
2 NEPHI 25 – 30

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INTRODUCTION

After quoting a long section of Isaiah, Nephi gives us six chapters of commentary. His comments took Isaiah's words and added what he learned from his own visions to create a *targum* (Hebrew for scripture with commentary: see Luke 4:16-21 for an account of Jesus doing this; or Matthew 6, where most of the chapter is Jesus giving extensive *targum* on the Mosaic Law).

In the 1830 Book of Mormon (and in the original manuscripts), our 2 Nephi 25-27 is Chapter XI, and 2 Nephi 28-30 is Chapter XII.

The *Institute Manual* provides a detailed outline of this section (p. 92), which is summarized here:

- 2 Nephi 25:10–20 Message to the Jews
- 2 Nephi 25:21 – 26:11 Message to the children of Lehi
- 2 Nephi 26:12 – 29:14 Message to the Gentiles

Keeping these three sections in mind and the audience of Nephi's words helps us better understand the message.

Nephi concludes by giving a glimpse into the Millennium with its peace and openness, a time when Satan himself is bound, without power over God's children.

2 NEPHI 25:1-9 THE SPIRIT OF PROPHECY

25:1 ***the manner of prophesying among the Jews***. The manner of prophesying includes at least:

- The use of poetry and parallelistic structures in the writing.
- The 'prophetic perfect,' meaning the use of a single statement to apply to multiple times or events.
- The use of geographical, social, historical, and other aspects of life in Israel that would be unknown to someone not living in that area.

25:4 ***plain unto all those that are filled with the spirit of prophecy***. President Joseph Fielding Smith stated that the spirit of prophecy comes to those who have received the gift of the Holy Ghost (*Institute Manual*, 92). John also taught that "the testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy" (Revelation 19:10). This is the first of three keys that Nephi highlights to understanding Isaiah.

25:5 ***the manner of the things of the Jews***. Nephi's second key is to understand "the things of the Jews." Since Nephi came from Jerusalem and "beheld the things of the Jews," he understands Isaiah. Since we can't go directly to Nephi or any other resident of ancient Jerusalem and learn about it, we use history, archaeology, linguistics, and the findings of similar fields to understand the "things of the Jews."

25:7 ***I proceed with mine own prophecy***. Nephi combined Isaiah's writings with his own spiritual understanding, gained from personal revelation, visions, conversations with angels, etc.

25:8 ***in [the last days] shall they understand them***. Living in the last days gives us a powerful advantage to understanding Isaiah and other ancient writings. We have marvelous resources at our disposal that few, if any, had in previous generations. We also have the gift of the Holy Ghost which teaches us all things. With that blessing also comes the responsibility to use these resources, enhance our understanding of scripture, and teach our family and others these sacred truths.

2 NEPHI 25:10-20 MESSAGE TO THE JEWS

This section is written to the Jews, detailing their destruction by the Babylonians, the return to Jerusalem, their rejection of the mortal Jesus and his death, and their second destruction and scattering.

25:10 ***they have been destroyed***. Lehi (2 Nephi 1:4), Nephi (here), and Jacob (2 Nephi 6:8) all had revelations that Jerusalem had been destroyed and many carried away captive.

25:11 ***they shall return again***. As Jeremiah and Isaiah prophesied, Nephi knew that some of the Jews taken to Babylon would return again, which happened under the reign of Cyrus not long after Nephi wrote these words.

25:12 ***they shall have wars and rumors of wars***. After the return of the Jews until the time of Jesus, the Jews were in the middle of many wars, including the conquest by Alexander the Great, the Maccabean revolt, and the Roman conquest.

25:12-13 ***they will reject him..they will crucify him***. Nephi has written about this already (1 Nephi 11:32-33; 19:7-19; 2 Nephi 6:9) but it is a message that must have astounded him. How could the Jews reject their own Messiah? Yet he saw that testimony in Isaiah's writings and knew it from personal revelation, so taught it to his people and to us.

25:13 ***with healing in his wings***. The rest of the passage is so literal and historical (or future historical, since it hadn't happened yet in Nephi's day), that this phrase jumps out. Why did he use this? The phrase is not found anywhere in the Old Testament except Malachi 4:2, which was written long after Lehi left Jerusalem. Other than the citation in Malachi and the Savior's quotation of the same passage (see 3 Nephi 25:2), this is the only other occurrence of the phrase in scripture. Nephi was perhaps quoting Zenos, as Malachi may have been (McConkie and Millet, 1:285). Wings signify movement and power to act (D&C 77:4), but this particular metaphor evokes one Jesus used during his lifetime that represents protection: "...how often would I have gathered thy children together, even as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, and ye would not!" (Matthew 23:37; see also Psalm 17:8; 36:7; 57:1; 61:4; and 63:7). Healing comes because of Jesus power over death, giving

him the ability to heal anything (see Alma 7:11-12; Gaskill, 57-59). See also Elder Richard G. Scott's comment in the *Institute Manual*, 93.

25:13 **my heart doth magnify his holy name.** To magnify in the Old Testament is *gadal*, meaning to promote, praise, or make powerful. This is the only time the Book of Mormon uses the phrase to magnify a name, though David prayed, "And let thy name be magnified for ever, saying, The LORD of hosts is the God over Israel" (2 Samuel 7:26).

25:14 **Jerusalem shall be destroyed again.** This happened in AD 70, at the hands of the Romans.

25:15 **scattered among all nations.** Unlike the Babylonian destruction where the Jews stayed relatively intact as a people, the Roman destruction brought a worldwide scattering as Jews spread around the Roman empire and beyond.

25:16 **they should believe these things.** Nephi is clear that after the scattered house of Israel believes in Christ and his atonement, they will also believe in the things that he (Nephi) is writing.

25:17 **a marvelous work and a wonder.** This phrase from Isaiah 29:14 is used here prefiguring what Nephi will write in 2 Nephi 27.

25:18 **he shall bring forth his words.** The coming forth of the Book of Mormon and other of God's words (see 2 Nephi 13) in the last days are part of the marvelous work and wonder and is the mechanism for convincing the lost Israelites of the Messiah.

25:19 **his name shall be Jesus Christ, the Son of God.** This is the first mention in the Book of Mormon of this full title (Jacob called his name "Christ" in 2 Nephi 10:3). Jesus Christ is, of course, the name most familiar to us, which is probably why it was translated this way. Nephi may have said, in Hebrew, *Yeshua ha-Massiach*, the equivalent to Jesus Christ (which comes from *Iesus Christos* in Greek).

2 NEPHI 25:21 – 26:11 MESSAGE TO THE CHILDREN OF LEHI

25:22 **the nations who shall possess them shall be judged.** See quote from President Ezra Taft Benson, *Institute Manual*, 94.

25:23 **it is by grace that we are saved, after all we can do.** This is a classic statement of how grace applies to us. Mormonism is not Calvinist, believing that God's grace is mysteriously but selectively given for reasons unknown to man. Mormonism is not Lutheran, believing that grace is the only means of salvation and that works are meaningless. Mormonism is also not Catholicism, believing that there are certain specific works that must be done and then God saves us. Rather, we believe that we must keep all of God's commandments, make holy covenants, and endure to the end to the best of our ability. Then God's grace makes up the (huge) difference and saves us accordingly to the efforts that we have made. We cannot save ourselves, but we must do everything in our power to change ourselves to be as much like Jesus Christ as we can. We will fail on our own, but God will fill the gap with his wondrous grace. It is a doctrine that can only come with a correct understanding of the nature of God and man, and the plan that the Father and the Son has put into place so that we may become like them. See Elder Dallin H. Oaks comments, *Institute Manual*, 94-95.

25:24-25 ***we keep the law of Moses...until the law shall be fulfilled.*** The Law of Moses was the Lord's law to the house of Israel from Moses until the time of Christ. Nephi surely kept it with exactness and taught his people to do the same. He knew the Law was "dead unto us," but kept it "because of the commandments" of God to Israel.

25:26 ***we talk of Christ...rejoice...preach...prophecy...write.*** Nephi and his people understand that even the Law of Moses was all about Christ. Every sacrifice, every act, every symbol pointed the people to the Savior and his mission. See Pres. Gordon B. Hinckley's and Elder Jeffrey R. Holland's words, *Institute Manual*, 95.

25:26-29 ***the right way is to believe in Christ.*** Nephi speaks plainly to his people and to us that we "cannot misunderstand"—Jesus is the right and only way.

26:1 ***Christ...shall show himself unto you.*** Nephi is speaking to his descendents, telling them again that Jesus will appear unto them after his resurrection.

the words which he shall speak unto you shall be the law which ye shall do. This is a theme of much of the rest of Nephi's words, especially 2 Nephi 32 (part of next week's lesson).

26:3-6 ***signs...of his birth, and also of his death and resurrection.*** Fulfilled in 3 Nephi's early chapters. Signs are given to the righteous and to the wicked for various reasons. In this case, both groups saw the signs of Jesus birth and death, though the wicked did not survive those given of Jesus' crucifixion.

26:4 ***proud...do wickedly...burn them up...stubble.*** Like 2 Nephi 25:13 above, this verse uses phrases only found in Malachi 4 in the Bible and until the Savior quotes Malachi at his coming to the New World, are only found here in the Book of Mormon. Like that earlier verse, we can safely conclude that both Malachi and Nephi are quoting from a brass plates prophet such as Zenos (McConkie & Millet, 301).

26:7 ***O the pain, and the anguish of my soul.*** To Nephi, the future destruction of his people was as real as his own life, and it brought him great, consuming sadness. Yet in spite of his own feelings, he still trusted in God, crying, "Thy ways are just."

26:9 ***the Son of righteousness...shall heal them.*** The imagery goes back to 2 Nephi 25:13. The change from "sun" in Malachi to "Son" in 2 Nephi (and later in 3 Nephi 25:2) is a small one in English, but Nephi and Malachi were writing in Hebrew or something similar, where the change is from *shēmēsh* to *bēn*, two unrelated words. Thus the original on the brass plates had somehow been altered by the time it got to Malachi, or perhaps Malachi was altered after quoting the older prophet.

26:11 ***the Spirit of the Lord will not always strive with man.*** The quote is from Genesis 6:3, which sets up the destruction of the flood. See Elder Joseph B. Wirthlin, *Institute Manual*, 96.

2 NEPHI 26:12 – 29:14 MESSAGE TO THE GENTILES

The longest of the three sections is addressed to the Gentiles. It seems clear that Nephi knew his future audience well to target the bulk of interpretative comments towards them—towards us.

26:12 ***it must needs be that the Gentiles be convinced.*** So much of God’s plan in the last day rides upon the Gentiles. Nephi and Isaiah understood this, as well as other prophets.

26:13 ***he manifesteth himself...by the power of the Holy Ghost.*** Very few of the people born on this Earth have seen or will see Jesus in person. Most will gain a testimony of him by the Spirit of the Lord, whose eternal role it is to bear testimony of the truth, and especially of the Father and the Son (see Bible Dictionary, “Holy Ghost,” 704).

26:14 ***the last days.*** The context of Nephi’s writing for the next three chapters is the last days and the role of the Gentiles in God’s plan for that period of time.

26:15-16 ***out of the ground...out of the dust.*** Nephi’s righteous seed will speak to the Gentiles “out of the ground.” Nephi will expand on this in 2 Nephi 27, but the idea is that the dead and buried will have a voice and be heard, as if they were speaking out of their graves (see McConkie & Millet, 306). How this is done is explained next.

26:17 ***written and sealed up in a book.*** Did Nephi know that the very words he was writing would be part of that book, written by many people over 1,000 years and finally collected, summarized, and hid up by a righteous father and son?

26:20 ***many churches...their own wisdom and their own learning.*** Lest we are tempted to see this as a condemnation of all other churches, remember that Nephi taught that the “churches” he spoke of were not just religious organizations, but any group that fought against the church of God (see 1 Nephi 14:10-17).

26:22 ***secret combinations, even as in times of old.*** Secret combinations didn’t arise in the Book of Mormon until well after Nephi’s time, but they go back to the dawn of time (see Moses 5:29-33).

26:24-28 ***he commandeth none that they shall not partake of his salvation.*** Unlike some religions, our Church teaches that God desires universal salvation—he wants all of his children to be saved.

26:25 ***buy milk and honey, without money and without price.*** Compare Isaiah 55:1. Jacob quoted this scripture in 2 Nephi 9:50-51.

26:29 ***priestcrafts.*** This verse offers the best definition of “priestcrafts” in the scriptures, which is to “preach and set themselves up for a light unto the world, that they may get gain and praise of the world.” See Elder M. Russell Ballard, *Institute Manual*, 97.

26:30 ***charity is love.*** “Charity” is not found in the KJV Old Testament. In the New Testament, the word translated “charity” is *agapē*, which is a form of love—brotherly love. So Nephi is correct: *charity is love.*

26:32 ***whoso doeth them shall perish.*** This verse provides a very complete list of things that disciples of the Savior must not do or they will perish. While none of them are a surprise, it is interesting that “having malice,” taking “the name of the Lord their God in vain,” contending with another, and lying is on a par, in terms of salvation, with murder and whoredoms.

27:1 ***drunken with iniquity.*** Nephi painted an image of complete wickedness over all the earth. That statement sets up the great teachings of the restoration of the gospel in the rest of this chapter.

2 NEPHI 27:2-35 THE BOOK THAT COMES FORTH

27:2-35 is a quotation from Isaiah 29:6-24, with significant changes. When the Prophet did the work on the Joseph Smith Translation, 2-3 years after the Book of Mormon was published, he used this chapter in the Book of Mormon to translate most of Isaiah 29, apparently copying the 1830 Book of Mormon text nearly word for word into Isaiah. This demonstrates that Nephi's words in 2 Nephi 27 are not just Nephi paraphrasing Isaiah or a random commentary—Nephi appears to be quoting the brass plates for this chapter of Isaiah, which version was restored by Joseph Smith in his inspired New Translation.

The text below shows the original KJV text of Isaiah 29 on the left (using KJV verse numbers), with the JST changes folded in. Additions are marked with **bold**, while deletions are indicated by ~~crossed out text~~. On the right is 2 Nephi 27, matched up for ease of comparison. The changes in that text compared to the base text KJV passages, are also marked with **bold**.

Isaiah	2 Nephi 27
(29:6) Thou shalt For they shall be visited of the LORD of hosts with thunder, and with earthquake, and great noise, with storm and tempest, and the flame of devouring fire.	2 And when that day shall come they shall be visited of the Lord of Hosts, with thunder and with earthquake, and with a great noise, and with storm, and with tempest, and with the flame of devouring fire.
(29:7) And the multitude of all the nations that fight against Ariel, even all that fight against her and her munition, and that distress her, shall be as a dream of a night vision.	3 And all the nations that fight against Zion , and that distress her, shall be as a dream of a night vision;...
(29:8) Yea, it shall be as when an yea, it shall be unto them even be as when an unto a hungry <i>man</i> who dreameth, and, behold, he eateth; but he awaketh, and his soul is empty: or as when like unto like unto a thirsty man who dreameth, and, behold, he drinketh; but he awaketh, and, behold, <i>he is</i> faint, and his soul hath appetite: yea, even so shall the multitude of all the nations be, that fight against mount Zion.	... yea , it shall be unto them , even as unto a hungry man which dreameth, and behold he eateth but he awaketh and his soul is empty; or like unto a thirsty man which dreameth, and behold he drinketh but he awaketh and behold he is faint, and his soul hath appetite; yea, even so shall the multitude of all the nations be that fight against Mount Zion.
(29:9) For behold, all ye that do iniquity , stay yourselves, and wonder; for ye shall cry ye out, and cry: they are yea, ye shall be drunken, but not with wine; they ye shall stagger, but not with strong drink.	4 For behold, all ye that doeth iniquity , stay yourselves and wonder, for ye shall cry out, and cry; yea, ye shall be drunken but not with wine, ye shall stagger but not with strong drink.
29:10 For behold , the LORD hath poured out upon you the spirit of deep sleep. and hath For behold, ye have closed your eyes, and ye have rejected the prophets and your rulers, and the seers hath he covered because of your iniquities .	5 For behold , the Lord hath poured out upon you the spirit of deep sleep. For behold, ye have closed your eyes, and ye have rejected the prophets; and your rulers, and the seers hath he covered because of your iniquity .
And it shall come to pass that the Lord God shall bring forth unto you the words of a book, and they shall be the words of them which have slumbered.	6 And it shall come to pass that the Lord God shall bring forth unto you the words of a book, and they shall be the words of them which have slumbered.
And behold, the book shall be sealed, and in the book shall be a revelation from God, from the beginning of the world, to the ending thereof.	7 And behold the book shall be sealed; and in the book shall be a revelation from God, from the beginning of the world to the ending thereof.
Wherefore, because of the things which are sealed up, the things which are sealed shall not	8 Wherefore, because of the things which are sealed up, the things which are sealed shall not

be delivered in the day of the wickedness and abominations of the people. Wherefore, the book shall be kept from them.	be delivered in the day of the wickedness and abominations of the people. Wherefore the book shall be kept from them.
But the book shall be delivered unto a man, and he shall deliver the words of the book, which are the words of those which have slumbered in the dust. And he shall deliver these words unto another.	9 But the book shall be delivered unto a man, and he shall deliver the words of the book, which are the words of those who have slumbered in the dust, and he shall deliver these words unto another;
But the words which are sealed ¹ by the power of God, and the revelation which was sealed shall be kept in the book until the own due time of the Lord, that they may come forth. For behold, they reveal all things from the foundation of the world unto the end thereof.	10 But the words which are sealed he shall not deliver, neither shall he deliver the book. For the book shall be sealed by the power of God, and the revelation which was sealed shall be kept in the book until the own due time of the Lord, that they may come forth; for behold, they reveal all things from the foundation of the world unto the end thereof.
And the day cometh that the words of the book which were ² sealed shall be read upon the house tops; and they shall be read by the power of Christ; and all things shall be revealed unto the children of men which ever have been among the children of men, and which ever will be, even unto the end of the earth.	11 And the day cometh that the words of the book which were sealed shall be read upon the house tops; and they shall be read by the power of Christ; and all things shall be revealed unto the children of men which ever have been among the children of men, and which ever will be even unto the end of the earth.
Wherefore, at that day, when the book shall be delivered unto the man of whom I have spoken, the book shall be hid from the eyes of the world, that the eyes of none shall behold it, save it be that three witnesses shall behold it by the power of God. And they shall testify to the truth of the book and the things therein.	12 Wherefore, at that day when the book shall be delivered unto the man of whom I have spoken, the book shall be hid from the eyes of the world, that the eyes of none shall behold it, save it be that three witnesses shall behold it, by the power of God, besides him to whom the book shall be delivered; and they shall testify to the truth of the book and the things therein.
And there is none other which shall view it, save it be a few, according to the will of God, to bear testimony of his word unto the children of men. For the Lord God hath said that the words of the faithful should speak as if it were from the dead.	13 And there is none other which shall view it, save it be a few according to the will of God, to bear testimony of his word unto the children of men; for the Lord God hath said that the words of the faithful should speak as if it were from the dead.
Wherefore, the Lord God will proceed to bring forth the words of the book, and in the mouth of as many witnesses as seemeth him good will he establish his word. And wo be unto him that rejecteth the word of God.	14 Wherefore, the Lord God will proceed to bring forth the words of the book; and in the mouth of as many witnesses as seemeth him good will he establish his word; and wo be unto him that rejecteth the word of God!
(29:11) And the vision of all is become unto you as the words of a book that is sealed, which men But behold, it shall come to pass that the Lord God shall say unto him to whom he shall deliver the book, Take these words which are not sealed, and deliver them to one another that is he may shew them unto the learned, saying, Read this, I pray thee: And the learned shall say, Bring hither the book, and I will read them.	15 But behold, it shall come to pass that the Lord God shall say unto him to whom he shall deliver the book: Take these words which are not sealed and deliver them to another, that he may show them unto the learned, saying: Read this, I pray thee. And the learned shall say: Bring hither the book, and I will read them.

¹ Evidently the Prophet's eye skipped a line, jumping from one instance of "sealed by the power of God" to another, thereby leaving out a whole phrase that is in the Book of Mormon version.

² The word *were* is actually written twice in the JST manuscript (*OM*, 807).

And now, because of the glory of the world, and to get gain will he say this, and not for the glory of God.	16 And now, because of the glory of the world and to get gain will they say this, and not for the glory of God.
And he saith the man shall say, I cannot bring the book; for it <i>is</i> sealed.	17 And the man shall say: I cannot bring the book, for it is sealed.
Then shall the learned say, I cannot read it.	18 Then shall the learned say: I cannot read it.
(29:12) And Wherefore, it shall come to pass that the Lord God will deliver again the book is delivered and the words thereof to him that is not learned, saying, Read this, I pray thee: and he saith the man that is not learned shall say, I am not learned.	19 Wherefore it shall come to pass, that the Lord God will deliver again the book and the words thereof to him that is not learned; and the man that is not learned shall say: I am not learned.
Then shall the Lord God say unto him, The learned shall not read them, for they have rejected them, and I am able to do mine own work. Wherefore, thou shalt read the words which I shall give unto thee.	20 Then shall the Lord God say unto him: The learned shall not read them, for they have rejected them, and I am able to do mine own work; wherefore thou shalt read the words which I shall give unto thee.
Touch not the things which are sealed, for I will bring them forth in mine own due time. For I will shew unto the children of men, that I am able to do mine own work.	21 Touch not the things which are sealed, for I will bring them forth in mine own due time; for I will show unto the children of men that I am able to do mine own work.
Wherefore, when thou hast read the words which I have commanded thee and obtained the witnesses which I have promised unto thee, then shalt thou seal up the book again, and hide it up unto me, that I may preserve the words which thou hast not read, until I shall see fit in mine own wisdom, to reveal all things unto the children of men.	22 Wherefore, when thou hast read the words which I have commanded thee, and obtained the witnesses which I have promised unto thee, then shalt thou seal up the book again, and hide it up unto me, that I may preserve the words which thou hast not read, until I shall see fit in mine own wisdom to reveal all things unto the children of men.
For behold, I am God, and I am a God of miracles. And I will shew unto the world that I am the same, yesterday, today, and forever. And I work not among the children of men save it be according to their faith.	23 For behold, I am God; and I am a God of miracles; and I will show unto the world that I am the same yesterday, today, and forever; and I work not among the children of men save it be according to their faith.
(29:13) Wherefore And again, it shall come to pass that the Lord said, shall say unto him that shall read the words that shall be delivered him,	24 And again it shall come to pass that the Lord shall say unto him that shall read the words that shall be delivered him:
Forasmuch as this people draw near unto <i>me</i> with their mouth, and with their lips do honour me, but have removed their heart hearts far from me, and their fear toward me is taught by the precept precepts of men.	25 Forasmuch as this people draw near unto me with their mouth, and with their lips do honor me, but have removed their hearts far from me, and their fear towards me is taught by the precepts of men—
(29:14) Therefore, behold, I will proceed to do a marvelous work among this people, even yea, a marvelous work and a wonder: for the wisdom of their wise men and learned shall perish, and the understanding of their prudent <i>men</i> shall be hid.	26 Therefore, I will proceed to do a marvelous work among this people, yea, a marvelous work and a wonder, for the wisdom of their wise and learned shall perish, and the understanding of their prudent shall be hid.
(29:15) And wo unto them that seek deep to hide their counsel from the LORD, and their works are in the dark, and they say, Who seeth us? and who knoweth us?	27 And wo unto them that seek deep to hide their counsel from the Lord! And their works are in the dark; and they say: Who seeth us, and who knoweth us?
(29:16) And they also say, surely your turning of things upside down shall be esteemed as the potter's clay. But behold, I will shew unto them, saith the Lord of Hosts, that I know all their	And they also say: Surely, your turning of things upside down shall be esteemed as the potter's clay. But behold, I will show unto them, saith the Lord of Hosts, that I know all their works.

works. For shall the work say of him that made it, He made me not? Or shall the thing framed say of him that framed it, He had no understanding?	For shall the work say of him that made it, he made me not? Or shall the thing framed say of him that framed it, he had no understanding?
(29:17) But behold, saith the Lord of Hosts, I will shew unto the children of men that it is is ^{is} not yet a very little while, and Lebanon shall be turned into a fruitful field, and the fruitful field shall be esteemed as a forest.	28 But behold, saith the Lord of Hosts: I will show unto the children of men that it is yet a very little while and Lebanon shall be turned into a fruitful field; and the fruitful field shall be esteemed as a forest.
(29:18) And in that day shall the deaf hear the words of the book, and the eyes of the blind shall see out of obscurity, and out of darkness.	29 And in that day shall the deaf hear the words of the book, and the eyes of the blind shall see out of obscurity and out of darkness.
(29:19) And the meek also shall increase, and <i>their</i> joy shall be in the LORD, and the poor among men shall rejoice in the Holy One of Israel.	30 And the meek also shall increase, and their joy shall be in the Lord, and the poor among men shall rejoice in the Holy One of Israel.
(29:20) For assuredly as the Lord liveth, they shall see that the terrible one is brought to nought, and the scorner is consumed, and all that watch for iniquity are cut off:	31 For assuredly as the Lord liveth they shall see that the terrible one is brought to naught, and the scorner is consumed, and all that watch for iniquity are cut off;
(29:21) And they that make a man an offender for a word, and lay a snare for him that reproveth in the gate, and turn aside the just for a thing of nought.	32 And they that make a man an offender for a word, and lay a snare for him that reproveth in the gate, and turn aside the just for a thing of naught.
(29:22) Therefore thus saith the LORD, who redeemed Abraham, concerning the house of Jacob, Jacob shall not now be ashamed, neither shall his face now wax pale.	33 Therefore, thus saith the Lord, who redeemed Abraham, concerning the house of Jacob: Jacob shall not now be ashamed, neither shall his face now wax pale.
(29:23) But when he seeth his children, the work of mine my hands, in the midst of him, they shall sanctify my name, and sanctify the Holy One of Jacob, and shall fear the God of Israel.	34 But when he seeth his children, the work of my hands, in the midst of him, they shall sanctify my name, and sanctify the Holy One of Jacob, and shall fear the God of Israel.
(29:24) They also that erred in spirit shall come to understanding, and they that murmured shall learn doctrine.	35 They also that erred in spirit shall come to understanding, and they that murmured shall learn doctrine.

27:3 **a hungry man which dreameth.** Like a man who dreams of food and drink but has none when he is awake, so that it be with those who fight against Zion—and thus God. Their efforts will be in vain and come to naught.

27:7 **in the book shall be a revelation from God.** The book that comes forth from them that slumbered and is sealed shall be an actual revelation from God, something which man has not seen in many years.

27:9-11 **kept in the book until the own due time of the Lord.** The sealed portion is promised to come forth in a day of righteousness, but not at the beginning, which we have already been told is a day of wickedness. When they are given to man, they will be read upon the housetops (which in Nephi's day made more sense, since housetops were much like patios are today—places to eat and spend time in nice weather).

27:12 **three witnesses shall behold it.** Shortly after Joseph Smith translated this in the summer of 1829, Martin Harris, Oliver Cowdery, and David Whitmer asked Joseph to inquire of the Lord if they might be these Three Witnesses. D&C 17 records the Lord's response to the question of these three

men. The concept had already been mentioned in Ether 5:2-4 a short time earlier in the translation process, and even earlier in D&C 5. For more information, see *Institute Manual*, 99 and 409.

27:13 ***none other...save it be a few***. While D&C 5 and Ether 5 had both mentioned three witnesses, this is the first text to hint that more might be able to see the plates. This was fulfilled in the experience of the Eight Witnesses who saw the plates and touched them, though without angelic appearance, as did the Three.

27:15 ***show them unto the learned***. When Joseph Smith translated this passage in 2 Nephi, it was about a year and a half since Martin Harris had had the experience described in these verses. Oliver Cowdery related that the angel Moroni had told Joseph about this before he even began the work on the translation (*Institute Manual*, 99). Still, coming on this detailed prophesy of the experience so long after the event must have been gratifying to Joseph Smith—the Lord knew what was going to happen and that the work would still go forth, something the young Prophet makes clear in his writings that he did not know in the summer of 1828.

27:16 ***the glory of the world and to get gain***. This reflects on Charles Anthon’s desires in the transaction—his own personal aggrandizement.

27:20 ***I am able to do mine own work***. God doesn’t need scholars to do his work, especially ones who reject his commandments and are motivated by their own gain. Instead, he used the humble servants, such as Joseph Smith, Martin Harris, and Oliver Cowdery, to bring forth the Book of Mormon to the world.

27:22 ***seal up the book again, and hide it up unto me***. This intriguing passage perhaps sheds some light on what happened to the plates of the Book of Mormon while in Joseph Smith’s care. The Prophet certainly kept the plates well-hidden. As for sealing them up, Joseph’s personal history recorded only a short passage about the fate of the plates: “But by the wisdom of God, they remained safe in my hands, until I had accomplished by them what was required at my hand. When, according to arrangements, the messenger called for them, I delivered them up to him; and his has them in his charge until this day, being the second day of May, one thousand eight hundred and thirty-eight” (*History of the Church*, 1:18-19; JS-H 1:60).

27:24-25 This passage is a reflection of Joseph’s experience and hearkens back to the First Vision, where he learned that all the churches were wrong, and that “they draw near to me with their lips, but their hearts are far from me” (JS-H 1:19).

28:1 ***the Spirit hath constrained me***. Constrained here does not mean restricted, but compelled or urged.

2 NEPHI 28:4-32 SATAN’S TACTICS IN THE LAST DAYS

Most of this chapter teaches how Satan will try to gain victory in the last days, and how the Lord will openly combat him and get the words of truth out to his faithful followers and anyone else in the world who will listen.

28:4 ***they shall teach with their learning***. The churches built up “not unto the Lord” contend with each other and teach according to their own understanding, not according to the Holy Ghost.

28:5-6 **there is no God today.** This passage readily shows that these “churches” are not churches as we would think of them but institutions of the great and abominable, that teach that there is no God, no miracles, and no revelation.

28:7 **Eat, drink, and be merry, for tomorrow we die.** This is the philosophy I see the most often. Life is all about entertainment and getting the most out of each day. It’s a very myopic point of view, but if you don’t believe in God (verse 5), it would be hard to imagine any higher purpose for living.

28:8 **Eat, drink, and be merry; nevertheless, fear God.** Less common overall but still existing are those who say you should believe in God but merely accept him as your Savior and not worry too much about your behavior. After all, if you have brought Jesus into your life and your eternal life is assured, what does it matter if you “lie a little, take advantage of one...dig a pit for thy neighbor”? God will forgive these sins—in fact, he has already forgiven them. So don’t worry about it—“we shall be saved in the kingdom of God.” See *Institute Manual*, 101-102 for good quotes on these topics from Elder Neal A. Maxwell, President Gordon B. Hinckley, and President James E. Faust.

28:11 **they have all gone out of the way.** Jesus is the way (John 14:6). Harkening back to Lehi’s and his own vision of the tree, those that have left the narrow path have either wandered into the darkness, lost forever, or made it to the spacious building, and are mocking the faithful.

28:12-14 A catalog of activities and attitudes in the great and abominable.

28:14 **a few, who are the humble followers of Christ.** These are apparently not those of the Church of God mentioned in previous verses, but are rather those among the false churches who have maintained their humility and believe in the true worship of Christ. These are those who are ready converts to the Church when they hear the message of the restored gospel. They only err today because “they are taught by the precepts of men” and don’t know where to find truth.

28:15 Again, the list is humbling and perhaps cause for self-reflection. Besides “those who commit whoredoms” and “those who preach false doctrines” being “thrust down to hell,” others in the same category include the wise, the learned, the rich, and the proud.

28:18 **must tumble to the earth.** You will recall that the great and spacious building was floating in the air, high above the earth (1 Nephi 8:26). So when it falls, it comes down hard, “and great must be the fall thereof.”

28:20-22 More of Satan’s last-days tactics (see *Institute Manual*, 102-103 for insightful comments). He will:

- Get them to “anger against that which is good.” We see this today in many ways as people reject eternal principles in favor of political correctness or tolerance.
- “Pacify and lull them away into carnal security.” The call that “all is well” will lure many into inaction, which cheats them out of their souls.
- Flatter them and tell them that there is no eternal punishment, causing them to allow Satan to bind them “in his awful chains.”

28:23 **death, and hell.** Nephi wrote his brother Jacob’s word, clearly teaching that Jesus overcomes death and hell (2 Nephi 9:10-12). But those that succumb to Satan’s tactics will be cheated and bound and led “carefully down to hell” (v. 21), where because of their lack of repentance and total submission to Satan, “there is no deliverance” (v. 22).

28:28 **built upon the rock...a sandy foundation.** Another great Nephi first and only reference—until Jesus came to the people and taught them about the wise and foolish builders (3 Nephi 14:24-27), this is the only mention of this metaphor in the Book of Mormon.

28:29 **we need no more of the word of God.** Developed more in the next chapter, this cry from latter-day rejecters of truth is a common one today. *Sola Biblia*, the Christian world cries out. But even among themselves, they cannot fully agree on what the Bible is—what books to include, what to exclude. Catholics, Protestants, Russian Orthodox, Greek Orthodox, Coptics, and more, all have different books in their Bibles. What they do all agree on is that God speaks no more to prophets today—the canon is closed, and has been for nearly 2000 years. Mormonism’s thundering challenge is to open their eyes and their hearts—God reveals his mind and will to men on earth today. He is the same yesterday, today, and tomorrow. Who is man to deny God the ability to speak?

28:30 **line upon line, precept upon precept.** This is how the Lord teaches us. As soon as we are ready for more light and knowledge, he offers it. Hence we “learn wisdom; for unto him that receiveth I will give more.”

29:1-14 THE BIBLE DOES NOT CONTAIN ALL THE WORDS OF GOD

29:1-3 Notice the long ‘interruption’ starting with the dash at the beginning of verse 1 and ending at the beginning of verse 3. The thought is that many Gentiles say something, but Nephi interrupts himself to quote the Lord talking about remembering covenants and promises made to the children of men, to Nephi and Lehi, and to Nephi’s seed yet unborn.

29:3 **A Bible! A Bible! We have got a Bible.** The word “Bible,” of course, if from the Greek *biblion*, meaning a book put together from various pages (as opposed to a scroll). We don’t know what word Nephi would have used, since there is no evidence that ‘books’ existed in his day, just rolls or parchment or papyrus or potsherds (broken pottery pieces). But perhaps it was *sēfēr*, meaning ‘document’ but most commonly translated “book” in the Old Testament. Whatever it was, it was clearly Bible to Joseph Smith, and we completely understand the exclamation in our day.

29:4-6 **what thank they the Jews for the Bible.** We need to always maintain a spirit of gratitude for our Bible. What a precious gift it is, miraculously written and preserved, copied and translated by faithful scribes and scholars for hundreds of years, and put into our hands by men willing to give their lives to bring us its messages. Without the Jews (and even the New Testament was nearly all written by Jews), we would have no Bible and no first-hand records of ancient prophets and the mortal ministry of the Son of God.

29:7-8 **there are more nations than one.** Why would we think that God would only speak to one nation on the entire planet? The eternal law of witnesses at least requires two (which is partly why we have an Old and New Testament or witness). So the Lord’s point is that it takes at least two witnesses to establish truth.

29:9 **ye need not suppose that I cannot speak another.** Pres. James E. Faust said it perfectly (*Institute Manual*, 104): “Does God love us less than those led by the ancient prophets? Do we need his guidance and instruction less? Reason suggests that this cannot be. Does he not care? Has he lost his voice? Has he gone on a permanent vacation? Does he sleep? The unreasonableness of each of these proposals is self-evident.”

29:12 **Jews...Nephites...other tribes...all nations.** There are not just some sealed plates waiting for us. There are not just records of the lost tribes to be translated. There are records from all nations, scriptures inspired by God, messages written by prophets in all ages and all places. When it's all done, the 'cycle' for scripture study in gospel doctrine might be a couple decades! See Elder Neal A. Maxwell, *Institute Manual*, 105.

2 NEPHI 30 THE SUMMATION OF ISAIAH'S MESSAGE

Nephi wraps up his inspired commentary on Isaiah with a marvelous summary of the role of the Gentiles and God's delight in keeping his covenants with Israel.

30:1-2 **keep the commandments of God.** Whether we are of the house of Israel or not, the key to receiving God's blessings is repentance and obedience to his commandments.

30:3 **many which shall believe the words which are written.** The Gentiles first will embrace the Book of Mormon, then carry it to the seed of Lehi. The fulfillment of that is likely found in the growth of the Church in Latin and South America, and the isles of the sea. We don't know exactly where Lehi's seed is now—perhaps only in a small geographical area or perhaps covering the entire New World and Pacific Islands. But they are certainly somewhere in that collection of peoples and are receiving the gospel in increasing numbers with each passing year.

30:5 **restored...to the knowledge of Jesus Christ.** A fascinating concept—the descendents of Lehi will be “restored” to an understanding of Jesus Christ had among their ancestors. Reminds me of a roommate in college to whom I introduced the gospel. He was Native American (we called it Indian back then) and when he read the story of 3 Nephi and the visit of Christ to the Americas, he felt a strong connection with those people and that story. He joined the Church three weeks after reading those chapters.

30:6 **scales of darkness shall begin to fall from their eyes.** The blindness caused by generations of ignorance and sin will fall away in the light of the restored gospel, making the children of Lehi “a pure and a delightsome people.” Note that older editions (pre-1981) here read “a white and a delightsome people.” When the 1981 edition was being prepared, it was discovered that Joseph Smith had edited this verse and published it in his lifetime as “a pure and a delightsome people.” When the change was proposed to President Spencer W. Kimball, the president of the Church at the time, he readily accepted it, saying it was the will of the Lord. In Nephi's theology especially, “pure” and “white” are synonyms, but in our day, white has too many ties to other factors. “Pure” captures Nephi's meaning without any confusion.

30:7 **the Jews...shall begin to believe in Christ.** This has not yet happened, but as sure as the coming forth of the Book of Mormon or the work among the Gentiles and the children of Lehi has come or is coming to pass, this will also happen.

30:9-10 **he must destroy the wicked by fire.** At the last days, the righteous will be gathered and the wicked destroyed by fire.

30:11-15 THE MILLENIUM

Nephi concludes by quoting or paraphrasing a number of verses from Isaiah 11.

30:11-15 See Isaiah 11:5-9. The imagery is clearly millennial, following the Second Coming and the beginning of the reign of Christ on the Earth.

30:16-18 ***Satan shall have power...no more.*** This marvelous state of the Earth is day of no secrets between nations, a day without the darkness of sin, and a day of full restoration of knowledge and past revelation. Satan will have no power over mankind “for a long time.” It is a day to look forward to with great excitement and anticipation.

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