
3 NEPHI 28 – MORMON 3

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David A. LeFevre

INTRODUCTION

The transition from the magnificence of 3 Nephi to the wickedness and destruction of Mormon is quick and stark. We move quickly through hundreds of years of peace and joy to the end of the Nephite nation as Mormon takes up the plates to record the events of his own day. We have seen glimpses of this great man already but now we learn more about him personally, see his great character, and sorrow with him that he lived in such a time when righteousness was such a solitary condition. Wickedness may prevail in our day, but in a Church with millions of active members, we do not have the burden of loneliness that he must have felt.

A simple outline of the chapters in this lesson is:

Topic	Reference	1830 Reference
The Three Nephites	3 Nephi 28	Book of Nephi 13*
Mormon's Conclusion	3 Nephi 29	
	3 Nephi 30	Book of Nephi 14
Transition to the End	4 Nephi	Book of Nephi 1
Beginning of the End	Mormon 1	Mormon 1
War and Plates	Mormon 2	
Mormon Withdraws	Mormon 3	

* The 1830 Book of Nephi chapter 13 contains what is today 3 Nephi 27:23-29:9.

3 NEPHI 28 THE THREE NEPHITES

2 *the age of man*. Nine of the twelve desired to live to “the age of man” and then come unto Jesus in his kingdom. In his response, Jesus defined that age as “seventy and two years old” (v. 3). In the Old Testament, a “very aged man” was 80 (2 Samuel 19:32), so 72 could certainly be considered the ‘age of man.’ The Doctrine and Covenants uses similar language and sheds light on the fate of the three Nephites, though presenting the information in the context of the Millennium:

And he that liveth when the Lord shall come, and hath kept the faith, blessed is he; nevertheless, it is appointed to him to die at *the age of man*. Wherefore, children shall grow up until they become old; old men shall die; but they shall not sleep in the dust, but they shall be changed in the twinkling of an eye (D&C 63:50-51; italics added).

A related concept is found in D&C 101, with another allusion to the fate of people during the Millennium, but this time using a slightly different phrase:

In that day an infant shall not die until he is old; and his life shall be as *the age of a tree*; And when he dies he shall not sleep, that is to say in the earth, but shall be changed in the twinkling of an eye, and shall be caught up, and his rest shall be glorious (D&C 101:30-31; italics added).

Finally, another interesting reference is D&C 130, where Joseph Smith recorded that he was praying about the time of the Second Coming. In response, a voice told him, “if thou livest until thou art eighty-five years old, thou shalt see the face of the Son of Man.” The Prophet shared that he couldn’t decide if that meant the Second Coming would happen in that year or if it was a personal reference to Joseph’s fate (which it obviously proved to be; D&C 130:14-17).

6 *the thing which John, my beloved...desired of me.* The expression of this desire is recorded in the last chapter of John in the New Testament:

Peter seeing him saith to Jesus, Lord, and what shall this man do? Jesus saith unto him, If I will that he tarry till I come, what is that to thee? follow thou me. Then went this saying abroad among the brethren, that that disciple should not die: yet Jesus said not unto him, He shall not die; but, If I will that he tarry till I come, what is that to thee? (John 21:21-23).

Non-LDS Bible commentaries are generally confused by this reference. Here is one sample:

Interestingly, the final chapter of Matthew is likewise given to dispelling a rumor—in Matthew’s case that the disciples stole Jesus’ body (Matt. 28:11-15; cf. 27:62-66). It is not impossible that these final verses were penned by John’s disciples subsequent to his death in order to counter the charge that Jesus’ prediction had been proven erroneous by John’s death. More likely is the suggestion that John himself, while still alive, seeks to lay to rest the rumor that Christ has promised to return during his lifetime” (Arnold 2002, 2:195).

Joseph Smith and Oliver Cowdery must also have been confused as they translated this chapter in April 1830. Being aware of the account in John 21, they had “a difference of opinion” regarding John’s fate, one believing John died and one that he lived (the History doesn’t say who had which opinion). They determined to consult the Urim and Thummim and recorded the response they received (Smith 1980, 1:35-36). That revelation was first recorded in “Revelation Book 1” then the 1833 Book of Commandments, then updated and expanded by Joseph Smith in the 1835 Doctrine and Covenants.

Revelation Book 1	1833 Book of Cmdmts	1835 D&C
<i>A Revelation to Joseph & Oliver concerning John the Beloved Deciple who leaned on his Saveiours breast given in Harmony Susquehannah County Pennsylvania April 1829</i>	<i>A Revelation given to Joseph and Oliver, in Harmony, Pennsylvania, April, 1829, when they desired to know whether John, the beloved disciple, tarried on earth. Translated from parchment, written and hid up by himself.</i>	<i>A Revelation given to Joseph Smith, jr. and Oliver Cowdery, in Harmony, Pennsylvania, April, 1829, when they desired to know whether John, the beloved disciple, tarried on earth.— Translated from parchment, written and hid up by himself.</i>
And the Lord said unto me. John my Beloved what desiredst thou	1 And the Lord said unto me, John my beloved, what desiredst thou?	1 And the Lord said unto me, John, my beloved, what desiredst thou? For if ye shall ask, what you will, it shall be granted unto you.

& I said Lord give unto me power that I may bring souls unto thee	and I said Lord, give unto me power that I may bring souls unto thee.—	And I said unto him, Lord, give unto me power over death, that I may live and bring souls unto thee.
& the Lord said unto me Verily Verily I say unto thee because thou desiredst this thou shalt tarry until I come in my glory	And the Lord said unto me: Verily, verily, I say unto thee, because thou desirest this, thou shalt tarry till I come in my glory.	And the Lord said unto me, Verily, verily, I say unto thee, because thou desiredst this thou shalt tarry until I come in my glory, and shall prophesy before nations, kindreds, tongues and people.
& for this cause the Lord said unto Peter if I will that he tarry till I come what is that to thee For he desiredst of me that he might bring souls unto me but thou desiredst that thou mightiest come unto me in my kingdom	2 And for this cause, the Lord said unto Peter:—“If I will that he tarry till I come, what is that to thee? for he desiredst of me that he might bring souls unto me: but though desiredst that thou might speedily come unto me in my kingdom:	2 And for this cause the Lord said unto Peter, If I will that he tarry till I come, what is that to thee? For he desiredst of me that he might bring souls unto me; but thou desiredst that thou might speedily come unto me in my kingdom.
I say unto thee Peter this was a good desire but my beloved hath has undertaken a greater work	I say unto thee, Peter, this was a good desire, but my beloved has undertaken a greater work.	I say unto thee, Peter, this was a good desire, but my beloved has desired that he might do more, or a greater work, yet among men than what he has before done;
		yea, he has undertaken a greater work; therefore, I will make him as flaming fire and a ministering angel: he shall minister for those who shall be heirs of salvation who dwell on the earth;
		and I will make thee to minister for him and for thy brother James: and unto you three will I give this power and the keys of this ministry until I come.
Verily I say unto you ye shall both have according to your desired for ye both Joy rejoice in that which ye desired	3 Verily I say unto you, ye shall both have according to your desires, for ye both joy in that which he have desired.	3 Verily I say unto you, ye shall both have according to your desires, for ye both joy in that which ye have desired.

Revelation Book 1 from (Jensen, Woodford and Harper 2009, 18-19). 1833 Book of Commandments and 1835 Doctrine and Covenants from (Joseph Smith Begins His Work 1962).

The first revelation in 1829 certainly interpreted John 21, but in the 1835 D&C version, Joseph Smith made substantial edits to the text. These edits no doubt came about because of a greater understanding the Prophet gained about John’s mission and as a result of an increased understanding of the role of Peter, James, and John in the early Church, perhaps at least partly as a

result of receiving the priesthood under their hands (which hadn't happened in April 1829 when the revelation was first received). All of it was certainly influenced by 3 Nephi 28, which not only prompted the question but then informed the answer—what Peter asked was similar to what the nine asked, and John's request and fate was similar to the three.

7 ***never taste of death***. Jesus clarifies this in verse 8: "he shall be change in the twinkling of an eye from mortality to immortality." In other words, they will 'die' but it will happen instantaneously so that they will not suffer death as others do.

12 ***touched every one of them with his finger save it were the three***. Touching the nine apparently enacted the blessing they had received to live to the age of 72 and then come to Jesus' kingdom. The three were not touched but had a unique experience in the next verses that apparently tied into their transfiguration.

13 ***they were caught up into heaven***. Either as a result of being translated or as part of becoming translated, the three disciples experienced a heavenly vision where they witnessed things they could not share.

15 ***like a transfiguration of them***. The terms in 1829 were not solidified in their meaning as they were later in Joseph Smith's life. They were, in fact, transfigured—changed—but in their case it was long-term, not temporary, as with Peter, James, and John on the Mount of Transfiguration. Therefore, today we call that 'translated.' See *Student Manual*, 339.

17 ***I know not***. Mormon wrote this now but learns more later (v. 37). Not having an eraser for things he carved into the plates, this stands as is but corrected in a few verses.

19 ***they were cast into prison***. Not only prison, but deep pits in the earth, a furnace, and a den of wild beasts (vv. 20-22). They could neither be killed nor harmed, so were always delivered. It is interesting that here there are still groups of people (perhaps the majority?) who are not converted to the Lord yet and are fighting against the disciples. Like the New Testament apostles, they faced stiff opposition.

20 ***they were converted unto the Lord***. Through the efforts of the disciples, "all people" among the Nephites appear to be converted.

The church of Christ. This was the name they had in 3 Nephi 27, and after Jesus' discussion with them, they kept it.

25 ***the names of those who were never to taste of death***. Why their names had to be kept secret is unclear. The only thing we know for sure is that Nephi was *not* one of the three, for his death is recorded in 4 Nephi 1:19.

26 ***I have seen them***. Mormon seems to have seen them between the time he wrote the previous verses and when he wrote the rest of this chapter!

30 ***they can show themselves***. Translated beings have the ability to move freely, to disappear or appear as needed and to travel great distances quickly and easily. Hence they would minister among Gentiles, Jews, and lost tribes (vv. 27-29). (McConkie 1991, 4:192).

36 ***cleansed from mortality to immortality***. Though the word 'cleansed' is found in the printer's manuscript and the 1830 edition, Skousen determined that it is a likely error. Not only does it not

make sense in the context but the likely alternative, *changed*, is very close in appearance and is commonly used elsewhere, two other times in this very chapter (Alma 12:20; 3 Nephi 28:8; 3 Nephi 28:15). (Skousen 2005-2008, 6:3542-3544).

37 *I have inquired of the Lord.* Wanting to understand the situation of the three disciples, Mormon prayed and learned that they are indeed changed—not yet to a resurrected state (v. 39) but beyond mortality where they cannot suffer death, pain, or even sorrow (except sorrow for sins).

3 NEPHI 29-30 MORMON'S CONCLUSION

These two short chapters could easily be one, but in this case, Orson Pratt determined to follow the 1830 chapter break and keep 3 Nephi 30 as its own chapter of only two verses. We will consider them together here as Mormon's conclusion to the great account of the Savior's visit to the Nephites.

29:1 *these sayings shall come unto the Gentiles.* Meaning not just the account in 3 Nephi but everything that Mormon had abridged on his plates—the Book of Mormon as we have it now.

already beginning to be fulfilled. As has been mentioned before, the coming forth of the Book of Mormon is a sign to the world that the Lord is moving to fulfill his covenants in the last days.

29:2 *shall all be fulfilled.* The Book of Mormon is a testimony that God's words to his prophets down through the centuries will all be fulfilled.

need not say that the Lord delays his coming. The concern that the Second Coming is delayed will not be shared by those who believe in the Book of Mormon; they will not know when, but they will have a certainty that he is indeed coming.

29:6 *the Lord no longer worketh by revelation.* This describes our day well, when people believe that the Bible is the final word of God and that modern prophets and apostles are unneeded. Though some believe in spiritual gifts and believe the Spirit does work among mankind in certain ways, they don't believe in the full gifts of the Spirit or the power that can come by it as described in the Bible.

30:1 *he commandeth me that I should write.* Mormon explicitly states that he is writing what he has been commanded to write—not just his own thoughts and feelings, but exactly what the Lord would have those in the last days read.

30:2 *Turn, all ye Gentiles, from your wicked ways.* The cry to repent and make covenants is preceded by a list of common sins from which Gentiles should turn. Making the covenant in the end joins the Gentiles to the house of Israel.

4 NEPHI TRANSITION TO THE END

Fourth Nephi is the little book that covers a lot of ground. It spans 286 years in four pages (72 years per page). By contrast, the book of Alma covers 38 years in 160 pages (about 1/4 year per page), and Helaman 50 years in 38 pages (about 1.3 years per page). It's as if Mormon, having told

the most important story of the text, just needs to quickly get to his own time while making a few key points along the way.

2 in the thirty and sixth year, the people were all converted. Just two years after the appearance of the risen Lord, all the Nephites and Lamanites were converted and part of the Church, so powerful was the testimony of the disciples and other eyewitnesses who saw him.

3 they had all things common among them. Like the New Testament church and the Saints in our dispensation, the members of the Church in 4 Nephi began to share their wealth and the fruits of their labors such that there were no more poor or slaves. See *Student Manual*, 342-343.

5 great and marvelous works. With all converted, faith and priesthood power were able to do great things. See *Student Manual*, 343.

7 they did build cities again. Zarahemla was rebuilt, as well as many others unnamed in the text.

10 an exceedingly fair and delightsome people. Mormon does not appear to be alluding to skin color here either. They are “fair and delightsome” because of their righteousness.

13 there was no contention. This state of no contention lasted for many years—an amazing testimony to the power of the Savior’s visit and the ability of the Spirit through the testimony of the disciples to change hearts.

14 all had gone to the paradise of God. It was now one hundred years since the sign of Christ’s birth. The nine original disciples had all died and been replaced by others, while the three disciples carried on.

19 Nephi...died. Nephi₃, one of the twelve disciples, apparently died when he was 72, as Jesus had said, unless he was one of the three that continued on. His son, Nephi₄, for which this book is entitled, took charge of the plates at some time during the years after Christ came (the handoff is not recorded in scripture so we don’t know when). Upon Nephi₄’s death, recorded in this verse, his son Amos took responsibility for the plates and was the record keeper for 84 years, down to his death in 194 (v. 21). The chronology of the record keepers shows a span of some very long lives (RoJ = Reign of the Judges; BoC = Birth of Christ):

Record keeper	Took charge of plates	Handed off plates	Years kept	Ref.
Nephi ₃	91 RoJ (-1 BoC)	About 50 BoC?	50?	4 Nephi 1:14
Nephi ₄	About 50 BoC?	110 BoC	60?	4 Nephi 1:19
Amos ₁	110 BoC	194 BoC	84	4 Nephi 1:21
Amos ₂	194 BoC	305 BoC	111	4 Nephi 1:47
Ammaron	305 BoC	320 BoC	15	4 Nephi 1:48
Mormon	345 BoC			Mormon 2:15

20 a small part of the people who had revolted. The revolt was that they no longer identified themselves with the Church and the rest of the people but began to use the ancient name of Lamanites. Why they chose this name is not clear, but it seems likely that it had symbolic implications. Since they were breaking off from the Church, they took the name of the ancient rebellious, anti-religious group. This was after about 150 years of peace and unity.

24 lifted up in pride. The downfall first began with people not wanting to be united, then came pride, which was the end of the Nephite Zion society (v. 25).

27 ***there were many churches***. The purpose of the churches was to “get gain” (v. 26). They also denied the truth of the Church of Christ which had been the dominant religion for close to 200 years. They still taught some form of the gospel but it was a watered-down version that didn’t demand righteousness and administered the sacrament to those who were unworthy.

29 ***persecute the true church***. The false churches took it upon themselves to persecute the true Church of Christ.

30 ***cast them into prison***. The unbelievers cast the three disciples into prison, furnaces, and dens of wild beasts (v. 30-33)—similar to 3 Nephi 28:19-22 only without the deep pits.

31 ***did smite upon the people of Jesus***. Unable to kill or hurt the three disciples that led the Church of Christ, the false prophets turned to the Church members themselves, beating them. But the Saints turned the other cheek and did not fight back.

36 ***Nephites, and they were true believers***. At this time, it is clear that “Nephite” means a believer and “Lamanite” means those against the believers. It is neither a cultural, political, or genetic term—it just refers to their belief in or denial of the true Church (v. 37-38).

42 ***combinations of Gadianton***. Even the ancient secret oaths made a comeback at this time—260 years after the birth of Christ.

43 ***people of Nephi began to be proud***. Even the believers began to fall away because of pride.

45 ***exceedingly wicked one like unto another***. After 300 years, the wickedness of the people was indistinguishable—everyone was equally wicked. By this time, the designations of Nephite and Lamanite appear to have more to do with geography than anything.

47 ***Ammaron did keep the record***. Amos’ brother, Ammaron, took over custody of the sacred records upon his brother’s death in 305. He only kept them for 15 years, then felt compelled to hide them up, seemingly relying on the prophecies of the record coming forth in a future day. In other words, Ammaron thought it was the end of the line and he was doing what Moroni will do in about 100 years time when it is really the end.

MORMON 1 BEGINNING OF THE END

1 ***the things which I have both seen and heard***. With the start of the book bearing his own name, Mormon shifts from abridger to original record keeper. He is going to tell his own life’s story now.

2 ***ten years of age***. Mormon was ten when Ammaron hid up the plates in 320 (4 Nephi 1:48). That means Mormon was born about 310.

a sober child, and art quick to observe. The two qualities that made Mormon stand out—he was a serious young boy but also a good observer. Both would serve him in his long but challenging life.

3 ***when ye are about twenty and four years old***. Ammaron’s direction to retrieve the plates when Mormon was 24 did not happen. According to the record, Mormon was actually about 35 years old. He doesn’t explain the delay, but he appears to have been living in the land southward far away from the hiding place Ammaron had used, and it was until the year 345 that he was finally close

enough to the place (because battles had drawn him there) to retrieve the plates (Mormon 2:16-17).

hill which shall be called Shim. The language is curious—it “*shall be* called Shim.” Perhaps Ammaron was referring to what it would be called when Mormon arrived? The name Shim was used for a hill among the Jaredites (Ether 9:3) which Moroni associated with the hill of the final battle of the Nephites and Lamanites, so near what was called Cumorah (though not the same hill, which the Jaredites called Ramah; see Mormon 6; Ether 15:11). This is the only place the “land of Antum” is mentioned in the Book of Mormon (and yes, it should have an “of” in the middle, based on the printer’s manuscript and the 1830 edition—see Skousen 2005-2008, 6:3584).

4 take the plates of Nephi unto yourself. Ammaron’s original charge was only to continue the record keeping activity he had received. There is no hint here of a greater mission to compile and abridge all the records of the Nephite people. In fact, he’s explicitly instructed to leave the other plates and items alone.

5 a descendant of Nephi, (and my father’s name was Mormon). Named after his father, Mormon was also a direct descendant of Nephi, meaning he was of the ‘royal’ line which had been kings down to the time of Mosiah. Of course, no descendant of Nephi had been a king for about 400 years, but being of that lineage must have still been of sufficient importance to call it out here.

6 being eleven years old...to the land of Zarahemla. The very next year Mormon’s father took him to live in Zarahemla, in the land southward, far away from Ammaron and the hill Shim. He discovered a place so full of people that it felt like they were equal in number to the “sand of the sea” (v. 7). The reason they moved south is not given, though hinted at in the next verses.

8 there began to be a war. It was Nephites versus Lamanites all over again, with the battle taking place near Zarahemla on the river Sidon. The Nephites fielded more than 30,000 soldiers and were able to soundly defeat the Lamanites such that they didn’t return for four years (vv. 10-12). It could well be that Mormon’s father came here to fight in the war. Certainly Mormon was well trained in the arts of war, hinting that his father was perhaps a soldier and even a leader among the Nephite armies.

13 the Lord did take away his beloved disciples. After laboring among their own people now for nearly 300 years, the three disciples received their instructions from the Lord—it is time to leave the Nephites.

15 being fifteen years of age. Mormon’s father is not mentioned again. Was he killed in battle? We do not know. His mother is not mentioned either, nor his wife (though he has at least one son, Moroni).

visited of the Lord. Many commentaries take this to mean that Mormon saw Jesus at age 15, and perhaps that is just what happened. But the word “visit” in the Book of Mormon and the Old Testament has many meanings, including both to punish and to bless. For example, Isaiah recorded, “Thou shalt 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” (Isaiah 29:6). That surely doesn’t mean a personal visitation, but to be punished for their sins. The first reference in the Book of Mormon using this phrase says, “I did cry unto the Lord; and behold he did visit me, and did soften my heart that I did believe all the words which had been spoken by my father” (1 Nephi 2:16). This certainly

does not mean that Nephi saw God at this point (though he clearly does later), but rather that he was touched by the Spirit and received a testimony of his father's teachings. Many other references could be cited with similar meanings (including 2 Nephi 4:26; 26:6; 27:2; 28:16; Jacob 2:33; Omni 1:7; Mosiah 11:22; 12:1; 24:14; Helaman 12:3; 13:10; and 3 Nephi 7:21). The point is that all Mormon may be saying here is that his heart was softened by the Spirit and he was given a testimony of the truth at a young age, which let him know "of the goodness of Jesus."

19 *fulfilling of all the words of Abinadi, and also Samuel the Lamanite.* The teachings of Abinadi in our present scriptures do not contain prophecies of the last days of the Nephites or any language similar to what Mormon is using here. But Samuel is easy to find, because he talked about things becoming "slippery," how desolation is come upon the people, and how the people have procrastinated their repentance past the day when it can do them any good (see Helaman 13:29-39).

MORMON 2 WAR AND PLATES

1 *the leader of their armies.* At the age of 15, Mormon was called upon to lead the Nephite armies. This no doubt came to him because of a combination of his training, size (which he mentions), and lineage. We'd like to think that his spiritual stature had a role as well, but his society didn't seem to value that characteristic very much, but it at least gave him a maturity that was recognizable by others. The year is 326, according to verse 2, so Moroni turned 16 during this first year as commander of their armies. He will remain the commander for 36 years, or until he was 51 or 52 years old.

4-6 *Angola...David...Joshua.* These places are only mentioned here in the Book of Mormon, so it's hard to know the location. But the Nephites are being driven north by the Lamanites, so these places are probably north of Zarahemla but south of Bountiful. The name "Angola" was spelled "Angolah" in the printer's manuscript and "Angelah" in the 1830 Book of Mormon (Skousen 2005-2008, 6:3596-3598).

8 *one complete revolution.* So much was in turmoil that Mormon felt the entire land was in revolution. This is the only time this word is used in the Book of Mormon, and the only time in all of scripture that it has the meaning of things being overthrown. The other instances of "revolution" have to do with planets revolving.

10 *the thieves, and the robbers, and the murderers.* The 1830 Book of Mormon had a typographical error here as the typesetters reversed two letters. "Murderers" became "rumderers" (Skousen 2005-2008, 6:3599). That there were not many more such errors is a testament to the skill and persistence of these men who had to set type backwards in a tray in order to print it on paper.

13 *the sorrowing of the damned.* For a brief time, Mormon had some hope that the sorrow he saw among his people would lead them to repent, as had happened in the past. But his hope was short-lived as he soon realized they would not repent but would plod on in their wickedness and self-destruction. He laments that "the day of grace was passed" as he saw thousands cut down in battle (v. 15).

16 ***the land of Jashon***. Another land and city only mentioned here in the entire book. The location is again unknown but Jashon was near enough to the hill Shim where the plates had been deposited by Ammaron that Mormon, for the first time in his busy life, is able to go get them (v. 17). Note that he only takes the plates of Nephi at this time and writes his account of the recent history of his people (v. 18). The year is 345.

20 ***northward to the land which was called Shem***. This is the only mention of the land and city of Shem. Here the Nephites gathered, being driven further and further north.

23 ***their wives, and their children, and their houses***. Perhaps having read on the plates about Moroni's title of liberty, Mormon gives a similar rallying cry to his people. However, he left out the part relating to God and their religion, a telling omission relative to their state. The call to "stand boldly" worked, and they were able to drive the Lamanites and Gadianton robbers back, retaking "the lands of our inheritance."

29 ***Lamanites did give unto us the land northward***. Though they had achieved some victories, the Nephite position must have been weak because they were not able to hang on to their territories in the negotiations, and the Lamanites are clearly in control of the situation. The result is that the Nephites are now in the land northward only.

MORMON 3 MORMON WITHDRAWS

1 ***did not come to battle again until ten years***. Perhaps part of the negotiations was the time of the truce, for Mormon sees the peace only as a time of preparation for more war.

2 ***the Lord did say unto me: Cry unto this people***. The Lord commanded Mormon to open his mouth, which had been shut before by another command (Mormon 1:17). This is a last opportunity for them to turn from the course of destruction, "but it was in vain" (v. 3) because they did not listen.

4 ***the king of the Lamanites sent an epistle unto me***. The purpose of the letter was surely to strike fear into the hearts of the Nephites and of Mormon. The Lamanite king hoped they would surrender and spare him the losses of battle, but he was determined either way to conquer them. The year is now 360, meaning Mormon is about 50 years old and has been the military commander of his people for about 35 years.

5 ***by the narrow pass***. This was a place of natural defense, a narrow pass that forced the Lamanite armies to come through at a certain place. Mormon's hope was to stop them from getting into the land northward.

7 ***the Lamanites did come down***. Desolation was near the sea (v. 8), so coming there was coming "down." Two successive years of attacks showed that Mormon's strategy was the right one—they were able to defeat the attacking armies soundly and hold their position.

9 ***they began to boast in their own strength***. The people attributed their great victories to themselves. Worse for Mormon, they began to swear by the heavens and the throne of God that they would destroy the Lamanites.

11 **did utterly refuse...to be a commander.** In the year 362, at the age of 52 years, Mormon stepped down as their military leader, not able to bear their sins any longer. You can hear the terrible sadness in his words, how in spite of their wickedness, he “had loved them, according to the love of God,” had prayed for them (v. 12), had led them and attributed their victories to God but they would not listen. Finally, after knowing that their desire for offensive war was wrong, the Lord’s voice came to him: “Vengeance is mine, and I will repay; and because this people repented not after I had delivered them, behold, they shall be cut off from the face of the earth” (v. 15).

16 **I did stand as an idle witness.** With the plates in his charge, Mormon’s job now was to observe and record, no longer a participant in the Nephite downfall.

20 **I write unto you all.** Mormon’s audience is no longer his own people, who are past grace, but those who will read his writings in our day—Gentiles, Jews, and lost tribes, and the ends of the earth (vv. 17-19). His call is to believe in Christ, accept his gospel, “and prepare to stand before the judgment-seat of Christ” (v. 22).

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