
2 NEPHI 31 – JACOB 4

Book of Mormon, Adult Institute Class, Monday, 19 Oct 2009

David A. LeFevre

INTRODUCTION

2 NEPHI 31-32 – THE DOCTRINE OF CHRIST

31:1 **cannot write but a few things**. A summary of Nephi's writing might be the following:

- An abridgement of Lehi's record: 1 Nephi 1-8
- Plates and Lehi's teaching: 1 Nephi 9-10
- Nephi's vision and explanation: 1 Nephi 11-15
- Journey to the promised land: 1 Nephi 16-18
- Quotes from brass plates prophets, including Isaiah: 1 Nephi 19-21
- The destiny of Israel: 1 Nephi 22
- Lehi's final words and Nephi's psalm: 2 Nephi 1-4
- Nephites and Lamanites: 2 Nephi 5
- Jacob's two sermons: 2 Nephi 6-10
- Delighting in Christ and his words: 2 Nephi 11
- Isaiah 2-12: 2 Nephi 12-24
- Explaining Isaiah; to the Jew, Lehi's seed, and the Gentiles: 2 Nephi 25-30
- The doctrine of Christ: 2 Nephi 31-32
- Concluding words: 2 Nephi 33

So in fact, if you take away Nephi quoting others and recounting historical events, out of 55 chapters in 1 and 2 Nephi, we only get about 18 chapters of Nephi teaching doctrine! But what marvelous chapters they are, including these last three.

31:2 **the doctrine of Christ**. This is Nephi's title for the next two chapters. He is going to carefully define "the doctrine of Christ" to be what we today would call the first principles and ordinances of the gospel. See Elder Jeffrey R. Holland, *Institute Manual*, 107.

31:3 **my soul delighteth in plainness**. Nephi set the tone for the other book of Mormon prophets with his straightforward writing style. Though individual styles may vary somewhat, in general the Book of Mormon is written in language that is both understandable to a child and yet rich with meaning to a gospel scholar. It speaks plainly of the most important eternal things.

31:4 ***I have spoken unto you concerning that prophet.*** The footnote appropriately refers us back to 1 Nephi 10 and 11 (specifically 10:7-10 and 11:26-28), Lehi's words and the beginning of Nephi's own tree of life vision, where they were shown the mission of John the Baptist. He brings up John to remind us that he baptized Jesus.

31:5 ***need to be baptized by water.*** The argument is simple: If Jesus, who is "holy," needs to be baptized, how much greater is our need for the same ordinance?

to fulfill all righteousness. Compare Matthew 3:13-15 (which, by itself, is a marvelous refutation of the doctrine of 'grace alone' to anyone willing to understand this phrase). "Righteousness" in the Old Testament is *šēdaqah* or *šēdēq*, both of which are identical in meaning and relate to justice and justification. (The great king Melchizedek has this as part of his name, meaning 'the king of righteousness.') The concept of being 'righteous' is to fully conform to a standard—to be perfectly obedient. The standard is set by God, who is perfectly righteous because he keeps his own law and covenants with perfection (see Harris, Archer, and Waltke, *Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament*, 752-755). The New Testament word is similar: *dikaionē*, meaning the condition of life that is acceptable and approved by God, a correct way of thinking, feeling, and acting (*Thayer's Greek Lexicon*; also Kittel, *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, 2:198-210). Jesus fulfilled all righteousness in his baptism because, even though he was sinless and didn't need it for the remission of sins, baptism is a requirement of God's law—Jesus' own law—to mankind. So to be in perfect conformity and to be completely justified (with sin or blemish), he submitted to the ordinance (McConkie and Millet, 1:360-363). Nephi explains this in more detail in the next four verses.

31:7 ***witnesseth unto the Father that he would be obedient.*** Jesus' physical act of baptism was a sign to God that Jesus was willing to be perfectly obedient to all aspects of the laws of God.

31:9 ***straitness of the path...narrowness of the gate.*** 'Strait' means constricted, tight, or narrow. Both the gate and the path we must follow to return to God are thus described: any deviation from the proscribed course makes us unrighteous and in need of repentance to get back on the path. This fully relates back to Lehi and Nephi's dreams, where the only way to stay on the path is to hold tightly to the rod of iron while navigating and stay focused on the goal, not the worldly distractions all around us. (*Note:* In all editions of the Book of Mormon prior to 1981, including the 1830 first printing, this word was printed "straight" which means 'not crooked,' not only in this verse but several others in this and subsequent chapters. But the printer's manuscript has "strait" and "straitness," so the Scriptures Publication Committee determined to go back to the manuscript in the 1981 edition. This makes more sense in the context because 'strait' and 'narrow' are synonyms, while 'straight' has a very different meaning.)

he having set the example. How could Jesus be our perfect example if he didn't keep every law perfectly? That enables him to then say, "Follow thou me (v. 10) and for us to have confidence that following his example will achieve the desired goal.

31:11 ***And the Father said.*** The voice of the Father is not specifically recorded in scripture very often. Nephi records several passages in the next verses that he attributes directly to the Father.

Repent ye, repent ye, and be baptized in the name of my Beloved Son. The Father calls upon all his children to start down the path of righteousness and enter into the narrow gate by following Jesus' example.

31:12 ***the voice of the Son...give the Holy Ghost.*** Nephi's experience appears to have included a very unique conversation with both the Father and the Son, somewhat like Joseph Smith experienced in the Sacred Grove and at other times in his life. In this case, the son echoes the Father's statement, adding that the Holy Ghost is given to those who submit to baptism and follow Jesus.

31:13 This verse is packed with the doctrine of Christ, including what we have to do to qualify to receive the Holy Ghost:

- *Follow the Son:* relating to striving to be 'righteous,' as discussed above.
- *Full purpose of heart:* A total commitment of not only actions, but thoughts and feelings. "There are individuals who try to serve the Lord without offending the devil" (President Marion G. Romney, *Institute Manual*, 108).
- *Acting no hypocrisy and no deception:* The word hypocrisy in the New Testament literally means "to act." It is pretending to be something other than what we are, a great deception. Nephi is teaching not only that we must be sincere about this commitment to God but that our feelings and desires must align with our public declaration of faith.
- *With real intent:* This phrase is only found here and in four other verses near the end of the Book of Mormon (Moroni 6:8; 7:6, 9; and 10:4. It means being ready to "act upon the manifestation if it is received" (*Institute Manual*, 402). We are prepared to do what is revealed to us.
- *Repenting your sins:* There are two words commonly used in the Old Testament for "repent." The first is *naḥam*, which often relates to an action by God (e.g., Psalm 90:13 or Jeremiah 18:8), and means to feel sorry or regret. The second is *šūb*, which means to go back where you were, or turn away from the direction you are going (e.g., Ezekiel 14:6). It is often translated as "turn" or "return" (e.g., Isaiah 31:6 and Jeremiah 3:22). In this case in Nephi, both definitions aptly apply—we must sorrow and regret our sins and also turn the course of our life toward God and away from the path that we may have chosen.
- *Willing to take upon you the name of Christ:* This phrase is hinted at in the Bible (e.g., Acts 15:14, though better explained in Romans 8 and 9 without this phrase), but it is really a phrase unique to latter-day scripture. It is well developed in the Book of Mormon, and we'll discuss it in more detail in Mosiah 5. Like so many Book of Mormon doctrines, though, the first appearance of the phrase (in this verse) came from Nephi. Other prophets pick up on his language and adopt it in their own teachings. Basically, this means to become part of the family of Christ and receive the blessings that come with that relationship. To me, it gives new meaning to the injunction in Exodus 20:7, "Thou shalt not take the name of the LORD thy God in vain; for the LORD will not hold him guiltless that taketh his name in vain."
- *Baptism:* Though the end of the things listed in this verse, it is only the beginning of our journey down the strait path to God.

then shall ye receive the Holy Ghost. The blessing of doing all of the above things—of living the doctrine of Christ—is the reception of the Spirit, the "baptism of fire" that causes us to "speak with the tongue of angels, and shout praises unto the Holy One of Israel." See Elder David A. Bednar, *Institute Manual*, 108.

31:14-15 ***the voice of the Son...a voice from the Father.*** In these two verses, the Son teaches the doctrine and the Father testifies that it is true.

31:14 **better for you that ye had not known me.** Compare 2 Peter 2:20-22 and Alma 24:30. It is striking that in the early days of the Church, as well as in our day, the worst enemies of the Church, those that come out the strongest against it, are those who were once committed and devout members but who turn away, for whatever reason.

31:15 **He that endureth to the end, the same shall be saved.** Elder Joseph B. Wirthlin stated that “those who endure are balanced, consistent, humble, constantly improving, and without guile. Their testimonies are not based on worldly reasons—they are based on truth, knowledge, experience, and the Spirit” (*Institute Manual*, 109).

31:16-18 Nephi summarizes his main points of the last few verses, which he knows to be true he was taught them directly by the Father and the Son: repent, be baptized to enter the gate, then receive a remission of sins by fire and the Holy Ghost.

31:19 **I would ask if all is done?...press forward.** See Elder David A. Bednar, *Institute Manual*, 109.

31:20 **thus saith the Father: Ye shall have eternal life.** Nephi quotes the Father one more time.

31:21 **the doctrine of Christ, and the only and true doctrine of the Father.** The doctrine is taught by Christ but originated with the Father, as we learn in Abraham 3.

32:1 **why do ye ponder these things.** Usually, pondering is something we are encouraged to do. But here Nephi alludes to pondering that generates inaction. In other words, if we only think great thoughts about the doctrine of Christ but do not act on what the Spirit teaches us, our pondering is a waste of time.

32:2 **speak with the tongue of angels.** Nephi explains what this phrase, introduced back in 31:13, means in this verse: to speak by the power of the Holy Ghost. Thus when we speak according to the Spirit, we are speaking the words that angels would speak, were they speaking in our place.

32:3 **feast upon the words of Christ.** We commonly speak of the words of Christ as the scriptures, and true enough. We should not simply smell, taste, nibble, or snack on the scriptures, but feast on them, with all that that term implies. But Nephi’s context makes clear that “the words of Christ” is more than the scriptures (for him, the brass plates), but includes the things God had revealed to him, the prophet, to teach his people, and what each of us can learn by the revelations of the Spirit. President Ezra Taft Benson stated that we feast on the words of Christ “as we receive it through His scriptures, His anointed, and His Holy Spirit” (*Institute Manual*, 110). Elder Robert D. Hales reiterated that thought, saying, “And when we want Him to speak to us, we search the scriptures; for His words are spoken through His prophets. He will then teach us as we listen to the promptings of the Holy Spirit” (*Institute Manual*, 110).

all things what ye should do. This doesn’t contradict D&C 58:27 (“do many things of their own free will”) but points to the fact that the important steps we must take to be saved will be taught to us by feasting on the words of Christ. This is restated in verse 5. See *Institute Manual*, 110-111.

32:6 **this is the doctrine of Christ.** The ultimate doctrine of Christ is to “all things” as taught to us by the Holy Ghost (v. 5).

32:6 **no more doctrine given until after he shall manifest himself unto you in the flesh.** This phrase can have more than one meaning. First, Nephi is clearly speaking to his own people, teaching

them that this doctrine of Christ is what they need to follow until the resurrected Christ appears unto them in almost 600 years, at which time he will teach them more doctrine. But if we liken the scripture to us, it takes on an additional, personal meaning: the doctrine of Christ—to repent, be baptized, and follow the Holy Spirit—is what governs our life until Christ appears personally to us. Joseph Smith taught:

“Now what is this other Comforter? It is no more nor less than the Lord Jesus Christ Himself; and this is the sum and substance of the whole matter; that when any man obtains this last Comforter, he will have the personage of Jesus Christ to attend him, or appear unto him from time to time, and even He will manifest the Father unto him, and they will take up their abode with him, and the visions of the heavens will be opened unto him, and the Lord will teach him face to face, and he may have a perfect knowledge of the mysteries of the Kingdom of God; and this is the state and place the ancient Saints arrived at when they had such glorious visions—Isaiah, Ezekiel, John upon the Isle of Patmos, St. Paul in the three heavens, and all the Saints who held communion with the general assembly and Church of the Firstborn” (*Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith*, 150).

32:7 *the Spirit stoppeth mine utterance.* Nephi is ready to teach us more, but is prevented by the Spirit, “because of the unbelief, and the wickedness, and the ignorance, and the stiffneckedness of men.”

32:8 *ye must pray.* Though not previously mentioned as part of the doctrine of Christ, this is so obvious to Nephi that it grieves him to have to call it out. But he realizes that we are still pondering (and not acting), so he makes this point.

32:9 *ye must not perform any thing unto the Lord save in the first place ye shall pray.* This scripture speaks strongly of the need to prepare ourselves privately in prayer before doing the Lord’s work. But I once learned a different lesson from it. On my mission, I went on a split with my mission president to teach a family. I expected him to take the lead, but he acted like my junior companion instead of the mission president, and I did the bulk of the teaching. As we were leaving, he asked how it went, and I told him I didn’t think it went so well. With great kindness, he opened his scriptures to this verse and had me read it there in front of their house. Then he lovingly said, ‘We closed with prayer, and that was good, but it would have helped bring in the Spirit to have started with prayer, too. Don’t ever act in the Lord’s name—as a teacher or leader or parent—without starting with prayer. Without that prayer of faith, it is harder for the Lord to bless you and guide you.’ That powerful lesson has always stayed with me and is why I always start classes, meetings, and other Church activities, including Education Week with hundreds of attendees, with a prayer. This scripture also speaks strongly of the need to prepare ourselves privately in prayer before doing the Lord’s work.

2 NEPHI 33 – NEPHI’S FAREWELL

33:1 *neither am I mighty in writing, like unto speaking.* Nephi must have been an amazing speaker, because his writings are very mighty!

33:3 *I pray continually for them by day, and mine eyes water my pillow by night.* The image of Nephi pleading with the Lord on behalf of his people is compelling and powerful. I have heard prayers from our modern leaders and have felt the same kind of personal care and concern.

33:4-5 A great list of what Nephi sees in the power of the scriptures he has written, which:

- Persuades us to do good.
- Tells us of our fathers.
- Speaks of Jesus.
- Persuades us to believe in him.
- Teaches us to endure to the end (“which is life eternal”).
- Speaks harshly against sin.

33:6 ***I glory in my Jesus, for he hath redeemed my soul.*** Back in 2 Nephi 4:31, Nephi plead that the Lord would “redeem my soul.” Now here he gives God praise for that having been achieved.

33:7 ***I shall meet many souls spotless at his judgment-seat.*** Like John who saw “a great multitude, which no man could number, of all nations, and kindreds, and people, and tongues, stood before the throne, and before the Lamb, clothed with white robes,” Nephi expected to see many who had followed the doctrine of Christ come to the last judgment spotless and ready to join God in his kingdom. See also v. 12, where he hope that “many of us, if not all, may be saved.”

33:8 ***Jew, because I mean them from when I came.*** An important verse that indicates how Nephi uses the term “Jew.” Many times in his writings he spoke of the “Jews” but from the context it is clear that he means the house of Israel as a whole. This confirms that the word, to Nephi, is all those in the kingdom of Judah, regardless of their tribe.

33:9 ***reconciled unto Christ.*** Nephi reiterated that only those who are baptized and cleansed by the power of the Holy Ghost, and who continue that pattern all their lives can be reconciled (to be acceptable or pleasing, to be in favor) to Christ.

33:10 Great logic: listen to my words and believe in Christ; even if you don’t believe my words, believe in Christ; but if you believe in Christ you will believe my words, since they teach the words of Christ.

33:11 ***you and I shall stand face to face.*** How many will pass before Nephi’s eyes and hear his words: ‘Did you read the Book of Mormon? Why didn’t you believe? Why didn’t you accept it? I am Nephi—I helped write it.’

33:14 ***I bid you an everlasting farewell.*** Those who will not heed the prophets, Nephi, and the very words of Christ, will not see Nephi after the day of judgment.

33:15 ***thus hath the Lord commanded me, and I must obey.*** A marvelous summary of Nephi’s life and mission, and an incredible example to us. It’s a great motto—“I must obey”—akin to President Spencer W. Kimball’s famous deskplate: “Just do it.”

JACOB 1 – JACOB LEADS THE NEPHITES

Elder Jeffrey R. Holland gave a tender description of Jacob, the new spiritual leader of the Nephites. See *Institute Manual*, 113.

1:1 ***fifty and five years.*** Somewhere around 541-540 B.C.

The small plates. This is where we get the name we commonly use to refer to these plates.

1:2 **write upon these plates.** Nephi gave the charge to keep the small plates to Jacob, his brother. The large plates went with the line of kings (v. 3). That means that Nephi's seed were not the record keepers of these plates, but Jacob's.

1:4 **engraven the heads of them.** The expression "heads" is an ancient Hebrew one (*rōš*), meaning the main points, the chief parts, or the sum. Nephi instructed Jacob to write sacred preaching, great revelation, or prophecies.

1:5 **because of faith and great anxiety.** Nephi and Jacob learned the destiny of their seed through their faith in God but also because of their sincerity and effort to plead with the Lord for that knowledge. This is a lesson of the need to work to receive revelation and not just expect it because we ask.

1:7 **come unto Christ, and partake of the goodness of God.** Like all true servants of the Lord, Jacob's efforts were not out of self-interest, but out of genuine concern for the happiness of others. His labors were diligent and persistent, and his goal was to help as many as possible avoid judgment and "enter into his rest."

1:8 **suffer his cross and bear the shame of the world.** In the Joseph Smith Translation, we get a clear definition this: "And now for a man to take up his cross, is to deny himself all ungodliness, and every worldly lust, and keep my commandments" (JST Matthew 16:24). Because Saints reject the things of the world and seek after the things of God, they are mocked by the world (as in the large and spacious building), and thus have to bear the shame of the world.

1:9 **Nephi...anointed a man to be a king.** This doesn't appear to be Nephi's son, just "a man."

1:10 **The people having loved Nephi exceedingly.** He protected them, fought battles in their behalf, and work his whole life for the benefit of others.

1:11 **called by the people second Nephi.** To honor Nephi, the kings after him were called after his name, at least for a time (later we come across kings named Mosiah and Benjamin, and the custom of calling them after Nephi seems to have been dropped). We never learn the name of the man who was king after Nephi, or any others for many years. See the excellent chart of Nephite kings, judges, prophets, and military leaders in *Institute Manual*, 114-115.

1:12 **Nephi died.** A succinct description of the end of one of the greatest men in the Book of Mormon and the history of God's people.

1:13-14 **Lamanites that seek to destroy the people of Nephi, and those who are friendly to Nephi I shall call Nephites.** Jacob is clear about his naming convention: Lamanites are the enemy of his people, Nephites are the friends of his people. A strong statement of their likely interaction with others already in the land.

1:15 **wicked practices...wives and concubines.** Just one generation after Nephi, the people were already seeking after things contrary to God's will. A concubine is merely another wife of lesser status (*Institute Manual*, 115). This is one of the main points of Jacob 2. (It is also another pointer to a larger population; if the group was just the descendents of Nephi, Sam, Jacob, Joseph, Zoram, and Nephi's sisters, just how many wives and concubines could they take among their cousins?)

1:16 **gold and silver...lifted up somewhat in pride.** The Lord had blessed them with prosperity, but already the cycle, which will become standard in the Book of Mormon's long history, is showing itself—prosperity leads to pride, which leads to wickedness.

1:17 **having first obtained mine errand from the Lord.** Jacob is not just sharing his opinion, nor is he taking it upon himself to correct the people. Rather, he is commissioned by God to deliver this message. No doubt it troubled him deeply and he took it to the Lord in prayer, but he did not stand forth and call the people to repentance without the proper authorization. We, too, can receive our errands from the Lord through calls extended by authorized priesthood leaders, and by the direction of the Holy Spirit within our stewardships.

1:18 **Jacob, and my brother Joseph.** Ordained by Nephi, these two brothers had the proper priesthood authority, as well as the sustaining of the Lord in their work.

1:19 **we did magnify our office unto the Lord.** Jacob is the only person in the Book of Mormon to use this phrase, and Paul is the only one to use it in the Bible. To “magnify” is to make great, to do honor to, or to grow, promote, and make important. President Thomas S. Monson explained it in *Institute Manual*, 115-116.

JACOB 2-3 – PRIDE AND IMMORALITY

These two chapters are a record of a sermon Jacob gave to his people some time after Nephi's death. He is compelled (as he explained above) to speak to them on these topics by the Spirit and out of his love for his people.

JACOB 2:1-11 PREPARING THE PEOPLE FOR THE MESSAGE

2:1 This verse sounds more like a preface or chapter heading. In fact, it is. The Book of Mormon contains a number of such headings, which were part of the translated text. Most are at the beginning of books so easy to spot, and the typesetter, John Gilbert, set most such internal headings in italics, which practice has been followed ever since. But a few prefaces were in the middle of books. He missed two of them—this verse and 2 Nephi 6:1—resulting in them later receiving verse numbers. Both are introductions to talks by Jacob. For two he didn't miss, see Alma 7 and Alma 9.

2:3 **I this day am weighed down.** Parents, family members, friends, and priesthood leaders all can feel burdened by the sins of others around them. Sometimes it is because they are victims of the sinner's behavior, but often they mourn with the sinner, knowing the misery that is caused by such choices.

2:4 **as yet, he have been obedient.** Like many wise teachers, Jacob begins on a positive note, letting the people know of his care for them and acknowledging their good behavior in most areas before zooming in on the problem. See comment by Elder Jeffrey R. Holland, *Institute Manual*, 116, noting especially that Jacob took ten verses to get around to delivering his message, carefully setting the stage.

2:5 **I can tell you concerning your thoughts.** Jacob could discern their thoughts by the spirit of revelation. See McConkie and Millet, 2:11.

2:7 **whose feelings are exceedingly tender and chaste and delicate.** Why didn't Jacob deliver his message in a priesthood meeting, since it seemed to be aimed at the men? He doesn't say, but it may be safe to conclude that he wanted the wives and children to know their husbands and fathers had been given this bold and direct message. Perhaps some of them needed to hear it, too, but most seemed to be more righteous than their men.

2:8-9 **have daggers placed to pierce their souls.** See Elder Dallin H. Oaks, *Institute Manual*, 116-117.

2:11 **get thou up into the temple on the morrow.** The task was given the day or night before by the word of the Lord to Jacob. This hints that the people were going to be gathered anyway, for a feast or celebration or remembrance of some kind. Jacob was praying to know what he should say, and these words came to him by revelation.

JACOB 2:12-22 RICHES AND PRIDE

2:12 **search for gold, and for silver.** This activity was probably a sin on several levels. First, it took their focus off of God and his commandments, because they were putting the search for wealth first. Second, it turned them toward selfishness, as they were more likely to care about their success than the needs of others. Third, it took their time away from more productive activities, such as caring for their fields and flocks and families.

2:13 **the hand of providence hath smiled upon you.** This odd little phrase is only found once in all of scripture, in this verse. Hands don't smile, of course, but Jesus or the heavens do in other scriptures (e.g., 3 Nephi 19:30; D&C 84:101).

stiff necks and high heads. Jacob quoted Nephi (2 Nephi 28:14). As class distinctions developed among the Nephites, they exhibited the classic traits of pride. Someone with a stiff neck cannot turn the ear to hear the Lord's word (Jeremiah 17:23) or bow the head in obedience or prayer. Those with high heads are lifted up in pride, seeing themselves as better than others (McConkie and Millet, 1:336).

2:17 **be familiar with all and free with your substance.** To be familiar with someone is to treat them like family (McConkie and Millet, 2:16). With family, you share what you have, imparting to them according to their needs and your abilities.

2:18-19 **before ye seek for riches, seek ye for the kingdom of God.** See comments by President David O. McKay and President Boyd K. Packer, *Institute Manual*, 117. When we have our priorities straight, the Lord can bless us according to our desire to use it to serve him and bless others.

JACOB 2:23-35 "GROSSER CRIMES"

2:23 **grosser crimes.** Having dealt with the issue of riches and pride, Jacob next turned to a far more serious and delicate subject. "Grosser" has several meanings that apply here, including 'flagrant and extreme' and 'indelicate, indecent, obscene, or vulgar.'

They understand not the scriptures. As we shall see, the people are using examples from the scriptures, especially kings David and Solomon, to justify their immorality.

2:24 **many wives and concubines...which thing was abominable.** There is no doubt that David and especially Solomon had many wives. In some cases, those wives were given by the Lord, and there was no sin. In other cases, they took it upon themselves, which was sin. In David's case, it was only the instance of Uriah and his wife, Bathsheba (see D&C 132:38-39). Solomon, however, had many wives that were not given him of the Lord, but were taken for political or sexual reasons only (1 Kings 7:1-6). Notice that Jacob only cites these two men, not Abraham, Jacob, Moses, or others who had plural wives, because they were obedient to the Lord in this matter (see D&C 132:34-37).

2:27 **one wife.** This is the 'default' law of marriage to man, and was the law given to the Nephites. See President Gordon B. Hinkley's comment about the Church's position toward plural marriage today (*Institute Manual*, 118).

2:28 **delight in the chastity of women.** See Elder Richard G. Scott's comments, *Institute Manual*, 119.

2:30 **raise up seed unto me.** This justification for plural marriage is given here by Jacob and alluded to D&C 132:35, 37.

2:31-32 **heard the mourning of the daughters.** The Lord condemns the adulterous practices of many husbands in the land from which the Nephites came, and declares that the same shall not happen in this new land.

2:34 **these commandments were given to our father, Lehi.** I know of no place in the record where this is taught by Lehi, but Jacob cites his father as a source for this understanding.

2:35 **greater iniquities than the Lamanites.** It is not recorded in the Book of Mormon that the Lamanites ever practiced plural marriage. See also Jacob 3:5-7.

JACOB 3:1-2 WORDS TO THE FAMILIES

3:1 **Speak unto you that are pure in heart.** Jacob next turned to the others in his audience who were innocent of the sins he discussed and were, in fact, victims. He says the Lord will give them these blessings (good counsel for anyone who is a victim to another's sins):

- "he will console you in your afflictions" – Consolation and peace come as a gift of the Spirit.
- "he will please your cause" – Jesus will be your advocate with the Father and make the case of your suffering before him. You are not alone. See D&C 45:3-5.
- "send down justice upon those" – Those who cause suffering in this life often seem to go unpunished, but the Lord assures us that justice does happen.

3:2 **feast upon his love.** We speak often of feasting on the word of God, but this singular reference in all of scripture teaches us that after we "receive the pleasing word of God," we can enjoy a great outpouring of his love.

JACOB 3:3-11 LAMANITES MORE RIGHTEOUS

3:3 **shall scourge you even unto destruction.** The Lamanites are cursed, but not because of their marital practices, and the Lord will eventually use them to destroy the Nephites.

3:4 **they shall possess the land...the Lord God will lead away the righteous.** This prophecy was fulfilled during the time of Mosiah (Omni 1:12-13), which is part of next week's lesson.

3:7 **their husbands love their wives.** The Nephites condemned many things about the Lamanites, but Jacob declares that in this thing, they are perfectly obedient.

3:8-9 **their skins will be whiter than yours.** White skin color is not a sign of righteousness, any more than dark skin color is a sign of wickedness, but white is a symbol of purity, and Jacob uses that metaphor to declare that the Lamanites righteousness will exceed that of the Nephites one day. It seems clear from these verses that the Lamanites in general were darker than the Nephites at this time, but that distinction appears to go away after a few generations at most.

3:10 **bring your children unto destruction.** Children retain their agency, of course, but the influence of a parent on a child is huge, and parents are held accountable for their teachings and their examples. See Elder Jeffrey R. Holland, *Institute Manual*, 120.

3:11 **arouse...shake...loose.** When we find ourselves in sin, the idea of waking up, shaking and loosing ourselves is appropriate.

JACOB 3:12-4:18 BE RECONCILED TO GOD

JACOB 3:12-4:3 MORE ABOUT THE PLATES

3:13 **a hundredth part...cannot be written.** Compare John 21:25 and Jacob 4:1.

the larger plates. As with Jacob 1:1, this is where we get our name for Nephi's other plates.

4:1-3 Jacob described the difficulty of writing on the plates and their desire to get the most important things recorded for their "children, and also our beloved brethren" (v. 2).

JACOB 4:4- TEACHING ABOUT CHRIST

4:4 **we had a hope of his glory.** Because of prophets like Nephi and Jacob, the Nephites fully knew about the mission of Jesus Christ long before he was born, just as we know about his Second Coming in the last days. We, too, have a hope of his glory that will save the world at the end.

4:4-5 **all the holy prophets...worshiped the Father in his name.** The Old Testament in the condition we have it is not as clear about ancient prophetic understanding of the mission of the Savior. The Joseph Smith Translation, especially the chapters in the Book of Moses, makes it clear that prophets from the very beginning knew the full plan and Jesus' role as Redeemer and Messiah.

4:6 **search the prophets...have many revelations and the spirit of prophecy.** We search the scriptures that we might gain understanding of the words written, but more important is to have scripture study be a catalyst to our own revelatory experiences, that we might have the spirit of prophecy, or the testimony of Jesus.

4:7 **it is by his grace.** Another marvelous Book of Mormon reminder about the doctrine of grace. We only have the power to do anything because of God's sharing his power with us. This includes

small things but also big ones, as mentioned at the end of verse 6 (have trees, mountains, and waves of the sea obey us).

4:9 ***earth was created by the power of his word***. Compare John 1. Man has to manipulate things with his hands, but God speaks and the universe obeys. Jesus is called “the Word” because he spoke the words of the Father and worlds came into being.

4:10 ***seek not to counsel the Lord, but to take counsel from his hand***. How do we counsel the Lord instead of taking his counsel? Consider our prayers and the desires we have for quick responses. Jesus example, ‘Thy will be done,’ demonstrates that God will make all things come out in our behalf if we exhibit faith and trust. See President Marion G. Romney, *Institute Manual*, 120.

4:11 ***be reconciled unto him through the atonement of Christ***. To be reconciled through the atonement is a humbling concept. It means to exchange for something of similar value. If we are reconciled through the atonement, then Christ sacrificed himself—paid the price of the exchange—so that we could have like value to the Father. In other words, Jesus’ atonement makes us as ‘valuable’ to God as Jesus himself.

4:12-13 These doctrines Jacob taught are not his alone, but have been taught by prophets and others speaking by the Spirit.

4:14 ***blindness came by looking beyond the mark***. This is another unique phrase to Jacob. The mark probably has reference to a target, such as with a bow and arrow or sling. If you are not sighted in on the target but instead focus beyond the mark, at a distant tree or other object, you will not hit it except by chance. It could also mean that you are turned in entirely the wrong direction, and looking beyond the mark by ignoring the target completely. See *Institute Manual*, 121.

4:15-17 ***this stone shall become the great, and the last, and the only sure foundation***. The metaphor of Jesus as the rock is attested in several part of scripture (e.g., Psalm 118:22; Isaiah 8:14-15; Matthew 21:42-44). The stone was rejected, so the building of Judaism collapsed, but they will come back and rebuild one day on the correct stone, and create a great, last, and sure foundation.

WORKS CONSULTED

Joseph Fielding McConkie and Robert L. Millet, *Doctrinal Commentary on the Book of Mormon*.

Joseph Smith, *Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith*.

LDS Church, *Book of Mormon Student Manual, Religion 121-122 (Institute Manual, 2009)*.