

THE THREE INTRINSIC MESSAGES OF THE BOOK OF MORMON

BRUCE H. PORTER

Besides the preaching of the Gospel, we have another mission, namely, the perpetuation of the free agency of man and the maintenance of liberty, freedom, and the rights of man.¹

—John Taylor

The Gentile prophecies begin with Nephi and his father Lehi, as they begin to inhabit and inherit the promised land. The desires of Nephi, Lehi, and Jacob to know more, led to the revelations and prophecies about the land of their inheritance and the people that the Lord would bring to that land. Their concern was due to the prophetic visions of the wickedness and eventual spiritual destruction that would befall their posterity (1 Nephi 12:19–20). Searching for answers to prayers, these prophets foresaw the gospel and blessings of the fathers restored to their remnant posterity (2 Nephi 30:3–4). The restoration of the gospel of Jesus Christ to their posterity—the very thing these prophets prayed for and saw—could only be accomplished through a ministry by a Gentile nation that would be raised up on the same land that was founded on the principles of freedom (3 Nephi 21:2–6; D&C 10:45–51).

As the Nephite civilization neared an end, Mormon and Moroni both began speaking to the Gentile nation that would in the future come to that land, fulfilling the promises by the Lord made to the prophets of the Book of Mormon. Both of these Nephite prophets speak often, and specifically, to the Gentiles concerning the remnant of this dying civilization and explain the blessings and the responsibilities that will be required of the Gentile inhabitants. In fact, these responsibilities of these Gentiles upon the land of promise are a major focal point of Book of Mormon prophecies. The leading discussions about the Gentile nation are found at the beginning and the end of the book with the most important prophecies made by Christ as He visits those at Bountiful after His resurrection. There are three key chapters that discuss the Gentile nation in depth, and the work that they will do among the remnant of the seed of Lehi in the last days. These important insights and details taught personally by the Savior are found in 3 Nephi 16, 20, and 21. The responsibilities placed upon the Gentiles who will facilitate the restoration of the gospel and church in a land promised to be free is one of the major messages and concepts found in the Book of Mormon. This particular message outlines the responsibilities that rest upon those who live upon that promised land and the work that they must do for that land to remain free.

Three Groups, Three Messages

¹ *Journal of Discourses* 23:63

As the Book of Mormon is a prophetic record of four migrations that came, and would come, to the same promised land, it likewise has at least three major messages to three distinct groups found within its pages. As these concepts were briefly explained above, they are here delineated for more clarity. There are three concerns of the Title of Liberty: first, *faith*; second, *freedom*; and third, the wives and children—or *families*. Each is connected to the other while the temporal and spiritual security of one’s family is contingent upon a chosen faith, and a freedom to believe as one might desire. The messages found in the Book of Mormon are those of the fulness of the gospel and the freedoms connected to the land by prophecy and promise from the Lord. This scripture is a record of a fallen people that must be likened unto ourselves for our spiritual and temporal salvation.

Each of these will be discussed below in-depth and in the context of the scriptures as written by the prophets of the Book of Mormon. These prophets were concerned about the “Gentile” nation that they knew would eventually reside on the land of their inheritance.

Title of Liberty	The Message	To Whom	Where
To our God and our Religion — Faith —	The Gospel, for the convincing of all mankind that Jesus is the Christ	Everyone— Jew and Gentile	The world
Our freedom and our Peace — Freedom —	The responsibilities to maintain the protection of freedom in the land	Member and Non-Member	Those living in the promised land
Our Wives and our Children — Families —	Spiritual history; the sins of Israel are the sins of Israel in every age and dispensation	Members of the Church	The world Church

The Book of Mormon is a gospel message to everyone in the world. It contains a message of the good news of salvation and has—within its pages—not only *the* gospel that should be taught, but also *how* the gospel should be taught. This book is also a Title of Liberty—and a handbook of freedom to all those who live in the land of promise—with a particular non-denominational message to the Gentiles who live in that chosen land. There is a message of instruction on how to keep this choice land as a land of freedom and peace. And last, this sacred book reveals a living history of ancient believers, whose life stories were chosen and addressed to the members of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints throughout the world. The visible message stressed in all scripture is the fact that the sins of the Saints in one age or time period are the same in all

dispensations. This record of a fallen people is, and should become, a voice of warning for latter-day members who hold dear the same faith and gospel as those prophets who recorded this inspired scriptural history.

One essential issue exists in the discussion of the prophecies and promises about the Gentiles in the land of promise that cannot be forgotten. That is, that if the promised land of Lehi and of the Gentiles cannot be positively identified, then the blessings, responsibilities, and prophetic promises outlined in the Book of Mormon serve no purpose and can provide no benefit blessing. This must be true, as it will be shown that the responsibilities and blessings are inseparably connected to the chosen land.

A Gospel Message to the World

The first point Captain Moroni wrote on the Title of Liberty is “our God, our religion”—a gospel message of ‘faith’ prepared and preserved for the world. The first and most important message of the Book of Mormon is that it contains the “...fulness of the gospel of Jesus Christ to the Gentiles...” (D&C 20:9). Nephi stated that the plates of gold “...were written and should be *kept for the instruction of my people, who should possess the land, and also for other wise purposes...*” (1 Nephi 19:3). The revelations to Nephi by the Lord announce another reason for the record in relation to the Gospel. Nephi wrote:

For, behold, saith the Lamb: *I will manifest myself unto thy seed, that they shall write many things which I shall minister unto them, which shall be plain and precious; and after thy seed shall be destroyed, and dwindle in unbelief, and also the seed of thy brethren, behold, these things shall be hid up, to come forth unto the Gentiles, by the gift and power of the Lamb.*

And in them shall be written my gospel, saith the Lamb, and my rock and my salvation.
(1 Nephi 13:35–36)

The fulness of the gospel is contained in the Book of Mormon and is the primary purpose and fundamental content of the scriptural text. The book is to be used—as the Title Page suggests, leaving no one excluded—for the convincing of “Jew and Gentile that Jesus is the Christ.” In concert with this purpose, the “gospel” of Jesus Christ was presented through the restoration of the “plain and precious” truths contained therein. Jacob, the brother of Nephi, wrote that the message on the plates “will give our children, and also our beloved brethren, a small degree of knowledge concerning us, or concerning their fathers” (Jacob 4:2). He continued by focusing on this purpose in these words: “for this intent have we written these things, that *they may know that we knew of Christ, and we had a hope of his glory...*” (Jacob 2:4).

The Doctrine and Covenants also speak of this same purpose as the Lord revealed through Joseph Smith that

for this very purpose are these plates preserved, which contain these records—that the promise of the Lord might be fulfilled, which he made to his people...

that the Lamanites might come to the knowledge of their fathers, and that they might know the promises of the Lord, and that they may believe the gospel and rely upon the merits of Jesus Christ.” (D&C 3:19–20)

Mormon, the prophet directed by the Lord to abridge the historical record of the Nephites, included in his commentary important verses that are directed to the “remnant” who are spared and also the Gentiles who will come to the land to assist in the work of the Lord. These words of

Mormon are written for the latter-days and directed to the Lamanites and the Gentiles “who have care for the House of Israel” and, in particular, those Gentiles who understand the gospel and “know from whence their blessings come” (Mormon 5:10).

And also that a knowledge of these things must come unto the remnant of these people, and also unto the Gentiles, who the Lord hath said should scatter this people... therefore I write a small abridgment...

And now behold, this I speak unto their seed, and also to the Gentiles who have care for the house of Israel, that realize and know from whence their blessings come.

Now these things are written unto the remnant of the house of Jacob...and they are to be hid up unto the Lord that they may come forth in his own due time.

And this is the commandment which I have received; and behold, they shall come forth according to the commandment of the Lord, when he shall see fit, in his wisdom. (Mormon 5:9–13)

Following these verses, Mormon explained that the record was preserved for all mankind throughout the world for their spiritual benefit, and that it would be instrumental in the conversion to Jesus Christ.

And behold, they shall go unto the unbelieving of the Jews; and for this intent shall they go—that they may be persuaded that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of the living God; that the Father may bring about, through his most Beloved, his great and eternal purpose, in restoring the Jews, or all the house of Israel, to the land of their inheritance, which the Lord their God hath given them, unto the fulfilling of his covenant;

And also that the seed of this people may more fully believe his gospel, which shall go forth unto them from the Gentiles; for this people shall be scattered, and shall become a dark, a filthy, and a loathsome people, beyond the description of that which ever hath been amongst us, yea, even that which hath been among the Lamanites, and this because of their unbelief and idolatry. (Mormon 5:14–15)

The Title Page of the Book of Mormon declared that the book was written for the “convincing of Jew and Gentile that Jesus is the Christ, the Eternal God.” It also stated that a remnant spared would come to know of their fathers, the gospel covenants, and the prophecies of restoration. This sacred record restores the plain and precious truths that were taken from the gospel as presented in the Old and New Testaments, and it exists as a second witness and Another Testament of Jesus Christ. The gospel of Jesus Christ is for the world at large. The Book of Mormon contains a fulness of this gospel for every individual seeking for truth. It is a worldwide message that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of the living God, and that salvation can only be found in the Atonement and resurrection of the Son of God. It is, as Joseph Smith stated, “that the Book of Mormon was the most correct of any book on earth, and the keystone of our religion, and a man would get nearer to God by abiding by its precepts, than by any other book.”²

Freedom on the Promised Land

The second idea Moroni wrote on his rent garment is that of ‘freedom and peace.’ This is also the second message of the Book of Mormon as the scriptures are replete with the promise of freedom and protection guaranteed by obedience and recognition of the ‘God of the land.’ This message

² *History of the Church* 4:461.

addresses the “land of promise” motif found throughout the text. There exists in the Book of Mormon continual prophecies about the land of promise, and the message within the text is directed to those who live and *will* live on that land. This last day message is intended specifically for the Gentiles who will become a mighty nation on the land. This message is obvious in the text because of the extended prophetic discussion about the Gentiles who will come to the land of promise. The prophecies about, and responsibilities upon, the Gentiles are presented in the book as a major focus of inspiration. The prophets Mormon and Moroni teach and counsel the Gentiles, who were yet to come, about their responsibility in the protection of the freedoms connected to the land. This counsel includes not only the individual wickedness of the philosophies of Babylon, but also “secret oaths and combinations” that were found in the text and prophesied would be prevalent in the last days.

Mormon’s explanations of the purpose of this scriptural text are often read without an examination nor understanding of the parties and purposes involved. The gospel message is prepared for all mankind for their spiritual salvation, and prophetic directives to the Gentiles who will assist in the Lord’s work, and also those who have received the gospel. It is to these Gentiles who live upon the land of promise—not all the world—that the blessings and restrictions must be made known for their temporal security. Part of the history of the Book of Mormon is for the purpose of alerting those who live on the land of the responsibilities they have to maintain the freedoms connected to the land. This message is not to the world, nor limited to those who know the gospel, but directed to all who live upon the chosen land.

The Prophet Abinadi explained this concept to King Noah’s court stating:

And it shall come to pass that except they repent I will utterly destroy them from off the face of the earth; yet *they shall leave a record behind them, and I will preserve them for other nations — which shall possess the land — yea, even this will I do that I may discover the abominations of this people to other nations.* And many things did Abinadi prophesy against this people. (Mosiah 12:8)

King Mosiah echoed the words of Abinadi adding that the historical content is included within the text to “discover to every creature *who should possess the land* the iniquities and abominations of his people” (Mosiah 28:15). The “land” mentioned is not meant to be defined as the world, but is limited to the land to which the three migrations in the Book of Mormon were led by God, and where the fourth group (the Gentiles) would find an inheritance. Moroni, writing to the LDS reader of the latter-day about the Book of Mormon, stated:

And this cometh unto you, O ye Gentiles, that ye may know the decrees of God—that ye may repent, and not continue in your iniquities until the fulness come, that ye may not bring down the fulness of the wrath of God upon you as the inhabitants of the land have hitherto done. (Ether 2:11)

The history of a fallen people is recorded for those who know the gospel and who will possess the same land, giving themselves an equal potential for a similar fate. One rule of wisdom seldom realized is the necessity to search for the failures of the past to guarantee the success of the future.

In the Book of Mormon, most of the prophecies and promises about the land that becomes the Nephite homeland are found in the beginning and the end of the text. This, of course, is due to the fact that the land was a major concern when both the Jaredites and the Lehiters found themselves on the promised land. The prophecies and promises of the land again come into the forefront of prophetic utterance as the Nephite nation nears annihilation, reminding those who

will eventually inherit the same land of the restrictions and blessings connected to it. Thus, it can be seen that the discussion about the land in the scripture is naturally found in the beginning by those prophet authors who were led there by God, and then again by those final prophets who realize that their people have lost the freedom promised and guaranteed them by divine decree because of their rejection of Jesus Christ. Mormon and Moroni stress to the “Gentile” inhabitants that will arrive later, the prophecies and promises attached to the land to which they will be led. From Lehi’s escape from Babylon in Jerusalem to the devastation by spiritual Babylon at the Hill Cumorah, the Book of Mormon speaks forcefully of the concept of the promised land.

Over two thousand years before Christ came, the brother of Jared was told that he, his family and friends “should come forth even unto the land of promise, which was choice above all other lands, which the Lord God had preserved for a righteous people” (Ether 1:7). The brother of Jared was made aware of, and Moroni stressed again, the restrictions placed by God on the land, even though he was writing to a future audience. Moroni continued the abridgment of the Jaredite text:

And he had sworn in his wrath unto the brother of Jared, that *whoso should possess this land of promise, from that time henceforth and forever, should serve him, the true and only God, or they should be swept off* when the fulness of his wrath should come upon them.

And now, we can behold *the decrees of God concerning this land*, that it is a land of promise; and *whatsoever nation shall possess it shall serve God, or they shall be swept off* when the fulness of his wrath shall come upon them. And the fulness of his wrath cometh upon them when they are ripened in iniquity.

For behold, *this is a land which is choice above all other lands; wherefore he that doth possess it shall serve God or shall be swept off; for it is the everlasting decree of God.* And it is not until the fulness of iniquity among the children of the land, that they are swept off. (Ether 2:8–10)

To make sure the reader would know to whom he is now writing, Moroni addressed the future audience and readers (the Gentiles) that have been spoken of throughout the text. He did this to ensure that these Gentiles know and understand that the same restrictions are still existing during their occupation and inheritance of the promised land.

And *this cometh unto you, O ye Gentiles, that ye may know the decrees of God—that ye may repent, and not continue in your iniquities* until the fulness come, that ye may not bring down the fulness of the wrath of God upon you as the inhabitants of the land have hitherto done.

Behold, *this is a choice land, and whatsoever nation shall possess it shall be free from bondage, and from captivity, and from all other nations under heaven, if they will but serve the God of the land, who is Jesus Christ, who hath been manifested by the things which we have written.* (Ether 2:11–12)

The decree all are to understand—historically and prophetically from the time of the brother of Jared—is that whoever should possess the land “henceforth and forever *shall serve God, or they shall be swept off*” (Ether 2:8). This is proven historically when the people are “ripened in iniquity” (Ether 2:9). This is the monumental restriction placed upon the land that Jared, Lehi, Mulek were led to by the hand of the Lord and *cannot* be ignored. The Lord reminded all to “remember that my Spirit will not always strive with man; wherefore, if ye will sin until ye are fully ripe ye shall be cut off from the presence of the Lord. And *these are my thoughts upon the*

land which I shall give you for your inheritance” (Ether 1:15). The Lord then commands *“that whoso should possess the land should possess it unto the Lord, or they should be destroyed when they were ripened in iniquity; for upon such, saith the Lord: I will pour out the fulness of my wrath”* (Ether 9:20). As the Jaredite civilization concluded its final act, Coriantumr lives long enough to witness the truthfulness of the promises and prophecies as he remained alone *“to see the fulfilling of the prophecies* which had been spoken concerning another people receiving the land for their inheritance” (Ether 13:21).

Lehi understood the same blessings and restrictions given to the Jaredites, adding that these promises are for whomever the Lord shall bring and that the blessings will last “forever” if they prove to be faithful. The words of Lehi are recorded as

...this land is consecrated unto him whom he shall bring. And if it so be that they shall serve him according to the commandments which he hath given, it shall be a land of liberty unto them; wherefore, they shall never be brought down into captivity; if so, it shall be because of iniquity; for if iniquity shall abound cursed shall be the land for their sakes, but unto the righteous it shall be blessed forever. (2 Nephi 1:7)

Continuing, the prophet Lehi taught his posterity about the blessings of those brought to the land under the direction of the Lord. The freedoms and protections are tied to the acceptance of the God of Creation, including shielding them from “other nations.” The restrictions are also discussed as Lehi stated that because of wickedness, his posterity and those who inhabit the land will lose the blessings of freedom and the isolation that will provide their protection from other nations. These restrictions mentioned above and below are not limited to members of the church or those who know and understand the gospel. The message may need to be perpetuated by those who read the Book of Mormon, but it is not limited exclusively to them. The blessings received will be a result of obedience to the commandments.

...they shall keep his commandments they shall be blessed upon the face of this land, and there shall be none to molest them, nor to take away the land of their inheritance; and they shall dwell safely forever.

But behold, when the time cometh that they shall dwindle in unbelief, after they have received so great blessings from the hand of the Lord—having a knowledge of the creation of the earth, and all men, knowing the great and marvelous works of the Lord from the creation of the world; having power given them to do all things by faith; having all the commandments from the beginning, and having been brought by his infinite goodness into this precious land of promise—behold, I say, if the day shall come that they will reject the Holy One of Israel, the true Messiah, their Redeemer and their God, behold, the judgments of him that is just shall rest upon them.

Yea, he will bring other nations unto them, and he will give unto them power, and he will take away from them the lands of their possessions, and he will cause them to be scattered and smitten. (2 Nephi 1:9–11)

These verses prophetically explain that the Gentiles will come to the promised land, and will scatter and afflict the remnant of Lehi. This affliction will come because the remnant of Lehi had, at one time, such a great knowledge of the “works of the Lord” and then refused to remain true to the God of the land, as did the Jaredites before them. The same events await every people who do not learn from the mistakes of the nations and peoples who have lived upon this land before. Jacob, the brother of Nephi, also rehearsed the words of the Lord and Lehi to the descendants of his father by informing them that *“this people shall keep my commandments, saith the Lord of Hosts, or cursed be the land for their sakes”* (Jacob 2:29). The “land” will be cursed—rather

than the people—because of the wickedness. Because it is a ‘chosen land unto the Lord,’ the blessings received are intrinsic blessings, contingent upon righteousness. Jacob continued this thought with the warning: “But, wo, wo, unto you that are not pure in heart, that are filthy this day before God; for except ye repent *the land is cursed for your sakes...and the Lord God will lead away the righteous out from among you*” (Jacob 3:3–4). Jacob again indicated that the ‘land will be cursed’ by the Lord, as does Enos (Jacob’s son), who ministered to the people of Nephi. In his record, Enos echoed the same warnings as did his father Jacob saying:

...the voice of the Lord came into my mind again, saying: I will visit thy brethren according to their diligence in keeping my commandments. *I have given unto them this land, and it is a holy land; and I curse it not save it be for the cause of iniquity*” (Enos 1:10)

The *freedom* that is guaranteed in the land of promise is a major theme running throughout the Book of Mormon. ‘Freedom’ is connected to the land as one of the many blessings promised to the inhabitants who recognize Jesus Christ as their God. Mosiah warned the people of absolute power residing in one man or in a single, organized entity. Both the rule by a king with absolute power or a government by the voice of the people have advantages and shortcomings. Suggesting a government of “judges”—all elected by the voice of the people—was preferred by King Mosiah.

The Book of Mormon catalogs the problems associated with the system of judges when they become wicked: seeking power for gain first in their positions as lawyers, then becoming judges with agendas for protection of personal or special interests. The downfall of this culture was facilitated by judges who are not chosen by the voice of the people whom they should represent and protect. When *every* level of judges is chosen by the voice of the people, they must answer to the voice of those who vote, rather than the will of those who appoint them. Mormon’s editorial comment informs the reader “that *the foundation of the destruction of this people is beginning to be laid by the unrighteousness of your lawyers and your judges*” (Alma 10:27). Judges who were unrighteous proved to be a major contributor in the breakdown of the Nephite culture in the Book of Mormon. This same problem exists in all societies, and especially today. If crime goes unopposed and unpunished in the streets of the ghetto or columned halls of the government, it will not be because of ‘law’ itself, but because of the judges, most of whom are not elected by the voice of the people.

Mosiah counsels and connects the law of the land to the moral law ‘given by the hand of God’ and contained in the scriptures by stating: “*Therefore, choose you by the voice of this people, judges, that ye may be judged according to the laws which have been given you by our fathers, which are correct, and which were given them by the hand of the Lord*” (Mosiah 29:25). Mosiah continued to counsel the people with a warning about the voice of the people and the restrictions placed upon the land of promise:

Now it is not common that the voice of the people desireth anything contrary to that which is right; but it is common for the lesser part of the people to desire that which is not right; therefore this shall ye observe and make it your law—to do your business by the voice of the people.

And if the time comes that the voice of the people doth choose iniquity, then is the time that the judgments of God will come upon you; yea, then is the time he will visit you with great destruction even as he has hitherto visited this land. (Mosiah 29:26–27)

These two verses are sobering in their predictive consequence for those living in the land of promise. There is a responsibility resting heavily upon those who seek to maintain the blessings of freedom that are promised to those *on the land*. As just quoted, “*if the time comes that the voice of the people doth choose iniquity, THEN is the time that the judgments of God will come*” (emphasis added) just as He has done in the past. The silent majorities have no voice, and the power and control lie in those who speak the loudest by the numbers who vote. As history records, by apathy the more wicked minority can rule.

Alma, speaking to his son about the wickedness of times past and explaining one reason the historical accounts are found in the Book of Mormon, quotes the Jaredite record, “*and I will bring to light all their secrets and abominations, unto every nation that shall hereafter possess the land*” (Alma 37:25). Alma counsels his son to “*keep from this people, (the Nephites) that they know them not...*”—referring to those secret oaths and combinations that led to the destruction of the Jaredite nation (see Alma 37:27). Alma continued, “*...there is a curse upon all this land, that destruction shall come upon all those workers of darkness, according to the power of God, when they are fully ripe; therefore I desire that this people might not be destroyed*” (Alma 37:28). Concerned about the people in the church and their spiritual and temporal security, Alma taught them, as he taught his son Helaman, saying:

Thus saith the Lord God—*Cursed shall be the land, yea, this land, unto every nation, kindred, tongue, and people, unto destruction, which do wickedly, when they are fully ripe; and as I have said so shall it be; for this is the cursing and the blessing of God upon the land, for the Lord cannot look upon sin with the least degree of allowance.*
(Alma 45:16)

The curse or blessing upon the land is a result of individual agency and the freedom to choose good or evil. Helaman explained that because of the people, “*a curse shall come upon the land, saith the Lord of Hosts, because of the peoples’ sake who are upon the land, yea, because of their wickedness and their abominations*” (Helaman 13:17). Ether, the final prophet of the Jaredite nation, recognizes the fulfillment of the blessing and curse upon the land as he concluded his record by making note that “*there began to be a great curse upon all the land because of the iniquity of the people...*” (Ether 14:1). The confirmed imperative presented in the Book of Mormon lies at the heart of the restrictions and blessings placed upon the promised land. This declaration rings loudly across the pages of this book of scripture, and embraces all ages and times, as the Lord confirms that “*I will have all men that dwell thereon that they shall worship me, saith God*” (2 Nephi 10:19).

Freedom—and the protection of that freedom—is a *major message* of the Book of Mormon. Moroni and the brother of Jared, the first Jaredite prophet and also the last prophet of the Jaredite civilization, also spoke of the same ‘promise’ of the Lord that is connected to the land. It was also an inspired concern six hundred years before Christ; when Lehi addressed this freedom after finding a home and inheritance in the land of promise. The restrictions on the freedoms promised to the latter-day nation of the Gentiles were stressed by Christ and commanded to be recorded for the future readers:

For it is wisdom in the Father that *they [the Gentiles] should be established in this land, and be set up as a free people by the power of the Father, that these things might come forth from them unto a remnant of your seed...* behooveth the Father that it should come forth from the Gentiles, that he may show forth his power unto the Gentiles, for this cause that the Gentiles, *if they will not harden their hearts, that they may repent and come unto me and be baptized in my name and know of the true points of my doctrine, that they may be numbered among my people, O house of Israel...*

And my people who are *a remnant of Jacob shall be among the Gentiles, yea, in the midst of them as a lion among the beasts of the forest, as a young lion among the flocks of sheep, who, if he go through both treadeth down and teareth in pieces, and none can deliver. Yea, wo be unto the Gentiles except they repent; for it shall come to pass in that day, saith the Father, that I will cut off thy horses out of the midst of thee, and I will destroy thy chariots...*

And I will execute vengeance and fury upon them, even as upon the heathen, such as they have not heard. But *if they will repent and hearken unto my words, and harden not their hearts, I will establish my church among them, and they shall come in unto the covenant and be numbered among this the remnant of Jacob, unto whom I have given this land for their inheritance;* (see 3 Nephi 21:4–21).

The message to those who live on the land of promise is finally rehearsed by the concluding Nephite prophets as the civilization came to a close a thousand years after Lehi.

And also that *a knowledge of these things must come unto the remnant of these people, and also unto the Gentiles, who the Lord hath said should scatter this people, and this people should be counted as naught among them—therefore I write a small abridgment...*

And now behold, this *I speak unto their seed, and also to the Gentiles who have care for the house of Israel, that realize and know from whence their blessings come.*

And behold, the Lord hath reserved their blessings, which they might have received in the land, *for the Gentiles who shall possess the land.*

And then, *O ye Gentiles, how can ye stand before the power of God, except ye shall repent and turn from your evil ways?*

Know ye not that ye are in the hands of God? Know ye not that he hath all power, and at his great command the earth shall be rolled together as a scroll?

Therefore, repent ye, and humble yourselves before him, lest he shall come out in justice against you—lest a remnant of the seed of Jacob shall go forth among you as a lion, and tear you in pieces, and there is none to deliver. (Mormon 5:9–10, 19, 22–24)

Almost every discussion in the Book of Mormon about the freedom on the land of promise was and is directed specifically to the Gentiles nation of the latter-days. These Gentiles are those who—the Lord tells Nephi—would come out of captivity to the same land that Lehi came and that his family received for an inheritance.

To Members of the Church, and Our Families

The third message is the history or “record of a fallen people” (D&C 20:9) who “were once a delightful people, and they had Christ for their shepherd; yea, they were led even by God the Father” (Mormon 5:17). This book contains a message given for the temporal and spiritual security of the family, and specifically the “wives and the children.” The spiritual protection of families may be found in the acquisition of a knowledge and understanding of the gospel of Jesus Christ, and the right to be able to teach that gospel and worship the God of the land.

Everyone who reads the Book of Mormon should ask the question after every page or chapter: *Why was the prophet inspired and required to place this information in the record?* Since the Book of Mormon was written for an era other than the Nephite time period and culture, the reader must also ask: *What significance is this record to me?* The fact that the Book of Mormon

contains the fulness of the gospel of Jesus Christ goes without question, but it is also described as “a record of a fallen people” (D&C 20:9) which begs the question to be asked; Why *this* history?

Who will read and understand this history of a fallen people? The prophets were inspired. Mormon and Moroni, who abridged the record, were divinely guided in their historical inclusions within the record, yet some members of the Latter-day Saints are the only ones reading the record. It is because of these Saints, who read the record in the latter-days, that it contains the history of a people who knew the gospel of Jesus Christ and then fell from favor before God.

As he began to conclude the record, Moroni explained:

Behold, the *Lord hath shown unto me* great and marvelous things concerning that which must shortly come, at that day *when these things shall come forth among you*.

Behold, *I speak unto you as if ye were present, and yet ye are not. But behold, Jesus Christ hath shown you unto me, and I know your doing*.

And I know that ye do walk in the pride of your hearts; and there are none save a few only who do not lift themselves up in the pride of their hearts, unto the wearing of very fine apparel, unto envying, and strifes, and malice, and persecutions, and all manner of iniquities; and your churches, yea, even every one, have become polluted because of the pride of your hearts.

For behold, *ye do love money, and your substance, and your fine apparel, and the adorning of your churches, more than ye love the poor and the needy, the sick and the afflicted*.

O ye pollutions, ye hypocrites, ye teachers, who sell yourselves for that which will canker, *why have ye polluted the holy church of God? Why are ye ashamed to take upon you the name of Christ? Why do ye not think that greater is the value of an endless happiness than that misery which never dies—because of the praise of the world?*

Why do ye adorn yourselves with that which hath no life, and yet suffer the hungry, and the needy, and the naked, and the sick and the afflicted to pass by you, and notice them not? (Mormon 8:34–39)

Knowing what the members of the Church of Jesus Christ would be like in the latter-days, Moroni addresses the sins—prevalent in all ages—that Israel (those who know the gospel) would have when the Book of Mormon would be read by them. The book was written for members of the church, the “Gentiles who have care for the house of Israel, *that realize and know from whence their blessings come*” (Mormon 5:10). Since only one group would read this scripture, the history contained in the Book of Mormon was written to be read by them. There are no direct prophecies of the last days in the Book of Mormon, but this book of scripture is the spiritual and economic pattern of the last days.

Mormon taught in his editorial comments that that it was important to the Lord to “*discover to every creature who should possess the land the iniquities and abominations of his people*” (Mosiah 28:15). The record was preserved because it (1) contained the gospel of Jesus Christ, and (2) explained to the people (who would read this scripture) the “iniquities and abomination of his people” and (3) the deed restrictions of the promised land.

The Book of Mormon contains a history of the sins and attitudes of a fallen people who once knew the way of salvation, and it details the resulting afflictions as a consequence. The result of the rejection of Christ and His gospel encompasses a history that is recorded for all of Israel to see—a history recorded for those who have accepted and embraced the gospel. This message is directed specifically to the members of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, to those who know the gospel and the ordinances of salvation; it is a message directed to those who “profess to know God.”

The Book of Mormon, like the Old Testament, is teaching those who should know that the sins of Israel are the sins of Israel in every dispensation and every generation. The modern members of Mormonism are afflicted by the same desires, appetites, and passions as were the ancient believers. The spiritual failures of the members of the church in antiquity will be the same spiritual setbacks for contemporary believers today, unless the reason for which scriptural history is written is understood. Nephi instructed the readers to “liken all scriptures unto us, that it might be for our profit and learning” (1 Nephi 19:23). The character, temporal desires, appetites, faults, failings and sins, the righteousness and obedience of a people who once knew the Lord, can be recognized in scripture and likened to us, individually and collectively today. This one intrinsic element of the purpose of scriptural history, exists, as Joseph Smith declared, because the “constitution of man has not changed since he fell.”³

Moroni reinforces these thoughts as he pleads, “O ye Gentiles, it is wisdom in God that these things should be shown unto you, that thereby ye may repent of your sins” (Ether 8:23). From beginning to end, the record of the Book of Mormon explained with depressing accuracy and detail the very nature and character traits that led to the annihilation of a once-blessed culture and people who previously and actively possessed the gospel of Jesus Christ on the promised land.

The prophecies and promises are specific, the message is specific, and the land is a specific land. Because the prophecies are intended for a precise and specific land, the Book of Mormon must have within its pages, enough information to identify that promised land. If this were not so, this message found throughout the scripture is mute and of no value. If the land is misidentified then the blessings, responsibilities, and restrictions are misdirected. But this is not the case, for instead, the message is clear, the prophecies are clear, and the land must be able to be identified within the text by those prophecies and promised about the fourth group who would come to the same land. This record of a fallen people exists as a solemn testimony that the promises and prophecies that are revealed and discussed in the text are true. Because of the neglect of their religion and God, as well as the lack of an active concern for their political leaders and intellectual philosophies, the effect is a spiritual decline and loss of the freedom and peace that once secured the protection of their families from seen and unseen enemies. The physical and spiritual protection of the family in every dispensation is founded on the fact that freedom and peace must exist in the environment in which people live.

The history of a fallen people was preserved for the readers of the text who are members of the church—members who need to understand that the iniquities that plagued the Nephite culture are the same iniquities and sins that eventually beset the masses in the culture who will be given the gospel. The only hope of surviving the calamities of the last days is found in the ‘gospel of Christ’ and the ‘scriptural history’ of the Book of Mormon as we liken the scripture unto ourselves.

³ *TPJS*, 59.

The three elements of the Title of Liberty and the directed messages of the Book of Mormon are not usually seen by the casual reading of this scripture. The restoration of the plain and precious truths that comprise the fulness of the gospel is made available within the text of the Book of Mormon for the entire world to acquire, if they so choose. This knowledge and understanding is based upon faith in the gospel of Jesus Christ.

The promised land was a major concern for the prophets of the Book of Mormon, and thus the majority of their prophecies and promises revolve around this chosen land, and those who lived on it in antiquity and in its future inhabitants (which is now present-day). The Book of Mormon has within its pages the necessary requirements that are mandatory for that chosen land to remain free. Finally, the record is that of a fallen people, given that the serious reader may liken the scriptures to themselves, recognizing that the gospel is new to every generation, and that testimonies and righteousness are not genetic. Scriptural history is a necessary component of progression if a people are to advance spiritually. The Book of Mormon becomes a Title of Liberty to the wary reader as it teaches how to secure the temporal and spiritual protection of “our faith and religion, our freedom and peace, and our wives and children” (Alma 46:12). *Faith, freedom, and family* is the purpose of the Book of Mormon, as it becomes not just a Title *of* Liberty but a Title *to* Liberty for the righteous.