

3 Nephi 1-4

I. Signs only convert those who believe:

- A. Stupid warnings: blender, cleaners bag
- B. Paul Dunn, running a red light/LDS Highway Patrolman
- C. Have you ignored a warning sign?
- D. Seth - signs do not convert

Conditions of the World the Awaited Our Lord:

“Socrates taught that Greeks should regard all mankind, except their own countrymen, as natural enemies; Aristotle and Cicero taught that forgiveness of injuries is cowardly and mean; Zeno and Cato taught that there is no distinction of degree, aggravation, or heinousness in crimes; Plato taught that excessive drinking was allowable during the festival of Bacchus; Aristotle taught that deformed or infirm children ought to be destroyed; Cicero taught that fornication is in no instance wrong; Plato taught that a community of women would conduce to good, and that soldiers ought not to be restrained from even the grossest indulgence; Menander taught that a lie was better than a hurtful truth; and Zeno and Cato recommended suicide by their example, while other philosophers inculcated it in precept. And Solon enacted that sensuality was irreproachable, except when practiced by a slave; several states of Greece legalized unnatural lust, and encouraged it by public statutes; philosophers and legislators sanctioned the grossest indecency, drunkenness, and lewdness during the festivals of Bacchus, Cybele, and Ceres; and Rome was distinguished by licentious divorces, and procuring abortions, the exposing of infants, the nuisance of public stews, the sports of gladiators, the maltreatment of slaves, etc, all of which were sanctioned or connived at by both sages and legislators. Such was the state of morals among the ancient heathen” (John Fleetwood, *The Life of Our Savior Jesus Christ* [1862], p. 20).

“Julius Caesar, at that time the Chief Pontiff of Rome, and as such, the highest functionary of the state religion, and the official authority in religious questions, openly proclaimed, in his speech in the Senate, in reference to Catiline and his fellow-conspirators— that there was no such thing as future life; no immortality of the soul. He opposed the execution of the accused on the ground that their crimes deserved the severest punishments, and that, therefore, they should be kept alive to endure them, since death was in reality an escape from suffering, not an evil. ‘Death,’ said he, ‘is a rest from troubles to those in grief and misery, not a punishment; it ends all the evils of life; for there is neither care nor joy behind it’ (Geikie, as cited in Bruce R. McConkie, *The Mortal Messiah*, Vol. 1:289).

“The advent of Christ was the breaking of the ‘dayspring from on high’ through a gloom that had been gathering for ages; a great light dawning on a world which lay in darkness, and the shadow of death” (Geike, *The Life and Words of Christ*, p. 20).

XR 3 Nephi 6:16-16,18.

“He [the Savior] came to the Nephites not to atone, but to bless. For the days of wickedness and vengeance had already passed for them, and he came to reward those who had passed through the fire of vengeance spiritually unscathed because of their righteous faithfulness to him. And he did bless them.... The days of wickedness and vengeance are in reality the days of righteousness and blessing. The wickedness through which each of us must pass is but the fire which proves our love for the Lord and his righteousness” (Chauncey C. Riddle, *The Book of Mormon: Helaman*

Through 3 Nephi 8, p. 191).

“The chronological material listed on the bottom of each page in the Book of Mormon did not appear in the first edition. These chronological notes were first added in the edition of 1920 at the recommendation of a committee headed by Elder James E. Talmage. The abbreviation B.C. is used to designate the number of years before the time of Christ. The abbreviation A.D. (from the Latin Anno Domini, meaning ‘in the year of our Lord’) is used to indicate the number of years since the birth of Christ. Note that this calendar system does not go through a zero number. Thus the year before the birth of Christ is 1 B.C. and the year in which the Savior is born is A.D. 1. According to the calendar systems previously used by the Nephites, the year A.D. 1 occurs in the ninety-second year of the reign of judges (the record says the ‘ninety and first year had passed away’) and in the six hundredth year from the time Lehi left Jerusalem. (3 Nephi 1:1.)” (Daniel Ludlow, *A Companion to Your Study of the Book of Mormon*, p. 252)

II. 3 Nephi 1:

President Ezra Taft Benson said, “The record of the Nephite history just prior to the Savior’s visit reveals many parallels to our own day as we anticipate the Savior’s second coming” (*Ensign*, May 1987, 4).

“[I]n the Book of Mormon we find a pattern for preparing for the Second Coming. A major portion of the book centers on the few decades just prior to Christ’s coming to America. By careful study of that time period, we can determine why some were destroyed in the terrible judgments that preceded His coming and what brought others to stand at the temple in the land of Bountiful and thrust their hands into the wounds of His hands and feet.

“From the Book of Mormon we learn how disciples of Christ live in times of war. From the Book of Mormon we see the evils of secret combinations portrayed in graphic and chilling reality. In the Book of Mormon we find lessons for dealing with persecution and apostasy. We learn much about how to do missionary work. And more than anywhere else, we see in the Book of Mormon the dangers of materialism and setting our hearts on the things of the world. Can anyone doubt that this book was meant for us and that in it we find great power, great comfort, and great protection?” (Ezra Taft Benson, “The Book of Mormon—Keystone of Our Religion,” *Ensign*, Nov. 1986, 7).

“I suppose that nowhere in the scriptures do we have a more beautiful or detailed record of God’s dealings with man than in the account of this visit as recorded in Third Nephi. . . . [The] warnings and beautiful teachings . . . , if accepted and lived, will do more than anything else to bring peace and happiness to the world and to the individual seeking such a way of life. Here we can find explanations for many unanswered questions in the Bible.

“Third Nephi gives us additional information in more detail than the four Gospels in the New Testament, and preserves the doctrines, teachings, and compassion of the Lord. For this reason there are many who refer to Third Nephi as the ‘fifth Gospel.’” (N. Eldon Tanner, *Ensign*, May 1975, 34).

“What a blessing it would be if every family would read together 3 Nephi, discuss its sacred contents, and then determine how they can liken it unto themselves and apply its teachings in their lives.

“Third Nephi is a book that should be read and read again. Its testimony of the resurrected

Christ in America is given in purity and beauty” (Ezra Taft Benson, *Ensign*, May 1987, 6).

1-3 *The presumed translation of Nephi*

“Nephi, like his illustrious father, was the leading spirit of the age. Previous to the visit of the risen Redeemer to the Nephites he was their High Priest and prophet. When the Messiah came to them and chose twelve Disciples to be special ministers of His Name and glory, Nephi was the first that He called. To him, on various occasions, the Savior immediately directed His conversation and instructions.

“Shortly before the birth of our Savior, Nephi received the Sacred Plates with their appendages from his father with strict instructions as to their care. From that time the elder Nephi was no more seen by mortals and his son took his place as the representative of Jehovah to the inhabitants of the western world.” (Reynolds and Sjodahl, *Commentary on the Book of Mormon*, vol. 7, p. 49-50).

“Many have supposed that the doctrine of translation was a doctrine whereby men were taken immediately into the presence of God, and into an eternal fullness, but this is a mistaken idea. Their place of habitation is that of the terrestrial order, and a place prepared for such characters He held in reserve to be ministering angels unto many planets, and who as yet have not entered into so great a fullness as those who are resurrected from the dead... This distinction is made between the doctrine of the actual resurrection and translation: translation obtains deliverance from the tortures and sufferings of the body, but their existence will prolong as to the labors and toils of the ministry, before they can enter into so great a rest and glory.” (Joseph Smith, *Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith*, p. 170).

“Nephi lived in a time of tremendous upheaval and dissension when morals and standards were abandoned, government had disintegrated, and Gadianton robbers ruled the land, yet he remained faithful and engendered faith in others willing to hear the message of Jesus Christ. He taught with power. He was fearless in proclaiming truth no matter what opposition he encountered. When Satan applied more pressure he became more determined in living and acting righteously. He perfected his ability to be led by the Spirit and followed its direction without hesitation. His fearlessness came from a righteous heart. He possessed great humility and compassion. He blessed others with a knowledge of truth. His total faith in Jesus Christ allowed him to be protected and empowered to do good. He taught us how to pray for an answer when we urgently need it. He showed those who hold the priesthood how to exercise that sacred authority properly.

“...I love this prophet. I humbly testify that Nephi’s greatness came from his humility, his unflinching obedience, and his firmly rooted faith in Jesus the Christ. When truth was taught, he listened carefully and obeyed it consistently. May our study and pondering of the example of this admirable servant of the Lord enrich us with a desire to be more submissive when tested, more obedient when tempted, more forgiving when falsely accused, and more resolute in our faith in the Master.” (*Heroes From The Book of Mormon*, p. 155-6)

4-14 *The faithful anxiously await the signs of Christ’s Coming*

4-6 Great signs and miracles - time is past

7 Mocking those who believed

“There is always a satisfaction, my brethren and sisters, in having been right on any question that

has engaged our attention, especially if the wisdom and judgment of others have been brought to bear upon that question and we have not all agreed. You know how prone we are to say, 'I told you so.' The more important the question that is involved in a consideration of this kind, the greater satisfaction there will be in the end when we find that we have been right; but if on the other hand it is found that we have been wrong there will be correspondingly great disappointment... The greatest question that man has ever considered, according to my judgment, is that of religion, or salvation, of what it consists and how it may be attained. There is no other question I suppose that has engaged the attention of so many people or upon which there has been such diversity of opinion... Those of us who know the truth of the Gospel as it has been revealed in these last days through the instrumentality of the Prophet Joseph Smith, know that there are millions of people who, in the end, [when] it shall be universally known of what salvation consists [and] how it may attained, will be tremendously disappointed." (George F. Richards, *Conference Report*, Apr. 1932, p. 39)

- 8-9 Killing believers
- 10 Nephi sorrows due to the death of the faithful
- 11 **Story by Elder Vaughn J. Featherstone: On What a Mediator actually is**
- 13 Lord's comforting words

"Let us be sure we thoroughly understand the most important things we can do to prepare ourselves for our Lord's second coming to earth and, by our obedience and faithfulness, escape his punishment. The following are important considerations. We must set our lives and homes in order. This means a searching of our souls, an admittance of wrongdoing, and repentance where needed. It means keeping all of God's commandments. It means loving our neighbor. It means living an exemplary life. It means being good husbands and wives. It means teaching and training our children in the ways of righteousness, It means being honest in all our doings, in business and at home. It means spreading the gospel of Jesus Christ to all the peoples of the world. The Lord has said: 'I will hasten my work in its time.' (D&C 88:73) There is an urgency in his work. Time is getting short. This sense of urgency in promoting the Lord's kingdom in these last days does not arise out of panic, but out of a desire to move swiftly and surely to establish and strengthen his kingdom among all people who are seeking the light and truth of the gospel, which is God's plan of life for all his children. God will hasten his work by opening the heavens and sending heavenly messengers to his prophets to warn his children to prepare themselves to receive their Lord at his second coming" (Delbert L. Stapley, *CR*, October 1975, p. 71.)

"The chiliast, one who believes in a second coming of Christ that will usher in a millennial reign, has special challenges in reading signs. First, he is urged to notice lest he be caught unawares. Second, he must be aware of how many false readings and alarms there have been in bygone days, even by the faithful. For instance, has any age had more 'wonders in the sky' than ours, with satellites and journeys to the moon? Has any generation seen such ominous 'vapors of smoke' as ours with its mushroom clouds over the pathetic pyres of Hiroshima and Nagasaki? Yet there is 'more to come.' Our task is to react and to notice without overreacting, to let life go forward without slipping into the heedlessness of those in the days of Noah" (Neal A. Maxwell, *The Neal A. Maxwell Quote Book*, p. 301).

"The Book of Mormon account of Christ speaking to Nephi the grandson of Helaman and saying, 'On the morrow come I unto the world' (3 Nephi 1:13), is not intended to infer that the spirit does

not enter the body until the moment of the actual birth. Rather this revelation to the Nephites was itself being conveyed in a miraculous and unusual way. Quite probably the one uttering the words was speaking in the first person as though he were Christ, in accordance with the law enabling others to act and speak for Deity on the principle of divine investiture of authority” (Bruce R. McConkie, *Doctrinal New Testament Commentary*, 1:85).

“The half hour silence after the opening of the seventh seal represents a short interval during which angels and Saints prepare in sorrow for the sentence of destruction to be executed upon the world. The interval is needed: a period of preparation, of devotion and worship, of readying before heaven executes God’s will, a moment of mourning for a world sick unto death. One idea stands out: this is a period in which the heavenly and earthly churches of God will be linked as never before, a period in which the Saints will make their final preparations for what is to come. [D&C 133:38-40]. The devastations that follow will be, at least in part, a response to this prayer of God’s servants. Thus, the righteous will not be caught off guard. They will follow the Lord’s admonition: [D&C 106:4-5]” (Richard R. Draper, *Opening the Seven Seals*, p. 90-91).

15-21 *The signs come to pass*

“Those who had doubted the words of Samuel - who in smug self-security had refused to accept the oracles of an anointed servant of God - now came face to face with reality. Like those at the time of the Second Coming who have doubted the signs of the times and the warnings of the prophets, the unbelievers of the first century were dislodged and upended, both physically and spiritually” (Millett & McConkie, *Doctrinal Commentary of the Book of Mormon, Volume IV*, p. 8).

“...we live in a day in which the Lord our God has set his hand for the last time, to gather out the righteous and to prepare a people to ... meet the Bridegroom when he comes to reign over the earth, even Jesus Christ” (Joseph F. Smith, *Millennial Star* 36:220).+

Story: Elder Packer and the Teton Dam Metaphor, 1991 Sperry Symposium, *Doctrines of the Book of Mormon*, p. 75-76.

“The time for the Second Coming of Christ is as fixed and certain as was the hour of his birth. It will not vary as much as a single second from the divine decree. He will come at the appointed time. The Millennium will not be ushered in prematurely because men turn to righteousness, nor will it be delayed because iniquity abounds” (Bruce R. McConkie, *The Millennial Messiah*, pp. 26-27).

22-30 *Satan spreads lies, false doctrine, and secret combinations*

“Amid tears of sorrow—our hearts heavy with forebodings—we see evil and crime and carnality covering the earth. Liars and thieves and adulterers and homosexuals and murderers scarcely seek to hide their abominations from our view. Iniquity abounds. There is no peace on earth.

“We see evil forces everywhere uniting to destroy the family, to ridicule morality and decency, to glorify all that is lewd and base. We see wars and plagues and pestilence. Nations rise and fall. Blood and carnage and death are everywhere. Gadianon robbers fill the judgment seats in many nations. An evil power seeks to overthrow the freedom of all nations and countries. Satan reigns in the hearts of men; it is the great day of his power” (Bruce R. McConkie, “The Coming

Tests and Trials and Glory,” *Ensign*, May 1980, 73).

“There will be plagues and pestilence and disease and death. An overflowing scourge shall cover the earth and a desolating sickness shall sweep the land. Flies shall take hold of the inhabitants of the earth, and maggots shall come in upon them. (See D&C 29:14–20.) “Their flesh shall fall from off their bones, and their eyes from their sockets” (D&C 29:19).

“Bands of Gadianton robbers will infest every nation, immorality and murder and crime will increase, and it will seem as though every man’s hand is against his brother.

“We need not dwell more upon these things. We are commanded to search the scriptures where they are recounted with force and fervor, and they shall surely come to pass” (Bruce R. McConkie, “Stand Independent above All Other Creatures,” *Ensign*, May 1979, 93).

29 These people (youth) fell because they were only converted by signs

“Experience in decision-making can be learned at home, too. A child's determination to spend his allowance foolishly on some object of predictably short-term worth, may be wise to honor, so that the child can experience, firsthand, the consequences of his choice. Learning to assess ‘the consequences of what one wants’ can be taught when the parent can still insulate children from gross or serious error and yet allow controlled contact with reality. The time often comes when, as told in The Book of Mormon (3 Nephi 1:29) youth ‘became for themselves’ and would no longer accept parental counsel. Continuing parental access to offspring for counseling even in the latter's adulthood depends on a climate of trust which reflects the granting of a gradually increasing area of agency, beginning with early childhood.” (Neal A. Maxwell, *A More Excellent Way*, p. 132).

“While we do not think of it this way very often, the rising generation has some genuine responsibilities to the older generation still living. We are not immune to influence from you. We not only regard you as the seedbearers of a celestial culture to come, but our own journey can be hastened by your pressing forward. About A. D. 3, an emerging generation of Lamanite youth ‘became for themselves,’ discounting the influence of their righteous parents, and many young adults ‘were led away.’ Then this telling observation about how we always need each other was given: ‘. . . the Lamanites . . . began to decrease as to their faith and righteousness, because of the wickedness of the rising generation.’ (3 Nephi 1:29-30.) Lowering standards in the rising generations can create an undertow that affects all ages.

“We have seen, in just the past decade, various youth movements wash over shaky adults who gave way under pressure. Some adults, strangely enough, replaced their old values, of all things, with youth worship! The last thing youth needs is to be envied or worshiped.” (Neal A. Maxwell, *Wherefore, Ye Must Press Forward*, p. 84)

“The spirituality of a ward will be commensurate with the activity of the youth of that ward” (President David O. McKay, in Robert L. Backman, *Ensign*, Nov. 1982, 40).

“It has been well said that “there comes a time when the general defilement of a society becomes so great that the rising generation is put under undue pressure and cannot be said to have a fair choice between the Way of Light and the Way of Darkness.” (Hugh Nibley, *An Approach to the Book of Mormon*, 1957; Ezra Taft Benson, “Satan’s Thrust—Youth,” *Ensign*, Dec. 1971, 53).

“In our world of escalating crisis, where the fraternal wars, corruption, secret combinations, and immorality are reminiscent of the wickedness described in the Book of Mormon, Satan has

intensified his efforts to destroy the family by corrupting the youth and robbing childhood of its innocence. Our youth are especially vulnerable as the enemy cunningly utilizes every means at his disposal, including the mass media and changes in constitutional law, to deceive them. He bombards our homes with enticements of destructive and harmful products and morals through television, videos, press, books, etc.” (Horacio A. Tenorio, “Let Us Build Fortresses,” *Ensign*, Nov. 1994, 23).

“We must ever keep in mind that it is the design of Satan to thwart the plan of our Eternal Father. The plan of the adversary is to destroy the youth of the Church—the “rising generation,” as the Book of Mormon calls them (see Alma 5:49)—and to destroy the family unit” (Ezra Taft Benson, “The Honored Place of Woman,” *Ensign*, Nov. 1981, 105).

“Today we face insidious, devastating evils that are widespread. Aimed especially at the destruction of America— the last great bastion of freedom— with emphasis on our youth, the evils are everywhere.... Never has evil been presented in such an array of appealing forms.... As citizens of the greatest nation in the world, we face a deadly serious crisis. We must do battle with these evil forces on every front, now. Any delay will be disastrous” (Ezra Taft Benson, *CR*, October 1969, p. 61).

“Satan knows that youth is the springtime of life when all things are new and young people are most vulnerable. Youth is the spirit of adventure and awakening. It is a time of physical emerging when the body attains the vigor and good health that may ignore the caution of temperance. Youth is a period of timelessness when the horizons of age seem too distant to be noticed. Thus, the now generation forgets that the present will soon be the past, which one will look back upon either with sorrow and regret or joy and cherished experiences. Satan’s program is “play now and pay later.” He seeks for all to be miserable like unto himself. The Lord’s program is happiness now and joy forever through gospel living. (Ezra Taft Benson, “A Message to the Rising Generation,” *Ensign*, Nov. 1977, 30).

“We live in a difficult time. Satan is mindful of you, my young brethren and sisters. He is committed to your corruption. His hooks and snares would seduce you pleasantly. He’ll not discipline you with commandments, but give you the freedom of your “own thing” ... the freedom to smoke, to drink, to misuse drugs, or to debauch your way to the slavery of addiction. Satan knows that you are young, at the peak of physical vigor, excited by the world, and consumed by new emotions. I think there has never been a time, at least in my memory, when the devil has been so well organized and when he’s had so many emissaries working for him. It is my conviction that his thrust today is primarily at the youth, and at our basic institutions of the home and the family. You see evidence of it on every side. The temptations are so insidious, so devious, so numerous, and so unexpected. Temptations that your parents never dreamed about are on almost every side from day to day in the time in which we live”(Ezra Taft Benson, “News of the Church,” *Ensign*, Oct. 1974, 87).

“Recently some adult youth leaders were discussing problems our youth face today. One of them, a mother of 12, said, “It seems to me Satan has declared all-out war on our youth.” How true this statement is!” (Victor L. Brown, “Is There Not a Cause?” *Ensign*, Nov. 1974, 103).

“On the surface it is difficult to see how the people could fall so quickly after being converted. As mentioned above, this conversion was a result of an *outward sign* and required no work on the

part of the people. They had seen the sign, but, for the most part, they did not sustain their faith. Thus Satan was able to blind their minds and harden their hearts until they ‘began to wax strong in wickedness and abominations’ (3 Nephi 2:3)” (Terrance Szink, *Studies in Scripture: Alma 30 to Moroni*, pp. 127-128).

III. 3 Nephi 2:

1-10 *The wicked deny the signs and reject the doctrine of Christ*

“The viewing of signs or miracles is not a secure foundation for conversion. Scriptural history attests that people converted by signs and wonders soon forget them and again become susceptible to the lies and distortions of Satan and his servants. (Hel. 16:23; 3 Ne. 1:22, 2:1, 8:4.) ‘How long will this people provoke me?’ the Lord said to Moses, ‘and how long will it be ere they believe me, for all the signs that I have shewed among them?’ (Num. 14:11.)

“Jesus made a triumphal entry into Jerusalem, but John records in sadness, ‘Though he had done so many miracles before them, yet they believed not on him.’ (John 12:37.)

“In contrast to the witness of the Spirit, which can be renewed from time to time as needed by a worthy recipient, the viewing of a sign or the experiencing of a miracle is a one-time event that will fade in the memory of its witness and can dim in its impact upon him or her. For example, as **President Kimball** observed, ‘Oliver Cowdery saw many signs. He handled the sacred plates; saw John the Baptist; received the higher priesthood from Peter, James, and John, and was the recipient of many great miracles, and yet they could not hold him to the faith.’” (Dallin H. Oaks, *The Lord's Way*, p. 87)

See D&C 29:15; Isaiah 2: 19-21; Alma 12:14; D&C 45:49-50

“Our duty is to prepare our hearts in righteousness, forsake iniquity, cleanse our souls of evil, not become beguiled by enticing and flattering words or the vain deceits of designing men who would lead us down the paths of misery and destruction” (Delbert L. Stapley, *Improvement Era*, June 1970, p. 75).

“The world is sick and has been sick during its mortal history, but today we are living in very troublous times. The hearts of men are failing them. Selfishness, unrighteousness, the desire to possess, to take advantage, and withal the fear that accompanies evil are found in the hearts of men” (Joseph Fielding Smith, *Doctrines of Salvation*, 3:314).

“Human nature was then as it is now, the slave of passion, the victim of corruption. In a few words that describes the Nephites of Samuel's time. They hated truth, and each walked in his own way. As a nation of much-favored people, they, however, were quick to forget, and slow to remember God's goodness. Heaven's greatest gift to mankind, the Savior of the world, was declared by them to be folly, and the idea of Christ was foolishness. Even when their eyes and ears, and even their hearts, told them of His reality, they sought ways to explain by a purely materialistic concept that they were deceived, and that Samuel and others of the prophets were peddlers of mischief.” (Reynolds and Sjodahl, *Commentary on the Book of Mormon*, vol. 7, p. 53).

“Spiritual deafness describes the state of those who are lacking in spirituality, whose spirit ears are not attuned to the whisperings of the still small voice of the Spirit. Similarly, spiritual

blindness is the identifying mark which singles out those who are unable to see the hand of God manifest in the affairs of men. Such have ‘unbelief and blindness of heart’ (D. & C. 58:15); they are ‘hard in their hearts, and blind in their minds.’ (3 Ne. 2:1.)” (Bruce R. McConkie, *Mormon Doctrine*, p. 184)

11-19 *Nephites and Lamanites unite to fight the Gadianton Robbers*

“The dark skin was a sign of the curse. The curse was the withdrawal of the Spirit of the Lord. The dark skin is no longer considered a sign of the curse. Many of these converts are delightful and have the Spirit of the Lord” (Joseph Fielding Smith, *Answers to Gospel Questions* 3:123-124).

“We cannot understand this period in Nephite history. It is a mystery. It may be likened to a night of horror. Its whole nature is but a composite of crime and cruelty. In the darkness thereof we are not surprised to find the plans of the evil one enmeshed with those of his servants... Its evil offspring were those of which we may imagine the devil and his servants were the legitimate parents.” (Reynolds and Sjodahl, *Commentary on the Book of Mormon*, vol. 7, p. 55)

Read 3 Nephi 9:13; 10:12 and look for which group survived to witness the visit of the Savior. Read Doctrine and Covenants 97:21–25 looking for what group will survive the difficulties that precede the Second Coming. Discuss some of the following questions:

- What evidences can you think of that demonstrate that the battle between wickedness and righteousness continues today?
- What examples might the wicked give to try to show that they are winning this battle?
Book of Mormon Seminary Teacher Resource Manual, p. 212
- What can the righteous give as evidence that they are winning the battle? (Answers might include the increasing numbers of members, temples, and priesthood holders.)
- Why would you want to be on the Lord’s side in the latter days?

Share the following statement by Elder Ezra Taft Benson, then a member of the Quorum of the Twelve:

“This is the last and great dispensation in which the great consummation of God’s purposes will be made, the only dispensation in which the Lord has promised that sin will not prevail. The Church will not be taken from the earth again. It is here to stay. The Lord has promised it and you are a part of that Church and kingdom. . . . The kingdom of heaven and the kingdom of God on the earth will be combined together at Christ’s coming—and that time is not far distant. How I wish we could get the vision of this work, the genius of it, and realize the nearness of that great event. I am sure it would have a sobering effect upon us if we realized what is before us” (The Teachings of Ezra Taft Benson [1988], 19).

Share also these statements made by President Benson while President of the Quorum of the Twelve:

“We live today in a wicked world. Never in our memory have the forces of evil been arrayed in such a deadly formation. The devil is well organized and has many emissaries working for him. His satanic majesty has proclaimed his intention to destroy our young people, to weaken the home and family, and to defeat the purposes of the Lord Jesus Christ through his great church” (*God, Family, Country: Our Three Great Loyalties* [1974], 90).

“All through the ages the prophets have looked down through the corridors of time to our day. Billions of the deceased and those yet to be born have their eyes on us. Make no mistake about it—you are a marked generation. There has never been more expected of the faithful in such a short period of time as there is of us. Never before on the face of this earth have the forces of evil and the forces of good been as well organized. Now is the great day of the devil’s power. . . . But now is also the great day of the Lord’s power, with the greatest number ever of priesthood holders on the earth” (“In His Steps,” in 1979 Devotional Speeches of the Year [1980], 59).

IV. 3 Nephi 3:

1-26 *Giggiddoni seeks to prepare his people for battle*

“The Prophet Joseph Smith said the time would come when the Constitution would hang as it were by a thread. Modern-day prophets for the last thirty years have been warning us that we have been rapidly moving in that direction. Fortunately, the Prophet Joseph Smith saw the part the elders of Israel would play in this crisis. Will there be come of us who won’t care about saving the Constitution, others who will be blinded by the craftiness of men, and some who will knowingly be working to destroy it?” (Ezra Taft Benson, *CR*, April 1963, p. 113).

- 1-3 Flattery
- 4-6 You can’t win/Give-up
- 7-10 Join us or die
- 11-16 Get real/Preparation

“An everlasting principle underlies this command. The Lord’s newly converted saints must flee from Babylon lest they be swallowed up by the world and, walking with the world partake again of the ways of the world. Always and in all ages the Lord’s people must gather to those places where true worship prevails; gather into congregations where they can strengthen and perfect each other, gather to holy temples where the ordinances of salvation and exaltation are performed; and, particularly in our day, gather to the holy houses wherein their dead may be redeemed. The law of the gospel includes the law of gathering. But the Lord’s house is a house of order; his saints must be organized; the gathering is not a hasty, unprepared foray to a new locale. It is a wisely planned and prearranged assembling; provision must be made for food, clothing, shelter, travel, and even a future livelihood, if possible” (Bruce R. McConkie, *A New Witness for the Articles of Faith*, p. 598).

- 17-21 We will wait for them to come to us
- 22-26 More preparations -

“We as latter-day Saints [should not] manifest a blood thirsty disposition. We should be a peaceful people, seeking peace, and endeavoring to escape all the horrors of war, and to avert them from the nations of the earth...” (George Q. Cannon, *CR*, April 1898, p. 85).

Some thoughts on Preparation from my chapter “Preparation is Power”

V. 3 Nephi 4:

1-33 *Armed with the power of God, the Nephites defeat the Gadianton Robbers*

“Since flocks and cattle of every kind have to be fed for seven years, and since horses are only necessary where there is a demand for transportation, it is plain that the Nephites were not all shut up in one city, but united within one land. The area was not enough to support such a host indefinitely but it must have been considerable.” (Hugh Nibley, *An Approach to the Book of Mormon*, p. 421)

1-4 *Preparation: 7 years vs 0*

“For years we have been counseled to have on hand a year’s supply of food. Yet there are some today who will not start storing until the Church comes out with a detailed monthly home storage program. Now, suppose that never happens. We still cannot say we have not been warned. Should the Lord decide at this time to cleanse the Church— and the need for that cleansing seems to be increasing— a famine in this land of one year’s duration could wipe out a large percentage of slothful members, including some ward and stake officers. Yet we cannot say we have not been warned. You do not need to go into debt to obtain a years supply. Plan to build up your food supply just as you would a savings account. Save a little for storage each paycheck... We urge you to do this prayerfully and do it now. I speak with a feeling of great urgency.... The revelation to produce and store food may be as essential to our temporal welfare today as boarding the ark was to the people in the days of Noah” (Ezra Taft Benson, *Teachings of Ezra Taft Benson*, pp. 265-266).

“We have had many calamities in this past period. It seems that every day or two there is an earthquake or a flood or a tornado or distress that brings trouble to many people. I am grateful to see that our people and our leaders are beginning to catch the vision of their self-help. ...

“Now I think the time is coming when there will be more distresses, when there may be more tornadoes, and more floods, ... more earthquakes. ... I think they will be increasing probably as we come nearer to the end, and so we must be prepared for this.” (Spencer W. Kimball, *Conference Reports*, April 1974, pp. 183–84.)

“**Bishop Vaughn J. Featherstone**, second counselor in the Presiding Bishopric, spoke on food storage, and the concern the General Authorities have concerning those Church members who won't heed the counsel of the leaders on this subject.

“Bishop Featherstone first chided members for not following counsel to have a year's reserve of food to sustain life. He told the leaders attending the meeting to ‘not only keep teaching the principle but let's also teach our people how.’

“He suggested a few things everyone can do. First, he said, take an inventory—a physical count of all reserves.

“‘This would be a great family home evening project if you're prepared, if not, it may be terribly embarrassing to you in front of your family. Imagine how the powerful testimony you bear concerning a living prophet must sound to your children who know that as a family head, you have been counseled by the Brethren for 38 years to have a year's supply reserve of food on hand. We need to know where we are.

“Second, decide what is needed to bring your present reserve levels to a year's supply. Then make a list and prepare a plan. Consider first the basics. What are the basics—wheat or grain from your locale, sugar or honey, dried milk, salt and water. Most of us can afford such basics. Buy them from your monthly food budget allowance. The Church discourages going into debt to buy for storage.

“Now that you know where you are and where you need to be, the third step is to work out a time schedule when you will reach your goal. I suggest one year from today we ought to have a year's supply of food in every active and many inactive member's homes in the Church,” said Bishop [Featherstone].” (*Church News*, 04/03/76)

“I do not want to be a calamity howler. I don't know in detail what's going to happen in the future. I know what the prophets have predicted. But I tell you that the welfare program, organized to enable us to take care of our own needs, has not yet performed the function that it was set up to perform. We will see the day when we live on what we produce.” (Marion G. Romney, *Conference Reports*, April 1975, p. 165.)

“Elijah then promised her in the name of the Lord that if she would feed him, she would never lack for food. I have pondered on the faith of that woman, who, on the promise of a humble man of God, put her life and the life of her son in the balance. Obediently she baked food and fed Elijah, and then followed the miracle of the fulfillment of the prophet's promise: “And the barrel of meal wasted not, neither did the cruse of oil fail, according to the word of the Lord, which he spake by Elijah.” (1 Kgs. 17:16.)

“I have tried to compare her spirit of obedience with our willingness to obey the word of God as spoken by modern prophets. These prophets hold the same fullness of authority given to Elijah. They have told us to keep at least a year's supply of food on hand for any future emergency. We have only their word of prophecy to rely on, just as the widow relied on that of Elijah. We should obey as she did. By so doing, we will be able to save ourselves and our families from want.

“Some members of the Church have said to me, “Why should we keep a store of food on hand? If a real emergency came in this lawless world, a neighbor would simply come with his gun and take it from us. What would you do if a person came and demanded your food?” I replied that I would share whatever I had with him, and he wouldn't have to use a gun to obtain that assistance either.

“I wouldn't,” replied one man. “I have a gun, and I wouldn't hesitate to use it to defend my family. Anyone would have to kill me first in order to get food away from me! After all, they bring their own misery on themselves by not being prepared!”

“Well, one way to solve this problem is to convert your neighbors to become obedient Latter-day Saints with their own supply of food. If every family were provided for, our stores would be safe for the use of our families. But not all people have sufficient faith to share with others as did the widow who shared with Elijah....

“I sincerely believe if we do everything in our power to be obedient to the will of God, we and our families will never lack. If we are obedient as true followers of Christ and share what we have with those less fortunate than we, the Lord will keep his promise to watch over us and care for us. I will then be glad that I have stores of food on hand so I can be of assistance to others. Perhaps like the widow who fed Elijah, the meal will then never fail in our barrels nor the oil ever fail in our cruses until prosperity comes again” (Theodore M. Burton, “The Power of Elijah,” *Ensign*, May 1974, 62-63).

- 5 Survival - must plunder
 6-11 Great Slaughter
 12-14 Nephites Win
 16-28 Zemnah's hunger

“Because *deliverance* is a major function of the Savior’s atoning sacrifice, the illustrations of *deliverance* serve as metaphors for such other synonyms of *atonement* as *redemption* and *salvation*. Therefore, every instance of *deliverance* is also an instance of redemption, salvation, or at-one-ment. I conclude that the Book of Mormon was provided, or at least in part, to illustrate how grace and atonement actually work in the lives of those who come to Christ. Obviously, Limhi and his people trekking across a wilderness some two thousand years ago may mean little to the reader until he realizes that Limhi’s journey is analogous to his own life journey. Therefore, a person will read the Book of Mormon differently as he or she grasps the insight that humility, prayer, and obedience can draw down divine deliverance in the midst of one’s own wilderness trials. The Book of Mormon is a handbook of principles for traveling one’s earthly path by the divine enabling power of the Lord Jesus Christ. The Book of Mormon, quick and powerful, the living word of God, is designed so that the reader who approaches it with humility can use it for a personal revelation, that is, as a personal Liahona. The Book of Mormon is itself a tool of deliverance” (M. Catherine Thomas, “Types and Shadows of Deliverance,” *Doctrines of the Book of Mormon: 1991 Sperry Symposium*).

“One of the greatest examples of sophistry and deceptive flattery ever written comes from a leader of the Gadianton robbers, and the response of the righteous Nephites to that fraud is a lesson strikingly applicable to our day.

“In short, that response was spiritual and physical preparation that protected the Nephites from ruinous invasion. In fact - in what could well be called the moral of this account - ‘it was impossible for the robbers to lay siege sufficiently long to have any effect upon the Nephites.’ “ (See 3 Ne. 4:18.)

“[Lachoneus’] response [to Giddianhi’s epistle] was quick - and wise. He called for the Nephites to gather themselves and build fortresses, to make weapons of war, to obtain provisions and appoint captains - physical preparations necessary for victory in battle. But more importantly, he exhorted his people to be humble, pray, repent, appoint captains who had the spirit of prophecy and revelation, listen to their inspired leaders, and fear God - spiritual preparations without which the physical preparations would have ultimately done little good. (See 3 Nephi, chapters 3 and 4.)

“What then, one is compelled to wonder, is the application of these passages in today’s confused, ambiguous and sometimes evil world? Has any force ‘declared war’ on those who love and fear God? Do we face influences - perhaps well-intentioned but misled, or openly opposed to the will of God - that rely on half-truths, flattery, sophistry or outright lies to lead us away from our Heavenly Father and His Son, our Savior? If war has been declared, where will the battle be fought? And are we physically - and spiritually - prepared for such a fight?

“Enemies of righteousness, of course, are legion. Attempting to list every evil or even less-than-good influence in our lives is impossible. While Lachoneus’ enemy was pretty clearly defined, ours is schooled and highly trained in the art of not exposing who he really is.

“Our protection, however, is much the same today as it was for the Nephites. The list of those protections is certainly comparable, and probably greater, than the list of evils we face. Thus listing all would be similarly impossible. But, as explained by Lachoneus, those protections center on faith in God, keeping His commandments and relying on the boundless and eternal love He unceasingly offers.

“If we are constantly vigilant in doing the will of the Father, we, too, will find that it is impossible for our enemies to lay siege sufficiently long to have any effect on us. (See 3 Ne. 4:18.)” (*Church News*, 06/01/96)

“Third Nephi 4:28-33 recounts in considerable detail the execution of Zemnarihah, the captured leader of the defeated Gadianton robbers. It has recently been suggested that this public execution followed ancient ceremony and law... After the Nephites had chopped down the tree on which Zemnarihah had been hanged, they all cried out ‘with one voice’ for God to protect them. Then they sang out ‘all as one’ in praise of God (3 Nephi 4:30-33). Is there some kind of ritual involved here? Several evidences point to an ancient background for this execution. Consider these few items.

“First, notice that the tree on which Zemnarihah was hung was felled. Was this ever done in antiquity? Apparently it was. For one thing, Israelite practice required that the tree upon which the culprit was hung be buried with the body. Hence the tree had to have been chopped down...

“Second, consider why the tree was chopped down and buried. As Maimonides explains: ‘In order that it should not serve as a sad reminder [with] people saying: This is the tree on which so-and-so was hanged.’ In this way, the tree became associated with the person being executed; it came to symbolize the culprit and the desire to forget him or her. By way of comparison, the Nephites identified the tree with Zemnarihah and all those like him, that his infamy might not be forgotten, when they cried out: ‘May [the Lord] cause to be felled to the earth all who shall seek to slay them, . . . even as this man hath been felled to the earth.’

“...Finally, the people all chanted loudly, proclaiming the wickedness of Zemnarihah, which may be reminiscent of the ancient practice of heralding a notorious execution. Deuteronomy 19:20 says that ‘those which remain shall hear, and fear, and shall henceforth commit no more any such evil among you.’ How was this to be accomplished? Rabbi Jehudah explained: ‘I say that he is executed immediately and messengers are sent out to notify the people.’ Indeed, public matters, such as the execution of a rebelling judge (see 3 Nephi 6:22-28), had to be heralded. An even clearer example of heralding in the Book of Mormon is found in Alma 30:57, where the results in Korihor’s case were heralded abroad. In both these cases, the apparent requirement of publishing the wickedness of the culprit was satisfied, so that all who remained would ‘hear and fear,’ and the evil would be removed from among God’s people.” (John Welch, *Reexploring The Book of Mormon*, p. 250-52).

VI. *More on Preparation from “Preparation is Power”*

“There are in our lives reservoirs of many kinds. Some reservoirs are to store water. Some are to store food, as we do in our family welfare program and as Joseph did in the land of Egypt during the seven years of plenty. There should also be reservoirs of knowledge to meet the future needs; reservoirs of courage to overcome the floods of fear that put uncertainty in lives; reservoirs of physical strength to help us meet the frequent burdens of work and illness; reservoirs of goodness, reservoirs of stamina; reservoirs of faith. Yes, especially reservoirs of faith so that when the world presses in upon us, we stand firm and strong; when the temptations of a decaying world about us draw on our energies, sap our spiritual vitality, and seek to pull us down, we need a storage of faith that can carry youth and later adults over the dull, the difficult, the terrifying moments, disappointments, disillusionments, and years of adversity, want, confusion, and frustration” (Spencer W. Kimball, *Faith Precedes the Miracle*, “*Reservoirs of Righteousness*, p. 110-111.).

“...we think we are secure here in the chambers of the everlasting hills, where we can close those

few doors of the canyons against the mobs and persecutors, the wicked and the vile, who have always beset us with violence and robbery, but I want to say to you, my brethren, the time is coming when we will be mixed up in these now peaceful valleys to the extent that it will be difficult to tell the face of a Saint from the face of an enemy to the people of God. Then brethren, look out for the great sieve, for there will be a great sifting time, and many will fall; for I say unto you there is a *test*, a TEST, a **TEST** coming, and who will be able to stand? (Orson F. Whitney, *Life of Heber C. Kimball*, p. 446.)

Who will be able to stand? Brother Heber answered his own question when he later stated that “The time will come when no man nor woman will be able to endure on borrowed light. Each will have to be guided by the light within himself. If you do not have it, how can you stand?” (*Life of Heber C. Kimball*, p. 449-450.) If we want to survive temporally and spiritually in these last days, we are going to need some extra gas in our tanks, or to be more scriptural, oil in our lamps. We will not be able to rely on our neighbor’s reserve supply - we will have to have our own surplus of faith, testimony, courage, and fortitude.

Elder Wilford Woodruff stated the following:

“...I expect that the Savior was about right when he said, in reference to the members of the Church, that five of them were wise and five were foolish; for when the Lord of heaven comes in power and great glory ..., if he finds one-half of those professing to be members of his Church prepared for salvation, it will be as many as can be expected, judging by the course that many are pursuing” (Rulon T. Burton, *We Believe: Doctrines and Principles of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints*, 1994, pp. 942-943.).

President Harold B. Lee taught that

“The Lord gives us, each one, a lamp to carry, but whether or not we shall have oil in our lamps depends solely upon each one of us. Whether or not we keep the commandments and supply the needed oil to light our way and to guide us on our way depends upon each of us *individually*. We cannot borrow from our Church Membership. We cannot borrow from an illustrious ancestry. Whether or not we have oil in our lamps, I repeat, *depends solely upon each one of us*, it is determined by our faithfulness in keeping the commandments of the living God.” (Clyde J. Williams, *The Teachings of Harold B. Lee*, 1996, pp. 145-146, emphasis added.)

“The Boy Scouts say it best of all: “Be Prepared.” That isn’t just cracker-barrel wisdom with us; it is theology...The scriptures teach that preparation -prevention, if you will, is perhaps the major weapon in our arsenal against discouragement and self-defeat” (Jeffery R. Holland, *However Long and Hard the Road*, “For Times of Trouble, p. 3.).

President John F. Kennedy said “The time to repair the roof is when the sun is shining.”

Elder McConkie declared: “Great trials lie ahead. All of the sorrows and perils of the past are but a foretaste of what is yet to be. And we must prepare ourselves temporally and spiritually.” (Ensign, May 1979, p. 92)

Being prepared is not merely a good idea, it is one of the most important and sacred doctrines our church teaches. We need to be ready for whatever lies ahead!