

CHAPTER 48

Mormon 1–6

Introduction

Having summarized accounts of the Lord’s visit among the Nephites and the 200-year era of peace that followed, Mormon reported that, starting in the 201st year, pride, disunity, and wickedness took over (see 4 Nephi 1:24–47). In the book of Mormon we read of events where he was an eyewitness. These events include the demise of the Nephite civilization. In Mormon 1–6 we can empathize with Mormon’s sorrow over the destruction of his people, a destruction which came upon them because of their rejection of the Lord and His gospel. We can also resolve to avoid such calamity in our own lives.

Commentary

Mormon 1:1. “I, Mormon”

- The Prophet Joseph Smith (1805–44) taught, “The word Mormon, means literally, more good” (*History of the Church*, 5:400).
- In an overview of Mormon’s life, President Gordon B. Hinckley (1910–2008) referred to the meaning associated with Mormon’s name, a name that has become a reference to The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints:

“May I remind you for a moment of the greatness and of the goodness of this man Mormon. He lived on this American continent in the fourth century after Christ. When Mormon was a boy of ten, the historian of the people, whose name was Ammaron, described him as ‘a sober child, and . . . quick to observe’ (Mormon 1:2). Ammaron gave him a charge that when he reached the age of twenty-four, he was to take custody of the records of the generations who had preceded him.

“The years that followed Mormon’s childhood were years of terrible bloodshed for his nation, the result of a long and vicious and terrible war between those who were called Nephites and those who were called Lamanites.

“Mormon later became the leader of the armies of the Nephites and witnessed the carnage of his people, making it plain to them that their repeated defeats came because they forsook the Lord and He in turn abandoned them. . . .



“He wrote to our generation with words of warning and pleading, proclaiming with eloquence his testimony of the resurrected Christ. He warned of calamities to come if we should forsake the ways of the Lord as his own people had done.

“Knowing that his own life would soon be brought to an end, as his enemies hunted the survivors, he pleaded for our generation to walk with faith, hope, and charity, declaring, ‘Charity is the pure love of Christ, and it endureth forever; and whoso is found possessed of it at the last day, it shall be well with him’ (Moroni 7:47).

“Such was the goodness, the strength, the power, the faith, the prophetic heart of the prophet-leader Mormon” (in Conference Report, Oct. 1990, 69–70; or *Ensign*, Nov. 1990, 52).

Mormon 1:16. Willful Rebellion against God

- Elder Jeffrey R. Holland of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles contrasted the spiritual maturity of Mormon with the sinful state of Mormon’s people. In spite of Mormon’s righteous desire, he was forbidden to preach because of the rebellious condition of his people: “The maturing Mormon, by then fifteen years of age, stood beyond the sinfulness around him and rose above the despair of his time. Consequently, he ‘was visited of the Lord, and tasted and knew of the goodness of Jesus,’ trying valiantly to preach to his people. But as God occasionally does when those with so much light reject it, Mormon literally had his mouth shut. He was forbidden to preach to a nation that had

willfully rebelled against their God. These people had rejected the miracles and messages delivered them by the three translated Nephite disciples, who had now also been silenced in their ministry and been taken from the nation to whom they had been sent” (*Christ and the New Covenant* [1997], 318).

- While serving as a member of the Seventy, Elder Dean L. Larsen explained that rebellion against God has individual roots which, if not corrected, spread with devastating consequences:

“Historically, the drifting away from the course of life marked out by the Lord has occurred as individuals begin to make compromises with the Lord’s standard. This is particularly true when the transgression is willful and no repentance occurs. Remember Mormon’s description of those who turned away from the true path in his day. They did not sin in ignorance. They willfully rebelled against God. It did not occur as a universal movement. It began as individual members of the Church knowingly began to make compromises with the Lord’s standard. They sought justification for their diversions in the knowledge that others were compromising as well. Those who willfully sin soon seek to establish a standard of their own with which they can feel more comfortable and which justifies their misconduct. They also seek the association of those who are willing to drift with them along this path of self-delusion.

“As the number of drifting individuals increases, their influence becomes more powerful. It might be described as the ‘great and spacious building syndrome.’ The drifting is the more dangerous when its adherents continue to overtly identify with and participate with the group that conforms to the Lord’s way. Values and standards that were once clear become clouded and uncertain. The norm of behavior begins to reflect this beclouding of true principles. Conduct that would once have caused revulsion and alarm now becomes somewhat commonplace” (“Likening the Scriptures unto Us,” in Monte S. Nyman and Charles D. Tate Jr., eds., *Alma, the Testimony of the Word* [1992], 8).

Mormon 1:19. Sorceries, Witchcrafts, and Magic

- President James E. Faust (1920–2007) of the First Presidency warned against intrigue with Satan’s mysteries: “It is not good practice to become intrigued by Satan and his mysteries. No good can come from getting close to evil. Like playing with fire, it is too easy to get burned. . . . The only safe course is to keep well distanced from him and any of his wicked activities or nefarious practices. The mischief of devil worship, sorcery, casting spells, witchcraft, voodooism, black magic, and all other forms of demonism should be avoided like the plague” (in Conference Report, Oct. 1987, 40; or *Ensign*, Nov. 1987, 33).

Mormon 2:13. “The Sorrowing of the Damned”

- Elder Neal A. Maxwell (1926–2004) of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles noted the contrast between godly sorrow and “the sorrowing of the damned”: “After recognition, real *remorse* floods the soul. This is a ‘godly sorrow,’ not merely the ‘sorrow of the world’ nor the ‘sorrowing of the damned’ when we can no longer ‘take happiness in sin’ (2 Corinthians 7:10; Mormon 2:13). False remorse instead is like fondling our failings. In ritual regret, we mourn our mistakes but without mending them” (in Conference Report, Oct. 1991, 40; or *Ensign*, Nov. 1991, 31).

In contrast to the sorrowing of the damned, President Ezra Taft Benson (1899–1994) explained the nature of godly sorrow so that we might understand the sorrow that leads to cleansing repentance: “Godly sorrow is a gift of the Spirit. It is a deep realization that our actions have offended our Father and our God. It is the sharp and keen awareness that our behavior caused the Savior, He who knew no sin, even the greatest of all, to endure agony and suffering. Our sins caused Him to bleed at every pore. This very real mental and spiritual anguish is what the scriptures refer to as having ‘a broken heart and a contrite spirit’ (D&C 20:37). Such a spirit is the absolute prerequisite for true repentance” (*The Teachings of Ezra Taft Benson* [1988], 72).

Mormon 2:15. “The Day of Grace Was Passed”

- Elder Jeffrey R. Holland noted the chilling line in Mormon’s account that time had run out for saving his

people: “It is at this moment in Nephite history—just under 950 years since it had begun and just over 300 years since they had been visited by the Son of God himself—that Mormon realized the story was finished. In perhaps the most chilling line he ever wrote, Mormon asserted simply, ‘I saw that the day of grace was passed with them, both temporally and spiritually.’ His people had learned that most fateful of all lessons—that the Spirit of God will not always strive with man; that it is possible, collectively as well as individually, to have time run out. The day of repentance can pass, and it had passed for the Nephites. Their numbers were being ‘hewn down in open rebellion against their God,’ and in a metaphor almost too vivid in its moral commentary, they were being ‘heaped up as dung upon the face of the land’” (*Christ and the New Covenant*, 319).



- President Spencer W. Kimball (1895–1985) described how we today might also remove ourselves from the cleansing grace of repentance: “It is true that the great principle of repentance is always available, but for the wicked and rebellious there are serious reservations to this statement. For instance, sin is intensely habit-forming and sometimes moves men to the tragic point of no return. . . . As the transgressor moves deeper and deeper in his sin, and the error is entrenched more deeply and the will to change is weakened, it becomes increasingly near-hopeless, and he skids down and down until either he does not want to climb back or he has lost the power to do so” (*The Miracle of Forgiveness* [1969], 117).

MORMON 2:19

What do we learn from this verse that gave hope to Mormon amidst his sorrow for the wickedness of his people?

Mormon 2:26. “We Were Left to Ourselves”

- We may not recognize and appreciate how much Heavenly Father helps us in our daily lives as we try to live faithfully. Mormon wrote that when his people became wicked they lost the strength of the Lord that had previously protected them. While serving as a member of the Seventy, Elder Ray H. Wood explained: “When a person violates any of God’s commandments, if there is no repentance the Lord withdraws His protective and sustaining influence. When we lose power with God, we know of a certainty that the problem lies within us and not within God. ‘I, the Lord, am bound when ye do what I say; but when ye do not what I say, ye have no promise’ (D&C 82:10). Our misdeeds bring despair. They sadden and extinguish the ‘perfect brightness of hope’ offered by Christ (2 Nephi 31:20). Without God’s help, we are left to ourselves” (in Conference Report, Apr. 1999, 54; or *Ensign*, May 1999, 40–41).

Mormon 3:8–11. Mormon Refused to Be a Commander

- In spite of Mormon leading his people for approximately 35 years, at this point he refused to lead them. Mormon must have been influenced by the abridgement he was making of the Book of Mormon. He saw Captain Moroni’s and Helaman’s justifiable reasons to go to war (see Alma 43:9–58:12)—defending their lands, houses, wives, children, rights, privileges, liberty, and ability to worship. He taught the people these purposes of war (see Mormon 2:23–24). After seeing the motivation the Nephites in his day had for fighting the Lamanites—to “avenge themselves” and that they “began to boast in their own strength” and that they were guilty of great “wickedness and abomination”—he temporarily refused to lead their armies (Mormon 3:9–14).

Mormon 3:9; 4:8. Boasting

- Elder Neal A. Maxwell cautioned us to recognize Heavenly Father's power instead of our own: "Before enjoying the harvests of righteous efforts, let us therefore first acknowledge God's hand. Otherwise, the rationalizations appear, and they include, 'My power and the might of mine hand hath gotten me this wealth' (Deuteronomy 8:17). Or, we 'vaunt' ourselves, as ancient Israel would have done (except for Gideon's deliberately small army), by boasting that 'mine own hand hath saved me' (Judges 7:2). Touting our own 'hand' makes it doubly hard to confess God's hand in all things (see Alma 14:11; D&C 59:21)" (in Conference Report, Apr. 2002, 43; or *Ensign*, May 2002, 37).

Mormon 3:12. "According to the Love of God Which Was in Me"

- When he was in the Presiding Bishopric, Bishop Glenn L. Pace admonished us to strive to emulate the love Mormon exhibited: "This prophet had Christlike love for a fallen people. Can we be content with loving less? We must press forward with the pure love of Christ to spread the good news of the gospel. As we do so and fight the war of good against evil, light against darkness, and truth against falsehood, we must not neglect our responsibility of dressing the wounds of those who have fallen in battle. There is no room in the kingdom for fatalism" (in Conference Report, Oct. 1990, 8; or *Ensign*, Nov. 1990, 8–9).

Mormon 3:18–22. Our Judgment

- Elder Bruce R. McConkie (1915–85) of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles explained that others would take part in our Judgment: "The reality is that there will be a whole hierarchy of judges who, under Christ, shall judge the righteous. He alone shall issue the decrees of damnation for the wicked" (*The Millennial Messiah* [1982], 520).

The scriptures teach that there will be at least five sources who will take part on Judgment Day:

1. Ourselves (see Alma 41:7; *History of the Church*, 6:314)
2. Our bishops (see D&C 41:9; 58:14, 17–20; 64:40; 72:17)
3. Scriptures (see Revelation 20:12; 2 Nephi 25:18; 29:11; 33:14; 3 Nephi 27:25–26)

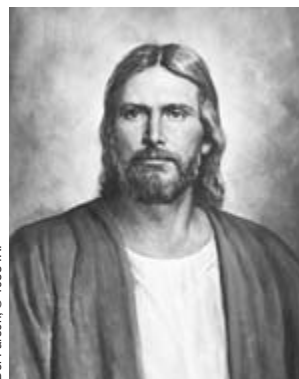
4. Apostles (see Matthew 19:27–30; 1 Nephi 12:9; 3 Nephi 27:27; Mormon 3:18; D&C 29:12)

5. Jesus Christ (see John 5:22; 3 Nephi 27:14)

- President John Taylor (1808–87) further elaborated on the role of the Apostles in our judgment: "Christ is at the head. . . . It would seem to be quite reasonable, if the twelve apostles in Jerusalem are to be the judges of the twelve tribes, and the twelve disciples on this continent are to be the judges of the descendants of Nephi, that the brother of Jared and Jared should be the judges of the Jaredites, their descendants; and, further, that the first presidency and twelve who have officiated in our age, should operate in regard to mankind in this dispensation" (*The Gospel Kingdom*, sel. G. Homer Durham [1987], 138).

Mormon 3:20–22; 5:12–14. An Admonition to Believe in Christ

- President Gordon B. Hinckley testified that the Book of Mormon is another witness for Christ: "This scripture



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of the New World, is before us as an added witness of the divinity and reality of the Lord Jesus Christ, of the encompassing beneficence of His atonement, and of His coming forth from the darkness of the grave. Within these covers is found much of the sure

word of prophecy concerning Him who should be born of a virgin, the Son of the Almighty God. There is a foretelling of His work among men as a living mortal. There is a declaration of His death, of the lamb without blemish who was to be sacrificed for the sins of the world. And there is an account that is moving and inspiring and true of the visit of the resurrected Christ among living men and women in the western continent. The testimony is here to handle; it is here to be read; it is here to be pondered; it is here to be prayed over with a promise that he who prays shall know by the power of the Holy Ghost of its truth and validity (see Moroni 10:3–5)" (in Conference Report, Apr. 1994, 95; or *Ensign*, May 1994, 72).

Mormon 4:23. Brief Overview of the Movements of the Plates

- Ammaron told Mormon to take the large plates of Nephi from the Hill Shim and add to them. Mormon was to leave the rest of the plates (plates of brass, small plates of Nephi, and plates of Ether) in the Hill Shim (see Mormon 1:2–4). Mormon removed the large plates, wrote a full account of the activities of his people on them, and used a selected portion of them to create his own condensed and abridged history of his people (see Mormon 2:18). Later Mormon returned to the Hill Shim and removed all of the plates (plates of brass, small plates of Nephi, plates of Ether, and all other plates) from the hill (see Mormon 4:23). Fearing that the Lamanites might destroy the records, Mormon hid the plates again—except his abridgement and the small plates of Nephi (the gold plates) in the Hill Cumorah (see Mormon 6:6). These gold plates Mormon gave to his son Moroni (see Mormon 6:6; Words of Mormon 1:1–7).

MORMON 5:12–14

What did Mormon perceive were the main purposes of his record keeping? (see also Mormon 3:20–21).

Mormon 5:16. The Spirit “Ceased to Strive with Their Fathers”

- President Harold B. Lee (1899–1973) explained that the wicked people of Mormon’s time had lost not only the Holy Ghost, but the Spirit of Christ from their lives: “Mormon described some people, his people, from whom the spirit of the Lord had departed, and when I read that . . . it seems clear to me that what he was talking about was not merely the inability to have the companionship of or the gift of the Holy Ghost, but he was talking of that light of truth to which every one born into the world is entitled and will never cease



to strive with the individual unless he loses it through his own sinning” (in Conference Report, Apr. 1956, 108).

Mormon 5:17. “Once a Delightful People”

- Mormon lamented the depraved condition of his people, who by contrast had once been “delightful.” President Gordon B. Hinckley reflected on some blessings associated with being delightful and the requirements to achieve such a condition: “There is the great blessing of wisdom, of knowledge, even hidden treasures of knowledge. We are promised that ours shall be a delightful land if we will walk in obedience to this law. I can interpret the word *land* as people, that those who walk in obedience shall be a delightful people. What a marvelous condition to be a delightful people whom others would describe as blessed!” (in Conference Report, Apr. 1982, 60; or *Ensign*, May 1982, 40).

Mormon 5:23. “In the Hands of God”

- Mormon wrote for us in the latter days, admonishing us to recognize God and His power. We are in His hands. Elder W. Craig Zwick of the Seventy explained some symbolism and blessings suggested by being in God’s hands:

“Hands are one of the symbolically expressive parts of the body. In Hebrew, *yad*, the most common word for *hand*, is also used metaphorically to mean power, strength, and might (see William Wilson, *Old Testament Word Studies* [1978], 205). Thus, hands signify power and strength. . . .

“To be in the hands of God would suggest that we are not only under His watchful care but also that we are guarded and protected by His wondrous power.

“Throughout the scriptures, reference is made to the hand of the Lord. His divine assistance is evidenced over and over again. His powerful hands created worlds, and yet they were gentle enough to bless the little children. . . .

“Every one of us needs to know that we can go on in the strength of the Lord. We can put our hand in His, and we will feel His sustaining presence lift us to heights unattainable alone. . . .

“. . . How do we learn to extend our hand and connect to the comfort provided by the Lord? . . .

“Here are four keys:

“Learn

“Listen

“Seek the Spirit

“Pray always

“The Lord will provide sustenance and support if we are willing to open the door and receive His hand of divine assistance. . . .

“Imagine the wounds in His hands. His weathered hands, yes, even His hands of torn flesh and physical sacrifice, give our own hands greater power and direction.

“It is the wounded Christ who leads us through our moments of difficulty. It is He who bears us up when we need more air to breathe or direction to follow or even more courage to continue.

“If we will keep the commandments of God and walk hand in hand with Him in His paths, we will go forward with faith and never feel alone” (in Conference Report, Oct. 2003, 36–38; or *Ensign*, Nov. 2003, 34–36).

MORMON 6:16–20

What insight do you gain about Mormon from these verses? How can we incorporate some of these attributes in our own lives?

Mormon 6:16–22. Don’t Reject the Open Arms of Christ

- Mormon mourned the death of his unrepentant people and sorrowed that they did not change their ways before their lives ended. If they had set aside their pride and repented of their sins, Mormon taught that their reunion with the Savior would have been joyful (see Mormon 6:17).

We too must prepare ourselves to stand before the Lord at the Judgment. President James E. Faust explained:



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“We long for the ultimate blessing of the Atonement—to become one with Him, to be in His divine presence, to be called individually by name as He warmly welcomes us home with a radiant smile, beckoning us with open arms to be enfolded in His boundless love. How gloriously sublime this experience will be if we

can feel worthy enough to be in His presence! The free gift of His great atoning sacrifice for each of us is the only way we can be exalted enough to stand before Him and see Him face-to-face. The overwhelming message of the Atonement is the perfect love the Savior has for each and all of us. It is a love which is full of mercy, patience, grace, equity, long-suffering, and, above all, forgiving.

“The evil influence of Satan would destroy any hope we have in overcoming our mistakes. He would have us feel that we are lost and that there is no hope. In contrast, Jesus reaches down to us to lift us up. Through our repentance and the gift of the Atonement, we can prepare to be worthy to stand in His presence” (in Conference Report, Oct. 2001, 22; or *Ensign*, Nov. 2001, 20).

Points to Ponder

- What do you think it means to be “of a sober mind”? (Mormon 1:15).
- How can you recognize the Lord’s influence in your life? (see Mormon 3:3).
- What do you think it means to be “in the hands of God”? (Mormon 5:23). What can you do to qualify to enjoy more benefits from being in God’s hands?

Suggested Assignments

- Write a verse-by-verse analysis of Mormon 3:17–22. Then explain to a friend or family member the important points contained in these verses.