

OBSERVATIONS

THE
BOOK
OF
MORMON

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Cover: Image of Steve Dunn Hanson personal scriptures

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Preface

*The Book of Mormon is for "the convincing the Jew and Gentile that JESUS is the CHRIST, the ETERNAL GOD... And...if there are faults they are the mistakes of men; wherefore, condemn not the things of God, that ye may be found spotless at the judgment-seat of Christ."*¹

When I was a boy in the early to mid-1950's, my mother's father, John William Dunn, told me about an experience he had with the Book of Mormon. Grandpa lived in Logan, Utah and was born in 1889. Martin Harris, one of the Three Witnesses of the Book of Mormon, had come to Utah in his old age and lived the last few years of his life in Clarkston, 20 miles northeast of Logan. He died 14 years before my grandfather's birth, but when grandpa was a young man, one who had spoken with Martin Harris told Grandpa about his experience.

What I remember my grandfather saying to me was that this man told him that he had visited Martin Harris in Clarkston and asked him if the Book of Mormon were true. Martin Harris told him he knew it was true because of what he had seen. That experience my grandfather had when he was a young man made such an impression on him, that he shared it with me.

It has been 70 years or so since I heard the story, and I have forgotten most of the details. But I never forgot Grandpa telling me about it and the impact it had on me at the time. Several years ago, I came in possession of my Grandmother Dunn's book of remembrance, which was chockfull of memorabilia, pictures, and documents. I systematically went through these and put them on FamilySearch. That is when I found this little note:

By Godfry

A number of young men with myself went to see ~~Martin Ha~~
Marin Harris, on the way one of them said,

"You are the oldest, you ask him some questions!"

When we got there I did ask him,

"Brother Harris do you believe the Book of Mormon is true?"

He said, "I do not believe it, Knowledge supercedes
belief, I know it is true!" The angel showed me the plates,
and I heard the voice of God declare they were translated
correctly."

He was very earnest and sincere in his testimony.

Thomas Godfry	John E. Godfry
John Butters	Charles Shumway
Alma Jensen	

I don't know who typed it, but if Mr. Godfrey didn't, it was copied from his handwritten or typed recol-

lection that was in my grandfather's possession. In any case, the note I have is likely 100+ years old and gives a first-person accounting of the experience of this young man and his friends. I have hold-it-in-my hand proof of what my grandfather told me those many years ago.

There have been countless articles and books written about evidences of the Book of Mormon. External validation includes, for example, Mesoamerican archeological discoveries in the last decades² and unimpeachable eyewitness accounts of the plates, of the angel safeguarding them, and how Joseph brought the book forth.³ There is also a plethora of internal evidence including Hebraic literary devices within the book and its remarkable consistency, complexity, and detail.⁴

While these are interesting, they are also expected, for the book is what it purports to be. The real proof of the book is what it does to you and for you. How you can change if you make it an integral part of your life. How your knowledge, understanding, and love of Jesus Christ grows because of the words you are reading and the Spirit you are feeling. How you are becoming a more Christ-like person through that process.

Back in the 1970's, I was driving our family from Utah to our home in southern California. It was late at night and everyone else in the car was asleep. I was listening to news radio when the newscaster talked

with a man by the name of Walter Martin, an evangelical Christian radio talk host who for years carried out a vendetta against the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. He had hired three so-called handwriting experts to exam Solomon Spaulding's handwriting as compared to the Book of Mormon manuscript. I am not sure which manuscript he was referring to—either the printer's copy or the original where only a fraction of that manuscript still exists. In any case, those were mostly handwritten by Oliver Cowdery. Walter Martin explained what he had done, and one of those he hired reported that the manuscript was in Solomon Spaulding's hand. The conclusion: Joseph Smith plagiarized the book from Solomon Spaulding.

For a second, a devastating wave swept over me, and then the resolve that defined who I was came. My commitment was unwavering. "I don't care what they say. I will follow that Book for the rest of my life." I knew what it had done to me and for me. And that is what I wanted. Then I almost laughed at the absurdity of what I had just heard. Turns out, a few days later what the other two experts concluded came out. One said, it was such a frivolous thing he did not want to participate. The other said, he was wondering what Mr. Martin was doing. He had written his opinion that there was no similarity whatsoever between the handwritings, and Mr. Martin did not even acknowledge it.

The importance of that experience for me was my seeing that the sublime truths and spirit of the Book of Mormon was what I desired. How it was changing my life was undeniable evidence that it was what Joseph purported it to be.

President Ezra Taft Benson said: "We do not have to prove the Book of Mormon is true. The book is its own proof. All we need to do is read it and declare it! The Book of Mormon is not on trial—the people of the world, including the members of the Church, are on trial as to what they will do with this second witness for Christ."⁵

Those who seek to “prove” or “disprove” the Book of Mormon using external evidence are looking beyond the mark. The proof is within its pages and the life-changing effect it has on the sincere reader. As Joseph Smith said, “A man would get nearer to God by abiding by its precepts, than by any other book.”⁶ That is the proof!

Every reader can be a certain and sure testator to its truthfulness. If they want. The pure, humble desire (faith) to follow the Savior is the key. That is why I can declare that I am a witness of the truthfulness of the Book of Mormon. Like Martin Harris, I do not believe it. I know it!

What we desire, will lead us to truth or away from it. Jesus said, “If ye continue in my word, then ... ye

shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free."⁷ The corollary, of course, is if you do not desire to live your lives as Christ has taught, you will block yourself from seeing and understanding truth. You will not be free. It is my irrefutable witness of the truths contained in this miraculous book. The Book of Mormon is literally filled with extraordinary insights that resonate with our souls. That they are merely the product of the mind of a 23-year-old farm boy with little formal education is inconceivable, even nonsensical. It is a certain witness of Jesus Christ, and who we can become.

Professor Robert V. Remini, a University of Illinois historian, not a member of the Church and who also served as the U.S. Congressional Historian, gave this admiring description of the coming forth of the Book of Mormon. "What is truly remarkable—really miraculous—is the fact that this massive translation was completed in sixty working days by an uneducated but highly imaginative zealot steeped in the religious fervor of his age. As a writer, I find that feat absolutely incredible. Sixty days! Two months to produce a work running over six hundred pages and of such complexity and density. Unbelievable."⁸

It is noteworthy that Professor Remini did not attempt to address the extraordinary spiritual insights and powerful doctrines that the book contains, or that Joseph dictated the entire book without any notes as

someone transcribed them for him. Virtually every chapter has life-helping, even life-changing truths that have affected me and every serious reader. No other book I have studied, including the Bible, has this concentration of truths so clearly and consistently and powerfully presented. I have had countless spiritual experiences in this journey and am coming to understand the fullness of the gospel of Jesus Christ as a result. I am coming to *know* Jesus Christ.

The Book of Mormon and its miraculous emerging is evidence that there is a God and that Jesus Christ is His Son and our Savior,⁹ and there is a plan of salvation or happiness that we are involved with here in our mortal stay. I have tried to live my life as a testimony of these truths. And as weak and failing as I am...that is not a statement of humility, it is a fact...my witness is sure and immovable. The way I have chosen to live my life, by following the simple, profound truths contained in the Book of Mormon, has resulted in consistent hope and purpose and peace and joy. I can promise, without reservation, that all who choose to do this, will experience that same sublime result.

This book is not a commentary, nor has it been my objective to explain in these pages the "meaning" of Book of Mormon verses. Rather, I have included truths that I have gleaned as I have read the Book of Mormon and wish to share them. Since 1960, that book has been an integral part of my life. I have read it cover-to-cover on

the average of more than once a year since then and will continue to do so to the end of my life. My written impressions in this book are based on the notes that I have made in margins of my Book of Mormon copies over those years.

Moses said, "It was given unto as many as called upon God to write by the spirit of inspiration."¹⁰ It has been my desire and prayer that that blessing would be mine as I wrote these observations.

Steve Dunn Hanson

1. Book of Mormon title page
2. See, for example:
bookofmormoncentral.org/blog/4-ways-the-new-may-an-discoveries-may-relate-to-the-book-of-mormon; See also *Mormon's Codex—An Ancient American book* by John L. Sorenson. For a synopsis of this extensive publication see:
www.fairmormon.org/conference/august-2012/reading-mormons-codex
3. <https://www.churchofjesuschrist.org/study/manual/foundations-of-the-restoration-teacher-manual/lesson-3-the-coming-forth-of-the-book-of-mormon?lang=eng>
4. <https://church-of-jesus-christ-facts.net/scripturesinter-nalevidence/>

5. www.churchofjesuschrist.org/study/general-conference/1984/10/a-new-witness-for-christ?lang=eng
6. www.churchofjesuschrist.org/study/ensign/1984/06/the-most-correct-book?lang=eng
7. John 8:31-32
8. *Robert V. Remini, The Worlds of Joseph Smith, 27;* https://newsroom.churchofjesuschrist.org/article/dallin-h-oaks-2020-church-history-symposium-transcript#_ftn14
9. See: knowhy.bookofmormoncentral.org/knowhy/why-did-the-book-of-mormon-come-forth-as-a-miracle
10. Moses 6:5

Suggestions

For Reading OBSERVATIONS

1. Generally, read each chapter in the Book of Mormon first before reading the *OBSERVATIONS* associated with that chapter.
2. If you are unfamiliar with the terms telestial, terrestrial, and celestial, read Doctrine and Covenants Section 76
3. Remember, the world in which we now live is of the telestial order, the lowest of the kingdoms of glory.

The First Book of Nephi

Between 600 B.C. and 590 B.C.

Chapter 1

Nephi wrote this account many years after these events occurred. He is writing in the context of years of experience since. Our own experiences likewise become ever more meaningful and significant as time passes, and we perhaps see things, as we look back, we did not see as they were happening.

All of God's children have afflictions in this mortal life. That is part of the journey.

God's tender mercies are given to those who choose to follow Him. We receive mercy as we extend mercy. It is a quid pro quo.

Chapter 2

Sometimes when we are given direction from the Lord we may think we have made a mistake assuming that it came from Him because of the difficulty of the way. But if we follow it, and usually after some time,

we will see it was from Him, and we will receive the fruits of doing what He asks.

We cannot have guidance from the Spirit when we murmur or focus our minds on the world.

Obedying because we are fearful is not the same as obeying because we want to. The results are not the same either.

Making choices—wanting to be one with our Heavenly Father or wanting to become a law unto ourselves—is what this mortal tour is all about.

Loving God means we love our fellowmen, even those who would do us harm. We recognize them as children of our Heavenly Father and our spiritual siblings.

A key to effective prayers is humility.

The ultimate result of not following God's directions is increased personal weakness.

Difficult challenges can help us remember God.

Chapter 3

We are to do what the Lord inspires us to do whether it is hard on us or even on those we have been impressed to ask to help us. When we obey, His purposes are brought about and the experience itself strengthens

us. Our being strengthened is always the result of obeying.

When the Lord has either commanded or inspired us to do something, we can be assured He will supply a way for us to do it. Even without receiving some manifestation of that assurance, doing it says everything about who we are and our willingness to obey Him. That, in and of itself, is a blessing.

When people are warned consistently by prophets of their wickedness and do not change, they will be destroyed.

Keeping records is crucial so that those who come after us will know our language and the teachings the Lord has given us. Their subsequent seeking for righteousness is supported and encouraged because of us keeping our records and passing them on.

Chapter 4

No matter what we are confronted with, if we try to do what the Lord asks of us, we will ultimately achieve it through his grace.

Those who follow Jesus Christ are entitled to the same help from the Lord as Moses and His other prophets received.

It is not miracles and angels that change us for the better. They can get our attention, but it is ultimately our desire that brings us to change.

We do not need to know why we receive spiritual promptings or even exactly what will happen if we follow them. Sometimes we may never know because what we are impressed to do is to help bring about the Lord's purposes that may not effect us directly. We just follow and have faith in the outcome. It will all work out.

No one nor anything can destroy the purposes of God.

What we call death is not a termination of existence. It is a transition. We existed before we came into this mortal state, and we exist after we leave it.

We will prosper (i.e. have sufficient for our needs) both spiritually and temporally as we follow the Lord's directions.

Records (scriptures) are essential for us to know and, therefore, follow the directions of God.

Chapter 5

Even the righteous are challenged with their faith here in this telestial world. I have wondered what would

have happened to Sariah's faith (or Lehi's) if their sons did not return. I think they would have been okay.

God gives us the power and ability to do the seemingly impossible tasks He asks of us. It is called grace.

Acknowledging His grace and giving gratitude for it says everything about our humility and, therefore, our being able to receive that grace consistently.

Lehi was of the seed of Joseph. Ultimately, the role of Joseph's posterity is to save all Israel as Joseph had originally saved his family in Egypt. The descendants of Ephraim and Manasseh, Joseph's sons, are doing that today.

What is contained on the plates of brass is to go forth unto every nation, kindred, tongue, and people as well as to those who are the seed of Lehi. The Book of Mormon has been published and available throughout the world, but it is a condensation of only part of the records. The brass plates and all that is on them are yet to come forth.

It is not enough to have the scriptures and refer to them from time to time. If they are to bless our lives, we must search and ponder them continually.

Not everyone finds reading the scriptures desirable. That is a choice that might reflect, at least for the moment, our desire to be involved in the telestial.

Chapter 6

When Nephi wrote on the small plates, he assumed those who read them, also had access to the record of his father. His words here are written for those who desire righteousness. He tells his descendants to not write anything on these special plates that are not of worth to the children of men. Perhaps that is a statement about what we should limit our writing to today.

Chapter 7

The two sons of Ishmael were married and had families. Could their wives be sisters of Nephi?

If we do not consistently strive to remember our spiritual experiences, we will forget them.

The Lord helps us if we have faith in Him and are faithful to Him.

Over time, prophecies by the Lord's prophets are fulfilled, and we will see that. But do not set the clock as to when that will occur.

If we choose to not follow God's direction, we will experience the negative consequences.

We are entitled and even expected and invited to pray for strength beyond our natural abilities.

Choosing is a process. We will determine what we eventually want through the experiences we have here. That is the purpose of our telestial tour. There will be moments when it seems that we want to follow Jesus Christ and other times when our actions and thoughts are contrary to that. Our experiences will ultimately point us to our eternal choice.

When we forgive another who has harmed us, we will pray for them to have the grace to change.

Chapter 8

Asking is key to receiving. We receive mercy as we ask for it and as we give it.

We want our family to be partakers of the gospel for we know it can bring them joy because of the joy it brings us. That is love.

Fathers and mothers have the responsibility to be clear in their invitation to their family to live the gospel. It is their choice whether or not they will live it. That is agency.

Some people start on the Lord's way, but when doubts and challenges come, they wander off.

Some partake of the gospel but want to be liked by the world and stop living those principles so they will be accepted.

Some stay on the covenant path, partake of the gospel fully, and are faithful to the end regardless of the world and its mortal challenges.

Perhaps the majority who live on the earth never seriously consider living fully the gospel but instead focus on the world and what is in it.

We are to admonish our family and invite them to follow the Lord's directions but always honor their agency. There may come a time when all we can do is show them the way of the Lord by our example and love.

Chapter 9

We do what the Lord commands or prompts us to do even though we may not see in our lifetimes the reason.

The Lord knows all that will happen. Not because it must happen, but because it will.

Chapter 10

A series of extraordinary prophecies by Lehi demonstrate that prophets before Christ knew of Him and His mission, of John the Baptist and his forerunner role, of the ultimate scattering of Israel, and the fullness of the gospel coming to Israel and the gentiles.

We can receive revelation and know the mysteries of the kingdom through visions and by the Holy Ghost. These gifts come by faith in the Son of God.

The path to exaltation, which is becoming as Jesus Christ, was established before the foundation of the world. We make the choice here in our telestial state if we want to take that path or desire something less.

Chapter 11

To know the things of God we must want to know them, believe that we can receive that knowledge, ask for it, then do our part by seeking, studying, and pondering God's word.

To see we must first look!

The condescension of Jesus Christ was to descend to this telestial earth. That was part of His great sacrifice. His leaving this earth by way of the cross was Him going back home. He was being reborn. Death came when He left the presence of His Father to come here. Birth came when he went back.

The Tree of Life and the Fountain of Living Waters symbolize the pure love of God; our placing God first in our lives and loving Him purely. That is what is most desirable of all things and brings a fullness of joy.

Pride is antithetical to a celestial being and automatically brings personal and collective destruction. Pride is just another way of saying we are looking to be a law unto ourselves.

Chapter 12

Nephi sees with great specificity the future of his posterity. The events will happen as though they had already happened. In a sense, perhaps they have.

Our pride creates an impassable divide between us and the word of God and Jesus Christ. To follow Them is to want to become one with Them. Pride is the opposite of that desire.

Chapter 13

The great & abominable church is not just one organization but is the spirit of anti-Christ that seeks to keep us from focusing our lives on Jesus Christ. Today, at least one manifestation of it is anti-religion secularism.

We do not yet have all that is on the plates of brass. Someday, according to prophesy, we will have all of it.

Enduring to the end is the defining step to become one with Jesus Christ. That may be the most difficult of all.

Those who declare and bring about peace are the elect of God. They receive joy.

There will be other sacred accounts besides the Bible, Book of Mormon, Doctrine and Covenants, and Pearl of Great Price. These holy records also testify of Jesus Christ and all are witnesses of each other.

Chiasm—the last shall be first and the first shall be last—is the way of the Lord. His process of bringing about the immortality and eternal life of man is one eternal round. From Celestial to Terrestrial to Teles-tial. From Teles-tial to Terrestrial to Celestial.

Chapter 14

If those in the Americas will accept and follow Jesus Christ, they will be numbered with the house of Israel and will have temporal and spiritual protection.

Those who look to destroy the people of the Lord will war among themselves and destroy each other.

The Lord will work a great and marvelous work in the last day that will bring everyone to a choice. They will either seek peace and eternal life or harden their hearts and experience temporal and spiritual destruction.

We are to remember the covenants of the fathers for they lead to Jesus Christ, and if we are to come to Him, they need to be our covenants too.

Ultimately, there are only two churches or forces. The Church of the Lamb made up of those who will follow Jesus Christ. And, the church of Satan, the whore of all the earth, made up of those who pollute the earth and seek to destroy righteousness.

The Church of the Lamb apparently will always be relatively few in numbers but will be located throughout the world.

Those who follow the Savior have the power of God with them and are armed with righteousness. They cannot be defeated. Ultimately, when the mother of harlots (Church of Satan) is destroyed, the covenants the Lord has made with the faithful will be fulfilled.

The words of the Lord's prophets were pure and understandable when they were spoken and first written, but wicked men and women distort them or remove them. Eventually, they will come forth in their purity.

Those receiving the Vision, which is the comprehensive view of this earth from start to finish, are only allowed to reveal to others a small part of what they see. Righteous women and men who seek it are entitled to see all of it in the due time of the Lord.

Chapter 15

Nephi being confronted with arguing brothers after his extraordinary spiritual experience is the typical

juxtaposing of the temporal and spiritual in our lives. Two other extreme examples are Moses who was confronted by Satan after his experience with God on the mount, and Adam and Eve who were praying when Satan appeared.

To understand the things of God we must ask, have faith that we will receive an answer, and keep His commandments.

The explanation of the vision of the tree of life is given three times, which underscores the importance of that symbolic representation of the love of God.

There will ultimately be a separation of those who wish to follow Jesus Christ from those who do not. That is the gathering the prophets speak of and is, in fact, both a physical and spiritual separation and gathering.

Loving God first and purely is to choose to become one with Him and, therefore, to become as He is. That we can do that with His grace is His greatest gift to us.

Chapter 16

When we refuse to live truth, the truth becomes irritating. We do not want to be reminded of our failure to abide by it.

Following the directions of the Lord is what brings the blessings. The Liahona is symbolic of us living the gospel. If we follow the Lord's directions, we are led to those experiences that will be a blessing to us. Temporally perhaps, but most important, spiritually, and eternally. We need to be careful that we do not mislabel what, in fact, is a blessing. A blessing is any experience that will help us become more like the Savior.

When we are faced with adversity, rather than be despondent about it and murmur or get angry, we need to seek direction from the Lord and do what we can about it. It will pass. It is temporary, and we can learn from it, if we will.

Personal direction from the Lord only comes if we are faithful, and if we heed what the Lord tells us. As we do this, we become eligible for more inspired direction.

In our lives, it is the Lord working with us in relatively small ways that ultimately brings us to be who we can become.

Chapter 17

When we are striving to be righteous, the Lord helps make even the difficult things we are doing, doable. He does this by nourishing us, strengthening us, and giving us the means to overcome and carry out what

is needful. Our challenge is not usually taken away. Rather, our ability to meet it and grow from it is increased.

Ultimately, if we are faithful, our challenging journeys will bring us to a place of peace and blessing.

Through that journey, the Savior will be our light, both in direction and in hope. Over time, and that may seem exceptionally long, we will arrive at our sacred destination. We will see that our faith has been well placed.

If we choose to harden our hearts and live contrary to the Lord's commandments, even when we are obviously being led by Him, our minds will be blocked, and we will likely come to condemn Him and His ways.

Every man, woman, and child are regarded the same by God. We are all His children, but naturally, those who follow His directions are favored. The righteous ultimately prevail. The wicked will ultimately perish.

The simplicity of the Lord's directions is a turnoff to some. They refuse to look and are left to themselves.

A characteristic of those who love the Lord is that they love and pray for everyone, including those who treat them ill.

Whatever the Lord commands us to do, we can, with His grace, do.

Chapter 18

Revelation comes line upon line as we need it, ask for it, and are ready for it.

Spiritual understanding and knowledge come because we constantly ask for them and strive to be worthy to receive them.

The Lord rarely interferes here on the earth. The wicked can do their thing, and they will receive justly according to their works and desires. What they do to affect others is, by definition, temporary. No one can harm another person eternally.

The righteous and faithful have no reason to ever murmur because of their afflictions. Everyone on this telestial tour is subject to those. That defines our mortal journey.

Chapter 19

Everyone is prone to error including prophets and those who wrote what we accept as scripture. Their humanness is there, but we can see the hand of the Lord in what they wrote or said, if that is what we are looking for. The Spirit will manifest those truths to us if we will live them. Those who choose not to live their

lives as the Lord has directed, often look for errors and other humanness in the words of the prophets so they can justify rejecting them. In doing so, they categorically keep the Spirit from confirming to them the truth that is contained in those words and inhibit their ability to receive other truths.

How we are living our lives will determine our response when the Lord comes again. The righteous will rejoice. The wicked will be struck with great fear.

The scriptures are written with the intent that those who read them will remember Jesus Christ.

The purpose of the scriptures is for us to apply what they say in our everyday lives. In other words, to learn how to live our lives that we might have hope and constantly remember our eternal potential.

Chapter 20

If we follow the directions the Lord has given us, we will have peace here in our temporary telestial stay. There is no peace in doing wickedness.

Chapter 21

Those who have mercy toward others are qualified to lead them.

The Lord is constantly aware of and is desirous of blessing every one of His children.

Chapter 22

Our knowledge and understanding of things as they really are is drastically limited if we do not seek to listen to the Spirit.

Scriptural prophecies apply to both temporal and spiritual (eternal) things.

Has the entire marvelous work and wonder the Lord promised happened yet? No. For example, the Jews are not yet converted. The Book of Mormon has not yet played its destined role in that process.

I believe the great and abominable church is anti-religion secularism and all its offshoots—socialism, fascism, communism. It is any movement, doctrine, practice, or principle that works against the establishment of the gospel of Jesus Christ as the guiding light for us in this world.

The righteous in Zion enclaves will be physically protected from those who would destroy them.

The only meaningful judgement is a righteous judgement.

There will be a complete gathering of the Lord's elect. We are in that process now.

Ultimately, becoming one with God means following His directions (commandments) and doing so under all the circumstances we are faced with until our mortal test has ended.

The Second Book of Nephi

Between 588 B.C. and 545 B.C.

Chapter 1

Prophecies come by the Spirit as prophets respond to spiritual promptings.

We are seeing today in our country the kind of iniquity and rejection of Jesus Christ that may bring us into captivity.

Many slumber in a mortal stupor. Their eternal vision is impaired by the myopia brought about by their love of the things of this world.

Like Lehi, my desire is that my children and grandchildren follow the Savior. That is where their enduring happiness lies. I have joy when they are happy.

The cursing of the unrepentant Lamanites was that they would constantly be at war, suffer physically, mentally, and emotionally, be filled with hate, and be subjected to the control of Satan. That is a type for us in our day.

Our strength comes through our desire to be righteous and to be one with Jesus Christ.

How we respond to God-inspired admonition reflects our current desires. If we are resentful and offended by His counsel, we are focusing our lives on our own worldly pleasures.

A righteous person who admonishes another by the Spirit does it out of love and for the benefit of the one being reproved.

Chapter 2

Every challenge or affliction we have will ultimately work for our good if we will follow the Savior.

The purpose of Adam's fall was to open the way for every man and woman to become like God. When Adam and Eve made the decision to partake of the fruit that made them mortal, they did it with full knowledge that this was the only way that they could become as their Heavenly Father and Heavenly Mother.

We all have the ability in our temporary mortal state to discern good from evil.

We died spiritually when we left the presence of God. A literal death.

Only those who surrender themselves to God and seek to be one with Him, can be sanctified and become as He is.

We come to the earth to receive a telestial body. Perhaps that is the only way to have an eternal physical body. Then, if we want, through the grace of God we learn to master it so it can become a celestial body. We must abide temporarily in a telestial state to receive this physical body and to have a clear view of all the ultimate options. It is only through this comprehensive experience that our agency can have full sway so we can make our eternal choice: become as God through the atonement of Jesus Christ; be a law unto our self and become as Satan; or, something in between.

There is opposition in all things. Without opposites, there is no agency. There is no existence! For example, there would be no joy if there was no sorrow. And to have a fullness of joy is to have a fullness of sorrow. Opposition and opposites define reality.

We learn here to become actors and not to be acted upon. We become completely free as we seek to be one with Jesus Christ. That is the destiny of those who act and do not allow outside forces, including either Satan or their telestial flesh, to control them. To be one with Jesus Christ and, therefore, with God the Father, is a voluntary, submissive act. There is no compulsion involved. God never controls us. We become part of

Him and He part of us. We are forever the actor. We are forever free.

Each one of us will have sufficient time and experience to make our eternal choices. Our probation occurs both here in this mortal state and during the period between our leaving our physical bodies and our resurrection. No one will lack any necessary experience to make their eternal choices.

The fall was part of the plan of salvation; a necessary step for us to ultimately have a fullness of joy. We are that we might have joy! That also means we are that we might have sorrow.

Our fall gives us a full smorgasbord of choices so we can become who we want to become. We will receive eternally what we finally choose, including all that goes with that choice. We will be our own judges.

As with Lehi, we should have no other object save the everlasting welfare of the souls of our ancestors, our spouses, and our posterity.

Chapter 3

Joseph Smith is specifically prophesied of and compared to Moses. Moses was 80 when he led Israel out of Egypt. Joseph Smith was 23 when he translated the Book of Mormon. He was less than half Moses' age when he passed away after establishing the Church,

built cities, received revelation after revelation, built temples, and did “more save Jesus only, for the salvation of men in this world, than any other man that ever lived in it.” An extraordinary mission for a kid to accomplish.

The Lord uses the weak men and women of the world because they are humble and, therefore, will listen to and follow Him. And it is a witness that there is a God as it obvious that those weak instruments could not do what they did by themselves.

The words we have in the Book of Mormon are the words God wanted us to have. They are the words Mormon, Moroni, Lehi, Nephi, Jacob, and others were commanded to write so we could have them in our day.

There is power in making words and principles simple.

Maybe the reason for having some seeming weakness manifest in the words written in the Book of Mormon is to test the faith of its readers. Those who have faith will not let the writer’s weaknesses distract them. They will see and feel the power of the words. Those who reject all that is in that book, because they presumably see the human factor there, may be making a statement about the kind of person they want to be. They are penny wise and pound foolish on an extraordinary scale.

There is a prophecy here concerning a descendent of Lehi's Jacob about his great power and mission. I have wondered if that might be one of the three Nephites.

Chapter 4

The promise to prosper in the land if we keep God's commandments refers to us having sufficient temporal resources for our needs and the blessing of the Spirit in all aspects of our lives.

If we want to understand the scriptures, we will read them consistently, and we will ponder their teachings constantly.

Depression is part of our mortal sojourn. The inadequacy of our earthly minds and bodies brings depression. This occurs with all of us, including great prophets and persons of extraordinary accomplishment. We all are disappointed in our weak efforts to avoid temptation, master our flesh, overcome iniquities, or carry out what we have hoped to do. The solution, and the only solution, is to trust in the Savior. Asking Him for grace to overcome our flesh is the way to overcome our flesh. That is how we overcome our depression. The first step is to recognize we cannot do it consistently without Him. Then, as we seek His grace, we will receive it.

If we rely exclusively on others or our own mental and physical abilities, we will be disappointed. Seeking

grace from our Heavenly Father lifts us to a higher level.

A broken heart and a contrite spirit are keys to overcoming.

Chapter 5

Coming from Jerusalem, Nephi and his people were apparently prejudiced concerning skin color. In this regard, they were like other western civilizations throughout time.

With respect to the Lamanites and their followers, both their behavior and darker skin worked to keep the Nephite people from intermingling with them. The Lord, of course, could care less about skin color but in this instance the Nephite narrow-mindedness kept them from associating with the Lamanites. This temporary challenge of theirs tended to remove them from the apostate influence of the Lamanites. It is important, however, that the desire of the Nephite prophets was always that their Lamanite brothers and sisters would repent and join them. Skin color had nothing to do with their standing before God.

Those who genuinely want to know God and follow his directions will recognize His words in the Book of Mormon.

Chapter 6

We can see in the scriptures patterns for us to follow as well as prophesied events and circumstances that we may witness in our own day. With that foreknowledge, we can be prepared.

Chapter 7

When we choose to go contrary to our potential, we sell our very souls. We allow ourselves to be controlled by someone or something else.

Chapter 8

As we strive to live righteously, we will remember that we are literally sons and daughter of God. That helps us keep things in perspective and opens the way for grace to be part of our lives.

Those who look to follow the Savior will receive comfort by the Spirit through all their challenges.

The Savior's law is written in our hearts. We know innately what is right. We do not need to be commanded in all things.

Another's reproach, hurtfulness, or vindictiveness toward us will not effect us permanently. We should give that no more attention than we would to a fly. Focus on that which is eternal.

If we seek it, the Lord will put His words into our minds and mouths.

We are to awake to our divine potential!

Chapter 9

Verses 3-27 contain a concise, yet thorough, descriptions of the plan of salvation and the atonement.

Gathering is the mission of the last days. All the house of Israel will gather to their appointed places.

Does the term "rise no more" imply there is more than one rising? More than one mortal experience for us?

When learning and riches become our gods, they will perish with us.

The idols of the flesh that we worship will die. Our self-inflicted blindness and deafness to truth is a manifestation of a desire to not follow the Savior.

Focusing on the temporal is death. Focusing on the spiritual is life eternal.

Does the term last day in scriptures mean that the dimension we define as time ceases also?

Our choice is whether to prepare our souls to come back into God's presence.

Those who love the world find the words of eternal truths hard to take.

We are to use the resources we are stewards over to further His work. Focusing on our God-given mission, rather than our own accomplishments, is how we find real joy.

Feasting on the living bread and water of Jesus Christ brings us His Life.

Our prayers need to be constant, morning and night and throughout the day. Prayer is the acknowledgment of our stewardship role and our humble dependence on God's grace to help sustain us. It is a continual reminder to us of who we are and who we can be.

Chapter 10

Was Christ sent through the lineage of David and born in the land of the Jews because they were the only ones in the entire world who would crucify Him?

The great and abominable Church, the whore of the earth, are all who fight against Zion.

We who have heard the gospel are admonished to remember Christ and lay aside our sins.

Our agency is that we are free to choose who we will be. That is our God-given right.

Agency means nothing without the grace of the Savior. He makes it possible to be raised from both a physical and spiritual death through His resurrection and atonement. He makes it possible for us to have telestial experiences so we can have full exercise of our agency. He makes it possible, if we choose to follow Him, for us to be sanctified and purified to become as He is.

God will prove all things, including the Book of Mormon, so that men will be left without excuse.

Chapter 11

Everything typifies or witnesses both that there is a God and who He is. There is no purpose to our existence here without Christ.

There is no mortal existence without Christ.

We can liken all scripture to ourselves.

Chapter 12

The idols in our day are our minds, our pride, our status compared to others, our perceived power. These are false gods and will disappear.

Chapter 13

In our day, Sodom behavior will be rampant and those who perpetrate it and the leaders who have promoted this wickedness will perish

Women in our day will be leaders in unrighteousness, and they will be brought low. The men who promote wickedness will die.

Chapter 14

Those who live in Zion will be holy. That is what we need to prepare to be.

Chapter 15

We are literally captive when we deny ourselves of knowledge—especially spiritual knowledge.

Those who choose to not follow the Savior pull their sins around behind them as if they are not attached to them. They call good, evil, and evil, good.

There will be no root nor branch for those who are wise in their own eyes and justify the wicked for praise, honor, and money. They will be left without heritage or posterity.

There will be a remarkable something that will bring the Lord's people to His Zion. Could that be The

Book of Mormon, and, ultimately, the discovery of the records from which it was taken?

Chapter 16

Those who do not want to follow Jesus Christ will not hear nor see truth when it is plainly put in front of them.

Chapter 17

We have been placed in a telestial world to experience telestial things so we can choose. Ultimately, those who want the celestial will refuse the telestial and deny themselves of all ungodliness.

Chapter 18

For those who reject righteousness, Jesus Christ is an obstacle, a constant reminder of their hypocrisy.

Chapter 19

We are to prepare the way for the Savior to be the governor of the people here on this earth.

Chapter 20

Everything we have is a gift. To claim personal credit for our so-called accomplishments as we use the physical strength or intelligence we have been given, is self-damning pride. It is what is called priestcraft.

Chapter 21

When we are looking with spiritual eyes and listening with spiritual ears, we will not judge the intents of others.

Chapter 22

To trust in the Lord and drink from His eternal well erases all fear from us.

Chapter 23

This chapter contains prophecy of the destruction of the world at the last day.

Chapter 24

There will not just be members of the Church in Zion Centers, but they will be joined by other good people who want to be with them.

Those who are a law unto themselves covet a power that can never be theirs. Becoming as God comes by His invitation to all who will offer their whole souls to Him. To those who have broken hearts and contrite spirits.

Chapter 25

NOTE: Chapters 25 through 30 include Nephi's remarkable, plain prophecies.

Destructions and scattering are foretold before they happen so that people will have time to change. We will recognize when and after they happen, that they have, in fact, been prophesied of.

We are to become, if we choose, a living testimony of the reality of Jesus Christ. Our lives, our thoughts, our words will be a witness of Him.

I believe that the Book of Mormon and eventually the coming forth of the records from which it was taken is the marvelous work and a wonder that will convince the Jews that Jesus is the Messiah.

There is no other way to become one with God the Father than seeking to become one with Jesus Christ. He is the way and those who know this bear the sacred responsibility to testify continually of that truth with their verbal and written witness and by the way they live their lives.

The words of God brought forth through miraculous means will condemn those who do not accept them.

Chapter 26

The purpose of our life here in the telestial world is to make choices. To choose works of darkness or works of Light. Those who stray will not be forgotten. Redemption will ultimately come as they change.

Priestcraft is preaching one's own wisdom and using their God-given abilities to get gain and power and the praise of the world.

Christ's laying down of his life was that he came to the telestial world in the first place. That separation from the celestial and God the Father was death.

Christ invites all to join him, no matter their ethnicity, culture, skin color, physical or mental status. All are alike unto God. All are His children.

Those serving in the Church are to labor for Zion and not money or recognition.

Chapter 27

The scriptures that prophesied that all nations, including the Jews, will be drunken with iniquity are being fulfilled in our own time.

We are approaching the time when natural disasters will come and destroy much of the population.

Zion will be protected during this cataclysmic time.

The wicked have closed their eyes and stopped their ears to truth.

The sealed part of the Book of Mormon plates has detail of the history of the world from beginning to end. What is there will be ultimately revealed.

Joseph did not translate the Book of Mormon per se but read the words that were on his seer stone or a stone from the Urim and Thummim as his transcriber wrote them down. Perhaps much like we read from our smartphones.

The Lord can only work with us according to our faith in Him.

The Lord knows us. We hide nothing from Him.

Chapter 28

A challenge that all teachers in the Church have is to not let their learning and skills take precedence over the Holy Ghost.

There are many who would be true followers of Christ outside the Church who do not yet fully know Him

because they have temporarily allowed the precepts of men to be their guide.

Satan's tools include causing anger, pacifying us with carnal security, and convincing us there is no heaven or hell and, therefore, no wrong.

We need to be careful to not take the gospel for granted or be satisfied with our current level of righteousness.

Those who seek truth will find it and find it to the degree they are both willing to seek it and to live it. Truth is given according to the level of our receptivity and our desire to abide by it. If we choose not to live it, that which we have been given will be taken away.

Chapter 29

The Lord gives His written word to all nations and all people for a standard and as an irrefutable witness of Him and His gospel. He will continue to do this until the end of time.

The gathering is a latter-day phenomenon and includes both the gathering of His people and the compilation of His word.

Chapter 30

All who will follow Christ are His covenant people regardless of lineage.

The Lamanite darkness was the scales on their eyes that kept them from seeing Jesus Christ and who they really were.

God's reproving is done according to who needs it and to the extent they need it. Correction from God is a blessing and a manifestation of His love for us.

There will ultimately be here in mortality, and there already is in the eternities, a separation of those who choose to follow Jesus Christ from those who choose not to follow Him. That separation exists in the spirit world prior to resurrection. In a sense, separation and gathering are saying the same thing.

Chapter 31

NOTE: Chapters 31-32 are Nephi's teachings of the doctrine of Christ which he presents as plainly as he did his prophecies.

The Lord teaches through his prophets in a language and in a manner the people can plainly understand.

The doctrine of Christ is to follow Him in every way. Focus our lives on Him. Obey Him. Continually repent. Receive the ordinances of the holy priest-

hood from baptism to family sealings and keep the covenants we make when we receive those ordinances. Then, we endure to the end.

As we adhere fully to the doctrine of Christ, we will have the Holy Ghost as our constant companion, and we will speak with the tongue of angels.

Enduring to the end means that we work our way through the challenges of this world, that we love Christ purely and manifest that love in our service in His name (charity), and that we feast on God's word.

Chapter 32

We discover all that we are to do in our mortal probation through:

Feasting on the words of Christ.

Listening to the Holy Ghost.

Following the directions Christ has given us.

Praying continually that all that we do will be for the welfare of our souls.

Those who will not live truth will reject even hearing it.

Chapter 33

Unrighteousness prohibits the Spirit from abiding in us, and, therefore, we will not see nor hear truth.

Our prayers can affect the wellbeing of our children and grandchildren.

We are to do what the Lord through His Spirit directs us to do, not knowing specifically why we have been asked or even what the ultimate result will be. Nephi did not know, while he was writing, how his words would ultimately affect millions of people who would live over two millennia after he wrote them.

The Book of Mormon will stand as a witness against all who have rejected it.

And a story: As a young missionary, my companion and I were tracting in a suburb of Brisbane, Australia toward the end of 1960. We knocked on a door that was opened by a man at least 15 years older than us. He said, simply, "I have been expecting you. Please come in." He led us to his bedroom in the back of the house that had a wall filled with books. He brought in two chairs for us to sit on, while he sat on his bed. "You have a message for me," he said. Back in those days, there was no Church-wide systematic missionary lesson plan and we told him about Joseph Smith, the restoration of the gospel, and the bringing forth of the Book of Mormon. We handed him a copy as we testified of its truth. He took it and said, "Whenever I am holding a holy book, I ask a prayer that I will turn to a page and a passage that is a message from the Lord to me." He closed his eyes and prayed. Then, without looking, he opened the Book of Mormon and

put his finger on a page. He silently read and smiled. "Let me read to you what I just read," he said. He read 2nd Nephi 33:10-11. He then turned to us and said, "When can you come back and teach me?"

The Book of Jacob

Between 544 B.C. and 421 B.C.

Chapter 1

If those appointed to be leaders and teachers do not magnify their office and teach of Christ and his doctrine with diligence, the sins of the people will be on their heads. I believe that goes for parents and grandparents too.

The terms Lamanite and Nephite in the Book of Mormon generally refer to a person living in a specific geographic area and who for the most part adheres to a way of life and government that is unique to that group of people.

We are to only teach others as representatives of Jesus Christ if we are authorized by the Lord through his appointed servants to do so.

Chapter 2

Those called to lead have the responsibility to magnify their calling and do that in soberness

Sin begins in our thoughts.

God's word through the scriptures and through those speaking by the Holy Ghost can heal broken hearts and wounded souls.

Regardless of the perceived contrary ramifications, when the Lord by His voice or the voice of His spirit directs us to say or do something in the office of our calling, we are to do it. If we refuse, we will be held accountable.

We are prone to be prideful because the quantity and/or quality of some gifts God has temporarily given us may exceed those others may have. That pride, if it is unchecked, will destroy our souls. The truth is, it is never us. Without the gifts and grace of the Lord we are nothing.

We are to freely share our abundance with others and see them as sons and daughters of God, just like we are.

If we will first seek the kingdom of God and foster its growth, then whatever earthly temporary gifts we look for—wealth, power, knowledge, wisdom, etc.—we will receive according to His will, because we will use them to further His work. They are only tools.

Who we wish to be, affects how we look at everything. Do we focus on the secularist learning of men? Or, do we study and ponder the scriptures and see them as

being God's word and, therefore, true? Our choices here mirror where our hearts are.

The law of chastity is clear. Sexual relations are only sanctioned between one man and one woman who have been united by the law of the Lord. Any Divine exception to that, i.e., for a man to marry more than one wife, will be revealed by the Lord to his appointed prophet for the purpose of raising a righteous seed unto Him.

Chapter 3

If we are pure in heart, prayers for consolation in our afflictions are answered.

God leads the righteous, both physically and spiritually, out from among the wicked.

Like in virtually all cultures, skin color discrimination existed among the Nephites, and they were condemned for it.

We are responsible to our children to set a righteous example.

The Nephite and Lamanite nations did not just include descendants of Lehi and those who came in Lehi's party. They were joined by unnumbered indigenous people.

Chapter 4

We have the responsibility to write our words of counsel and faith and testimony of Jesus Christ for our children and grandchildren.

As we obey the Lord and follow Him our faith becomes unshaken, and He may do things through us that would appear miraculous to man.

We can only know the ways of God through revelation by the Holy Ghost. Our physical eyes and ears and our reasoning can only take us so far and are subject to error. Our lives and our words need to be testimonies of the reality of the atonement of Jesus Christ. We are to convey our spiritual understanding to others in plainness so they can understand.

Spiritual blindness comes by looking beyond the plain and simple things of the gospel (the doctrine of Christ) and getting caught up in the unimportant, such as so-called mysteries, etc.

Jesus Christ will ultimately become the chief cornerstone for the Jews.

Chapter 5

This chapter lays out, with extraordinary symbolism, the past, present, and future of the Church of Jesus Christ

When policies and procedures become the focus of the Church rather than the doctrine of Jesus Christ, the door is open for corruption and destruction. This fosters pride because it introduces worldly measuring into the Church to determine the status of its members. Symbolically, the branches of the tree overcome its roots.

Chapter 6

If we are wise, we will constantly repent and cleave unto God as he desires to cleave unto us.

Even after being nourished constantly by the word of God, there are those who will harden their hearts and quench the promptings of the Spirit within them.

Chapter 7

The Holy Ghost will put words into our mouths, and thoughts, concepts, and understanding into our minds if we ask for it and allow it.

The greatest eternal tragedy is when one lies to God by denying truth that they know with certainty and turning altogether therefrom.

As we come to realize our eternal nature, we see that we are strangers and foreigners here in the telestial world, and our stay here passes as though it were a dream.

The Book of Enos

Between 544 B.C. and 421 B.C.

Chapter 1

The influence that parents have on their children sometimes is not manifest until years after they have left home.

Wanting to sincerely repent means we hunger for eternal life. We focus on seeing what in our life needs to change so we can become more like Jesus Christ.

Cleansing comes through wanting to be clean and that through the grace of Jesus Christ.

As we focus on Jesus Christ our love for our family expands, especially for those who have momentarily chosen something other than the covenant path. We pray for them and plead to know what we can do to help them.

The Lord promised that the records the Nephite people kept would be preserved so the descendants of the Nephites and Lamanites would know of Jesus Christ and of their own house of Israel heritage. I believe we

will see all those records yet, and they will come forth as irrefutable evidence of The Book of Mormon and the restoration of the Savior's gospel in our day.

When we pray with faith, in other words a desire to follow Jesus Christ, we will not ask contrary to the Lord's will. Therefore, our requests will be granted.

The Book of Jarom

Between 420 B.C. and 361 B.C.

Chapter 1

Our ability to hear and understand the Holy Ghost is in direct correlation to our faith and righteousness.

The Book of Omni

Between 360 B.C. and 130 B.C.

Chapter 1

We prosper spiritually, mentally, emotionally, physically, and have sufficient for our temporal needs as we keep the Lord's commandments.

To become one with our Heavenly Father, we must offer our whole souls to Jesus Christ.

The Words of Mormon

About 385 A.D.

Chapter 1

When we are instructed by the Spirit to do something, we are to do it even if we do not know the reason at the time. Perhaps that is usually the situation. We proceed in faith, knowing that the Lord has a reason for His directive and, ultimately, we will understand what that is.

The Book of Mosiah

Between 130 B.C. and 92 B.C.

Chapter 1

The responsibility of fathers and mothers is to teach the word of God from the scriptures to their children so they can, in turn, teach them to their children.

Searching the scriptures diligently and living His word, is how we come to know and become like the Savior.

This world is temporary.

We determine the extent to which the Lord leads us. We receive direction according to the heed and diligence we pay to what we are given. If we are unfaithful, that direction ceases.

Chapter 2

Keeping God's commandments will fill us with love for Him and for all men. Loving and serving our fellow man is the way we love and serve God.

We must open our ears to hear and our hearts to understand if we are to know the mysteries of God.

Everyone on the earth, without exception, has challenges with their body and mind.

We have no reason to boast. We have been given everything and are accountable as stewards. All that we have that is meaningful, we are indebted to our Heavenly Father for.

We need to always avoid any kind of contention.

When we choose to behave telestially the Lord cannot be with us, because we refuse to allow Him to be there.

Our challenge here in this time-framed existence is to remember, remember, remember. If we do not make a concerted effort to remember who we are and what our mortal existence is all about, we will forget. We will forget that this world, with its allure of power, wealth, fame, and pride, is temporary and seeking these things is for naught. They will pass, and we will be left with nothing.

Chapter 3

We must wake ourselves from telestial sleep to hear the words of joy and redemption the Lord is extending to us. If we do not, we will never hear those words.

The Savior's great condescension to come to this telestial world was so He could bring a righteous, true judgment to all of us. He has experienced all that we have and more. He understands us. His mercy is extended to us if we will choose to follow Him.

Those who want the telestial instead of the celestial life He is offering, will get their choice.

We can never overcome our telestial minds and bodies by ourselves. We are, because of our nature here in our mortal state, an enemy to the celestial. Only by humbling ourselves as a little child, offering our souls to Jesus Christ, and by virtue of his infinite atonement can we become celestial and, therefore, like Him.

Mercy and justice are inseparable. Mercy is part of justice. The laws of mercy, including repentance, faith, humility, purity, and obedience, apply to us as we abide by them. The application of the Savior's grace in our lives is the result. If we do not abide by the laws of mercy, then that grace and the full power of the atonement can never be ours. We are left to ourselves.

Chapter 4

The plea of those who want to be as Jesus Christ is that the full effect of His atonement apply to their lives so they can be pure like Him.

The result of receiving a remission of sins is joy and peace of mind.

To know the reality of God and who and what He is, is to see our own nothingness. We realize we are in a telestial state and that without His grace we are left to ourselves. We are completely incapable on our own of rising above or beyond this kind of existence.

The atonement was instituted from before the world was for the redemption of every man, woman, and child who has ever lived on this earth since Adam. It is our choice if we accept it.

The only way we can become as our Heavenly Father is through Jesus Christ. It is His grace that gives us the strength to overcome. It is His example and His teachings and directives that show us the way to be as He is. It is His atonement that transforms us to a pure and celestial being.

Just believing is nothing. Wanting to do what we know to be true and then doing it is everything.

Repenting consistently and loving God brings us the knowledge of God and the knowledge of all that is just and true.

Our responsibility as a follower of Christ is to help our children and grandchildren know who He is through our word and example and that with kindness, love,

and patience. We are also to lift and bless all around us, both temporally and spiritually, in His name.

We are stewards over God's gifts and our duty is to use them on His behalf, as if He Himself were here using them.

Through our faith and righteousness, we receive all that we ask for that is right.

God is a God of order. We are expected to use wisdom in our efforts and not to go faster than we have strength or means.

We live in a telestial world with a telestial mind and body. We must work to remember this, so we are constantly aware of our need for His grace to overcome our telestial-ness.

Chapter 5

We know of the surety and truth of Jesus Christ and his gospel because the Spirit changes our hearts so that we have no more tendency to do evil but want to do good continually.

The Holy Ghost gives us knowledge of that which is to come because of our faith and desire to know.

As we come to know that we are literal sons and daughters of God, we will covenant with Him to obey Him if that is our desire.

We become the spiritual sons and daughters of Jesus Christ as we take upon ourselves His name. It is by His name we are called. It is His voice that calls us. We need to learn to recognize that voice so we will respond when He calls.

There is no other name, other than Jesus Christ, whereby we can be called to become one with God. To take upon ourselves the name of Christ is to say we want to be one with Him, and we will lose ourselves in Him.

A saint is one who is constant in her or his desire to do good continually and immovable in their desire to be righteous.

When righteousness is our desire and we want to become one with Jesus Christ, the day will come when we will be sealed His. That is a priesthood ordinance.

Chapter 6

Recording the names of those who covenant to obey the Lord through receiving the ordinances of the holy priesthood is requisite to God's order. One of the main purposes of an organized Church is to help those who have made the covenant to follow Jesus Christ, to constantly remember Him and the covenants they have made with Him.

Chapter 7

Our struggles on this earth will not cease while we are here. That is part of the telestial tour. However, as we trust in God, we will be delivered from our challenges in the Lord's time. His timing will be such as to bless us most, and we can rejoice and lift our hearts with that understanding. Choosing to be unrighteous is like ingesting poison, and we no longer have the Lord's protection or comfort.

Chapter 8

Some are given the gift of seeing past, present, and future, and to reveal to their fellowmen things they would not know otherwise. They thus become a great blessing to others. Most seem to be as a wild flock that flees from their master. They will not seek wisdom nor let wisdom guide their choices.

Chapter 9

We often see in others only what we want to see. Goodness or faults.

Chapter 10

When we strive to follow Jesus Christ, we will have the strength of the Lord to help us in our righteous battles.

Chapter 11

There is a pattern to a fallen people, and we see this pattern in our day:

- They fall prey to the flattering words of iniquitous leaders and support that iniquity.
- They place their hearts on riches, immoral behavior and thoughts, and partake of substances that will dull their feelings of responsibility.
- They boast in their own strength and revel in violence and bloodshed.
- They become blind to righteousness and harden their hearts against the word of God.
- They are left to themselves and will ultimately be overcome by their enemies.

Chapter 12

One reason the Lord makes certain that the records of His prophets are preserved is to show future generations the consequences of unrighteousness and wickedness.

Those who are sinful use scriptures to justify their unrighteousness. For example, if they are prospering financially and temporally, they refer to the Lord's promise of prospering in the land to underscore their self-righteousness. They point to scriptures that say the Lord's prophets speak of peace and good tidings, then infer that those who condemn evil ways or speak of destruction must not be of God.

It is one thing to understand the scriptures. It is quite another to live them and teach them. That is a choice that defines us.

Chapter 13

To want to follow the directions (commandments) of the Lord means those directives are engraved in our hearts. The outward following of commandments without an inner desire to do so is useless and hypocritical.

Without the atonement of Jesus Christ, there is nothing we could ever do that would bring us back to God's presence.

Chapter 14

The great condescension of Jesus Christ was he came to the telestial world with nothing glorious or remarkable in His appearance.

He experienced every emotional, physical, and mental hurt that man can inflict upon another or experience here. Every grief, sorrow, or pain we will ever suffer, he suffered. Every challenge we are involved in as we look to change to become celestial, he has born for our sake. He is our Savior. Not just to be adored, but to behold with utter astonishment and wonder and gratitude.

Chapter 15

Substituting telestial for Son (or flesh) in this chapter, and celestial for Father, gives clarity to Abinidi's declaration.

We are here in this mortal state to learn to subject our telestial mind and body to our celestial spirit, thus becoming as God. Or, in Lehi's words, we learn to fully act rather than be acted upon. This defines Jesus Christ, being both the Father because of the celestial and the Son because of the telestial. And this defines who we can become through His grace.

We are the offspring of Christ as we follow Him, repent, and receive the ordinances of the holy priesthood. Those who knowingly reject Jesus Christ and His Way cannot be redeemed.

Justice is that because we have agency, who we choose to be is who we will eternally be.

Chapter 16

The time will come when there will be a great, physical separation of those who want to follow Jesus Christ from those who reject Him. They will no longer be in the same space.

Those who choose to be carnal, knowing they are rejecting the celestial, will remain carnal and, therefore, be subject to Satan. Why? Because their spirits have ceased acting and have allowed themselves to be acted upon. Their bodies and their minds, and, therefore, Satan, controls them. As a result, they have halted their own progress.

The Law of Moses was a shadow or type of things as they really are. It pointed to Jesus Christ. Perhaps, in a sense, it was a forerunner to Him as John the Baptist was to be. On the other hand, maybe it is simply telestial law. In any case, only in and through Jesus Christ can man be purified and become celestial.

Chapter 17

Our covenant to sacrifice and consecrate in the temple pertains to dedicating everything we have, including our mortal lives, to build and defend the Kingdom of God on this earth. If that covenant brings about our physical death, that will stand as an unimpeachable

witness for Jesus Christ and a testimony against those who have sought to destroy us.

Chapter 18

What we are to teach is the doctrine of Christ, not our own conjectures or even mystery-revelations. We teach that Christ is our Savior and only in and through Him can we come back to His presence and become like Him and our Heavenly Father and Heavenly Mother. We teach that we must change from our ungodly actions and thoughts (repent), desire to follow Christ in every way, receive the ordinances of the Holy priesthood, and endure to the end.

For the ordinance of baptism to be efficacious, the receiver must want to come unto God and become as He is by lifting and blessing those around him or her. They will make and keep covenants to take upon themselves Christ's name, remember Him always, and follow His directions. Their baptism is a witness that they will do this. This ordinance of the holy priesthood then cleanses and empowers them.

We must strive for holiness if we are to represent the Savior in administering His ordinances and teaching of Him and His doctrine.

Receiving the ordinances of the holy priesthood and making and keeping the covenants associated with those ordinances entitles us to the grace of God.

Those who make and keep covenants with the Lord become one with Him and one with all others who are following that covenant path.

The teachers and leaders in Christ's Church are to provide temporally for themselves.

Members of the Church are to recognize their steward role and willingly help others both temporally and spiritually according to their needs.

Chapter 19

No observation

Chapter 20

No observation

Chapter 21

As members of the Church of Jesus Christ, we have the responsibility and blessing to use our resources to help those in need. Our baptism is our witness that we are willing to serve God without reservation.

No one has the right to establish the Church of Jesus Christ without specific, and the clear authority to do so given directly by the Lord.

Chapter 22

No observation

Chapter 23

All are alike unto God. We have no right to esteem one person over another or think we are superior to another.

The ideal government is headed by a righteous king. But because rulers, like King Benjamin, are extremely rare, and there is nothing worse than an unrighteous king (dictator), a government that is answerable to the people is preferred.

Righteous leaders put Jesus Christ first. Their prayer is that they can be an instrument in His hands to lead the people.

We are unworthy and unqualified to take any honor or glory upon ourselves.

Iniquity chains and binds us. Righteousness frees us.

Only those called by God through His appointed leaders to administer and preach His gospel have authority to do so. Only those so called who are righteous should be followed.

This world is a place for testing and challenges. Each of us, in our own unique tours through this life, will

have opportunity to have our righteous desires (faith) and patience tested and tried. Placing our trust in Christ allows us to confront and overcome these challenges and refines and molds us in His image.

Chapter 24

While the burdens we carry and the challenges we face here are often not removed when we would like, if we are trying to follow the Savior, we will be given the ability and grace to bear them and learn from them.

Chapter 25

The Church is necessary. It is the only authorized administrator of the empowering ordinances of the holy priesthood. It safeguards the truths of the gospel of Jesus Christ. It is the organized force behind the gathering of those who want to follow Jesus Christ on both sides of the veil. The social involvements it brings is also needed. Members of the Church help and strengthen one another in their righteous efforts. They become one with each other and true disciples of Jesus Christ.

Chapter 26

Those who choose not to believe in Jesus Christ will not understand His word either. They have blocked

its meaning from their minds. Ultimately, they will be separated from the believers because of the lives they choose to live.

Many who choose not to follow the Savior are intent on dissuading faithful members of the Church from believing. This, perhaps, to justify their own disbelief. There is no altruism in this as they are trying to convince others to live lesser lives than they are currently living.

Our ability to hear the voice of the Lord is in direct proportion to the degree to which we *want* to hear His voice and are willing to follow it.

The Church of Jesus Christ is for those who have faith in Him and are desirous of consistently changing their lives to follow Him (repenting). The hallmark of a follower of Christ is not only that they continually repent and ask for grace to overcome, but they do not judge others. They are forgiving, even if forgiveness is not asked for. That is the manifestation of Christ's love in us and the acknowledgment of our incapability and lack of authorization to judge others.

Everyone in the Church, regardless of position, is subject to admonition and the need to constantly repent.

Chapter 27

Pride destroys our peace.

The leaders of the Church are to support themselves financially, thereby making the time they spend in the Church their gift to the Lord and to those they serve.

We are to allow everyone their agency. Let them worship how, when, and what they may.

Causing dissension opens the door for Satan to be involved.

Our prayer for our children who have left the gospel is that they will see truth so they can make the choices they want to make with full knowledge of what they are doing.

A key to remaining faithful is to remember the blessing of the gospel in the lives of family members who have lived before us.

Spiritual rebirth comes from repenting. We reject the temptations of our body and mind and strive to be celestial in every aspect of our lives. We renew our kinship with God and become His sons and daughters. We then are recipients of the full redeeming power of the atonement.

Repenting and the rebirth process frees us from the bondage of sin and brings us peace.

When we have been spiritually reborn, we will help others have that great blessing in their own lives. Not through compulsion but by invitation.

Repenting means we try to repair the hurt we have caused others.

Chapter 28

Hatred is a disease. The cure is the gospel of Jesus Christ.

For one who chooses to follow the Savior, former transgression can bring much anguish. One who profoundly changes and is re-born desires to help everyone know the peace and freedom righteousness brings.

Chapter 29

The best government is one presided over by a righteous king, like Jesus Christ. But very few leaders are righteous enough to make that the best form of government in a telestial world. Therefore, the better government here is usually one where the people are ostensibly in control. The reason? Usually, the majority want to do what is morally right with the minority wanting something less than what is moral. If that balance changes, however, we are condemned as a people and nation.

We cannot expect help from God (grace) without repentance. That applies individually and as an entire nation.

We are not justified in excusing our sins because of our leaders' sins. We are responsible for our own actions, thoughts, and desires.

In the telestial world, everyone is entitled to believe what they want and are to be allowed that privilege without persecution.

The Book of Alma

Between 91 B.C. and 53 B.C.

Chapter 1

A faithful member of the Church will never denigrate or demean someone of another religion.

In the Church of Jesus Christ all are equal before God. The leaders are neither greater nor better than the members.

Members of the Church of Jesus Christ dress and act modestly and are generous in imparting to those in need, regarding them as their brothers and sisters.

The great heresy that constantly threatened the Nephite nation was priestcraft and the doctrine of non-accountability for one's words, thoughts, and actions. This religion promoted the elevation of their priests and placated its members by teaching that all are eternally saved regardless of how they chose to live their lives. We are seeing today, under various names, this same amoral concept, and its effects are as disruptive as they were then.

Chapter 2

When we are striving to be righteous, the Lord's grace will help us in our challenges.

A would-be dictator strives to make himself king by thwarting the decision of the people in an election to retain their current form of government. Because of the number of those who followed him, great havoc and contention resulted, bringing war and death. Are we faced with a similar situation today?

Chapter 3

The Book of Mormon does not promote nor justify racism. That some in the Book of Mormon were turned off by dark skin is clear. They were not excused in their racism, and God made it plain that all were alike unto Him, including black and white.

The followers of Christ are constantly reaching out to all who are not yet blessed with faith to invite them to join with them, and this without any notice of skin color.

A reason that on occasion words like cursed with a dark skin are used is explained in this chapter. The Book of Mormon does not say that because a person has dark skin they are cursed. The cursing is a separation from those who follow the gospel of Jesus Christ

and the darker skin, in this instance, was a mark to separate the anti-Christ's from those who wanted to follow Him. The cursing was the separation, not the color of the skin.

The difference in skin color was simply a mark to bring about the separation. Perhaps, if the wicked had a lighter skin color, the statement might have been, cursed with light skin. This is made clear in this chapter. The Amlicites placed a red mark on their foreheads to distinguish them from the other Nephites. That red mark is also called a curse. Again, the separation is the curse, not the mark.

Because of their refusal to be moral and because of their complete rejection of Jesus Christ, they were separated from those who wanted to follow Him and the mark on their forehead indicated that. Importantly, there is nothing about these examples in the Book of Mormon concerning skin color or marks that can or should be applied out of this context or universally. To do so, is bigotry and racism and is completely antithetical to the gospel of Jesus Christ and the words of God Himself.

He declares in the Book of Mormon that all are alike unto Him, and that His desire is for salvation to come upon all. The entire Book of Mormon is about God's people seeking to reclaim those who have turned from Him regardless of who they are.

Chapter 4

When members of the Church of Christ falter in their faith and behavior, they create an obstacle to those who do not belong to the Church. The Spirit of the Lord will not fail the faithful.

Chapter 5

Remembering our past challenges and how through grace we were able to overcome them will help us in our current difficulties and bolster our on-going faith and commitment to be righteous.

If we are receptive, the Lord will bring about a mighty change in our hearts that will awake us from a deep celestial sleep. We will be born again into celestial focus. When we are unbound from our sins our souls expand, and our understanding of eternal truths grows within us. When our hearts are changed and our lives focused on Jesus Christ, His image shows in our countenances.

With a focus on the Savior, we look ahead with an eye of faith. Literally seeing what will be, because of our desire to know and do what the Savior would have us know and do. For our hearts to be fully and consistently changed, we need to renew that rebirth constantly or we will lose it. It is only in and through Jesus Christ that this change takes place in our souls. It

is only through our faith in Him and repentance that we can be sanctified and ultimately dwell with Him. One whose heart has been changed will no longer be prideful, envious, mock or belittle a brother, and will be in a constant state of repentance.

Ultimately, we have two choices. To follow Jesus Christ and seek that which is good and become one with Him; or, follow Satan and seek that which is evil by becoming a law unto ourselves. While there are gradations between these, these are the fundamental choices.

We come to a knowledge of the truth through fasting and prayer and by the power of the Holy Ghost.

Those whose hearts are changed will separate themselves from this fallen world including all actions, thoughts, and words that pertain to it.

The message of Alma to those who are members of the Church is a commandment to repent and keep their covenants. To those who are not members yet, his message is an invitation to join with the Savior and His people.

Chapter 6

The organization of Christ's church varies according to circumstances and needs. In the Church established by Alma, there were priests, teachers, and

elders. No matter the circumstances, the process authorizing Church leaders to act does not vary. They must be called of God and ordained or set apart to their calling by the laying on of hands by one who has the authority given to them by God to do so.

No one is denied the opportunity to hear and accept the gospel of Jesus Christ and to receive the full blessings of the ordinances of the holy priesthood.

One of the hallmarks of the Church of Christ is that its members fast and pray for those who do not remember they are children of their Heavenly Father. This, so that they might come to that understanding and accept Jesus Christ as their redeemer.

Chapter 7

This chapter contains one of the most extraordinary and concise explanations of who Jesus Christ is and what His atonement is all about.

There is a hint here that Alma's language may have been different than the language of some he was addressing.

Our joy often comes because of going through great sorrow and learning from it.

If we genuinely want to follow Christ and be as He is, we will likewise expect to have experiences like His.

One cannot become like Jesus Christ without following His way. Experiences that help us have empathy for all who suffer and, therefore, be able to succor them because we understand what they are going through, is to follow Christ's pattern. To want to lift others and be willing to have those experiences that will allow us to do that, is the definition of one whose work and glory is to bring about the eternal life of man. That defines God and all who would become as He is.

Through the grace of God, we can make our covenant path straight and true, not veering to the left or to the right.

The course of God is one eternal round. The chiasm is symbolic of that truth. Our course is also one eternal round as exemplified in the temple. We move from Celestial to Terrestrial to Telestial. From Telestial to Terrestrial to Celestial.

Almost all of us are in telestial stupor. We must awaken to our divine nature and follow the holy order of God to become who we can become. That awakening means we become humble, submissive, gentle, easy to be entreated, patient, long suffering, temperate, diligent in following His directions, and asking God for what we truly need, both temporally and spiritually.

If we choose to focus our lives on Jesus Christ and who we are, we will have peace here in this telestial world.

Chapter 8

One who is spiritually reborn will be faithful in striving to follow the directions of God from the moment he or she has their hearts turned.

Those called of God to teach and lead are entitled to revelation and prophecy in their service.

The timing of using the power the Lord gives us is as important as that gift itself. The Lord will direct us when it is to be used.

Chapter 9

will be held accountable for not teaching their children the light and truth they received from their own parents.

To not follow the Lord's directions (commandments) is to sever oneself from His presence, influence, and mercy.

To purposely choose to go against the light and knowledge one has been given is to ripen for destruction. The Lord will not allow such to destroy those who seek to follow Him.

This world is our proving ground. A neutral state where we can objectively determine just who we want to be.

Chapter 10

When people's hearts are hardened toward the gospel of Jesus Christ, they may be aware of the extraordinary things that transpire because of the gospel, but do not comprehend the miracle and power of what is behind it nor recognize the impossibility of what they are observing without divine help.

It is one thing to see and hear the voice of a messenger from God. It is another to obey his or her directives.

Unrighteous lawyers and judges subvert good laws. When most people desire unrighteousness, they are ripe for destruction. Are we in that state now? If so, it is because of the prayers of the righteous that that destruction has not yet come upon us. Without wholesale repentance, though, it will come.

One literally becomes a slave to unrighteousness as they allow Satan to control them.

Chapter 11

Alma chapters 11, 12, and 13 provide the most comprehensive accounting of the plan of salvation found anywhere in scripture.

Unscrupulous attorneys do today what they did anciently—stir up people to contention and generate lawsuits to get gain.

Those who seek to destroy that which is good are literal operatives of Satan.

Those who choose to be telestial in their thoughts, words, and actions cannot dwell in the presence of God. They cannot abide a celestial environment, and their presence there would pollute it.

Jesus Christ is the Son of God the Father. He is also the Eternal Father (creator) of heaven and earth.

There are two spiritual deaths. Both deaths refer to a separation from God and His influence. The first death is temporary and occurred when we came to this earth. We left the presence of our Heavenly Father, and we came down into this telestial world that is subject to time. Therefore, what transpires here, except for our eternal choices and the ordinances of the holy priesthood that have been ratified by the Holy Spirit of Promise, is, by definition, temporary. It will at some point cease to exist.

There are two phases to this temporal condition of ours. Mortality, where our spirits are united to a telestial body of flesh and bones (matter that is coarser, less fine than our spirits), and the spirit world, where we continue to have temporal experiences but without a

physical body. We pass from the first phase to the second phase when our earthly bodies cease to function, and our spirits leave them. While we often refer to this transition as death, it is not a separation from God, and, therefore, is not, in that sense, a death. In fact, for many, but not all, it is more akin to a spiritual birth in that they are coming into a temporary paradisiacal state which brings them into closer proximity to God.

The purpose for descending out of God's presence is to allow our agency to have full sway. We see, first-hand, good and evil, and we can choose the kind of person we want to be. Our experiences in both phases of this temporal existence give us the knowledge to determine this eternally. We are then brought back into the presence of our Heavenly Father and are resurrected into an eternal state.

Those who have chosen to be one with Him by offering their whole souls to Jesus Christ, are given celestial corporal bodies that conform to their celestial spirits. They will be as Heavenly Father and Heavenly Mother in every respect.

Those who choose to be something less than celestial, will be given a commensurate corporal body, and they will be limited in their power and glory and potential.

Those who choose to reject Jesus Christ altogether, and be a law unto themselves, will receive a corporal body but will have no power and no glory. They will

be removed completely and eternally from the influence of God. This is the second death, and those who have so chosen are the only ones who are subject to it.

For everyone, our resurrected corporal bodies will be permanent. Our spirits will never again separate from it. That body is incorruptible, imperishable, indestructible, and unchanging, perhaps forever.

Chapter 12

Satan has power over us only to the extent we allow it or invite it. Surrendering ourselves to him, brings captivity. Offering our souls to Jesus Christ brings freedom.

Our ability to understand the things of eternity is conditioned on our desire to be righteous. We receive as much eternal knowledge as we are willing to live. As we live the truth we are given, we then receive more truth. As we harden our hearts to truth because we will not live it, our avenue to truth is shut off. Ultimately, if we continue that path, the truth that we have been given in the past will be taken away as well.

Every man, woman, and child who repents and believes in Jesus Christ and who desires to follow Him, will become one with Him and with Heavenly Father. No one is denied that eternal end who chooses it.

Those who choose to reject the Savior and His truth and to live contrary to His way, choose to be subject to the will of Satan. They forfeit their ability to act and are now acted upon. They cannot be redeemed because they choose not to be redeemed.

The plan of salvation was put into place while we were in our premortal existence to give us the opportunity and choice to become as our Heavenly Father and Heavenly Mother. As a result of us accepting this plan, we have been placed in a condition of corruption, to know good from evil, so we can determine who we want to be eternally. Here we are given a buffet of choices. The entire range of our possibilities. We are given sufficient time with ample experiences to make our ultimate choice. We will not be shortchanged.

To rationalize our errant behavior by claiming we are only postponing our ultimate choice to be as Jesus Christ, may in fact be saying the telestial is what we want eternally. On the other hand, if we see that the telestial is not what we want, and under the telestial conditions we find ourselves in, we determine to follow Jesus Christ, we will be empowered to do so. We will receive His grace to give us the strength and ability to overcome the less than celestial in us, and we will ultimately be cleansed by the blood of Jesus Christ to become as pure as He is. We will be eternally unfettered because we have overcome all things through His grace. We become one with Him.

To the degree we reject Jesus Christ, we will be restricted eternally. That is what damnation is. Grace cannot change that. Choosing to not follow Jesus Christ fully, is to choose to limit our eternal potential. Grace can never work contrary to how we choose to use our agency.

It is noteworthy that some of the most in-depth and revealing passages of scripture have come through prophets teaching very wicked people. For example, Abinadi teaching king Noah and his priests, and here Alma and Amulek instructing the apostate people of Ammonihah. In addition, some of the greatest prophets in the Book of Mormon were, for a time, reprobates and lived lives antithetical to the gospel of Jesus Christ, including Alma the elder, Alma the younger, Amulek, and Zeezrom. This is confirmation of our ability to change and the power and infinite nature of the atonement.

Chapter 13

God's knowledge of past, present, and future allows Him to make assignments in our premortal existence that pertain to our priesthood callings here on earth. This is not pre-destination. It is foreknowledge. All started out on the same foot in our premortal life. All were eligible for service privileges here on this earth to represent and typify Jesus Christ and learn to become like Him as they exercised the holy priesthood after

the order of the Son of God. That many do not receive this opportunity here has been their choice. They harden their hearts and choose the telestial. Therefore, the extraordinary blessing of holding this priesthood is denied them.

Those who choose to repent and offer their souls to the Savior are tutored through administering the holy priesthood, and His image is reflected in their countenances as they take upon themselves His name. Those who are ordained high priests after His order, are to do what He does. They preach, teach, serve others, and live the principles of the everlasting gospel. Their work and their glory are also to bring to pass the eternal life of men. They strive to live their lives so that those they serve will see Jesus Christ in their actions, words, and thoughts.

Those who choose to follow Jesus Christ and have become pure through the Holy Spirit and the blood of Christ, avoid even the appearance of transgression. Giving men this right or power to act in the name of Jesus Christ and authorize them to officiate in the ordinances of the holy priesthood leads them and those they serve to Jesus Christ. They act in His behalf and what they do and say points to and prepares for His coming.

The truth is laid out before us. Angels have testified of and continue to testify of the plan of salvation throughout the world. That testimony also comes

from the living prophets and teachers and priests of God, and it comes through the scriptures. All who desire to live truth will see that truth through these means, as well as through personal revelation by the Holy Ghost. If they twist what the Lord is saying through these sources to justify their less than Christ-like behavior, that will turn to their condemnation.

We are all strangers here in this telestial world. All have need to change (repent) to bring our bodies and minds to a celestial state, through the grace of Jesus Christ. Now is the time to do this. Now is the time to choose. Those who strive to follow the Savior by consistently acknowledging their own weaknesses and seek to overcome them through His grace, will not be tempted beyond what they can withstand.

The approximate timing of the coming of Jesus Christ is made known unto His prophets so they can prepare the people. Not the day nor the hour, but the event and its nearness. We are hearing that warning now from President Russell M. Nelson.

Chapter 14

Putting this world into its eternal perspective gives us understanding. To know that our stay here is temporary and that we are eternal beings having a momentary and often unpleasant, even painful experience,

brings peace. The temporary bodies of every one of us will at some time stop functioning. How that happens, whether naturally or inflicted by something or someone externally, is not important. However, the destroying of the bodies of innocent people by violent and sin-absorbed men and women will stand as an eternal witness against the perpetrators.

Alma was guided by the Spirit to come back to Ammonihah. Yet in doing so, he and Amulek suffered great physical harm. They were imprisoned, stripped of clothes, beaten, and forced to witness the martyrdom of many women and children. The Spirit leads us to do what God would have us do for us to accomplish our assigned missions. Sometimes the suffering we go through, because of our decision to obey, is part of the learning process that is necessary for us to become like the Savior. In this instance, there were many who were brought to the knowledge of the Redeemer and were converted, including Amulek who became a great prophet in his own right, and Zeezrom who became a missionary. In addition, wicked leaders received their just rewards and the warned city of Ammonihah was ultimately destroyed because most of its people would not heed Alma's and Amulek's warning.

Chapter 15

There is a physical, mental, and emotional price to pay when we acknowledge and seek to repent of our

own serious transgressions. Perhaps it is the pain that comes from pushing out from us the telestial that has become such a part of us. Is that what happened on an incomprehensible scale to the Savior in Gethsemane when his anguish for our sins pushed out great drops of telestial blood?

Those who choose, after miraculous warning, to continue to harden their hearts against the gospel of Jesus Christ and persist in their worldly ways, rationalize away the extraordinary things they have witnessed. It has come from Satan. It did not happen. There is a natural explanation.

When we are converted, we leave the gods we had worshipped, including money, prestige, possessions, and power, and focus our lives on Jesus Christ. Our former gods may become tools in our hands for furthering the Lord's work, but we no longer worship them, and they no longer control us.

Chapter 16

Prior to the next coming of the Savior, the Spirit of the Lord will be sent among His people to prepare them for His coming. There will be a sense of oneness among them. They will help one another, focus their lives on Him, and strive to be one with Him. They will become a Zion People.

Chapter 17

Those who choose to follow Jesus Christ are strong in the knowledge of truth because they seek to find it through prayer, fasting, and searching the scriptures. They develop sound understanding as a result and see and speak by the spirit of prophecy and revelation. Their words carry the power and authority of God.

Experiencing suffering is inextricably connected to becoming like the Savior. We cannot know Him without having, to some degree, similar experiences to His. The heights of our joy are related to the depths of our sorrow. That is what reality is.

The most powerful thing we can do to help others see who they are and come to know Jesus Christ is to show them by our own lives and love for them what a follower of Christ is like.

In our striving to do what we feel the Lord would have us do we need to trust in Him. There will be times when we do not know exactly where we are heading or what the immediate results of our righteous efforts are. We proceed with faith. It will always work out, but often not when or how we think it will.

We have within us the latent power of God that will come forth when our sole intent is to use that power to lift and bless those around us and bring them to the Savior.

Chapter 18

The rationalization here in our current world is that morality is a variable. Whatever I decide now to be right, is right. In essence, it is a choice to be a law unto ourselves.

What we ask God to do that is right, He will do. In turn, we are to do for those we serve whatever they ask of us to do that we can do that is right.

The amount of knowledge and understanding we receive from God depends on the degree to which we will obey His word. We use that same criteria in imparting the knowledge we have been given by the Holy Spirit to another person.

The description of heaven in scriptures points to another universe or dimension. It is always referred to as up or above. Those in that universe, which is the spirit world, apparently can have frequent one-way interface with us that we may not recognize. We also can interface with them, although seemingly less frequent, in the form of visions, dreams, voices, and thoughts.

The Spirit operates in the telestial world and is the source of knowledge beyond what our eyes, ears, and other physical senses can discern. It is also the source of power beyond our own natural ability. The degree to which we can tap into this is governed by our faith and desire to follow Jesus Christ.

God's message to the world through His servants is His plan of salvation for them. Their temporary stay here in this telestial world is part of that plan and is a proving ground for them to determine the extent to which they want His plan to apply in their lives.

Chapter 19

Those who have filled their souls with darkness because of a hard heart and disbelief might have a dramatic physical and emotional reaction when they finally allow the Light to come in. For example, Alma the Younger, the sons of Mosiah, Zeezrom, and King Lamoni.

When we are desirous of truth, we will recognize it when we see or hear it. External witnesses or evidence are not necessary to persuade us, though they will exist.

Hearing the word and witnessing truth allow us to make choices.

When we choose to follow Jesus Christ, our hearts are literally changed. We have no more desire to do or say or think anything evil.

Chapter 20

What we are willing to give up reflects where we are in our eternal choices. For King Lamoni's father at an

early stage, his physical life was worth one-half of his kingdom. Later, as he grew spiritually, what he was willing to give up for eternal peace and rest escalated exponentially.

Chapter 21

Our coming to a telestial world to have the experiences necessary for us to make eternal choices and, if we choose, to become as our Heavenly Father and Heavenly Mother, would be impossible without the atonement of Jesus Christ. He is the key to our eternal life.

Chapter 22

It is not enough to just introduce someone to the gospel. With our invitation, we can also assist them in their learning and understanding of it.

Some may not be ready to receive the gospel when they are first introduced to it, and that truth may work on them initially in disturbing ways.

If we will listen, the Spirit can direct us where to go physically, what to say, and even what to think.

Repentance is key to making eternal choices here. Our desire to forego the non-celestial and strive to live according to the celestial is what ultimately defines us.

The great plan of happiness is simple. We have come down to a telestial world to have the whole spectrum of choices laid out for us. As we choose to shun everything less than celestial (repent) and focus our lives on Jesus Christ, His atonement has full effect on us. We begin to be molded in His image.

What we are willing to give up here for peace and happiness varies according to our desires at that moment. At one stage we may be willing to give up much of our possessions for our physical well-being, but not all. At a more advanced point, we are willing to give all that we physically and materially possess to have joy and an eternal hope. Ultimately, when our desire is to know our Heavenly Father and to become like Him, we are willing to give away all our sins to know Him.

Chapter 23

As we follow Jesus Christ, we come to understand that we are all literally brothers and sisters and will treat each other as such.

It is the spirit of revelation and prophesy that brings us to the knowledge of truth. If a teaching or doctrine is not of that spirit, it may not be truth at all.

True conversion means that one has made the eternal choice to follow Jesus Christ in every respect.

The Lamanites were cursed by being separated from the Nephites who had the gospel of Jesus Christ because the Lamanites disdained it. When the Lamanites who were taught by the sons of Mosiah were converted, that curse was removed. They were no longer separated from the people of God but had commerce with them and ultimately became part of their community. A person's skin color is never the curse. It is the separation from a righteous people that is the curse.

Chapter 24

When we have repented, then the hurt and guilt that our sinful actions have brought to our souls is ultimately removed because of the atonement of Jesus Christ.

When this complete change has taken place in us, we will not allow any external influence or force to compel us to sin, even if our physical lives are threatened.

Just about any kind of experience can be a catalyst for one to change. To help them see they do not want a godless life. Even the atrocities that one has committed might finally turn them from their evil ways.

The greatest enemies of the gospel and the plan of redemption have always been those who were once enlightened and then turn from it. It was so with Amu-

lonites and Amalekites. It was so in Joseph Smith's day. It is so today.

Chapter 25

Keeping the law of Moses did not bring eternal life, because it is a telestial law. But it pointed to Jesus Christ and the higher law and covenant. Therefore, one who understood the purpose of the law and kept it, had hope, through faith, of His coming. They anticipated and looked forward to the higher law He would bring.

Chapter 26

We rarely know ahead of time the specific results of making decisions by the Spirit. Our willingness to do so is enough in and of itself, as that reflects our desire to be one with Jesus Christ. Ultimately, and often over much time, we will see the reason(s) for that Spirit-directive.

We can never legitimately claim (boast) that our success is a result of our own prowess, intelligence, or physical abilities. We are instruments in the hand of God to bring about His purposes, and we are given the strength and power and knowhow from Him to do what we need to do. What we can do, and really the only thing that is solely ours to do, is to exercise

our agency to choose to obey the promptings of the Spirit.

When we make the choice to become one with Jesus Christ and are firm in it, no external force will pull us from that. We recognize that all earthly challenges to that decision are temporary and with His grace, those we can overcome.

The extent to which we offer our souls to Christ, that is, repent, and seek after Him in our thoughts, words, and actions, to that degree we are empowered to know the mysteries of the kingdom of God. Through those who receive those mysteries, the power of His word is manifest to others. As a result, countless are brought to understand who they are.

To see everyone, including our enemies, as sons and daughters of God, allows us to reach out to them to help them see who they are. That will bring peace to us and peace and conversion to many.

Part of our telestial experience is to suffer afflictions of many kinds. As we meet them with faith and patience, we will see them redound to our blessing.

The sincerity of one who claims to be a follower of Christ is indicated by the kind of love he or she manifests toward their fellowman.

Those who choose to follow Christ are strangers in this telestial world. Following Christ brings light, joy, hope, strength, and resilience throughout our stay.

Chapter 27

Slavery is an anathema and is condemned by the Lord.

Joy and peace are felt by the truly penitent and humble followers of Jesus Christ as they receive the full blessings of His atonement. When we are really converted, we love our fellowman and treat all as Jesus would with honesty, respect, and kindness.

Chapter 28

Those who are laws unto themselves are the great proponents of inequality. Their measure of success is how much more superior they are than others. Being a law unto oneself defines Satan. To understand we are literal children of our Heavenly Father and can be like Him brings joy. That is the great plan of happiness. All who have been converted are called to represent the Savior in carrying this truth to the world.

Chapter 29

We need to be satisfied with where the Lord has placed us regarding our gospel callings. We can grow and serve in sublime ways wherever that is, and the rami-

fications of our service might be felt by countless who we are not aware of. Alma apparently had little notion that his words would influence literally millions of people countless generations after him.

What we desire is everything. That is what agency is. We will receive what we want, along with everything that comes with it. To make our eternal choice, we will ultimately need to know the ramifications of our choices.

We can never take away from another person his or her right to choose according to their desires.

People of all nations receive that portion of the gospel the Lord wants them to receive. Ostensibly, that has to do with their readiness, or lack thereof, to receive the fullness of the gospel. That does not make a statement as to who they are in an eternal sense, but about the spiritual state they are in now. Perhaps today as we view what is happening with our missionary work, the success or absence of success of our missionary efforts reflects that.

As we spread the gospel through our callings and our interface with others, we are participating in the work and glory of God, to bring to pass man's eternal life. Therefore, we experience the joy our Savior and Heavenly Father feel as our brothers and sisters accept what we are teaching, both through our word and example, and change their lives accordingly.

Chapter 30

Any law that restricts the freedom of belief is contrary to God's commandments. He has given man agency. No one has the right to take that away from another.

To teach that there is no God and no eternal morality is to encourage wickedness. The purpose of such teaching is to let man justify in his or her mind behavior that is antithetical to becoming one with Jesus Christ.

Those who persist in trying to convince believers that there is no God, no Jesus Christ, and no eternal life, seek to disrupt the happiness and peace of believers. That is a Satan inspired motive.

In the church of Jesus Christ, the vast majority serve without any remuneration or worldly compensation. They do it because of the joy it brings them and the joy it brings to those they serve.

The gospel of Jesus Christ brings joy. The Satan-inspired teaching of no eternal life and no God and no Jesus Christ invites despair and depression.

Those who promote anti-Christ and anti-God philosophies have literally removed the Spirit from their lives so that it has no place in them. Their teachings foster and encourage the carnal mind.

Satan never supports those who follow him.

Chapter 31

Those who love the Lord feel great sorrow when they see their brothers and sisters choose to live lives contrary to that which will bring them eternal joy.

Allowing agency to bear sway and inviting others to hear and contemplate the truths of the atonement and plan of salvation will bring about a greater and more lasting change than trying to force them to compel.

There are things we can be doing that strengthen our resolve to be faithful and to remember who we are. They include consistent prayer, reading of scriptures, attending Church, partaking of the sacrament, and serving others on both sides of the veil. To the extent we ignore these opportunities to refresh our spirits, to that extent we deny ourselves the blessings and empowerment they would otherwise give us.

As we follow the Savior, we will have the ability to meet every challenge and affliction we are faced with for several reasons. We will know they are temporary and can have no lasting effect on us. We have faith that the grace of Jesus Christ will be sufficient for us to overcome. And, we will look to see how we can learn from each experience.

Chapter 32

Humility, and its companion, wisdom, is mandatory to hear and understand the words of Jesus Christ. To know that we have within us the seeds of divinity and the potential to become as the Lord Himself, while understanding our own nothingness and reliance on His grace to overcome, is true humility. Sometimes our adverse experiences push us to our threshold. If true humility results, then we will change as we hear the gospel. However, being humble without a compelling experience says much about the Christlike nature of that individual.

True and complete repentance always brings mercy. The accompanying grace literally justifies us because we use our sinful experience to bring us to Christ, and we, in turn, are then sanctified by the Spirit and through the atonement of Jesus Christ.

Faith may be a synonym for desire. It is our desire to follow Jesus Christ that is the power there. The life-changer. If we have no more than a desire to know Him, to believe in Him, and to follow Him, that desire will lead us to act and think as He has admonished us to do. And that experience, in turn, will bring peace, joy, and a satisfaction that is, in and of itself, evidence of the goodness and rightness and eternal power of His way. But first, we must want it. Desire it. Faith is wanting, desiring, to follow Jesus Christ

and be one with Him. Our actions and thoughts and words will reflect that faith in every way. If our desire is to follow Him, we will seek His word to consistently nurture us. We will do all within our power to overcome everything in our lives that would keep us from Him. We will have sufficient grace to do this. We will have peace. We will have an empowering hope of eternal life.

Chapter 33

When we communicate with our Heavenly Father with real intent, He will hear us and respond with mercy. Our pleadings will bring forgiveness.

Those who harden their hearts, cease to look. They cannot see, they cannot hear truth, nor are they affected by those who witness of the plan of salvation. They are left to themselves.

If we will plant the teachings of the plan of happiness in our hearts and continually nourish it through our thoughts, words, and actions, our faith, or our desire, will work in us to bring us the full fruits of Christ's atonement. We will know of its truth because of what it has done for us in our lives. We are happy. We have peace. We are guided by the Holy Ghost constantly.

Our burdens will be made light through our joy in Jesus Christ.

Chapter 34

All the sacrifices made from Adam until the coming of Christ typified the Savior's infinite sacrifice. His sacrifice provides eternal purification for all who choose to follow Him.

We have both a right and a need to ask our Heavenly Father for help and for blessings upon our family and others, our business, to overcome our adversities, including temptation, and to persist in our faith to follow Jesus Christ. Sincere prayers are constant, not just morning and night but throughout the day. They are offered in seclusion and in public. They are verbal or in our minds. They bring us peace and the strength to overcome and can lift those around us as well.

To follow the Savior is to reach out to help those in need, spiritually, temporally, physically, mentally, and emotionally. That is what becoming as the Savior is all about.

To procrastinate to some future time to follow Jesus Christ, is likely making a statement as to who we are. Procrastination is itself a choice to not follow Him. Rationalizing that we will make the choice to be as He is "when it counts" while we continue to live our less than celestial lives now, is a lie.

Wanting to use our time or not use our time here on this earth to learn to overcome our worldliness

and to come to know Jesus Christ may be making a statement about our eternal selves.

When we humbly acknowledge our weakness and plead for the grace of the Savior to help us change, the Holy Ghost can become our constant companion. We learn to be patient in our afflictions and learn from them. We do not revile against those who harm us. We are growing up in Jesus Christ.

Chapter 35

Peace, assurance, and the strength to withstand their afflictions are blessings available to the righteous.

Those who reject the gospel of Jesus Christ are often offended by the morality of those who seek to follow the Savior. They tend to make white, black in their minds and in their words.

Chapter 36

There is a correlation between the degree to which we put our trust in God and the extent of the grace we receive from Him as we battle our troubles and afflictions.

While our temporal experiences can confirm eternal knowledge, that knowledge comes by the Spirit. It is not the carnal that reveals the truth. Rather it tends to distort it or hide it all together.

The experience of Alma is a type of our own experience as we change from a carnal to a celestial state. If we have been absorbed in carnality, our spiritual re-birth purging can be severe. However, with our change of heart and a desire to follow Jesus Christ, that burden is lifted. The pain is gone, and the peace of the Savior's atonement and infinite love replaces it.

A hallmark of one who is born of God is a desire to spend their lives lifting others.

To follow the directions of the Lord (commandments) is a key to prospering here in the telestial world. We will have sufficient for our needs temporarily, and we will have the experiences we need to learn to become as Jesus Christ. Everything that is good, including an eternal family, will ultimately be ours.

Chapter 37

The plates of brass are to come forth in the latter days and go to every nation, kindred, tongue, and people. Their coming forth, along with all the Nephite records, will substantiate the miracle of the Book of Mormon and the prophet-seer calling of Joseph Smith. They will testify of the reality of Jesus. The preservation of all the Nephite records was to manifest the power of God to future generations. Our generation.

When we are given an assignment directly from the Lord, no power on earth or hell can keep us from accomplishing it if we will do our best and appeal to the Lord for help.

There is a latent curse on this promised land of the Americas. If the time comes when its inhabitants choose wickedness and do not repent, they will be destroyed.

We are to repent, have faith in Jesus Christ, be humble, meek, and lowly in heart, and withstand and avoid the temptations of Satan.

We are not to be weary in good works but are to pray to the Lord for support and direction.

Our hearts are to be constantly turned to Jesus Christ. We are to counsel with Him in all our doings and be filled with gratitude for Him and the plan of salvation.

We are to learn wisdom while we are yet young.

The Liahona is a type of the word of God. It is as a small thing and easy to disregard or forget. When we ignore the word of God, we no longer receive His direction. We not only suffer in our telestial journey, but our path will not take us to Him. We have lost our compass. We do not know the way.

We are warned to not be slothful because of the easiness of the way at times. If we will constantly look, we will see God and the way to Him.

As we travel through this telestial tour, we are to be sober about our purpose here.

Chapter 38

Follow the Lord's directions and you will make of this telestial experience all that you need to.

The great blessing of parents is to have their children in their youth choose to follow the Savior and continue in that pursuit until the end of their days.

As we put our trust in God, our tribulations and trials become manageable and we grow from them.

As we follow Jesus Christ, truth abides in us. Truth is the knowledge of what is, what was, and what will be. Truth is manifest to us by the Holy Ghost.

Jesus Christ is the life and light of this world. It is our choice whether to follow that Light.

Counsel for one who desires to be a child of God:

- Do not be lifted in pride and boast because of the strength of your mind or body.
- Be bold in your testimony of Jesus Christ, but

not overbearing.

- Control your bodily passions and be filled with pure love.
- Do not be idle.
- Always pray humbly, acknowledge your weaknesses before God, and beg for help in overcoming them.

Chapter 39

Sexual transgression is among the most serious of all violations of God's counsel and direction. Why? Because it is a violation of our pro-creation powers which is what defines a Heavenly Father and Heavenly Mother.

To deny the Holy Ghost you have received and do it knowingly, purposely, and completely, is unpardonable. Why? Because you have consciously chosen not to follow Jesus Christ. To be a law unto yourself. You will get your choice.

It is for our own good that our transgressions are brought to our attention. If we do not change, those choices will be a testimony against us ultimately because they will reflect who we want to be.

Young people who are wise will seek and heed counsel from those who have had more experience than they.

We need to be constantly on guard to keep ourselves from being led away from eternal truth by vain and foolish things.

A parent's responsibility is to admonish their children to be righteous. Not just for the sake of the child, but because of the harm their unrighteous example might bring to others and, to a certain extent, nullify the good works and good words of their parents.

To seek after the vain things and riches of this world is foolish. They are temporary. What you do take with you when you leave this world is your covetousness and licentiousness if you have not forsaken them while you are here.

It is the responsibility of parents and grandparents to help prepare the minds of their children and grandchildren to become a Zion people prior to the coming of Jesus Christ.

Chapter 40

Our knowledge of eternal things here is extremely limited. We catch glimpses, but the veil is in place.

No one was resurrected before Christ. At His resurrection, apparently those (many, most, all?) who died

before Him were resurrected. When the scriptures refer to a first, second, and third resurrection, they may be referring to the quality of the resurrection not the timing of it. Time may no longer exist when that occurs. The "first resurrection" in this sense would be for those who choose to be with our Heavenly Father.

There is a time-space between our deaths and our resurrection. We refer to this as the spirit world. This is a continuation of our probationary period. During this time, those who have chosen to follow Christ while in their mortal bodies will be in a place of rest, peace, and happiness. Those who rejected Him here in their thoughts, words, and in the way they conducted their lives, will be in an unenviable state separated from the righteous. However, the gospel of Jesus Christ will be preached there to those who will allow it. They might still choose to accept the Savior fully. Change, or repentance continues even after we leave this life.

The resurrection is the reuniting of the soul and body with every limb and joint joined perfectly. This will occur prior to standing before God to receive a final judgment.

Those who choose to follow the Savior will be in God's presence eternally. Those who completely reject Him and all that He is, will suffer a second death at their resurrection. They will die as to things pertaining to righteousness. They will be removed and

consigned to the condition or state of being they have chosen, isolated from all Light.

Chapter 41

God's justice requires a restoration. Everything will be restored to its proper order. Every part of the physical body will be restored to itself and be eternally whole and complete. What we have chosen to be in this telestial state will be restored to us eternally as well.

We will be our own judges, for we know what we want and who we wish to become. But we cannot change the consequences of our choices. For example, wickedness never was happiness nor ever can be. One cannot be restored from sin to happiness. That is not justice and literally violates our God-given agency.

Restoration does not mean to place a person in a state of being that is contrary to their nature or desires. Rather, restoration is to bring back evil for evil, carnal for carnal, good for good, righteousness for righteousness, justice for justice, and mercy for mercy. Whatever we give out will ultimately return. The law of restoration condemns those who choose wickedness or carnality and does not justify them in the least.

Chapter 42

The Plan of Salvation is that we come into a telestial world to know good and evil so we can have the full range of choices. It is the path to godhood. It is the path to outer darkness as well. We chose to come on this journey and in doing so were temporarily cut off from the presence of God. We died as to things spiritual so we could experience the non-spiritual. We are given sufficient time and experience in this estranged state before our resurrection to determine and choose who and what we want to be.

The atonement of Jesus Christ makes it possible for us to have these spectrum-wide experiences and yet not be adversely affected eternally by them. Through His infinite sacrifice, He provides the way for us to be purified completely on condition of our choosing to follow Him. So, through Him, the plan of salvation is brought to fruition. We descend below all things so that we comprehend all things, and then through His grace, we are lifted from that descension into His and our Heavenly Father's presence. Their grace enables us to become as They are. If that is what we choose.

Conversely, those who choose not to follow Jesus Christ, but rather their base desires or Satan himself, are not eligible for Christ's mercy. Mercy is given according to the law. Only those who want to change from their carnal state can receive it.

The final state of those who repent is happiness, peace, power, freedom, and to ultimately become as

God. The final state of those choosing to be carnal is turmoil, darkness, bitterness, and loss of freedom. They are eternally restricted.

The Plan of Salvation allows us to experience firsthand the juxtaposing of Light with darkness, of carnal with righteousness. Now, we can become as God, or something less, or even as Satan, because we know good from evil. We become what we choose. It is just. It is fair. It is the ultimate manifestation of God's love and grace.

Mercy is referred to as feminine and justice as masculine. Perhaps that is one of the reasons none of us can be whole without an eternal spouse—where mercy and justice are combined in an eternal one.

Chapter 43

Those who hold the priesthood after the holy order of the Son of God are authorized by Jesus Christ to represent Him. They are sent forth to preach the Word and truth by the Spirit according to the spirit of revelation and prophecy.

We are justified in going to war only to protect, preserve, and support our property, our families, our liberty, and our rights and privileges to worship God according to our desires. We are then able to call upon God for help. We are never justified in being the first offender. On the other hand, those who seek to en-

hance their own power through subjecting others by physical or mental or emotional force have no call upon God. They will ultimately be defeated by those who are defending their God-given rights and blessings.

Chapter 44

A nation's best protection against being destroyed is to live righteously and to not deny Jesus Christ.

Chapter 45

Before one is entrusted with profound knowledge from God, they must be worthy.

The land of America has both a cursing and a blessing from God. The blessing is that if its inhabitants are following Jesus Christ, they will prosper. The curse comes if they choose to dwell in wickedness, when they are fully ripe, they will be destroyed. This blessing and cursing held true for the Nephite people. It holds true for us today.

The great sin of man is he looks at himself as his god. His intellect, his riches, his fame, his body, and his power are his idols. He grows rich in his own eyes and turns altogether from God.

Chapter 46

If after tasting the fruit of the gospel of Jesus Christ one decides that is not what they desire, they often become an enemy to the Church. They are susceptible to the flattering words of would-be dictators; of wicked men and women who are focused on their own power and wealth and notoriety.

Chapter 47

Those who have been nurtured by the word of God and received knowledge of the plan of salvation and then dissent, might after a time harden their hearts against anything spiritual and become impenitent.

Chapter 48

The Lord is unambiguous in His direction regarding war. We are never to give offense. We are only to fight to preserve our lives and the lives of our family and the freedom that we are entitled to. If we are righteous, we will receive instructions from the Lord whether to fight or to flee. If we are to prepare for war, we will be guided as to what we should do. The Lord will deliver His people. That does not necessarily come without suffering, including death and harm. But that will be temporary, and His people will be preserved.

Chapter 49

While the protection-promise from the Lord to those trying to be righteous and follow the Savior is sure, it is also up to them to use their God-given intelligence to plan and prepare wisely. They will be guided by the Spirit if they seek it. If we are prepared, we need not fear in defending ourselves in war or whatever the situation we might find ourselves in.

Chapter 50

It is contention and unrighteousness that bring about wars and destruction. The faithful will be upheld and will prosper. The unrighteous will be cut off from the presence of God. They will be left to themselves.

Chapter 51

Contention and dissension are of Satan and if not curtailed and corrected will lead to destruction.

Chapter 52

No observation

Chapter 53

Those taught to follow the directions of God and choose to do so will be men and women of truth and

soberness. They will always be consistent in following truth in all things.

Chapter 54

Those who choose not to live as sons or daughters of God often justify their ungodly actions with a rationale that involves their self-promotion including power, position, wealth, notoriety, and narcissism.

Chapter 55

During battle, even if we are in the right, we are never authorized to abuse the power we have. We are to recognize even our enemies as sons and daughters of our Heavenly Father and treat them with deference.

Chapter 56

If we keep our covenants, we will have strength to deal with whatever happens to us. The influence that righteous mothers have on their children is unmatched.

Chapter 57

If our desires are pure and we follow Jesus Christ with exactness, then it will be done to us according to our faith.

Chapter 58

If we are faithful, in our most trying circumstances we will receive assurance and peace from the Spirit that we will be delivered. With that assurance we will have courage and be fixed in our determination to endure and overcome.

We are made free by embracing the truth. We will stand fast in that great liberty by remembering Jesus Christ constantly and following His directions.

Chapter 59

No observation

Chapter 60

The telestial world we live in is neutral ground. The entire range of devastations, including death, happens to all of us regardless of whether we are righteous or not. This phase of our existence is temporary, and those who are afflicted through no fault of their own, or die because of the actions of others, will not be affected eternally by those acts. The righteous will be at peace and continue their pursuit of Light, either here or in the spirit world, until the resurrection. Those who are responsible for unjustifiably harming

others will pay a commensurate price either during their telestial stay or after or both.

We are to use the temporal and spiritual means the Lord has provided us to deliver us from physical, mental, emotional, or spiritual challenges. If we do not use what we have already been provided, we might make ourselves ineligible for additional grace.

When we are faithful to our covenants and patient in our afflictions, no adverse power can effectively or permanently operate against us.

Chapter 61

We resist evil first with our words and prayers. Then it may be necessary, according to the will of God, that we seek to defeat it or eliminate it physically.

Our faith in Jesus Christ determines the degree to which the power of God abides in us.

Chapter 62

Our land may be spared for the sake of the righteous. But if the wicked prevail, there will be no sparing.

Our circumstances do not determine our faith. How we respond to our circumstances is the result of our faith or lack of it. Suffering through great challenges

can bring us humility or we can harden our hearts as a result. It is our choice.

Chapter 63

No observation

The Book of Helaman

Between 52 B.C. and 1 B.C.

Chapter 1

No observation

Chapter 2

No observation

Chapter 3

Pride is the poison that destroys many of those who proclaim membership in the Church. Those who choose to follow Jesus Christ become humbler, firmer in their faith, purer in their hearts, and have joy and consolation through each experience whatever it may be.

Chapter 4

Wickedness leads to destruction over time. Always. The protecting arm of our Heavenly Father is with-

drawn when we choose to be unrighteous. Those who were His people and who turn away to a contrary path are left the same as their enemies. They are no stronger and are now without Divine protection.

Those who turn from the Lord also often ignore, even disdain, the poor, belittle the humble, mock sacred things, deny the spirit of prophesy and revelation, and break the moral commandments (directions) of God.

Chapter 5

When a government answers to the voice of the people and the time comes when those who desire to be unrighteous outnumber those who are righteous, that people are ripening for destruction.

When a people become laws unto themselves and refuse to be governed by the rules of law and justice, they will be destroyed.

We owe it to our posterity to do good. How we live our lives affects them more than any other single thing we can do or say. They can see by our righteous example the fruits of our choices: Peace, hope, joy, service, faithfulness, and purity. They can then make their decisions with firsthand knowledge of the consequences of righteous choices.

Our talents and resources have been given us. We are stewards of these gifts. Boasting and the pride it represents will destroy us.

The greatest gift God can give us is eternal life, to be as He is.

In our present state, the *now* immediately replaces the *past*. We will forget much of the past unless we use our *now's* to remember our feelings, experiences, and righteous desires. Our desire to remember who we are defines us. It allows us to keep foremost in our minds our purpose here. If we do not constantly strive to remember, we will forget, and the telestial world will have ever more influence in our lives.

Our redemption or salvation cannot occur unless we repent or change from our telestial thinking, speaking, and acting. We cannot be redeemed in our sins. We can only be redeemed from our sins. Christ's grace is sufficient to redeem us, but only if that is our desire.

If we choose to make Jesus Christ our foundation here in our mortal stay, there will be no power on earth or in hell that can keep us from our divine destiny.

We need to look at scriptures as *part* of God's revelations to man, not as the whole. There are many truths that through the Holy Ghost are made known to and understood by the prophets and apostles that they do not write or speak of. They were not to be

spread abroad and, in many instances, are unlawful to even utter. All of us, no matter our ecclesiastical position, can have the same experiences as they. The Holy Ghost will teach us all truth according to our desires and our preparation to receive it.

When we speak by the power and authority of God, the Spirit will put the very words we are to say into our minds. Those words will carry that Spirit into the hearts and souls of those who are listening. Lives will be changed.

The power of the Lord's voice when He speaks to us is not in its volume. Most often it is a still, quiet voice that will pierce us to our very soul.

Repenting and having faith in Christ will remove the darkness of this world from our eyes and spirits.

Through our righteousness and faith in Christ, the Holy Ghost can fill us with a joy that is unspeakably intense.

It is the conversion of a people to eternal truths that will bring about what is right, not war. Never war.

Chapter 6

Those who seek to become a law unto themselves have literally and paradoxically subjected themselves to be ruled over by others. Their happiness and satisfaction

are determined not by just how well they are doing, but how well they are doing as compared to others. They need to have more than others have and to be better than others. If they do not win in that competition, they are miserable. They have ceased to be actors and, therefore, are not free, but are acted upon, and their contentment is dependent on the actions of all around them.

The Gadianton Robbers then and now are ruled by others. Their own acts of murder, robbery, and intimidation are all designed to elevate themselves above those around them. The pathetic thing is the uselessness of such actions, because, by definition, it is all temporary. Both the carnage they wrought because of their selfishness, and the momentary pleasure their actions may generate.

However, that they choose to be a law unto themselves here in this temporary state, likely defines their inability to exist in an eternal state unrestricted. They are proving themselves incapable of a celestial state or, maybe even a terrestrial or telestial state.

Chapter 7

The pattern of unrighteousness includes some or all the following. Condemn the righteous because of their righteousness. Let the wicked and guilty go un-

punished. Seek power for personal aggrandizement and not the public good.

Unrighteous leaders come into power because they represent the desires of most of the people they lead.

The wicked are no better or worse than the wicked they fight against. They are left to battle with only their own strength. Without change (repentance) they will all ultimately be destroyed.

Prophets who are authorized to speak on behalf of the Lord are given the words to speak by the Lord.

Chapter 8

Many who have been given irrefutable witnesses of the truth of who we are and the reality of Jesus Christ, still reject that truth. Why? They want the telestial or less that brings momentary and fleeting pleasure. They may be indicating by these choices their eternal desire.

Chapter 9

We have differing reasons for beginning to believe. Some respond to the Spirit that testifies of truth to them. For others, it is empirical evidence that first grabs their attention.

Chapter 10

There are those who refuse to be weary in carrying out their assignment by the Lord to represent Him faithfully and consistently no matter their circumstances. These are qualified to have whatsoever they ask the Lord be fulfilled, because they will never ask amiss. A select few are given great power to control the elements. They are continually living their lives here in the telestial as though they were in the presence of God.

The warning of destruction if a people do not repent is given by the Lord through his prophets and representatives before that destruction occurs.

Chapter 11

It is not unusual for members of the Church to disagree over doctrine. That is why we have prophets to keep us focused on what is important and true and to correct us when we stray from truth.

Chapter 12

Man, in relation to God, is nothing. His body and his mind exist because God created it for him. While his spirit is eternal, his body and brain will go back to the dust.

Through the atonement of Jesus Christ, we can have telestial experiences and by the power of repentance and our desire to change from a telestial state to a celestial state, we will be restored to righteousness. We will be sanctified and purified so we can come back into God's presence and be as He is.

We receive God's grace for the grace we give others. That is the law of restoration.

Chapter 13

When we desire to serve God, we will be directed by the Spirit as to what to do. When we receive and embrace the glad tidings of the gospel, including the knowledge of who we are and why we are here, our desire becomes the welfare of our brothers and sisters. We will seek to help them receive these glad tidings.

Repeatedly, a community who have righteous people among them are spared destruction for the sake of the righteous.

The voice of warning goes out to all who follow foolish, blind guides, and choose darkness rather than light.

Seeking to obtain happiness through iniquity is a futile, depressing act. Lasting happiness only exists with those who choose righteousness.

Chapter 14

As we follow Jesus Christ, we become spiritually reborn and ultimately physically reborn with an incorruptible body that allows us to be as He is.

Those who choose to reject Jesus Christ and be a law unto themselves will suffer a second and eternal death. They are removed from the presence of God to dwell with Satan and his followers in outer darkness. They condemn themselves. They get precisely what they choose.

Chapter 15

Faith in Jesus Christ and repentance brings about a change of heart. We throw off the old man of selfishness, greed, and pride and become a new creature in Christ. We are filled with love for Him, for our Heavenly Father, and, therefore, for our fellowmen. We deny ourselves all ungodliness. It is this change of heart that makes us free. We become unbound from the shackles that hold us and are loosed from the chains of iniquity.

Chapter 16

Prophecies are given so at the time they are fulfilled we have undeniable witness that they came from God. Those who continue to depend on their own

strength and wisdom and pride despite what they have seen, will rationalize away those fulfillments, however. They were lucky guesses, they reason. After all, it is not logical to think there is a God or Jesus Christ. Such myths come from fathers and mothers who have passed down these irrational traditions to keep the next generation in ignorance and subservient to those who proclaim that they are the spokespersons for this god.

Third Nephi

Between 1 A.D. and 35 A.D.

Chapter 1

The statement that Christ “came unto His own” implies our pre-mortal existence.

Christ is our type and shadow. Like Him, we are sent here to do the will of the Father by learning to control our telestial flesh.

When we harden our hearts, we are not able to see beyond our own pride and wisdom.

Chapter 2

When we do not seek to remember our sacred experiences and covenants, we will not see the signs and wonders that God has produced and will pass them off as creations of man or chance.

If we are faced with the destruction of our families, our freedom, and our religion, we may be justified in taking up arms.

Those who have not been followers of Jesus Christ or members of His Church can, through repentance and taking upon themselves the name of Christ, receive the full blessings of the covenant people. Those blessings include the empowering ordinances of the priesthood and profound knowledge from the Spirit.

Chapter 3

We are not justified in waging an offensive war. We are justified in defending ourselves.

Chapter 4

Our willingness to repent and our humility are our primary defenses against destruction.

Chapter 5

Mormon compiled his record from the plates of Nephi and his record is only a fraction of the writings of the prophets contained on those plates. Even in his abridgment he is limited in what he can write because of the unique structure of his language.

The gathering of Israel comes because of the covenants God has made with His people. That gathering involves a physical gathering, a restoration of the full knowledge of those covenants, and the blessings

and covenants contained in the ordinances of the holy priesthood.

Chapter 6

Unrighteousness will keep us from prospering in meaningful ways here in the telestial world.

Our circumstances do not determine our eternal choices. Being lifted in pride or humbling ourselves are choices made by different people when faced with the same external conditions.

Those who willfully rebel against God know fully who and what He is and reject Him. They will suffer the second death at their resurrection.

The Book of Mormon is a type and shadow of our day. Prior to the coming of the Savior in the Book of Mormon, men sought to destroy their government that was equitable and fair. Through wicked combinations they tore down the laws of the land and worked to establish their own dictatorial government.

Chapter 7

Today we are seeing the kind of polarization and tribalization that occurred among the people in the Book of Mormon before the coming of the Savior. This because of uncompromising self-interest and pride.

Baptism and all the ordinances of the holy priesthood are essential. They empower us with grace. They put us under covenant to obey celestial laws and open the door to specific blessings and eternal opportunities that can be obtained in no other way.

Chapter 8

The records kept on the plates of Nephi are true because they were kept by just and true men. However, the writers were human, and mistakes were certainly made. For example, it is possible that in some instances their accounting of dates may have been off.

Chapter 9

Man is destroyed both temporally and spiritually because of his iniquities, and when a people cast out the righteous from among them, they are ripe for destruction.

Christ will heal those who accept His invitation to come unto Him.

Jesus Christ is one with Heavenly Father. They are inseparable. Each of us can likewise become one with Heavenly Father and Jesus Christ in the same way that They are one, if that is our choice. Our offering then to Him goes beyond anything temporal and is literally the only thing we have to offer that is truly

ours: A broken heart and a contrite spirit. We become as a little child to Him. Submissive and easy to be entreated.

Chapter 10

The purpose of the plan of salvation, the plan of happiness, is to gather into one those who desire to be one with Jesus Christ and Heavenly Father.

The massive destructions that took place at the temporal death of Jesus Christ and just prior to His coming to those in the Book of Mormon after His resurrection was prophesied. Those prophecies were recorded for all to read and ponder. They are a type of the destructions that will occur now before His second coming.

Chapter 11

The voice of the Lord (Spirit) is a quiet voice and to be heard, we must be listening. When we do hear it, it will pierce us to our very hearts and absorb us both spiritually and physically.

This is the doctrine of Christ. We have telestial experiences. We desire to change (repent). We focus our lives on Jesus Christ because we have decided we want to be one with Him. We receive the ordinances of the holy priesthood including making and keeping sacred

covenants. Then, we endure to the end. This is the plan of salvation, and His only doctrine.

Any contentious spirit we feel within us or see in others is from Satan. The doctrine of Christ is not to stir up men to contention or have anger one toward another, but to be filled with love and to be as a little child, submissive and easy to be entreated.

Chapter 12

Humbling ourselves before God is the key to following Jesus Christ. Recognizing our innate weaknesses and seeking to change (repent) through the grace of Jesus Christ will empower us to become like Him in our thoughts, words, and actions. We become His Light to the world. The world sees Him through us. Our experiences here in the telestial world are no different than anyone else's. We are all subject to mortal woes including suffering, challenges, and every physical and mental and emotional difficulty. The difference is those who seek the Savior, face them with knowledge that they are children of God and these experiences are temporary and can help them become like Jesus Christ.

Chapter 13

To choose to follow Jesus Christ here in the telestial world is not to relinquish our responsibility to pro-

vide for ourselves temporally. It is a matter of setting our priorities. The promise is that as we choose to follow the Savior in every respect, we will find the means to take care of ourselves temporally as well, and both our spiritual and temporal needs will then be met.

Chapter 14

Here in this world, we determine our relationship with God. He does not coerce but invites us to follow Jesus Christ. If that is what we choose, we will then be guided as to what we should ask of Him. We will receive the knowledge, resources, and strength both to cope with our temporal and spiritual struggles as well as to carry out our specific missions here. As we ask in humility, righteousness, and faith, we will receive.

To follow Jesus Christ in every way and to seek His grace in overcoming our weaknesses, is to enter the single and strait gate that leads to His life, or Eternal Life. There is no other way. It is not just what we do, but why we do what we do. Saying that we follow Christ or even outwardly doing what He asks us to do but all for our self-aggrandizement is worthless. Even worse. We will be condemned as we will be our own judges and know our own hearts and intents. At that day we will no longer deceive ourselves.

Chapter 15

Seeking to remember is key to following the directions God has given us to become as He is. Here in the terrestrial world, with time as our veil, we must constantly do everything within our power to remember who we are and who we are to become. The refusal to do that, i.e. read the scriptures regularly, partake of the sacrament, pray, serve, and attend the temple, will cause us to forget who we are and may be an indication of our ultimate choices.

Chapter 16

Those who follow Jesus Christ are spread throughout the world. He speaks to them according to their willingness to listen and in ways that they will understand Him. The fullness of the gospel will be manifest to the gentiles in the last days because of the refusal of the house of Israel to initially accept the Savior. The gentiles, however, will sin against the profound knowledge they have received, and the house of Israel will regain its place through repentance and acceptance of Jesus Christ.

Chapter 17

Our willingness to listen and the degree to which we are following Jesus Christ will determine the extent to which we can hear and understand what the Sav-

ior says. We prepare ourselves to listen and to receive greater knowledge by pondering His word and living it.

If we are prepared, there will be moments when we see and hear and feel things not of this world. We will likely be unable to convey with our mortal tongue those marvelous truths. In many instances, we will be forbidden to do so for they are only available to those who prepare themselves by choosing to follow the Savior completely.

Chapter 18

Partaking of the sacrament worthily is a literal renewal of the covenants we made with God when we were baptized. We promise to take upon ourselves the name of Jesus Christ, to remember Him always, and to follow His directions. We figuratively become flesh of His flesh and blood of His blood. We are promised that we will have His Spirit to be with us constantly. This is building ourselves on the rock and foundation of Jesus Christ. No telestial challenge and no Satan inspired effort will dislodge us. Partaking of the sacrament worthily is critical to enduring to the end. Therefore, the sacrament is for those who are striving to abide by the doctrine of Christ and no one else.

Those who do not yet choose to follow the Savior completely are not to partake of the sacrament nor are

they named among the saints. However, they are welcome in our general meetings and loved and fellowshiped by the members as the day may come when they will focus their lives on the Savior.

Chapter 19

To be one who is Chosen of the Lord has nothing to do with pre-destination. They are they who, through telestial experiences, choose to follow Jesus Christ.

When we are speaking by the Spirit, we do not need to use many words. Each word will carry its own power.

We are purified according to our faith and desire to offer our souls to Jesus Christ. As we become one with him, the dross in our lives is eliminated, and we are cleansed through His grace to become pure like Him.

As we become pure, we may see visions and hear words, even in this fallen world, which only those who are striving to be pure can see and hear.

Chapter 20

Our asking for guidance from our Heavenly Father and expressing gratitude to Him for what we have been given, including our families, is ongoing. We do this verbally or in our hearts and not just at a designated time or times during the day. It is our consistent offering and pleading throughout the day.

We will be filled with knowledge, strength, peace, and a remembrance of who we are and what we are about here in this world as we focus our lives on Jesus Christ.

Those who choose to become one with Christ are the covenant people. They have been sent here to bless all the earth.

Understanding that we are children of our Heavenly Father gives us the strength and desire to change from our earthly ways.

As we seek to become pure, we will pull ourselves from this world. We will separate from all that is unclean.

The gathering is done in a measured way. Not with show and not with haste. It is in a sense a synonym for separation. We separate ourselves from the world and gather to become one with Jesus Christ.

Chapter 21

The Lord will show His power to the gentiles in our day and this will be so obvious that rulers and leaders and secularists will not be able to deny it. I believe this may be referring to the discovery of all the Nephite records that will verify uncontrovertibly that the Book of Mormon is what it purports to be and came forth as Joseph Smith testified.

There will ultimately be a millennial condition where there will be no lying, life-taking, adultery, etc. Why? Because those who would do these things are no longer here. Those that remain follow Jesus Christ.

The Book of Mormon is a key to the gathering of Israel. Its miraculous coming forth and extraordinary contents, including the fullness of the gospel and clear testimony of Jesus Christ, will ultimately be a magnet to bring the Lord's people together.

Chapter 22

No observation

Chapter 23

If we do not diligently search the words of the prophets, we will not know what they speak nor understand what they have said. Our wanting to know is paramount to our finding, understanding, and remembering truth.

Chapter 24

We are estranged from God in this telestial world. If we seek to come unto Him, He will come to us. The invitation is always there, but we must take the first step. We must want it and do something about it.

Chapter 25

Those who choose not to follow Jesus Christ will not have eternal life. They will not have posterity nor heritage. They have isolated themselves. That is the result of becoming a law unto oneself.

The purpose of the telestial tour is to qualify God's children. If we choose to be one with Him, we will, through His grace and the ordinances of the holy priesthood, be sealed and bound together in a oneness that defines God. We are empowered by those ordinances to be as our Heavenly Father and our Heavenly Mother.

Chapter 26

Our stay here in the telestial world is the perfect proving ground. Here we have all the choices before us ranging from becoming a law unto ourselves, like Satan, to offering our souls to Jesus Christ and becoming one with Him and our Heavenly Father and Heavenly Mother. We will make our ultimate choice only when we have plainly seen and experienced all the options. That is what the resurrection is. A statement, perhaps a final statement, of who we want to be. Those who choose something less than to offer their whole souls to our Heavenly Father are damned. That is, they are restricted. They are not completely free. Only those who choose eternal life are wholly unfet-

tered, as is God. Damnation does not necessarily mean misery. It means being restricted and relegated to a place that is compatible with our desires. We are given what we ultimately want, but that includes everything that comes with it.

The Book of Mormon, a condensation, is limited in what it contains. It is given to us in that form to literally try us. If we will believe these things, i.e. come to really know them, then greater things will be manifest to us. If we will not accept this book and what it teaches, then the greater things will be withheld and that to our condemnation. Ultimately, I believe, we will have access to the entire Plates of Nephi from which the Book of Mormon has been taken, as well as all the records kept by the Nephites.

Those who have been sanctified through their righteous desires and the grace of Jesus Christ will hear and see unspeakable things. Things which are not to be written nor spoken nor shown to others.

Chapter 27

To take upon ourselves the name of Christ is to do everything we do in His name. Our words, our thoughts, and our actions are all answerable to Him. We consecrate our time, talents, and material goods to furthering His work here. We are called by that name

to become one with Him, because that is the name we will answer to.

The Savior's crucifixion is a type of our eternal journal. As men judged Him and lifted Him up upon the cross, so He will judge men and lift those who have chosen to follow Him to be with Him and His Father and to become as They are.

The gospel or doctrine of Jesus Christ is simply to follow Him, repent (change) of our less than celestial thoughts, words, and actions, receive the ordinances of the holy priesthood, and keep the covenants we make. Then we endure to the end of our mortal lives. Through His grace, we will be sanctified and become as He is.

There is a record kept, under the direction of the Father, of all things that transpire here in this telestial phase of our existence.

The key to receiving revelation and power from God is to ask for it in humility and pure faith.

There are many who follow Judas Iscariot. They sell the Savior for the things of the world.

Chapter 28

Those who choose to spend their lives in service to others are as Heavenly Father and Heavenly Mother.

Their work and glory also are to bring to pass the immortality and eternal life of man.

We cannot behold the things of God in our telestial state. We must be at least temporarily elevated spiritually to do so.

The three disciples who were permitted to remain will serve throughout the world and perform great and marvelous things even among the gentiles.

Those who are called by authority to represent the Savior and to speak His words will carry as much authority in their words as the Savior Himself. We will feel the power and authenticity of those directions by the Spirit. If we will not follow what His representatives counsel us to do by His authority and Spirit, it will be as though we are rejecting Him.

Chapter 29

The coming forth of the Book of Mormon is the sign that the gathering has commenced and that the covenants God has made with His people, the descendants of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, will be fulfilled in every respect.

Chapter 30

The testimony of Jesus Christ is that the Book of Mormon is for both the House of Israel and the Gen-

tiles. For the Gentiles, it is a specific call to repentance so they can be numbered among the House of Israel. For the House of Israel, it is a call to gather.

Fourth Nephi

Between 36 A.D. and 321 A.D.

Chapter 1

In a Zion society there are no poor and no rich. All are free. There are no disputations or contentions, and everyone deals justly with one another. There are no more -ites. There is no separation based on supposed status, culture, age, or any other criteria. All are one in Jesus Christ.

While such a society can be formed here in our mortal state, some who reside there may turn away from a Zion way of life. When they do so, they are purposely shunning the Savior and His way. They are not deceived. They make that choice with full knowledge, and their state is worse than if they had never come to the earth in the first place.

All the records kept by the Nephites were carefully preserved so they could ultimately come forth to the world. Not just the condensed Book of Mormon we currently have, but all the Nephite records handed down over the 900+ years of existence of the Nephites.

The Book of Mormon

Between 322 A.D. and 420 A.D.

Chapter 1

When wickedness prevails in any part of the land, the Lord will withdraw His missionaries and His Church from among them, and they will be left to themselves.

Chapter 2

The Savior's grace is available to all who see their own weaknesses and ask for help in changing. When we refuse to either earnestly seek to see that which needs to change in our lives or do not want to change when we do see, our time to receive grace passes, and we are left to ourselves. The Spirit cannot strive with us, and we become weak like all others who refuse the Savior.

Chapter 3

We can love our fellowmen yet know we cannot pray for them with faith that they will change, because

their hearts are hardened and turned from God. We can only weep.

Every person who has lived on this earth will stand before Jesus Christ and answer for themselves as to who and what they have chosen to be. The warning voice to those who choose not to know Him is that that ultimate moment will come.

Chapter 4

Those who profess to follow Jesus Christ are forbidden to go on the offensive—i.e. attack an enemy first—without receiving that directive from the Lord. To do so, violates covenants and will lead to destruction.

Chapter 5

The records kept by the Nephite prophets from Nephi to Mormon have been preserved so that they can ultimately go forth to the Jews to prove to them that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God. They will be a compelling, irrefutable evidence. That is why Mormon and his predecessors went to such great pains to preserve the records and keep them from being destroyed by their enemies.

When we are made aware of the plan of salvation and reject it, the temporal blessings that were in store for

us are ultimately forfeited along with our spiritual blessings.

Chapter 6

Those who choose to live wickedly fear their physical death. They have no hope, and their path to death can be a horror.

Our loved ones have their agency. If they choose to go contrary to the truths we have taught, our sorrow cannot bring them back. Only their choosing to follow the Savior will bring them back. That is their God-given agency.

All, regardless of who they have chosen to be, will ultimately receive an uncorruptible body. That is, it will be immortal and not subject to physical pain, illness, or destruction.

Chapter 7

We are given directions to obtain peace in this world and eternal life in the world to come. These directions are immutable. To not follow them is to reject peace and a qualitative God-like life. Here are some of those directions:

- Do not go to war or fight another unless God specifically commands you to.

- Let your hearts turn to your fathers. Learn of them, do work for them in the temple so that you and your posterity can be bound to them for eternity. So you can be one. Therein is power and love and a fullness of joy.
- Offer your soul to Jesus Christ. Follow Him in every way. Desire to be one with Him. Believe that He is the Son of God, and His atonement and resurrection and grace are the way that you can become like your Heavenly Father and Heavenly Mother. Love Him purely.
- Repent. Constantly seek to see where you need to change to become like Jesus Christ and beg for His grace to help you change.
- Receive the ordinances of the holy priesthood which will empower you with grace that is obtainable in no other way.
- Endure to the end.

Chapter 8

There is a point at which a people become so wicked that the Lord will withdraw their opportunity to receive the gospel of Jesus Christ.

All scriptures, including the Book of Mormon, were written by human beings with the same fallibility that all of us have. That they were directed to write what they wrote by the Spirit qualifies their writings as scripture. That does not mean the writings are perfect and without error. The vehicle (the person writing) is weak and subject to error. However, in general, the scriptures are whole and accurate and anyone who condemns them because of the weakness of the writers stands to be judged accordingly. There is a Spirit of truth about them that cannot be denied by anyone striving to be righteous.

The Book of Mormon is not perfect, but it is the most correct book of any book written. We will be led by the Spirit to understand all its truths.

There are some on this earth who have developed such a oneness with Jesus Christ that they are able to command the elements as He does. They only do so at His direction or with His approval.

The Book of Mormon contains specific prophecies regarding our time. Our day was seen by those prophets, and through their writings we are warned. What happened to the unrepentant in their time will happen in its own way to the unrepentant in our day.

The seeking of praise, riches, and power in this terrestrial world may define us eternally. They are signs of our being a law unto ourselves.

Chapter 9

We will eternally be where we are most comfortable. Our experience here in a telestial world with our agency and the whole pallet of options before us allows us to make that ultimate choice. The final judgement is not a scoresheet of our actions. It is a statement of who we are and what we desire.

To claim that truth is not truth because we choose not to follow it is at the least disingenuous.

All of us will be redeemed as we will be brought back into the presence of our Heavenly Father. Our first death was a spiritual death in that we left His presence so we could have telestial experiences. That death is temporary. When we come back into His presence, we will have determined who and what we want to be. Filthy or righteous. Happy or unhappy. Our eternal standing will reflect those choices. Those who choose to reject Jesus Christ and God will then suffer a second, eternal death by being removed from Their presence and influence completely.

So called miracles, events for which man has no explanation for at the time they occur, have been witnessed from the beginning. We have the right to call upon God for miracles in our lives if we are faithful. These can be anything from being guided in performing a simple but important temporal task, to removing a

mountain. They are not given to prove that there is a God. They come because one with faith seeks for help.

To be damned in an eternal sense refers to the restrictions we place on ourselves that come with our eternal choices. If we choose not to follow Jesus Christ, we cannot be as Jesus Christ. He has a fullness of joy and power. Our choice to not be as He is, is a choice to have something less than that. That is damnation.

We are admonished to be wise in our telestial tour. Be wise in what we seek. Be wise in our actions. Be wise in our perspective. We are to try to see this world for what it is. Telestial. Temporary. A place to have experiences so we can become as our Heavenly Father and Heavenly Mother.

We all fall far short of being like Jesus Christ here in this world. However, to use the weakness of one who is trying to be like the Savior as justification for our own unrighteous behavior is at least dishonest. It may, in fact, be a statement about who and what we ultimately want to be.

We have a sacred responsibility to teach the doctrine of Christ to our families. That is a manifestation of our love for them. They then bear the full responsibility of accepting or rejecting those truths.

The Book of Ether

Unknown Dates

Chapter 1

The Jaredite civilization was prophesied to be one of the greatest in all the earth at their time. Many believe the Olmec civilization was likely this Jaredite civilization, and in their day none in the world was greater. At the time of the coming forth of the Book of Mormon, the extraordinary ancient civilizations in the Americas were unknown.

Chapter 2

The inhabitants of North America are to be righteous. If they as a body cease to follow Jesus Christ, they will be destroyed.

We are to call upon the Lord for help even in our temporal needs. When we are seeking to perform an important temporal task and we have done all we can do to accomplish it, we can ask our Heavenly Father for help to finish it. If we are faithful, and we do

everything we do in the name of Jesus Christ, we are entitled to assistance. It will come.

Chapter 3

While in the telestial world, we can and must call upon God for assistance. That is a recognition of our own weakness, and this humility is necessary to become one with God. The extent of our willingness to call upon God will determine the degree to which we will see beyond the telestial and remember who we are. That, in turn, lets us see how much God will operate in our lives here, if we invite Him.

It is possible, even while we are in the world, to be brought back temporarily into God's presence and to see everything from the beginning to the end.

Our physical bodies are in the form of our spiritual bodies but far from being glorified or in a perfect state. They are temporary.

Jesus Christ is the key to the plan of salvation. Because of Him and His supernal sacrifice, we have agency and can use that agency to choose our eternal status. Through Him, we are not only succored in our challenges here, but if it is our choice to become as He is, He has provided the means for us to become fully pure.

Chapter 4

The Lord has established a timing for certain truths to be manifest to the world based on the righteousness, or lack thereof, of the world.

All that is good has God as its wellspring for that defines Him. Whoever seeks to be good, is seeking to become more like God. They will recognize His word when they read or hear it because that is what they want. They can be privy to marvelous manifestations of eternal truth that are hid from the world.

Our veil of unbelief causes hearts to harden and eyes to be blind to truth. That veil can be rent through repentance and righteous choices.

If it is our desire to be one with Jesus Christ and our Father, Their grace will be sufficient for us to become as they are.

Chapter 5

The Book of Mormon is its own witness. There is no greater testimony of what it is than the Book itself and what it contains.

Chapter 6

If we will listen, we will be taught by the Holy Ghost

Chapter 7

No observation

Chapter 8

From the beginning there have been Satan-motivated men and women who have combined to gain power and wealth and to destroy the works of the Savior. These organizations operate in secret and have oaths that include pledging their lives to their secret works and to one another on penalty of death. We have been warned by Book of Mormon prophets that these combinations will exist in our day, and if we allow them to fester, they will destroy our freedom. Their mortal enemy is the gospel of Jesus Christ and those who seek to follow the Savior.

Chapter 9

No observation

Chapter 10

No observation

Chapter 11

When a people refuse to repent and completely harden their hearts to the gospel of Jesus Christ, the

prophets, teachers, and priests of God are taken from them, and they are left to themselves.

Chapter 12

Faith or desire is the key to determining our temporal and eternal peace, joy, and ultimate success and position. To the extent we desire to follow Jesus Christ, to that extent we are buoyed by hope and taken through whatever momentary challenges, trials, and catastrophes we may be confronted with. That hope, because of our righteous desires, literally serves as an anchor to our souls and keeps us steadfast and continually seeking to become one with the Savior. Without that desire or faith, there is no such hope, and we are left to the distorted, temporary world of our own creation.

Unimpeachable evidence is not given to establish faith in us, but rather comes because of our faith or desire to follow Jesus Christ.

Without faith and desire, we will not look forward with an eye of faith. We will only accept that which we can physically see, hear, or handle. Therefore, that which is real and eternal, we hide from our view. We keep ourselves from understanding, knowing, and participating in the fullness of reality. We have literally blinded and deafened ourselves to truth.

The ability to perform miracles, which are acts that are beyond telestial explanation, is generally limited to those who follow Jesus Christ.

Those who would ignore the written or spoken truth by God's prophets are literally fools. They justify their own base desires because of the frailties that they see in those prophets and teachers of Christ, and which are the lot of all mankind.

The key to receiving the grace of Jesus Christ and having our weaknesses become our strengths is to be willing to recognize those weaknesses in ourselves. To the extent we draw nearer to Jesus Christ, to that extent we see our weaknesses and desire his help to overcome them. To acknowledge our errors is the opposite of being weak. It is the most empowering thing we can do. We realize that coming to a telestial condition is to come to a state where we are as nothing. To understand this in relation to God who is everything, ironically, brings us His power as we submit ourselves to Him. That is the purpose of the telestial tour. To recognize that we are nothing and that we can become everything through Him. That is true humility, and when that is our desire, His grace is sufficient for us. Because we are desirous of seeing and overcoming our weaknesses, we will be made strong.

For the righteous, their hope or expectation is that what they see with an eye of faith or desire will, in fact, come about.

As followers of Christ, we will seek to bless our fellow-man because we love them as Christ loves them.

Chapter 13

A geographic area becomes holy because the people residing in it are holy. Our home becomes a holy place as we become holy. We transfer the spirit that is in us, in some way, to our surroundings. Our Sabbath becomes holy, because we choose to be holy on that day and our focus is away from the telestial.

The gathering is both spiritual and physical. Spiritual first and then physical. Because we choose to be holy, we will choose to be among those who want to be holy. We will physically, mentally, and spiritually separate from that which is unholy. That is the way it is in the post-mortal existence before the resurrection. There, a paradisiacal state and a spirit prison exist. There will also be a physical separation of the righteous from the rest of the world here before the Savior's coming as well.

Chapter 14

When those who have been taught the gospel reject it, the very land they live on is cursed. They will be unable to retain anything of value and will become isolated and left to themselves. Their wickedness will turn against them.

Chapter 15

The Spirit ceases to strive with those who harden their hearts to the gospel. Satan gains power over them. They will literally be drunken with anger toward anyone who contends with them.

Many of those who have chosen to go contrary to the word of the Lord will have great regret when they see the prophesies of the Lord's prophets being fulfilled. They will find it impossible to be comforted.

The records kept by Ether were to be found, so he hid them in a way that they could be found. I believe it is the same with the entire library of Nephite records. Mormon hid them up in such a way that when the time is right, they will be found.

The Book of Moroni

Between 400 A.D. and 421 A.D.

Chapter 1

No observation

Chapter 2

The gift of the Holy Ghost is an ordinance given by a priesthood holder who is authorized by one who holds the keys to administer it. Perhaps this gift means that an ancestor or ancestors in the spirit world have been assigned here to act on behalf of the Holy Ghost to provide the various manifestations of the Spirit continuously to their descendants who have received that gift. Just a thought.

Chapter 3

Only one who holds the priesthood keys to administer the gospel in a specific geographic area can authorize another to preach or teach the gospel in that area.

All who are called by priesthood authority to teach the gospel have the same message. Repent and follow Jesus Christ in every respect. Receive the ordinances of the holy priesthood that empower us to become like Him. Endure to the end.

Chapter 4

Like all saving ordinances of the holy priesthood, the sacramental prayers are given by revelation and are to be administered word for word. Those partaking of the bread are renewing their covenants made at baptism. They will take upon themselves the name of Christ and do everything they do in His name. They will remember Christ always by answering to Him for every word, act, and thought and by heeding the promptings of the Spirit. They will follow the directions He has given so that they can overcome this world and become as He is.

Chapter 5

Partaking of the sacrament water or wine is symbolic of being cleansed by the blood of Jesus Christ. When the Savior was in the Garden of Gethsemane, He bled from every pore. His celestial blood was being forced out of His celestial being on behalf of all of us. Partaking of the sacrament is emblematic of this cleansing. We are renewed and sanctified on condition of our repentance. We are empowered to overcome the weak-

nesses inherent in our flesh through this ordinance of the priesthood.

Chapter 6

Making and keeping sacred covenants are integral to receiving the ordinances of the holy priesthood and the blessings associated with that ordinance.

The Church of Jesus Christ is necessary to helping us become one with Him. The Church administers the saving ordinances of the holy priesthood, and it is within the Church we are nourished by the good word of God. We are brought to remembrance of who He is and who we are. We are fortified in our righteous desires. We are given opportunities for Christ-like service and to be served in our wants and needs. We are taught by our intimate interface with imperfect people like ourselves to be patient, kind, forgiving, loving, and in every way to be as the Savior.

Church meetings are to be led by the Spirit, whether to preach, discuss, teach, sing, or pray, so that all will be edified.

Chapter 7

It is not the external keeping the Savior's commandments that "counts." It is not like scoring the correct answers on a test. It is *why* we do what we do that

is everything. As we desire to follow Jesus Christ and be one with Him, we will do what He does and what He asks us to do, because that is what we *want* to do. It is who we *want* to be. When apparent righteous outward acts are not reflective of inward desires, that is not just hypocritical, but evil.

All that is good, worthwhile, true, and beneficial comes from God. There is a Satan, and he acts contrary to God and seeks to convince men and women to follow him. All influences that persuade men to act in evil ways or to not believe in and deny Jesus Christ, comes from that being. There is nothing good or worthwhile, in an eternal sense, that comes from him or those who follow him. We have been sent here to learn good from evil so we may make our choices accordingly. We need to be mindful that we do not judge that which is evil to be good, or that which is good to be evil. Such judgment is a statement about us and who and what we desire to be and to follow. That which is good will lead us to Jesus Christ. That which is evil will take us from Him.

There is absolute power in prayer. The very asking enables the latent power within us and brings it forth. The promise is that if we ask God with faith and in the name of Jesus Christ, it will be done if it is the will of the Lord.

There is a system or order in which God deals with us here on this earth. Just as Satan has constraints put

upon him and those who follow him, so God operates within constraints to allow us free rein in making our choices between good and evil. It is a level playing field here.

The plan of salvation must be made available unto the children of men so that if they desire, they will be able to see themselves in their eternal context which will give meaning to their righteous choices. That knowledge comes by our asking.

Adam prayed for guidance and after many days was visited by messengers from God. That is the pattern of how God interfaces with us here. Holy men, chosen vessels, who are appointed to lead, first ask, then angels appear to inform and witness of God and of our eternal nature. These vessels in turn, through their writing, their teachings, and their godly walk, help prepare the way for that knowledge to become available to those who will seek it. This opens the door for these truths to be manifest to all through the witness and power of the Holy Ghost.

Power and faith are inextricably connected. If we desire to be one with Jesus Christ, we will have access to His power.

The gospel of Jesus Christ can be summed up in three words.

FAITH. The desire to follow and be one with Jesus Christ. That faith or desire allows us to act in His name and with His power.

HOPE. We see our earth-stay as a temporary proving ground. We therefore participate in this telestial drama with the absolute realization that it will end and our desire (faith) to follow Jesus Christ will bring us to an eternal state of joy and a oneness with God.

CHARITY. The pure love of Christ is that we love Him purely. We choose to make Him the focus of our lives. He is, for us, the Way, the Light, and the One who we seek to be with. Pleading for this love with our entire souls, will bring it. We then will lift and bless all around us as Jesus Christ would. We will know Him and become as He is.

Chapter 8

The ordinance of baptism, including the covenants associated with it, is for those who can understand those covenants and can discern between good and evil. Children not of age have no need for baptism. The Savior's atonement provides sufficient grace for them.

Purification, the cleansing from sin, brings meekness and lowliness of heart. We become as little children to God, and the Holy Ghost is an integral part of our

lives here in this telestial world. As a result, we have faith, hope, and charity.

Chapter 9

We recognize when the Spirit of God ceases being with a people. They act contrary to the Savior's way. They react in anger to the prophets who seek to help them understand the harm they are doing to themselves and to others.

We each have responsibilities that were pre-assigned before we came to earth. Regardless of our circumstances here, we are to seek to know and understand those assignments and carry them out. They have to do with enhancing the desire for righteousness in others and conquering the enemies of righteousness. I believe it is us failing to honor those pre-mortal assignments that bring our Heavenly Father and the Savior great sorrow.

Chapter 10

To know truth, we must be willing to ponder inspired thoughts we have or have read or heard. We must want to know both the truth of what we have considered and allow the expansion of that truth into other thoughts we have not yet had. As in everything, we need to ask God for help in our understanding and knowledge of the truthfulness of what we are pon-

dering. The promise is, the Holy Ghost will manifest truth to us.

Our telestial capacity to know and understand truth is extremely limited. Our eyes, ears, taste, touch, and mental abilities are defined by the quality of the cells that make up our body. Even in the most ideal circumstances, we can only go to the understanding limits of the telestial. The Holy Spirit puts our spirit in touch with concepts and universes beyond this one. It is by that power that we can ultimately know the truth of all things. The price we pay for that infinite expansion of our knowledge and understanding is the offering of our souls to Jesus Christ and our covenant to live whatever truth we discover.

Everything that is good will point to Jesus Christ.

The power of God is real. That power is manifest in our lives according to the degree we desire to follow Him.

True humility is recognizing that whatever talents we have are gifts of the Spirit. We have the sacred responsibility to use those gifts and talents as stewards of God. Those gifts of the Spirit are manifested in many ways. Some can literally see beyond the telestial. Some are given specific knowledge of the future. Some have great wisdom or knowledge or physical abilities. Some have exceptional communication skills. Some have the capacity to learn and speak different languages. None

of these gifts make us greater or better than anyone else. They are tools. Responsibilities. Assignments. And they are all gifts.

The unbelief of men will limit spiritual gifts among them. Especially the gifts of seeing beyond what our eyes see, prophesying, discerning, wisdom, and even knowledge.

Hope, faith, and charity are requisite to navigating our telestial way and learning and growing through our experiences here.

If the gifts of the Spirit are not manifest among man it is because of unrighteousness.

Everyone will ultimately see the truth of all things and will judge themselves according to who they have chosen to be in the light of that truth. We will have restored to us fully that which we have chosen.

To come unto Christ is to deny ourselves of all ungodliness. We will then, through His atonement, become perfected in Him. We will become pure as He is. We will be both a witness of His power and a product of His power. Our spirits and perfected bodies will be joined eternally, and we will be holy without spot. This is the plan of salvation.