1:5.)

In the book of Omni there is a significant void in Lehi's history. Were the admittedly uninspired keepers of the records during that era a reflection of the spiritual depravity of the time? If so, this period of seeming regression would parallel the era of darkness that marked the apostasy of the house of Israel between the first and second gathering. This brings us up to the second gathering, which was just discussed, hence completing this overview of the temporal progression of the house of Israel.

## Why the Emphasis on the House of Israel?

This preview illustrates how Book of Mormon history provides a symbolical outline, sketching the house of Israel's past, present and future. This silhouette spans from the Exodus to the Apostasy (1 Nephi through Omni), the Apostasy to the present day (Omni through Helaman), and the

present day to the final battle at the end of the Millennium (Helaman through Mormon).

**Q.** Why would the parallels focus our attention on the house of Israel's sojourn?

**A.** Throughout the standard works, the Lord's dealings with the house of Israel is treated as a *major* -- if not the *most prevalent* -- theme. The word "Israel" occurs more than 2,500 times in the standard works: two to ten times more frequently than important and oft-repeated words such as faith, repentance, love, obedience, word, commandments.<sup>15</sup> Frequency of occurrence is not a sole indicator of importance; but it is an indicator. Because it is mentioned so often, we can conclude that "Israel" is a keynote topic of the scriptures. By paralleling the journey of the house of Israel through time, the Book of Mormon record further emphasizes that the subject of Israel is of great importance.

**Q.** Why is "Israel" a primary theme?

**A.** The first coming of Jesus Christ fulfilled the law given to Moses. (3 Ne. 15:4.) His second coming will fulfill the Abrahamic covenant. (3 Ne. 28:7; D&C 45:16.) Israel (Jacob) was Abraham's grandson, through whom the covenant blessings flow to all nations of the earth. (Gen. 35:12.) The word Israel means, "One who prevails with God" or "Let God prevail."<sup>16</sup> (Gen 32:24-28) Only those who repent will be numbered among those who prevail with God as did Jacob. (2 Ne. 30:2; 28:32.) In order to prepare ourselves for the Second Coming, we will need an adequate understanding of the Lord's dealings with the house of Israel from beginning to end. Book of Mormon history provides, in parable form, a diagram of the destiny of the Lord's chosen people.

**Q.** If the *vision of all* is a revelation from the beginning of the world to the end thereof, why doesn't the Book of Mormon begin with a parallel of the creation, or at least Adam; why does it begin with a parallel Moses?

**A.** The patterns exhibited in the progression of the house of Israel through time reflect how God has dealt with man from the beginning of time. He is "the same

yesterday, today, and forever." (2 Ne. 27:23; 2 Ne. 29:9; D&C 20:12.) (Note that all the references just cited occur in the context of the Book of Mormon's coming forth and the making known of greater things.) Being eternal in nature, the process and principles of redemption apply to all civilizations. The Lord intended the house of Israel to be a model to the world, "high above all the nations of the earth." (Deut. 28:1.) Cognizant of this, Lehi dwelt on the theme of Israel when teaching his sons about God's dealings with man, "*pointing to the covenant which should be fulfilled in the latter days....*" (1 Ne. 15:18.) Through Israel's "seed shall all the kindreds of the earth be blessed." (*Ibid.*) By paralleling the house of Israel's progression, Book of Mormon history lays out the ultimate pattern. The world looks to Israel, not Israel to the world. God's blessings to Israel spread throughout the world. The history of the house of Israel is the backbone of the history of the world.

**Q.** If Book of Mormon parallels are supposed to focus on the history of the house of Israel, why then, do they deal with a substantial segment of Gentile history (from Columbus to the current day)?

**A.** The resurrected Lord, when commanding men to diligently search the words of Isaiah, said, "For surely he spake as touching all things concerning my people which are of the house of Israel." (3 Ne. 23:2.) The answer to our question comes in the next breath when Jesus added, "Therefore it must needs be that he must speak also to the Gentiles." (*Ibid.*) The Gentiles play an essential role in bringing about the covenants of the Lord to His people. The parallels compare the Nephites to the Gentiles in the latter days, and the Lamanites to the house of Israel. This correlation provides a substantial commentary on the relationship the Gentiles have to the house of Israel in the latter days. For example, the Nephites establish the Church (Mosiah 18; Alma), promote freedom (Alma 43-62), proselyte to the Lamanites (Mosiah; Alma; Hel. 5). After a period when the Lamanites have trodden down the then corrupted Nephites (Hel. 1-5),

the Lamanites are miraculously converted and become more righteous than the Nephites (Hel. 5,6). Then the righteous of both the Nephites and Lamanites gather into one body for protection (3 Ne. 3).

While the history of the Book of Mormon furnishes a broad overview, its *primary focus is on the day in which we currently live. The highest concentration of parallels are those that depict just a handful of years, now commenced, during which great and marvelous things will transpire -- a day concerning which prophets have pondered, instructed and warned.* In this day, the hypocritical Gentiles will reject the fullness of the gospel, and it will then be taken to the house of Israel. (3 Ne. 16:10,11.) This is perhaps the most critical juncture in the history of the world: "the valley of decision," as Joel described it. (Joel 3:14.) Nephi consoled, "...Because of the words which have been spoken ye need not suppose that the Gentiles are utterly destroyed." (3 Ne. 30:1.) Those Gentiles who repent will be numbered among the house of Israel, while "as many of the Jews [house of Israel] as will not repent shall be cast off...." (30:2.) The parallels, with all their types and shadows, are designed to help us understand our position in this pivotal era and enable us to act in accordance with the mind and will of God -- and by so doing, be among those who "prevail with God."

## Spiritual Parallels

The parallels that have been considered so far compare the progression of one nation to that of another. There is yet another complete category of parallels: i.e. between the progression of nations and of individuals. Underlying the history of the Lehite and the Israelite nations from beginning to end are parallels to individual stages of spiritual growth. The spiritual journey of individuals through life can be seen as though mapped out in the large-scale patterns of nations.

Lehite history climaxes with Christ's appearance and the reign of peace that followed. For the house of Israel, the

Second Coming and the following millennium will be the highlight of their history. Likewise, the height of individual progression is to receive the second comforter (a personal manifestation of Jesus Christ) and have one's "calling and election [made] sure." (2 Pet. 1:10.)

Before this blessed state can be realized, evil must be completely overcome. This is true for nations as well as individuals. The battles between the Lamanites and the Nephites, for example, might exemplify a person's inner struggles between the will of the flesh and the will of the spirit. The subtle infiltration of secret combinations into the government of a nation epitomizes the cancerous effect that pride can have on an individual.<sup>17</sup>

Now that we have considered parallels toward the final stages of national and spiritual progression, let's consider some other parallels toward the beginning stages. Temporal histories portray important pivotal elements of a person's commencement in the paths of righteousness. The account of the children of Israel's exodus from Egypt (which parallels the Lehite exodus) embodies the principles of faith, repentance, baptism by immersion for the remission of sins, and receiving the guiding gift of the Holy Ghost. Moses led a humbled people out of Egypt through the waters of the Red Sea, and all the pursuing Egyptians were drowned. This departure and cleansing represents the principle of repentance and the ordinance of baptism. (1 Cor. 10:1,2.) The Lord sent a pillar of fire by night and a cloud by day to lead the children of Israel to the promised land. This symbolizes the guiding gift of the Holy Ghost.

After finally arriving in the promised land, the children of Israel eventually apostatized from the Lord. They were then scattered upon the face of the earth. Similarly, many pass through a personal period of rebellion, sometimes estranging themselves from the Lord -- commonly in adolescent years.

The apostasy of the house of Israel was not permanent. In these latter days the

Lord is now setting his hand a second time to recover his covenant people. As they turn their hearts once more toward God they are being gathered back into his fold. Likewise, as a wayward individual turns to the Lord, the Lord will be abundantly merciful to him too. Salvation is still extended to him.

The process of restoration, through which the Israelite and Lehite nations passed, bears likeness to that which individuals who are reborn of the Spirit experience. Scriptures coming forth among these two nations resemble the new-found love of the word of God that reborn individuals acquire. Next, the extensive missionary labors undertaken by both these nations reflect the missionary zeal that marks truly converted individuals, especially early after their rebirth. The rigors of the trials of the flesh and of the spirit with which an individual wrestles, are portrayed in national conflicts. This completes a brief overview of the spiritual parallels.

## **The Interrelationship of Temporal (National) and Spiritual (Individual) Parallels**

Spiritual parallels are one more means by which the Lord points individuals toward salvation and illuminates the path that leads there. The spiritual progression of His children is a most basic element of the Father's eternal plan. Should we be surprised, then, to see God's loving arm manifest in shaping the events of nations so that they model that progression? Isaiah wrote, "O Lord, thou art our father; we are the clay, and thou our potter; and we all are the work of thy hand." (Isa. 64:8.) If God can influence the life of an individual without infringing his agency, couldn't He also mold the events of nations without encroaching on agency even one iota? In the past, our unchanging God has utilized "many signs, and wonders, and types, and shadows..." all of which were designed to "show unto" the people "concerning his coming." (Mosiah 3:15.) The patterns established by the Lehite

and Israelite nations, as they point to Christ's coming are indeed valuable models for the individual as he too seeks the face of God. Civilizations guided by the hand of God don't parallel one another because history haphazardly repeats itself; they parallel one another because they follow a pattern of progression that is eternal -- a pattern which is equally pertinent to individuals. "Wherefore," the Lord said, "all things unto me are spiritual...." (D&C 29:34.) The temporal parallels, therefore, take on added significance because of the spiritual patterns they portray.

## Preview Conclusion

Therefore, hidden like parables in Book of Mormon history are significant parallels for individuals as well as nations.

On the temporal (national) level, the Book of Mormon reflects important elements of the progression of the house of Israel from beginning to end. On a spiritual (individual) level, Book of Mormon history personifies the principles of individual progression from beginning to end. The temporal parallels focus on the formation of a Zion society, which will become a glorious reality during the Millennium. Spiritual applications direct us toward being sealed unto eternal life. Book of Mormon history not only points nations and individuals to Christ in the ultimate sense but charts the course that leads to that transcendent goal.

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## Notes for Chapter Two:

11. Ezra Taft Benson, CR, April, 1962, p. 104. See also CR, Oct. 1965, p. 122.
12. Ezra Taft Benson, *The Constitution: A Heavenly Banner*, Deseret Book, Salt Lake City, UT, 1986, pp. 18-23.
13. *Ensign*, Nov. 1988, p. 87.
14. Joseph B. Wirthlin, *Ensign*, May 1989, p. 9. (Used by permission.)
15. Faith (577), repentance (564), love (557), obedience (243), word (1062), commandments (1697), Jesus (1222), God (5882).
16. *Bible Dictionary*, LDS King James Version, Salt Lake city: The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 1979, p.708.
17. "My dear brothers and sisters, we must prepare to redeem Zion. It was essentially the sin of pride that kept us from establishing Zion in the days of the Prophet Joseph Smith. It was the same sin of pride that brought consecration to an end among the Nephites. (See 4 Ne. 1:24-25.) Pride is the great stumbling block to Zion. I repeat: Pride *is* the great stumbling block to Zion." Ezra Taft Benson, "Beware of Pride," *Ensign*, May 1989, pp. 4-7.