

PART THREE

Spiritual Parallels

Includes:

Chapter 8. First Gathering of the Individual

Chapter 9. Second Gathering of the Individual

CHAPTER EIGHT

First Gathering of the Individual

Thus far, we have compared Book of Mormon history with the temporal progression of the House of Israel from beginning to end. We compared history with history until we came to the present day; then we compared history with prophecy. Having observed so many strong similarities, we are led to believe that these parallels could have very well been intended. Not only are there numerous striking comparisons between the histories, but they occur in generally the same sequence.

If we would compare anyone with Lehi and his exodus, it would be Moses. The Dark Ages--considering also the preceding rebellion and the subsequent reawakening--find their best match in the beginning of the book of Omni. The Constitution of the United States and the laws of Mosiah are also an obvious correlation. Like the coming forth of the Book of Mormon in our time, the coming forth of the Jaredite records to the Nephites was unexpected and unprecedented in its time. If we were to compare anyone with Alma, who was eulogized as the founder of the Nephite's church of Christ, it would be Joseph Smith. Korihor probably would have co-authored the *Communist Manifesto*, if he had lived during Karl Marx's time. Hitler and Amalickiah certainly could not have co-existed: one would have murdered the other as a definite threat to his rank. Also, where else in Book of Mormon history can we find a situation that so vividly parallels the very day in which we live and the threats we face than the book of Helaman? Further, no other period of Lehiite history reflects the literal gathering of the House of Israel so well as when the Nephites and Lamanites assembled into one body to protect themselves from the ravages of the Gadianton robbers. Only one place in Lehiite history--when the resurrected Lord appeared to them--parallels the Savior's second coming. Also, the extended period of peace that followed his ancient appearance points exclusively to the millennium.

Why do these histories evolve as they do? It seems the prophet-writers of the Nephite record gave us hints to help us discover these similarities, being keenly aware of them themselves. However, we know that they did not do the actual molding of history. They were merely tools in the hands of God during a brief period of history. He is the divine potter who designs and shapes the events of his chosen people through the ages, integrating eternal truths such as agency, justice, and mercy into his technique. From the striking comparisons we have seen, therefore, we might conclude that the Lord guided the events of the Lehiite nation to parallel important events of the Israelite nation. Why did he do this? Was it to serve solely as a temporal pattern, or did he have another purpose in mind?

The Lord has said, "...Verily I say unto you that *all things* unto me are *spiritual*...." (D&C 29:35.) The parallels we have discussed so far regard the temporal salvation of nations. However, the reason God is interested in the salvation of nations is because they are made up of individuals. "Remember the worth of souls is great in the sight of God." (D&C 18:10.) Did he shape the events of these two nations through time so that they would serve as a pattern of the advancement of an individual in his journey through life?

We know that the ultimate aim of an individual is to come unto Christ and salvation. Individuals, like nations, must overcome the influences of evil before that can happen. As we look at the process involved in overcoming those influences by the Lehite and Israelite nations, we begin to see that many personal insights may be gained in the comparison. These histories seem to reflect various fundamental steps of progression that any individual needs to climb to obtain the grand objective. As we uncover these spiritual parallels, we realize they too are probably intentional. They are definitely more personally relevant.

Though the model presented via these parallels seems to be of an individual born under the covenant,¹⁶² its messages of guidance can be applied to anyone of any circumstance, such as the convert. Jesus taught that they who come into the fold in the "eleventh hour" receive the same pay as they who labor beginning "early in the morning." (Matt. 20:1-16.) In the words of Nephi: "Behold, hath the Lord commanded any that they should not partake of his goodness? Behold I say unto you, Nay; but all men are privileged the one like unto the other, and none are forbidden." (2 Ne. 26:28.) While these principles pertain to each and every one of God's children, the specific application to ourselves rightfully should be made by us, individually.

Having completed one excursion through the Lehite history, looking for temporal parallels, now that we are looking for spiritual applications to the individual, we will turn back to the beginning of the Book of Mormon and work our way through one more time. This time, however, we will draw either upon Book of Mormon history, or the history of the House of Israel that it parallels (whichever makes the point most clearly), or both--having already established that correlation.

The First Principles and Ordinances

The spiritual parallels in First Nephi are fairly easy to detect. Nephi lays them out for us in just a few verses of chapter 17. There he reviews the history of the children of Israel's deliverance from Egypt and their journey to the promised land. (1 Ne. 17:23-32.) These verses seem to depict the first principles and ordinances of the gospel. Though Book of Mormon history also illustrates these points, in this instance the spiritual types are more clearly depicted in the corresponding Israelites' history.

¹⁶²"Born under the covenant" means to be born to parents whose marriage has been sealed in the temple of the Lord.

The reason the Lord commanded Moses to deliver the children of Israel was because they "were in *bondage*..., laden with tasks, which were grievous to be borne." (1 Ne. 17:25.)¹⁶³ Individuals can also find themselves in a state of bondage. Christ said, "...Whosoever committeth *sin* is the *servant* of sin." (John 8:34.) The gospel reaches out with a message of deliverance to such individuals.

The first step required for an individual to begin shaking off his shackles of sin is to have *faith* in the Lord Jesus Christ. Analogously, Nephi stated that the children of Israel "would [not] have been led away out of the hands of the Egyptians if they had not *hearkened* unto the words of the Lord." (1 Ne. 17:23.) Harkening and having faith are closely intertwined.

Nephi then asked, "...Do ye suppose that they would have been led out of bondage, if the Lord had not commanded Moses that he should lead them out of bondage?" (1 Ne. 17:24.) Individuals seeking deliverance and salvation are not left alone either. The Lord has always emphasized the need for missionaries to seek out and teach such individuals. So this aspect of history seems to depict missionary work.

"...Wherefore, ye know that it must needs be a good thing for them, that they should be brought out of bondage," Nephi continued. (1 Ne. 17:25.) On an individual level, leaving Egypt might represent *repenting* of one's sins and forsaking them. (D&C 6:9.) Repentance is the second principle of the gospel.

Nephi next said that after the children of Israel passed through the Red Sea on dry ground that the pursuing "*Egyptians were drowned* in the Red Sea..." (1 Ne. 17:27.) If Egypt and its oppressors represents sin, might their being drowned represent baptism and the washing away of sins--the third principle of the gospel?¹⁶⁴ Paul seemed to confirm this symbolic correlation, saying, "All our fathers...passed through the sea, and were all *baptized* unto Moses in the cloud and in the sea." (1 Cor. 10:1,2.) The completeness of the cleansing that baptism brings is symbolically alluded to in a verse from the Psalms. It states that when the waters of the Red Sea covered the enemies of the children of Israel, "there was *not one of them left*." (Psalms 106:9-11.)

Once the children of Israel were in the wilderness, they "were fed with *manna*" and drank of the waters that sprang forth from the rock that Moses struck with his rod. (1 Ne. 17:28,29.) These tokens of bread and water remind us of the emblems of the Lord's flesh and blood which we partake in the renewing ordinance of the sacrament. Again, Paul confirms this symbolism, stating that the children of Israel "did all eat the same *spiritual meat*; and did all drink the same *spiritual drink*: for they drank of that spiritual Rock that followed them: and that Rock was

¹⁶³In the case of Book of Mormon history, Lehi's group was not threatened by bondage so much as they were by destruction. Metaphorically, though, bondage and destruction are the same, for the captivity of Satan leads to spiritual death. (2 Ne. 2:27.)

¹⁶⁴The Lehites also crossed a body of water (the river Laman) before entering into the wilderness. (1 Ne. 16:12.) A possible symbol of baptism may be found in that event as well, considering what the river Laman represented to the Lehites. As the waters of baptism are the gate into the strait and narrow way leading to salvation, so did Lehi admonish Laman to be like the river they crossed: "continually running into the fountain of all righteousness." (1 Ne. 2:9; see also Ether 8:26.)

Christ." (1 Cor. 10:3,5.) As the manna satisfied the children of Israel's appetites, and the water did "quench their thirst" (1 Ne. 17:29), so has Jesus Christ taught, "He that eateth this bread eateth of my body to his soul; and he that drinketh of this wine drinketh of my blood to his soul; and his soul shall *never hunger nor thirst*, but shall be filled." (3 Ne. 20:8.)

The fourth principle of the gospel, receiving the gift of the Holy Ghost by the laying on of hands, also seems to be symbolized in scriptural history. While the Israelites wandered through the wilderness, they "[were] led, the Lord their God, their Redeemer, going before them, leading them by day and giving light unto them by night, and doing *all things* for them which were *expedient for man to receive*." (1 Ne. 17:30.)¹⁶⁵ Likewise, Nephi said the Holy Ghost "will show unto you *all things what ye should do*." (2 Ne. 32:5.)

Striving Toward the Promised Land

Therefore, underlying the children of Israel's from Egypt and their journey into the wilderness can be seen symbolic representations of the first principles and ordinances of the gospel. Paul apparently confirmed this, saying, "All these things happened unto them [the children of Israel] for ensamples: and they are written for our admonition." (1 Cor. 10:11,6.) If these things have spiritual applications, we might ask ourselves what the wilderness and the promised land represent for the individual.

Moses explained the purpose of the wilderness to the children of Israel: "Thou shalt remember all the way which the Lord thy God led thee these forty years in the wilderness, to humble thee, and to ^aprove thee, ^bto know what was in thine heart, ^cwhether thou wouldest keep his commandments, or no." (Deut. 8:2.) The Lord's statement about the probationary purpose of this life for the individual rings very similar to this. He said, "...We will ^aprove them herewith, ^bto see ^cif they will do all things whatsoever the Lord their God shall command them." (Abr. 3:24,25.) We know that our entire life is a probation (2 Ne. 2:21), but could the period following baptism be particularly important inasmuch as we then become much more accountable? Might this be an individual's "wilderness": being separated from the world, striving to prove ourselves worthy of the promised land?

The "promised land" is a more common metaphor, and it seems to represent salvation. For example, Alma said, "...The words of Christ, if we follow their course, [will] carry us...into a far better *land of promise*." (Alma 37:45.) His statement to the individual matches the following statement of the Lord through Moses: "All the *commandments* which I command thee this day shall ye *observe to do*, that ye may live, and multiply, and *go in and possess the land* which the Lord sware unto your fathers." (Deut. 8:1.)

¹⁶⁵The symbol in Book of Mormon history for the Holy Ghost probably lies with the Liahona, or compass, which they received. Both point the best way to go, and they work "according to the faith and diligence" that is given them. (16:10,16,28.)

Mosiah taught that those who will be brought to heaven and have everlasting salvation and eternal life are those who become "steadfast and immovable, always abounding in good works...." (Mosiah 5:15.) Again, looking to history, we find a likely parallel. Of those children of Israel that came through the Red Sea, only two were allowed to enter into the promised land: Caleb and Joshua. They were the only ones who "*wholly* followed the Lord." (Deut. 1:36,38.)

Interestingly, the others who were allowed to enter into the promised land were the "children, which in that day [when they passed through the Red Sea] had no knowledge between good and evil...." (Deut. 1:39.) Recall above that we suggested that passing through the Red sea represented baptism. The children's being unaccountable, strengthens this correlation. Mormon taught that little children do not need to be baptized, "for they are not capable of committing sin... [and] are alive in Christ..." (Moro. 8:8,11.) Therefore might this ancient occurrence symbolize the fact that those who die before the age of accountability automatically inherit the Father's kingdom? (D&C 137:10.)

As we consider the parallels between the literal promised land and personal salvation, statements about history seem to take on profound, spiritual meaning. Take, for example, the Lord's promise to Nephi: "Inasmuch as ye shall keep my commandments, ye shall prosper, and shall be led to a land of promise; yea, even ^aa land which ^bI have prepared ^cfor you; yea, a land which is choice above all other lands." (1 Ne. 2:20.) This sounds much like Jesus' statement, talking about the mansions of heaven in which he said, "^bI go to prepare ^aa place ^cfor you." (John 14:2.)

Adolescent Apostasy

If inheriting the promised land represents an individual gaining salvation, what comparisons are we to make of the remainder of the history? The plausible parallel in Book of Mormon history for the Israelites inheriting the promised land is found in First Nephi. The books of Second Nephi through Moroni still lie ahead. Because salvation is the desired end result for the individual, do the spiritual parallels stop in First Nephi?

Furthermore, if the promised land is supposed to symbolize salvation, why do we see so much rebellion once these groups obtain their promised lands? We know that because the children of Israel did not strictly obey the commandments of the Lord, all the covenants made to their fathers were not fulfilled at that time. Because of their disobedience, the promised land never became what it could have become. Eventually, notwithstanding all that was done by the Lord through his servants the prophets to reclaim the stiffnecked children of Israel, they still revolted. As a result, they were scattered abroad and cut off from the Lord. Does this carry a parallel for the individual?

What about adolescence? Might the dark era of the Israelites' history symbolize this critical period in an individual's life? Adolescence is commonly marked by varying degrees of rebellion and experimentation in worldly ways. This causes great consternation to parents or others who try to guide the wandering youth. Is this, perhaps, why the Lord described the

apostate period of the House of Israel as "the shame of thy *youth...*" and "the reproach of thy *youth...*?" (3 Ne. 22:4 = Isa. 54:4; Jer. 3:25.)

Considering all the worldly temptations that not only pull at them but seem to target them at this crucial period, it is hardly a wonder that youth tend to stray from the paths of righteousness. Regretfully, the more they delve into wicked, material ways, the more hardened they become to honor and virtue. If only they would eliminate these evil enticements from their lives, they would be able to remain true to God and to their beliefs, like Joshua and Caleb. This seems to be the message that the history of nations--particularly the Israelites'--brings out, when applied to the individual.

One of the foremost messages of Old Testament history is that because the children of Israel did not utterly destroy the wicked occupants of the land, their heathen gods became a snare to them and caused their downfall. (Judg. 2:1-3; 1 Ne. 17:35.) Idolatry is not limited to bowing down to graven images. The scriptures define a false god as basically anything that people set their hearts on and hence which turns their hearts from the True and Living God. (Deut. 4:28; 32:31-33.)¹⁶⁶

Rather than completely destroying these pagans as the Lord commanded them, the Israelites thought they could get away with a small alliance here and a seemingly harmless treaty there. They did not take the Lord seriously in his warning to have nothing at all to do with them. (Deut. 12:29,30.) This caused their downfall. Might this also apply to the individual who does not shun all evil influences? "Rejoice, O young man, in thy youth; and let thy heart cheer thee in the days of thy youth, and walk in the ways of thine heart, and in the sight of thine eyes: but know thou, that for all these things God will bring thee into judgment. Therefore remove sorrow from thy heart, and put away evil from thy flesh...." (Eccl. 11:9,10.)

Also in the portion of Book of Mormon history that parallels the apostasy and scattering of the children of Israel, we find some statements that seem beneficial to the concerned parent and others who have stewardship over the youth. The record states: "...It is expedient that much should be done...because of the hardness of their hearts, and the deafness of their ears, and the blindness of their minds, and the stiffness of their necks...." (Jarom 1:3.) Enos added, "...there was nothing save it was exceeding harshness, preaching and prophesying of wars, and contentions, and destructions, and continually reminding them of death, and the duration of eternity, and the judgments and the power of God, and all these things--stirring them up continually to keep them in the fear of the Lord. I say there was nothing short of these things, and exceedingly great plainness of speech, would keep them from going down speedily to destruction." (Enos 1:23.)

Sometimes, despite these tireless efforts, the youth still falls away, causing much heartache for his loving parents and guardians. Zenos' allegory bears sympathy as it describes the complete apostasy of the House of Israel (and the Gentiles). We read that "the lord of the vineyard [Jesus Christ] wept" when he saw that the trees of his vineyard (the various groups of people in the world) had "all become corrupt." (Jacob 5:41,39.) A parent's lamentations are

¹⁶⁶Spencer W. Kimball, "The False Gods We Worship," *Ensign*, June 1976, pp. 3-6.

echoed in the lord of the vineyard's cry: "...What could I have done more in my vineyard? Have I slackened mine hand, that I have not nourished it? Nay, I have nourished it..., and I have stretched forth mine hand almost all the day long...." (Jacob 5:40,41,47.)

CHAPTER NINE

Second Gathering of the Individual

Looking further in the Israelites' progression (as paralleled in Lehite history), we find great hope. Even though they apostatized anciently, when the time comes that they repent, they will be gathered again to their lands of promise, and the covenants made to their fathers will all be fulfilled. (Deut. 30:1-6.) The Lord declared, "...Can a woman forget her sucking child, that she should not have compassion on the son of her womb? Yea, they may forget, yet will I not forget thee, O house of Israel." (1 Ne. 21:15 = Isa. 49:15.) Similarly, though individuals may fall away, the Lord will not forget them, and when they turn their hearts back to him, he will be merciful and lead them to the greatest of blessings. The most fundamental theme of scriptural history and prophecy is restoration--just as repentance is the underlying principle of individual salvation. (D&C 6:9.) Furthermore, the process involved in redeeming nations seems to correspond closely to steps that an individual needs to take for personal redemption.

A Mighty Change of Heart

So far we have considered the spiritual applications of the history in First Nephi through Omni. In the books of Jarom and Omni was the account of the Nephites' decline that seemed to parallel the apostasy of the House of Israel. Proceeding into the book of Mosiah, we see the likeness of a reawakening. Several events apparently contain important personal applications: the rebirth of the people through the instrumentality of king Benjamin, the coming forth of the Jaredite records, Alma's establishment of the church of God, the persecutions of the saints, and the missionary fervor recorded toward the end of the book of Mosiah and the beginning of the book of Alma. Each of these seems to apply particularly to that period in an individual's life when he experiences a mighty change of heart--or "conversion."

Born Again

Reflecting back on the great spiritual transformation that took place among the Nephite people during this period, Alma the younger said, "Behold, He [the Lord] *changed their hearts*; yea, he *awakened them* out of a deep sleep, and they awoke unto God. Behold they were in

the midst of darkness; nevertheless, their *souls were illuminated* by the light of the everlasting word...." (Alma 5:7.) Thus they were saved from the bands of death and hell. (5:9.) So it is with individuals as well. If they are to be saved, they "must repent and be *born again*," experiencing "this mighty change in [their] hearts." (Alma 5:49,14; John 3:5.) This change need not be an event. It can be, and usually is a transition.

We are better able to understand this metamorphosis by considering what happened in Book of Mormon history. When the Nephite people experienced "a mighty change" in their hearts, they had "no more disposition to do evil, but to do good continually." (Mosiah 5:2.) (Having a desire to do good does not mean being perfect.) They were "willing to *enter into a covenant* with...God to do his will, and to be obedient to his commandments in all things that he [should] command..., all the remainder of [their] days...." (5:5.) Individuals as well, during this period of rebirth, besides renewing their baptismal covenants, can enter into additional covenants of obedience with God by going to the temple.¹⁶⁷

The Power of the Word

During this period of the Nephites' history, the ancient Jaredite records were found and translated, similar to the Book of Mormon's coming forth in modern times. Comparing this to the individual, we think of that time in a person's life when he "discovers" the scriptures for himself. He may have read the scriptures before, but because of his new-found zeal, priceless gems of insight begin to pour out of the pages as the Spirit unlocks that vast treasure box. The words are no longer just occasionally interesting marks on a page, but they become a personal urim and thummim for unveiling the marvelous mysteries of God. Like the Nephites--when they found the Jaredite records--such a transformed person becomes "desirous beyond measure to know" the messages contained in the scriptures. (Mosiah 28:12.) His attitude toward the words of modern prophets is likewise affected.

Restoration to the Church

Alma also established the church of God during this period of Nephite history, paralleling the restoration of the true church of Jesus Christ in the latter days through Joseph Smith. In contemplating what sort of spiritual pattern lies in this, we might think of someone who has strayed from the church and then returns to full activity, being "restored" to the church. At the same time, we realize some spiritually rebellious members never quit attending church. Some may even go on missions or serve in church positions. Indeed, some continue as "active" members for the remainder of their lives, but never experience the change of heart we are speaking about. They may feel occasional flutters of spiritual conviction, but they remain in relative darkness, without substantial growth.

¹⁶⁷At this time in Nephite history the people were given a "name, that thereby they [would] be distinguished above all the people which the Lord hath brought out of the land of Jerusalem...." (Msh. 1:11.) They were instructed: "...Remember to retain the name written always in your hearts, that...ye hear and know the voice by which ye shall be called, and also, the name by which he shall call you. (5:12.)

So might the restoration of the church, on a personal level, mean more than just attending church again? Could it have to do with an individual yielding his heart to God and dedicating his life to the Father's purposes, seeking diligently to understand and do his will in all things? (Mosiah 5:5.) Though he remembers that "it is not requisite that a man should run faster than he has strength," he does run, and with all the strength he has. (Mosiah 4:27.)

Persecution of the Saints

In the early days of the latter-day Church, as well as in the early days of the church that Alma founded, the members experienced intense persecution and made great sacrifices. Likewise, a person's spiritual rebirth and his commitment to carrying out the work of God, is usually accompanied by sacrifice and persecution. Being disowned from their family, fired from a job, taunted by neighbors, or being divorced are among the prices which some have had to pay. More often than not, along with this change of heart also comes a change of many friends because of a new set of values and interests. Transformation often brings transplantation. Sometimes old friends and even family members become bitter or cynical enemies, not understanding the mighty change for good that has taken place in the heart of this person. An individual who finds himself in such a plight might find comfort and purpose in these words from this portion of the Nephite history: "...The Lord seeth fit to chasten his people; yea, he trieth their patience and their faith. Nevertheless--whosoever putteth his trust in him the same shall be lifted up at the last day." (Mosiah 23:21,22.)

Missionary Zeal

After the churches were founded (through Alma anciently and Joseph Smith in modern times), great missionary efforts were initiated. One characteristic of individuals who have been born again is that the fire which has been kindled within them carries a strong desire to ignite the light of the gospel in the lives of others. Missionary fervor is perhaps strongest during this period of a person's life. This reveals added wisdom behind sending young adults on missions. Furthermore, a mission often fosters this mighty change of heart for those who have not yet experienced it.

While this period of a person's life is marked by a special zeal for missionary work, he may (and hopefully does) exhibit enthusiasm for proselyting at other times in his life as well. Likewise, while this particular portion of the Nephite record is noticeably devoted to relating missionary labors, such work took place throughout Book of Mormon history.

Be Not Deceived

This part of the Nephite record that highlights missionary work also tells of "many who...went forth preaching false doctrines...." (Alma 1:16.) Special attention is directed to a couple of persuasive anti-Christ: Nehor and Korihor.¹⁶⁸ Might this concentration of accounts about priestcraft carry personal implications? Is there a particular period in an individual's progression when he is more vulnerable or prone to deception by worldly philosophies?

In our model of an individual's progression, we are considering that period which customarily occurs in young adulthood. While this time is ripe for embracing the truth, because of the characteristic open-mindedness, it also seems to be a vulnerable time for falling to false ideologies. Older people tend to be more secure in their ways--not as apt to be swayed. Younger people, or children, do not have the intellectual capacity to comprehend many of the darker tenets.

Inasmuch as this period of people's lives is commonly when they are awakened to God and yearn to share with others, herein may lie a warning. These missionary-minded people are actively involved in sharing beliefs. As a result, they are also frequently exposed to the misleading and sometimes alluring doctrines of those with whom they come in contact. They (the individuals who have been born again) are filled with a love of the gospel of Jesus Christ. Yet they must also arm themselves against the fiery darts of false doctrine that may be hurled at them.

False ideologies are not, however, limited to the realm of what we narrowly define as religion. The priestcraft that came among the Nephites during this period was defined as "preaching false doctrines...for the sake of riches and honor." (Alma 1:16.) Likewise, Nephi strongly warned us about those in our day who would "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.) Some of the greatest damage done is orchestrated by those who are not affiliated with any religion.

The Book of Mormon seems to caution us about one movement in particular. It seems to be enticing more righteous individuals in a major way than any other movement. One of the anti-Christ who appeared during this period of the Lehite history was Korihor. The record devotes an entire chapter to this account. We previously noted that his ideologies closely match those of Karl Marx's.¹⁶⁹ Korihor "had much success" because his teachings "were pleasing unto the carnal mind...." (Alma 30:53.) In our day, we have beheld the same success of Marxist and related philosophies. The leftist thinkers of the world have gained a following in virtually every phase of society.

The timeless principle of this Book of Mormon warning, however, goes beyond just the Marxist philosophy. The expanding socialistic movement is essentially mankind's diabolical

¹⁶⁸The early days of the latter-day Church were also marked by a significant degree of deception, especially via apostates. (Marion G. Romney, CR, Oct. 1960, pp. 75,76.)

¹⁶⁹See "Birth of Communism" section in Chapter Six.

alternative to God's plan of salvation. On the individual level, this probably translates into putting one's trust in the arm of flesh. Therein may lie the crux of the warning. The following statement made by Nephi applies to both nations and individuals. He warned, "Cursed is he that putteth his trust in man, or maketh flesh his arm, or shall hearken unto the precepts of men...." (2 Ne. 28:31.) That seems to be the essence of deception, for anyone who truly places their full trust in God, not man, will be led aright and will not be deceived.

Wars of the Flesh

Following the account of the missionary labors and the anti-Christ confrontations, the Nephite record next turns to a detailed description of some wars that were waged between the Nephites and the Lamanites. Considering the forces of temptation that encompass us, we see that these temporal wars contain many instructive spiritual patterns.

A fundamental principle is that sin leads to captivity while obedience leads to freedom. (John 8:32,34.) In the story of nations we often see this principle fulfilled in a very physical way. A nation's fall to a tyrannical rule is usually preceded by the deterioration of the moral fiber of its people. Whether we are captive or free, as individuals or nations, depends on our obedience to the commandments of God.¹⁷⁰ The Nephite record states that "...those who were ^a*faithful in keeping the commandments of the Lord* were ^b*delivered at all times*, whilst thousands of their ^c*wicked brethren* have been ^d*consigned to bondage*, or to perish by the sword, or to dwindle in unbelief, and mingle with the Lamanites." (Alma 50:22.) Likewise, on the personal level, "all men shall reap a reward of their works, according to that which they have been--if they have been ^a*righteous* they shall reap the salvation of their souls, according to the power and ^b*deliverance* of Jesus Christ; and if they have been ^c*evil* they shall reap the damnation of their souls, according to the power and ^d*captivation* of the devil." (Alma 9:28.)

Motives very similar to those of Satan's in his conquest for the soul can be seen reflected in the aggressive forces which bring about the enslavement of weakened nations. The Lamanites sought "to ^a*destroy* their brethren, or to subject them and bring them into ^b*bondage* that they might ^c*establish a kingdom* unto themselves over all the land." (Alma 43:29.) So also does the devil seek "to ^b*captivate*, to bring [us] ^a*down to hell*, that he may ^c*reign over [us] in his own kingdom*." (2 Ne. 2:29.)

Specifically, we know that it is "the *will of the flesh* and the evil which is therein, which giveth the spirit of the devil power to captivate...." (2 Ne. 2:29.) So as we picture the Lamanites' aggression towards the Nephites, we might create a mental image of the debasing drives of the body assailing our aspiring spirit. Peter said that "*fleshly lusts...war* against the soul." (1 Pet.

¹⁷⁰At first, there may seem to be exceptions to this: wicked nations that are not in captivity, or righteous nations that are in captivity. However, with time wicked nations will go into captivity or destruction, and righteous nations will be delivered. (See Alma 61:12-14.) The same applies to the individual.

2:11.)¹⁷¹ Drawing applications from Book of Mormon history, we find answers about how to command and triumph in this struggle.

For example, the record suggests how a state of freedom can be maintained. It reveals that as long as the Nephites were obedient to the word of God, the Lamanites "*could not obtain power over the Nephites,*" and "*the Nephites had all power over their enemies....*" (Alma 49:22,23.) The Lamanites were only able to gain power over the Nephites in proportion to the wickedness of the Nephites. (Alma 53:9; 59:12.) Applying this to the individual, we recall the statement that "*whoso would hearken unto the word of God, and would hold fast unto it, they would never perish; neither could the temptations and the fiery darts of the adversary overpower them unto blindness, to lead them away to destruction.*" (1 Ne. 15:24.)

A compelling example of this is found with the 2,060 stripling warriors of Helaman, who came to fight after the Lamanites had begun gaining power over some of the Nephite cities. In a desperate battle, not one of them was slain while 1,000 of their enemy were slain. (Alma 57:25,26.) This was because "*they did obey...every work of command with exactness.*" (57:21.) "*Their minds [were] firm, and they...put their trust in God continually.*" (57:27.) The reason for their faith and their determination was attributed to the fact that "*they had been taught by their mothers that if they did not doubt, God would deliver them.*" (56:47.) This becomes a compelling commentary about the magnificent influence good mothers can have on the upbringing of their children, fortifying them for the temporal as well as spiritual battles they will face throughout life.

At the beginning of the great war waged between the Nephites and the Lamanites, the Lamanites came against the city of Ammonihah because "*they supposed that it would...become an easy prey for them.*" (Alma 49:3.) They had previously "*destroyed it once because of the iniquity of the people....*" (*Ibid.*) They were disappointed in this because of the Nephites' astonishing level of preparation. They had fortified the city to such an extent that the Lamanites could not get power over it. (Alma 49:4.) Then the Lamanites proceeded to the city of Noah which also "*had hitherto been a weak place....*" (Alma 49:14.) But it too, "*had now, by the means of Moroni [the Nephite general], become strong....*" (*Ibid.*) Isn't this also true of humble individuals who place their trust in God? The Lord promised: "*I [will] make weak things become strong unto them.*" (Ether 12:27; compare Alma 58:37.)

Another gem of spiritual insight is found in general Moroni's wisdom pertaining to war. He knew "*that it was easier to keep the city from falling into the hands of the Lamanites than to retake it from them....*" (Alma 59:9.) This makes a firm statement against flirting with temptation and rationalizing that repentance can always follow. Resisting sin in the first place is much easier than climbing the difficult road of repentance. "Therefore," we might conclude, as did the defending Nephites, "*let us resist evil...that we may retain our freedom....*" (61:14.)

¹⁷¹The aim, of course, is not war, but peace. We are to strive to bring the body and the spirit into harmony, for only then can we "receive a fullness of joy." (D&C 93:33.) Looking in Book of Mormon history we see a parallel, for the time came that there were no longer "any manner of -ites; but they were in one, the children of Christ, and heirs to the kingdom of God." (4 Ne. 1:17.)

Once a nation has lost or begins to lose its freedom, blood must usually be spilt before freedom can be regained.¹⁷² We can see this theme illustrated vividly in the Nephite-Lamanite wars as well as in the conflicts which we have experienced in the latter days.¹⁷³ In the same way, once a person gives in to sin, only through "the atoning blood of Christ," and by placing his trust in God, can he be freed from the bonds of transgression. (Mosiah 3:17,18; Acts 44:12; D&C 27:2.)

The Enmity of Pride

For the most part, the Lamanites constituted an enemy to which the Nephites had to remain constantly alert. But another enemy that proved to be even more destructive for the Nephites was the secret combination which came among them. It emerged first in the book of Helaman, and reemerged several times after being destroyed. What sort of parallels might this hold for an individual?

A key identifying characteristic of secret combinations is that they "are built up to get power and gain...." (Ether 8:23.) This is basically a feature of pride--on a national level. In fact, "Pride," says President Benson, "results in secret combinations."¹⁷⁴ Might pride have the same effect on an individual as secret combinations have on nations?

We know that pride is a sin that plagues all of us from time to time in varying degrees.¹⁷⁵ "The central feature of pride," said President Benson, "is enmity--enmity toward God and enmity toward our fellowmen. *Enmity* means `hatred toward, hostility to, or a state of opposition.'"¹⁷⁶

Herein we observe several strong comparisons between an individual's pride and secret combinations that "are had among all [nations]." (Ether 8:20.) First, in the same way that the pride of an individual causes him to pit his will against the will of God,¹⁷⁷ secret combinations cause people to literally combine against God and his people. (Hel. 6:39; Ether 8:22.) Second, as an individual's pride is the primary cause of contention (Prov. 13:10), secret combinations stir up people to anger one with another (Ether 11:7). A third similarity is that pride prompts individuals to "put down the power and miracles of God, and preach up unto themselves their own wisdom and their own learning, that they may get gain...." (2 Ne. 26:20; Jacob 5:48.) Secret combinations seek, essentially, to dethrone God and set themselves up as the preeminent ruling power. (Hel.

¹⁷²Book of Mormon history gives several examples of instances when blood was not required to regain freedom. But in those cases, divine intervention was what brought about their deliverance. (See, for example, Mosiah 24:21.)

¹⁷³For example, in 1944 President J. Reuben Clark, Jr. said, "...We stand in danger of losing our liberties, and...once lost, only blood will bring them back...." (Ezra Taft Benson, CR, Oct. 1966, p. 124.)

¹⁷⁴*Ensign*, May 1989, p. 6.

¹⁷⁵Ezra Taft Benson, *Ensign*, May 1989, p. 6.

¹⁷⁶*Ensign*, May 1989, p. 4.

¹⁷⁷Ezra Taft Benson, *Ensign*, May 1989, p. 4.

7:4,5.) Finally, secret combinations begin "at the more wicked part of [the people], until they...overspread all the land..., and [seduce] the more part of the righteous...; and thus they...obtain the sole management of the government..." (Hel. 6:38,30.) Likewise, pride is manifest in the most wicked part of the individual--those pet sins of which a person does not want to repent--and then spreads in its manifestation until it eventually governs his every action.

Unless an individual removes the cancer of pride, it will bring destruction upon him (Prov. 16:18), just as secret combinations will bring destruction to whatsoever nation will uphold them "until they shall spread over the nation..." (Ether 8:22.) The advancement of pride in the individual and secret combinations in a nation is ever so sly. Eternal vigilance is the watchword on both fronts.

The Lord said that before his covenants can be fulfilled in the latter days, he "must needs destroy the secret works of darkness...." (2 Ne. 10:15; Ether 8:26.) Perhaps now we can see more clearly why an individual must uproot pride from his heart in order to qualify for eternal life. (1 Ne. 8:34.)

The Chastenings of the Lord

In the book of Helaman, the Nephites fell into great transgressions despite the great knowledge and the bountiful blessings they had received. (Hel. 7:24.) As a result, the Lord sent scourging destructions upon them. Samuel explained why the Lord did this. He said, "The people of Nephi...hath he loved, and also hath he chastened them; yea, in the days of their iniquities hath he chastened them because he loveth them." (Hel. 15:3; 2 Ne. 26:24.) Likewise, when an individual who has been greatly blessed by the Lord goes too far amiss, he warrants divine reproach. For "God dealeth with you as with sons," Paul said. (Heb. 12:7.) And "whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth, and scourgeth every son whom he receiveth." (12:6.)

The latter-day parallel for this Book of Mormon period, as discussed previously, is with the great tribulations that are shortly to come upon the earth. Besides destroying the wicked, these afflictions will serve to refine the saints. The Lord said it is necessary that Zion be "chastened for a little season" before she is redeemed. (D&C 100:13.) The unfathomable blessings that Zion will provide will make the sanctifying trials worth while.

On the individual basis as well, the Lord chastens us "for our profit, that we might be partakers of his holiness." (Heb. 12:10.) This is because such chastening experiences yield "the peaceable fruit of righteousness unto them which are exercised thereby." (12:11; compare Hel. 3:35.) At the same time, having a trial is not sufficient in and of itself; we must "endure it *well*..." (D&C 121:8; D&C 101:5; compare Alma 62:41.) Then "God shall exalt thee on high; thou shalt triumph over all thy foes." (D&C 121:8.)

Overcoming the World

Turning now to Third Nephi, we come to the account of events that just preceded Jesus Christ's appearance to the Nephites and the marvelous era of peace that followed. The account states that the Nephites and Lamanites had to gather into one body to protect themselves from the ravaging Gadianton robbers. Then a little later, only a few remained stalwart as most others reverted to iniquity. Finally, the wicked were destroyed from among the righteous as the cataclysmic destructions came. Each of these precursory conditions (along with their latter-day counterparts) seem to bear application to the individual as he approaches the final and apparently most trying stage of his progression towards exaltation.

A statement of Alma's pertaining to the individual seems to illuminate the symbolic significance underlying the literal gathering of nations. "All you that are desirous to follow the voice of the good shepherd, *come ye out from the wicked, and be ye separate, and touch not their unclean things,*" he said. (Alma 5:57.) This seems to have to do with being *in* the world but not *of* the world. Might the literal gathering of nations on the temporal level reflect that period when an individual actually becomes successful in completely shunning the influences of the world?

Another important lesson we can derive from the Lehite history is the importance of drawing upon the Lord's power through prayer in order to triumph over our trials. A Nephite leader told the endangered Nephites and Lamanites, "As the Lord liveth, except ye repent of all your iniquities, and *cry unto the Lord, ye will in no wise be delivered....*" (3 Ne. 3:15.)

The principles of sacrifice and consecration are also exemplified in the Nephite-Lamanite gathering. They had to leave their homes and lands and assemble in another locale, apparently pledging their material resources to a common, worthy cause. (3 Ne. 3:22.) The following statement by Joseph Smith suggests an application of this principle to the individual. He remarked, "...A religion that does not require the sacrifice of all things never has power sufficient to produce the faith necessary unto life and salvation."¹⁷⁸

The words of the prophet Zenos, from the part of his allegory that refers to the end of the world,¹⁷⁹ also seem applicable to this phase of the individual's progression. It teaches us that we do not have to "clear away the bad...all at once," but we should "clear away the bad according as the good shall grow...." (Jacob 5:65,66.) The Lord does not expect us to throw off all worldly influences overnight. Overcoming the world is usually a gradual process that takes time and great care. As we assimilate the good, we may eliminate the bad, beginning with those influences that are "most bitter," and eventually "the good shall overcome the bad...."

¹⁷⁸N.B. Lundwal, Lectures on Faith, Salt Lake City, Utah, p. 58.

¹⁷⁹We might note the plausible symbolic significance of this common phrase, "the end of the world." Directly, it apparently refers to that time when all corruptible things will be consumed and a reign of righteousness ushered in. Indirectly, it could reflect that time in the individual's life when he overcomes all worldly influences: "the end of the world."

(5:57,66.) "He that *overcometh*," the Lord declared, "shall inherit all things; and I will be his God, and he shall be my son." (Rev 21:7,8.)¹⁸⁰

The closer the time approaches for the coming of Jesus Christ, apparently the more intense the trials will be. This is as true for nations as it is for individuals. In Book of Mormon history, the closer the people were to the time of the appearing of Jesus Christ, the more difficult it became to remain righteous, and the greater the sifting that occurred. Eventually, the church even began to be broken up "save it were among a few of the Lamanites who were converted unto the true faith; and they would not depart from it, for they were firm, and ^a*steadfast*, and ^b*immovable*, ^c*willing with all diligence to keep the commandments of the Lord*." (3 Ne. 6:14.) Likewise, our personal aim is to become "^a*steadfast* and ^b*immovable*, ^c*always abounding in good works*" so that the Savior will seal us as his and we may be assured everlasting salvation and eternal life. (Mosiah 5:15.)

One of the last things to happen in Book of Mormon history before Christ appeared to the people was that all of the wicked were destroyed "by fire, and by smoke, and by tempests, and by whirlwinds, and by the opening of the earth to receive them...." (3 Ne. 10:14.) The same will be true in the latter days; great cataclysmic destructions of the wicked will precede Christ's appearance to the world in glory, and "every corruptible thing...shall be consumed." (D&C 101:24.)

Similarly, in order for the individual to "stand *spotless*" before the Lord, he must "be *sanctified* by the reception of the Holy Ghost...." (3 Ne. 27:20.) "His garments must be *purified* until they are *cleansed from all stain*, through the blood of [Christ]...." (Alma 5:21.) Once a person has been sanctified, then he can "behold the face of God." (D&C 84:23.) "And this," said Jesus, "is life eternal, that they might know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom thou has sent." (John 17:3.)

Calling and Election Made Sure

Analyzing the scriptures, we discover that the thesis statement--which apparently summarizes the entire message of all holy writ--is "Repent: for the kingdom of heaven is at hand." (Matt. 4:17; 3:1,2; Alma 9:25; D&C 42:7; TPJS, p. 292.) Though this statement infers a warning to the wicked, it also seems to be an invitation to the righteous. The apex of Nephite history was the appearance of Jesus Christ to those people and the reign of peace that followed. Likewise, all of the prophets through the ages attest that the climax of the House of Israel's history will be the Second Coming and the millennial reign. In the same way, our aim, individually, is to receive the Second Comforter (the Savior himself) and to have our calling and election made sure. Could we not say, therefore, that the kingdom of heaven *is* at hand, not only for the nations of the earth, but for every individual? "Come unto me all ye ends of the earth..." is our Savior's supplication. (2 Ne. 26:25.)

¹⁸⁰This concept seems to be the theme of the book of Revelation, and is repeated throughout.

Peter urged, "Wherefore...give diligence to make *your calling and election sure*: for if ye do these things, ye shall never fall." (2 Pet 1:10.) Elder Marion G. Romney explained that to have one's calling and election made sure means that "one must receive a divine witness that he will inherit eternal life."¹⁸¹ Apparently, having one's calling and election made sure and receiving the Second Comforter are closely associated. The following statement by the prophet Joseph Smith spells out this relationship. He said,

"After a person has faith in Christ, repents of his sins, and is baptized for the remission of his sins and receives the Holy Ghost, (by the laying on of hands), which is the first Comforter, then let him continue to humble himself before God, hungering and thirsting after righteousness, and living by every word of God, and the Lord will soon say unto him, 'Son, thou shalt be exalted.' When the Lord has thoroughly proved him, and finds that the man is determined to serve Him at all hazards, then the man will find his calling and his election made sure, then it will be his privilege to receive the other Comforter, which the Lord hath promised the Saints, as is recorded in the testimony of St. John....

"Now what is this other Comforter? It is no more nor less than the Lord Jesus Christ Himself; and this is the sum and the substance of the whole matter; that when any man obtains this last Comforter, he will have the personage of Jesus Christ to attend him, or appear unto him from time to time, and even He will manifest the Father unto him, and they will take up their abode with him, and the visions of the heavens will be opened unto him, and the Lord will teach him face to face, and he may have a perfect knowledge of the mysteries of the Kingdom of God; and this is the state and place the ancient Saints arrived at when they had such glorious visions--Isaiah, Ezekiel, John upon the Isle of Patmos, St. Paul in the three heavens, and all the Saints who held communion with the general assembly and Church of the Firstborn."¹⁸²

The Second Comforter

The Second Comforter, therefore, has to do with a personal appearance of Jesus Christ. The scriptures are filled with accounts of individuals who have beheld the face of God.¹⁸³ This privilege is in no way reserved only for prophets. The Lord has promised, "It shall come to pass that *every soul* who forsaketh his sins and cometh unto me, and calleth on my name, and obeyeth my voice, and keepeth my commandments, shall see *my face* and know that I am." (D&C 93:1; John 14:21.) This privilege is something for which the Lord tells us to strive: "*Seek the face of the Lord always*, that in patience ye may possess your souls, and ye shall have eternal life." (D&C 101:38.) The history/prophecy of the Lehite and Israelite nations seems to point to several important aspects of this blessed state.

¹⁸¹CR, Oct. 1965, p. 20.

¹⁸²TPJS, Deseret Book Co. 1979, pp. 150,151.

¹⁸³The following is a list of several individuals who have seen God. Abraham (Gen. 12:7); Isaac (Gen. 26:2); Jacob (Gen. 28:13); Laban the Syrian (Gen. 31:24); Moses (Exo. 3:2); Aaron, Nabab, Abihu, and seventy of the elders of Israel and nobles of the children of Israel (Exo 24:9-17); Balaam (Num. 22:9,20); Solomon (1 Kings 3:5); Isaiah (2 Ne. 10:2,3); Daniel (Dan. 10:5,6); Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego (Dan. 3:22,25); Ezekiel (Ezek. 1:26-28); Amos (Amos 9:1); Micaiah (2 Chron. 18:18); Stephen (Acts 7:55); the Brother of Jared (Ether 3:20); Emer (Ether 9:22); Nephi (1 Ne. 2:16); Jacob, son of Lehi (2 Ne. 2:4); Lehi, Alma (Alma 5:22); Mormon (Morm. 1:15); Moroni (Ether 12:39); Joseph Smith, Sidney Rigdon (D&C 76:23); Adam, Seth, Enos, Cainan, Mahalaleel, Jared, Enoch, and Methusaleh (D&C 107:49); Enoch (Moses 7:4); Noah, Shem, Ham, and Japheth (Moses 8:27); and many others (Num. 12:6,8; Ether 12:9; Alma 36:26).

One prominent element of the prophecies of the Savior's second coming to the world is that we will "*know neither the day nor the hour* wherein the Son of man cometh." (Matt 25:13.) The same is true of us individually. When the day comes that "He will unveil his face unto you..., it shall be *in his own time*, and in his own way, and according to his own will." (D&C 88:68.)

The Nephite record states that after Christ initially appeared to them, "*he did show himself unto them oft...*" (3 Ne 26:13.) Likewise, during the millennium, we know the Lord will reign personally on the earth. As for the individual, Joseph Smith said that "when any man obtains this last Comforter, he will have the personage of Jesus Christ to attend him, or *appear unto him from time to time...*"¹⁸⁴

Moroni pointed out the role that faith plays in bringing about this privilege. First he said, "...It was *by faith* that Christ showed himself unto your fathers, after he had risen from the dead...." (Ether 12:7.) Next he explained that this is what being a partaker of "the heavenly gift" means. (12:8.) Another place in the Nephite record states that after Christ's first appearance to a large assembly of Nephites, eventually "they were *all* made free, and *partakers of the heavenly gift*." (4 Ne 1:3.) Moroni then admonished us individually, saying, "Wherefore, ye may also have hope, and be *partakers of the gift*, if ye will but have *faith*." (Ether 12:8,9.)

"Thou Shalt Be Exalted"

According to Joseph Smith, before an individual receives the Second Comforter, he will hear a voice from heaven declaring that he has been sealed up unto eternal life.¹⁸⁵ Reminiscent of this, before Christ appeared to the Nephites, his voice was heard from heaven. He will also utter his voice before he appears to the world in glory in the latter days.

Apparently, a person's receiving the Second Comforter and having his calling and election made sure are related. Might we say that what Christ's appearance to the Lehites was to their era of peace, the Second Comforter is to calling and election?

Perhaps the most distinguishing characteristic of the period of Nephite history that followed Christ's appearance was the profound and lasting peace. To apply this to the individual, we draw upon a statement by Elder Marion G. Romney. He said, "The fullness of eternal life is not attainable in mortality, but the *peace* which is its harbinger and which comes as a result of making one's calling and election sure is attainable in this life."¹⁸⁶

Concerning this same period of Nephite history, Mormon exclaimed, "Surely *there could not be a happier people* among all the people who had been created by the hand of God." (4 Ne 1:16.) Great joy is also a gift to individuals who overcome the world. In Christ's great intercessory prayer, he said, "these things I speak in the world, that they might have *my joy fulfilled in themselves*." (John 17:13.)

¹⁸⁴DHC 3:381. See also John 14:23.

¹⁸⁵DHC 3:381. See also John 14:23.

¹⁸⁶CR, Oct. 1965, p. 20. See also D&C 59:23.

In that same prayer, Christ said: "Holy Father, ^a*keep through thine own name* ^b*those whom thou hast given me*, ^c*that they may be one*, as we are." (John 17:11,21,22.) Each element of this statement seems to have a match in a particular statement in Book of Mormon history, which says, "There were no...Lamanites, nor any manner of -ites; but ^c*they were in one*, the ^b*children of Christ*, and ^a*heirs to the kingdom of God*." (4 Ne. 1:17.)

Earlier, in making comparisons between temporal histories, we found that sometimes statements about the Lehite and Israelite nations were so close in their wording that without context we could not tell which people were being spoken about. The same is sometimes true of the spiritual parallels. Take the following two statements, for example. One is about the individual, and the other is about the millennium--the House of Israel's calling and election per se, when they shall be "established, no more to be thrown down." (D&C 103:13.) Here is one statement: "Since the beginning of the world ^a*men have not heard*, nor perceived by the ear, ^b*neither hath the eye seen*, O God, beside thee, ^c*what he hath prepared* ^d*for him that waiteth for him*."¹⁸⁷ Here is the other: "^b*Eye hath not seen*, ^a*nor ear heard*, neither have entered into the heart of man, the ^c*things which God hath prepared* ^d*for them that love him*."¹⁸⁸ One of these is situated in the context of talking about when Christ will "rend the heavens...[and] come down, that the mountains might flow down at thy presence...." (Isa. 64:1.) The other is given in the context of saying that the mysteries of God cannot be made known to anyone but by the Spirit. (1 Cor. 2:7,10.) So which is speaking of nations and which is speaking of individuals? It turns out that the first is about the millennium, and the second is about the individual. This is a good example of how a statement about one can be applied, and usually is intended to apply to the other as well.

One of the great blessings that came to the Lehtes after Christ's appearance was that magnificent things were revealed to them. In the millennium as well the Lord "shall *reveal all things*--things which have passed, and *hidden things* which no man knew, things of the earth, by which it was made, and the purpose and the end thereof--things most precious, things that are above, and things that are beneath, things that are in the earth, and upon the earth, and in heaven." (D&C 101:32-34.) Concerning the individual, Alma said, "He that will not harden his heart, to him is given the greater portion of the word, until it is given unto him to *know the mysteries of God until he know them in full*." (Alma 12:10; 1 Ne. 15:11.) Wasn't it the brother of Jared's faith in such a promise that enabled him to behold all things from beginning to the end? He knew that "if he would believe in [Christ] that He could show unto him all things...." (Ether 3:26.) The Lord said, "He that keepeth [God's] commandments receiveth truth and light, until he is glorified in truth and knoweth all things." (D&C 93:28.)

Thus we observe many likenesses between the pinnacle condition of nations and individuals. Perhaps combining these images, Paul said, "the earnest of *our inheritance*...." is to be "*sealed with that holy Spirit of promise*...." (Eph. 1:13,14.) And so, as we reflect, not only

¹⁸⁷Isa. 64:4; compare 3 Ne. 17:16,17.

¹⁸⁸1 Cor. 2:9.

upon the parallels we find for this zenith condition, but for all those parallels which have led up to it, both temporal and spiritual, national and individual, we rejoice that "*all things which have been given of God from the beginning of the world, unto man, are the typifying of [Christ].*" (2 Ne. 11:4; Moses 6:63.)

The Unpardonable Sin

After 200 years, the peaceful condition among the Nephites began to deteriorate as pride slipped in again. Eventually, the Nephites completely and openly rebelled against God. (Morm. 2:15.) For this they were utterly destroyed. As we consider this regrettable situation, we realize that the description of the fallen Nephites matches closely the description of an individual who commits the unpardonable sin.¹⁸⁹ This, of course, does not mean that every individual who has his calling and election made sure will take this course. Still, it is a powerful testament to the miserable end of those who have or will.

Mormon lamented, "[The Nephites] were ^a*once a delightsome people, and they ^bhad Christ for their shepherd; yea, they ^cwere led even by God the Father.*" (Mormon 5:17.) This rings very familiar to Paul's description of those who commit the unpardonable sin: they ^a*were once enlightened, and have ^btasted of the heavenly gift, and were made partakers of the Holy Ghost, and ^chave tasted the good word of God, and the powers of the world to come....*" (Heb. 6:4,5.)

Concerning such individuals, Paul said, "...It is *impossible...to renew them again unto repentance....*" (Hebrews 6:4-6.) Likewise, speaking of that time when the Nephites would reject God outright, Samuel said, "Behold, your days of probation are past; ye have procrastinated the day of your salvation until *it is everlastingly too late, and your destruction is made sure.*" (Hel. 13:38; Morm. 2:10.)¹⁹⁰

When the time came that the Nephites fell, Mormon cried, "O ye fair ones, how could ye have departed from the ways of the Lord! O ye fair ones, how could ye have *rejected that Jesus, who stood with open arms to receive you!*" (Morm. 6:17.) Similarly, Paul explained that individuals who fall away after having such magnificent blessings effectively "*crucify to themselves the Son of God afresh, and put him to an open shame.*" (Heb. 6:6.)

Mormon explained further that if the Nephites had not rejected Christ, they "would not have fallen." (Morm. 6:18.) This is also indicative of those who have had their calling and election made sure. As long as they "commit no murder wherein they shed innocent blood," and as

¹⁸⁹Joseph Smith taught that in order for an individual to commit the unpardonable sin, "he must receive the Holy Ghost, have the heavens opened unto him, and know God, and then sin against Him. He has got to say that the sun does not shine while he sees it; he has got to deny Jesus Christ when the heavens have been opened unto him...." (TPJS, p. 358.)

¹⁹⁰This period of Book of Mormon history was not the first time that the people "wilfully rebelled against their God...." (Morm. 1:16.) Before Christ came to the Nephites, it was said that "they did not sin ignorantly, for they knew the will of God concerning them...therefore they did wilfully rebel against God." (3 Ne 6:18.) Yet at that time they were not beyond repentance, for they had not received the greater blessings that followed the manifestation of Jesus Christ.

long as they do not "blasphemy against the Holy Ghost," then "they shall come forth in the first resurrection, and enter into their exaltation...." (D&C 132:26,27.)

However, the Lord said, "...Those who know my power, and have been made partakers thereof, and suffered themselves through the power of the devil to be overcome, and to deny the truth and defy my power--they are they who are the *sons of perdition*...." (D&C 76:31.) Perhaps this is why Jesus, when prophesying anciently to the Nephites of "the fourth generation from this generation" who would be "led away captive" by the devil, said their fall would be "even as...the *son of perdition*...." (3 Ne. 27:32.)

