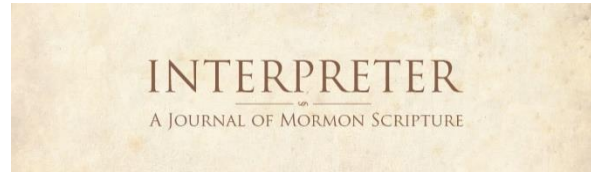




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## The Book of Mormon Versus the Consensus of Scholars: Surprises from the Disputed Longer Ending of Mark, Part 2

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## **The Book of Mormon Versus the Consensus of Scholars: Surprises from the Disputed Longer Ending of Mark, Part 2**

Jeff Lindsay

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# THE BOOK OF MORMON VERSUS THE CONSENSUS OF SCHOLARS: SURPRISES FROM THE DISPUTED LONGER ENDING OF MARK, PART 2

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Jeff Lindsay

*Abstract: Following the account of the ministry of Christ among the Nephites as recorded in the Book of Mormon, Christ gave a charge to His New World disciples (Mormon 9:22–25). These words are nearly like the commission of Christ to His apostles at the end of the Gospel of Mark (Mark 16:9–20). According to the general consensus of modern Bible scholars, Christ did not speak those words; they are a later addition. If so, this is a problem for the Book of Mormon. Fortunately, recent modern scholarship offers compelling reasons for overturning the old consensus against the longer ending of Mark. Some of the factors from modern scholarship that indirectly help overcome a potentially serious objection to and apparent weakness in the Book of Mormon also help us better appreciate its strength as we explore unifying themes derived from an ancient Jewish perspective. Part 1 of this two-part series looked at the evidence for the unity of Mark and the plausibility of Mormon 9:22–25. In Part 2, we examine further Book of Mormon implications from the thematic evidence for the unity of Mark.*

**I**n Part 1, we examined new scholarship supporting the authenticity of the widely disputed longer ending of Mark in Mark 16:9–20, where the great commission Christ gave to His disciples is referenced in Mormon 9:22–25. If Christ never spoke those words, the use of similar words quoted by Mormon in Christ’s commission to the New World disciples would be problematic. Fortunately, an abundance of evidence from early Christian sources, such as writings of early Christian fathers, liturgical materials, and New Testament manuscripts and translations (versions), support the authenticity of the longer ending of Mark. It is further

supported by internal evidence from the language and themes employed. Of particular importance is the recent scholarship in Nicholas P. Lunn's *The Original Ending of Mark: A New Case for the Authenticity of Mark 16:9–20*.<sup>1</sup> Detailed analysis from Lunn and others shows that the commonly accepted reasons for rejecting the longer ending of Mark are seriously flawed and are overly reliant on arguments of authority that need to be reexamined. Thus Mormon's use of language similar to part of the longer ending is not a serious indictment of the authenticity of the Book of Mormon.

Lunn's analysis of themes that unify Mark and strengthen the case for the longer ending as authentic also have bearing on the Book of Mormon, for some of the same themes appear to be used with subtle skill in the Book of Mormon.

### 3 Nephi and the Exodus Theme

In many cases, what we learn from Lunn has ramifications for Book of Mormon studies. For example, what happens when we look at 3 Nephi through the lens of the Exodus account? Does it show similar themes in the appearance of the Messiah to Book of Mormon peoples? Is there a new Exodus present in that book? Does Lunn's analysis of the theme of transfiguration offer any help in appreciating 3 Nephi and its transfiguration/translation scenes?

It is already well known (among serious students of the Book of Mormon) that subtle Exodus themes are pervasive in the Book of Mormon, especially in Nephi's writings,<sup>2</sup> so much so that some critics

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1. Nicholas P. Lunn, *The Original Ending of Mark: A New Case for the Authenticity of Mark 16:9–20* (Eugene, OR: Pickwick Publications, 2014).

2. See Terrence L. Szink, "Nephi and the Exodus," in *Rediscovering the Book of Mormon*, ed. John L. Sorenson and Melvin J. Thorne (Provo, UT: Foundation for Ancient Research and Mormon Studies, 1991), 39–42; <http://publications.mi.byu.edu/fullscreen/?pub=1111&index=6>; Bruce J. Boehm, "Wanderers in the Promised Land: A Study of the Exodus Motif in the Book of Mormon and Holy Bible," *Journal of Book of Mormon Studies* 3/1 (1994): 187–203; <http://publications.mi.byu.edu/fullscreen/?pub=1385&index=12>; and S. Kent Brown, "The Exodus Pattern in the Book of Mormon," in *From Jerusalem to Zarahemla: Literary and Historical Studies of the Book of Mormon* (Provo, UT: Religious Studies Center, Brigham Young University, 1998), 75–98; <https://rsc.byu.edu/archived/jerusalem-zarahemla-literary-and-historical-studies-book-mormon/exodus-pattern-book-mormon>. On the significance of flight into the wilderness as an exodus theme, see David E. Bokovoy, "The Bible vs. the Book of Mormon: Still Losing the Battle," *FARMS Review* 18/1 (2006): 3–19, particularly at 7; <https://publications.mi.byu.edu/fullscreen/?pub=1446&index=3>.

have pointed to this extensive and clearly deliberate hypertextuality as evidence of crude plagiarism, though this does injustice to the seemingly Semitic craftsmanship of the text.<sup>3</sup> While Nephi's interweaving of Exodus themes is noteworthy, related references are found elsewhere. For example, Abinadi's actions and preaching exhibit many allusions to Moses and the Exodus. Abinadi gives the Ten Commandments, his face glows, as did Moses's, and his actions and words suggest that his speech before King Noah may have been given at the Feast of Pentecost.<sup>4</sup> Like Moses challenging Pharaoh, Abinadi challenges King Noah. Pharaoh's response, "And Pharaoh said, *Who is the Lord*, that I should obey his voice to let Israel go?" (Exodus 5:2) is echoed by King Noah: "Who is Abinadi, that I and my people should be judged of him, or *who is the Lord*, that shall bring upon my people such great affliction?" (Mosiah 11:27). The result of Abinadi's brave ministry is similar to Moses's: the people are led away from the influence of the wicked ruler by escaping into the wilderness, where they enter into a covenant with the Lord. In the Book of Mormon, though, they are not led not by Abinadi himself but by his convert, the priest Alma.

Many other references and parallels to Exodus themes can be found in other scenes of deliverance and covenant making in the Book of Mormon. Here, though, I focus on later material related to the ministry of Christ in the Americas and compare it with the findings of Lunn relating to the Gospel of Mark.

Lunn's analysis reveals structure and unifying themes in Mark that can be easily missed by modern readers and, likewise, by ancient or modern forgers. Analysis of the Exodus theme throughout Mark, including the disputed longer ending, is important evidence of its unity and of the authenticity of the disputed verses. The same can also be said of the weaker but still noteworthy Elijah theme. For a Jewish writer steeped in the Hebrew scriptures and aware of its Messianic prophecies and symbols, the Gospel of Mark is made more powerful and instructive through its subtle and clever adaptation of those themes to describe the New Exodus led by Christ in a role with Elijah-like overtones. In Lunn's

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3. See the responses to some such complaints in Jeff Lindsay, "Joseph and the Amazing Technicolor Dream Map: Part 1 of 2," *Interpreter: A Journal of Mormon Scripture* 19 (2016): 153–239; <http://www.mormoninterpreter.com/joseph-and-the-amazing-technicolor-dream-map-part-1-of-2/>.

4. See, for example, "Did Abinadi Prophesy During Pentecost?," *Book of Mormon Central*, KnoWhy #90, May 2, 2016, <https://knowwhy.bookofmormoncentral.org/content/did-abinadi-prophecy-during-pentecost>.

analysis of the parallels between the longer ending of Mark and the Exodus, he offers these comparisons as a summary (*numbering added*):<sup>5</sup>

<b>Mark 16</b>	<b>Exodus</b>
1. Jesus “appeared” to the disciples (v.14)	The LORD “appeared” to Moses (3:16, 4:5)
2. Commissioned to “go” into all of creation and proclaim the gospel (v. 15)	Commissioned to “go” to Egypt and bring out the Israelites from slavery (3:10)
3. “Whoever believes ... whoever does not believe ... ” (v. 16)	“What if they will not believe me ... ?” (4:1); “that they may believe ... ” (4:5)
4. “signs” (v. 17)	“signs” (4:9, etc.)
5. “with their hands” (v. 18)	“in his hand” (4:4)
6. “they will pick up snakes” (v. 18)	Moses took hold of a snake (4:4)
7. The disciples went and preached, accompanied by signs (vv. 19–20)	Moses went and spoke the message and performed the signs (4:20, 30–31)
8. “hardness of heart” (v. 14)	“hardened ... heart” ( <i>passim</i> )
9. “cast out seven demons” (v. 9)	cast out seven nations (3:8; 34:24, etc.)

The last item in his list may be a stretch and is easy to criticize. Nevertheless, it is at least possible that Mark saw significance in the number seven when choosing to mention that detail. If the frequent theme of casting out demons in Mark was viewed as an analog to the casting out of pagan nations in Israel as part of God’s New Exodus through the ministry of Christ, perhaps Mark felt the number was significant, but it is simply speculation.

In looking at the parallels Lunn sees in the ending of Mark with the appearance of Christ and His commission to the apostles, we may wonder if anything similar might be happening in 3 Nephi with the appearance of Christ to Book of Mormon peoples. Exodus themes are strongly present in the Book of Mormon, though most strongly in the writings of Nephi<sub>1</sub>. Alma the Younger, clearly a devoted student of the brass plates, also uses Exodus themes in his writings. But do we find that in the 3 Nephi account of Christ’s appearance and ministry in the New World?

Several of the items in Lunn’s list have relationships to the Book of Mormon account. Obviously, Christ’s ministry begins with an appearance to the Nephites. The heading before 3 Nephi 11, present in the earliest manuscripts of the Book of Mormon and thus representing

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5. Lunn, *The Original Ending of Mark*, 262–63.



text from the gold plates, not a later editorial insertion, states that “Jesus Christ sheweth himself unto the people of Nephi. . . . And on this wise did he shew himself unto them.”<sup>6</sup> The word *appeared* is also used directly in the body of the chapter. After a divine voice speaks three times to the people to call attention to the descent of Christ, they look up and see a Man descending from heaven but did not know what it meant and “thought it was an angel that had *appeared* unto them” (3 Nephi 11:8). The same word, *appeared*, as found in the KJV of Mark and Exodus, is also used to describe the visit of the Lord in the New World, though this is not surprising.

Incidentally, just as the Nephites initially thought it was an angel appearing unto them, so Exodus 3 initially reports that “an angel of the Lord appeared unto [Moses]” in the fire of the burning bush (v. 2), but shortly thereafter we learn that it is actually God calling Moses from the midst of the bush (vv. 4–6).

Regarding issue 2, the charge to “go” given to Moses and the apostles is also found in 3 Nephi 11:41 in the introductory words of Christ, where He commissions His disciples to “go forth unto this people, and declare the words which I have spoken, unto the ends of the earth.” It is a commission to go unto “this people,” but the words and the gospel message are intended to be taken “unto the ends of the earth.” This echoes the commission in the longer ending of Mark and reminds us of God’s command to Moses to “go” and free Israel in Exodus 3:10. (“Go” is found in many translations of Exodus 3:10, such as the NIV, though the KJV has “Come now” instead of the NIV’s “So now, go,” even though the corresponding Hebrew root, *yalak*, is much more frequently translated as “go” in the KJV.)<sup>7</sup>

The next three issues in Lunn’s table, items 3 to 5 dealing with belief, signs, and hands, are all present in 3 Nephi 11 and somewhat in later parts of 3 Nephi.

Before the miraculous appearance of the Lord, 3 Nephi 11:2 refers to the “sign” that had been given and fulfilled concerning His death in the Old World. Another dramatic sign is given immediately after His appearance, when the Lord invites the Nephites to come and “thrust your hands into my side” and to “feel the prints of the nails in my hands and in my feet, that ye may know that I am the God of Israel, and the God of

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6. Royal Skousen, *The Book of Mormon: The Earliest Text* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2009), 593.

7. Strong’s H312, *Blue Letter Bible*, <https://www.blueletterbible.org/lang/lexicon/lexicon.cfm?Strong's=H3212&t=KJV>.



the whole earth, and have been slain for the sins of the world” (3 Nephi 11:14). Here the Lord offers His hands as both a visual and tactile sign and asks those present to use their hands to touch Him and confirm that He had been slain, removing any grounds for disbelief, that they might know that their God had appeared and completed His Atonement to redeem them. The topic of “signs” is explicitly addressed later, when the Lord speaks of a “sign” He will give Israel in the latter days so that they might know the Lord is fulfilling His promises and keeping His covenant with Israel (3 Nephi 21:1–2, 7).

The Exodus-related significance of Christ’s opening words and the wounds He showed have been noted by S. Kent Brown.<sup>8</sup> Brown observes that in ancient times, agents sent to negotiate for the release of captives in foreign lands would be sent with credentials that could be shown to confirm that they had the requisite authority. Thus Moses and Aaron, sent as representatives of the Lord to Pharaoh (Exodus 3:10; 4:14–15), presented their “credentials” in the form of divine signs worked by the power of the rod of Aaron/Moses (Exodus 7:8–12). Relating this concept to the Book of Mormon, Brown writes:

When we turn to 3 Nephi, the need and the effort to recover those who were captives of sin becomes clear. The principal differences, of course, were that (a) the risen Jesus, the one who sought the recovery, came in person rather than sending a messenger, and (b) there was no captor to whom he needed to present his credentials. In this connection, important features of Jesus’ visit grew out of the scene in which he presented his “credentials” and the tokens of his mission to those whom he sought to rescue. Note the following overtones in the wonderful moments just after his arrival: “Behold, I AM Jesus Christ whom the prophets testified shall come into the world. And behold, I AM the light and the life of the world” (3 Nephi 11:10–11). The similarities with Moses’ situation cannot be missed. In the first instance, Jesus identified himself as the one whom the gathered crowd had been expecting. Moses, too, had to identify himself as the envoy of Israel’s

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8. S. Kent Brown, “The Exodus Pattern in the Book of Mormon,” *BYU Studies* 30/3 (Summer 1990):111; reprinted and revised in S. Kent Brown, *From Jerusalem to Zarahemla: Literary and Historical Studies of the Book of Mormon* (Provo, UT: Brigham Young University Religious Studies Center, 1998), 75–98; <https://rsc.byu.edu/archived/jerusalem-zarahemla-literary-and-historical-studies-book-mormon/exodus-pattern-book-mormon>.

God (Exodus 4:29–31). Further, Jesus announced himself specifically by using the divine name I AM, the same name which Moses carried from his interview on the holy mount (3:14). Additionally, as Moses had carried at least one token of his commission which had the form of a physical malady, namely, his arm which could be made leprous (4:6–8), so Jesus bore the tokens of his crucifixion in his person. Moreover, to demonstrate the validity of his wounds, Jesus asked the entire crowd of twenty-five hundred people (3 Nephi 17:25) to come forward so that “ye may thrust your hands into my side, and also that ye may feel the prints of the nails in my hands and in my feet” (11:14). My last point in this context is that as the children of Israel had “believed” Moses and had then “bowed their heads and worshipped” (Exodus 4:31), so the people in Bountiful, after “going forth one by one . . . did know of a surety and did bear record, that it was he, of whom it was written by the prophets, that should come” (3 Nephi 11:15). They too “did fall down at the feet of Jesus, and did worship him” (11:17). And like the scene in which worship was extended to Jesus who was present, the Israelite slaves worshiped the Lord who “had visited the children of Israel” (Exodus 4:31).<sup>9</sup>

Both the acceptance of the tokens and the response seem significant in each context.

Brown points to additional parallels between 3 Nephi and the Exodus account, including the use of “I AM” and the response of the Nephites in bowing and worshipping Him Who “had visited the children of Israel” (Exodus 4:31). Christ, of course, was visiting the Nephites, and, in His address to them, said that the Father will “*visit* him [who believes in Christ] with fire and with the Holy Ghost” (3 Nephi 11:35).

Turning to the next item on Lunn’s list, number 6, there is no mention of snakes or serpents in 3 Nephi, apart from a passage on the Sermon on the Mount as adapted for and quoted to the Nephites (“Or if he ask a fish, will he give him a serpent?” in 3 Nephi 14:10). However, Mormon, in Mormon 9:22–25, later reports that Christ told the disciples essentially the same words found in the commission to the apostles in the disputed longer ending of Mark (Mark 16:15–18, with the taking up of serpents mentioned in v. 18 and in Mormon 9:24). Though it is so speculative that I hesitate to mention it, if the Nephites in Mesoamerica

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9. Ibid.

connected the brass serpent of Moses with Christ, perhaps in the context of an early form of what would become the Quetzalcoatl myth, then there is a conceivable link between touching Christ with their hands and the Exodus theme of Moses taking up the serpent that would become his rod again or more directly a link to touching the living reality behind the symbol of the brass serpent. But if such a connection were intended in 3 Nephi, one might hope to find an allusion to the brass serpent or to Moses's rod associated with the scene in 3 Nephi 11.

As for item 7, speaking the message accompanied by signs, this was thoroughly accomplished by the twelve disciples in the New World. Beginning the very night after Jesus appeared, they undoubtedly led the effort to announce the coming of the Lord to thousands during the night that they might be present for His return the next day (3 Nephi 19:1–4). On the next day, they then began fulfilling their commission by teaching what Jesus had taught, dividing the crowd into twelve bodies, then leading them in prayer and teaching the very words that Christ had taught the day before (3 Nephi 19:5–8). That day their divinely appointed ministry would be confirmed through dramatic signs, including the return of Christ in their midst. This commission to go and teach the words of Christ would continue throughout their lives (3 Nephi 26:17). Many signs would accompany the ministry, in particular those of the three disciples who were given special power to tarry on earth until the return of Christ in the last days (3 Nephi 28:1–23). These three “did go forth upon the face of the land, and did minister unto all the people” (3 Nephi 28:18) and would miraculously survive many attempts of the wicked to kill them or hold them captive (3 Nephi 28:19–22).

Item 8, which deals with the “hardness” of hearts, is not clearly present in the context of Christ's ministry, though in 3 Nephi it is referenced as a key factor associated with the wickedness of the people before the great destruction in 3 Nephi 8. As reported in 3 Nephi 1:22, “there began to be lyings sent forth among the people, by Satan, to harden their hearts, to the intent that they might not believe in those signs and wonders which they had seen; but notwithstanding these lyings and deceivings the more part of the people did believe, and were converted unto the Lord.” Here the hardening of hearts under Satan's influence leads to disbelief in the signs and wonders they saw that pointed to the coming of Christ. Then 3 Nephi 2:1–2 again reports that the people “began to be hard in their hearts, and blind in their minds, and began to disbelieve all which they had heard and seen,” ascribing signs and wonders from God to the works of Satan or the deception of men.

Further, in 3 Nephi 21, in speaking of a sign to be given in the latter days regarding the gathering of Israel, Christ states that the Gentiles may be counted among his people “if they will not harden their hearts,” and in the following verse He observes that His prophecies about the gathering of Israel in the last days “shall be a sign unto them [the Gentiles]” (3 Nephi 21:6–7). These passages link hardness of hearts to disbelief in divine signs, which is what we find in several verses in Exodus. For example, in Exodus 4:21, “the LORD said unto Moses, When thou goest to return into Egypt, see that thou do all those wonders before Pharaoh, which I have put in thine hand: but I will harden his heart [the JST has ‘Pharaoh will harden his heart’], that he shall not let the people go.” In spite of signs, the hardened heart does not believe and obey. Later in Exodus 7:3–4, the Lord tells Moses that He “will harden Pharaoh’s heart [also changed to ‘Pharaoh will harden his heart’ in the JST], and though I multiply my signs and wonders in Egypt, he will not listen to you” (NIV).

Other heart-related passages in 3 Nephi include 3 Nephi 7:16, where the great prophet Nephi<sub>3</sub>, “being grieved for the hardness of their hearts and the blindness of their minds — went forth among them” to preach repentance. Then when the Lord speaks to the Nephites immediately after the great destruction of 3 Nephi 8, He commands them to “offer for a sacrifice unto me a broken heart and a contrite spirit” (3 Nephi 9:20), which is the opposite of a hardened heart. In Christ’s initial words to the Nephites, He warns against Satan’s power over the hearts of men, to stir them up to anger (3 Nephi 11:29–30). While not using the word “hardness,” the concept is related. (On Nephi<sub>3</sub> as an Elijah figure, like John the Baptist, see the discussion below.)

Item 9, as mentioned (casting out seven nations/seven demons), may be a weak element in Lunn’s analysis and is not found in 3 Nephi. However, the Exodus theme of casting out pagan nations to prepare the way for Israel not only parallels Christ’s casting out demons in Mark as part of a New Exodus, it also has links to 3 Nephi, where the theme of a New Exodus is also present. Unfortunately, this New Exodus appears to require casting out portions of a pagan Gentile nation in the New World, as described in 3 Nephi 20:15–22 and 21:12–24. The words Christ uses make the ties to the account in Exodus particularly strong, for He introduces the concept after declaring that “this land” in the New World was given unto the Nephites/House of Israel for an inheritance (3 Nephi 20:14), and then begins to warn the Gentiles on this land (3 Nephi 20:15–22). Among the Gentiles, the remnant of the House of

Jacob shall be “as a lion among the beasts of the forest, and as a young lion among the flocks of sheep” (v. 16), a quoting of Micah 5:8 but also making reference to Numbers 23:22–24, where Balaam prophesies that Israel, as it had left Egypt and was entering its promised land, would “rise up as a great lion, and lift up himself as a young lion: he shall not lie down until he eat of the prey, and drink the blood of the slain” (v. 24). This lion/young lion combination is repeated in a similar context in 3 Nephi 21:12. The future gathering of Israel, coupled with some degree of scattering of Gentile peoples who reject the gospel, is part of the New Exodus of the last days and is rich in parallels to the original Exodus.

Significantly, nearly all the Exodus themes that Lunn lists for the disputed ending of Mark, where Christ appears and gives the great commission to His apostles, are also found in 3 Nephi, where Christ does the same with His twelve disciples in the New World. Elements identified by Lunn in defense of the integrity of Mark also help us see more of the Exodus links in 3 Nephi.

### Other Parallels Between Exodus and 3 Nephi

While Lunn focuses on Sinai-related parallels to Exodus 3 and 4, the Sinai experience continues in Exodus 6, where we find several noteworthy relationships to the 3 Nephi account in vv. 1–8:

Then the LORD said unto Moses, Now shalt thou see what I will do to Pharaoh: for with a strong hand shall he let them go, and with a strong hand shall he drive them out of his land.

And God spake unto Moses, and said unto him, *I am THE LORD:*

And *I appeared* unto Abraham, unto Isaac, and unto Jacob, by the name of God Almighty, but by my name JEHOVAH was I not known to them.

And I have also *established my covenant with them, to give them the land* of Canaan, the land of their pilgrimage, wherein they were strangers.

And I have also heard the groaning of the children of Israel, whom the Egyptians keep in bondage; and *I have remembered my covenant.*

Wherefore say unto the children of Israel, I am the LORD, and I will bring you out from under the burdens of the Egyptians, and I will rid you out of their bondage, and I

will redeem you *with a stretched out arm*, and with great judgments:

And I will take you to me for a people, and I will be to you a God: and ye shall know that I am the LORD your God, which bringeth you out from under the burdens of the Egyptians.

And I will bring you in unto the land, concerning the which I did swear to give it to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob; and *I will give it you for an heritage: I am the LORD.* (emphasis added)

Parallels to 3 Nephi occur in the declaration “I am the Lord” and “I appeared” as well as the language around the covenant and the land of inheritance given to the House of Israel, all discussed above. Further, Christ begins His words to the Nephites as He “stretched forth his hand and spake” (3 Nephi 11:9), similar to the “stretched out arm” in Exodus 6:6. He then declares, “Behold, I am Jesus Christ, whom the prophets testified shall come into the world. And behold, I am the light and the life of the world” (3 Nephi 11:10–11).

Other parallels to consider include the location of the appearance of the Lord at the temple in Bountiful, the “mountain of the Lord’s house” (Isaiah 2:2), which can be connected to Mount Sinai, site of Moses’s theophany.

Among the other Exodus concepts that occur in 3 Nephi, another dramatic one is the feeding of the people with bread and wine in a sacramental meal offered by Christ, even though neither bread nor wine was brought for that event (3 Nephi 20:3–7), a parallel to the feeding of Israel with manna and miraculously produced water during their journey in the wilderness. This event is treated in more detail below in relationship to Elisha.

Another water-related concept from Exodus is the crossing of the Red Sea (Exodus 14), for which Lunn sees parallels in Mark to teachings regarding baptism. This is consistent with 3 Nephi’s emphasis on baptism, one of the first topics that Christ touches upon after He appears (3 Nephi 11:21–27). Baptism, of course, is a ceremony whose symbolism includes being rescued from the waters of death and chaos. Water is explicitly mentioned in 3 Nephi: “ye shall go down and stand in the water” (3 Nephi 11:23), “then shall ye immerse them in the water” and “come forth again out of the water” (3 Nephi 11:26); “I have given power that they may baptize you with water,” and “after ye are baptized with water, behold, I will baptize you with fire and with the Holy Ghost” (3 Nephi



12:1); and four times in the context of baptism in 3 Nephi 19 (vv. 10–13), including going down to the water’s edge (3 Nephi 19:10), which may parallel the House of Israel approaching the Red Sea before the miracle began or to the crossing of the Jordan by Joshua and the priests carrying the tabernacle (Joshua 3:5–17, with the “brink of the water of the Jordan” mentioned in v. 8, or “the edge of the Jordan’s waters” in the NIV). Further, those who are not built upon His rock but on a sandy foundation will be received by the gates of hell “when the floods come” (3 Nephi 11:40, 18:13), followed by two references to the floodlike “waters of Noah” (3 Nephi 22:9, quoting Isaiah 54:9), waters whose destructive force reminds us of the Red Sea that destroyed the Egyptian army with its horses and chariots.

Speaking of horses and chariots, Christ’s partial quotation of Micah 5:10 in 3 Nephi 21:14, “I will cut off thy horses out of the midst of thee, and I will destroy thy chariots,” is likely a reference to the destruction of Egypt’s horses and chariots in the Red Sea (Exodus 14:6–9, 17–18, 23–28; 15:19; and especially Deuteronomy 11:4, where the Lord “destroyed” the Egyptian’s horses and chariots).

The “cloud” that surrounds Jesus and hides him from the Nephites as He ascends into heaven (3 Nephi 18:38) is also reminiscent of the cloud associated with God’s presence and power in the Exodus story (Exodus 13:21–22; 14:19–20, 24; 16:10; 19:9, 16; 24:15–16, 18; 34:5; 40:34–38).

Christ’s command to “Look unto me, and endure to the end” (3 Nephi 15:9), followed by healing of the people (3 Nephi 17:9), may point to the account of the brass serpent that healed Israelites who would look to that symbol of Christ (Numbers 21:8–9), as George S. Tate has suggested.<sup>10</sup>

Several major scenes involve apparent references to the Exodus as well as to Elijah-Elisha themes, such as scenes involving fire and translation, but these will be considered below.

### **Elijah in the Book of Mormon**

As mentioned in Part 1, in addition to multiple Exodus themes that unite the longer ending of Mark with the rest of his text, Lunn also notes

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10. George S. Tate, “The Typology of the Exodus Pattern in the Book of Mormon,” in *Literature of Belief: Sacred Scripture and Religious Experience*, ed. Neal E. Lambert (Provo, UT: Religious Studies Center, Brigham Young University, 1981), 245–62; <https://rsc.byu.edu/pt-pt/archived/literature-belief-sacred-scripture-and-religious-experience/13-typology-exodus-pattern-book>.



the subtle presence of references to Elijah in Mark's text, including the longer ending.<sup>11</sup>

Several other scholars have noted the many ways in which Elijah themes are used in the Bible. Thomas L. Brodie, for example, finds evidence that Luke deliberately shapes accounts of Jesus to correspond to events from Elijah's life.<sup>12</sup> In examining the relationship between the Assumption of Christ and Elijah's departure in the chariot of fire, for example, Brodie observes:

What is essential is that, even though, within the Bible as a whole, there are indeed three other references to people being taken away (Enoch in Genesis 5:24; and Elijah in 1 Maccabees 2:58 and Sirach 48:9), there are no other biblical texts, apart from 2 Kings 2:1 and Luke 9:51, which speak of the one who is soon to be assumed as journeying to the fated place. Nor are there any other biblical texts which place the image of assumption so close to the image or idea of death. The link is unique.<sup>13</sup>

Examining different aspects of the text, J. Severino Croatto argues that Luke not only links Elijah to John the Baptist but carefully applies other roles of Elijah to Christ to illustrate not only His role as Messiah and Savior but as a prophet.<sup>14</sup> Croatto bemoans the historical and current neglect of Christ's prophetic roles as the focus on the traditional messianic lens applied to the Gospels has blurred the varied perspectives presented for the role of Jesus, particularly His prophetic roles, including "a historical Jesus prophet, according to several biblical typologies, and a paschal Jesus Messiah, with the paschal extension of Prophet-Teacher 'like Moses.'"<sup>15</sup> After reviewing the strong but sometimes subtle evidence of Christ's varied prophetic roles in Luke, Croatto concludes:

Jesus fulfills everything foretold about the prophet (Luke 4:21), the Son of Man (18:31), the Messiah (24:26, 44–48; Acts 3:18), or "these days" (Acts 3:24). But above all, Jesus

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11. Lunn, *The Original Ending of Mark*, 263–5.

12. Thomas L. Brodie, "The Departure for Jerusalem (Luke 9,51–56) as a Rhetorical Imitation of Elijah's Departure for the Jordan (2 Kings 1,1–2, 6)," *Biblica*, 70/1 (1989): 96–109; <http://www.jstor.org/stable/42707462>.

13. Brodie, "The Departure for Jerusalem," 103.

14. J. Severino Croatto, "Jesus, Prophet like Elijah, and Prophet-Teacher like Moses in Luke-Acts," *Journal of Biblical Literature* 124/3 (Fall, 2005): 451–65; <http://www.jstor.org/stable/30041034>.

15. Croatto, "Jesus, Prophet like Elijah," 451.

develops a multiple prophetic function for himself: (1) in the tradition of the great prophets; (2) as Elijah (prophet and healer); (3) being killed, just like the prophets; and (4) as eschatological prophet-teacher, interpreter of the Scriptures. This prophetic-magisterial activity includes the affirmation of Jesus' paschal messiahship and the "jesuanic" prefiguration of the prophet who is rejected and condemned to death. In the last instance, Jesus' paschal messiahship is the reverse of his terrestrial prophetic activity. This activity is clarified and interpreted by his new prophetic-magisterial role "like Moses," which is also paschal.

The prophetic perspective of Jesus' activity is so intense in the Lukan *magnum opus* that it is astonishing that it could be replaced by the messianic readings and that such interpretation became almost the only one. *The blurring of the prophetic dimension of Jesus in the theological tradition — not only in the exegetical tradition — is connected to the absence of a prophetic typology in the nomenclature of the saints.* The saints can be confessors, virgins, martyrs, doctors, but there are no prophets in the Christian catalogue. (*emphasis added*)<sup>16</sup>

Croatto will be happy to learn that there are prophets in the Christian catalogue of the Latter-day Saints and that the Book of Mormon strongly affirms Christ's role not only as Messiah but as the archetype and fulfillment of the ancient, early Christian and modern Restoration role of prophets, including the more common role of paschal prophet-teachers but also the more dramatic role of prophets like Joseph Smith offering a bold new theophany, bold new visions, prophecies, and so forth.

Elijah is rarely mentioned in the Book of Mormon, yet Elijah themes appear in several contexts, sometimes with subtlety and skill, adding to the richness and unity of the Book of Mormon, as Elijah themes contribute to the meaning and unity of the Gospel of Mark.

Elijah themes have been noted several times in previous investigations of the Book of Mormon. Hugh Nibley, for example, saw a parallel between Elijah's going into hiding and Abinadi's departure from and then later return in disguise to the people of King Noah in the city of Nephi.<sup>17</sup> While Abinadi may be linked more directly with themes

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16. Ibid., 465.

17. Hugh W. Nibley, *Teachings of the Book of Mormon*, Semester 2, (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1993), Chapter 33, p. 59; <http://gospelink.com/library/>

related to Moses (e.g., he gives the Ten Commandments, his face glows as did Moses's, etc.<sup>18</sup>), his role as a prophet out of hiding and challenging a wicked king makes a plausible allusion to Elijah.

Following Lunn's lead, I will consider possible Elijah themes related to Christ and His followers in 3 Nephi and the adjacent texts of Helaman and 4 Nephi.

### Christ and Elijah

Many modern scholars traditionally focus on the role of John the Baptist as an Elijah figure,<sup>19</sup> often overlooking the strong evidence showing Christ as an Elijah figure. This topic, relevant to Lunn's analysis, has been fruitfully explored by a variety of authors, such as John Poirier,<sup>20</sup> J. Severino Croatto,<sup>21</sup> Craig Evans,<sup>22</sup> and Thomas L. Brodie,<sup>23</sup> who generally focus on Luke. Adam Winn,<sup>24</sup> Thomas L. Brodie,<sup>25</sup> and Wolfgang Roth<sup>26</sup> have also considered related Elijah-Elisha themes in

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document/30770.

18. See, for example, "Did Abinadi Prophecy During Pentecost?," *Book of Mormon Central*, KnoWhy #90, May 2, 2016, <https://knowhy.bookofmormoncentral.org/content/did-abinadi-prophecy-during-pentecost>. Further, one could also argue that like Moses challenging Pharaoh, Abinadi challenges King Noah, and the result of his brave ministry is somewhat similar: a people are led away from the influence of the wicked ruler by escaping into the wilderness, where they enter into a covenant with the Lord. In the Book of Mormon, though, they are not led not by Abinadi himself but by his convert, the priest Alma.

19. For example, see Markus Öhler, "The Expectation of Elijah and the Presence of the Kingdom of God," *Journal of Biblical Literature*, 118/3 (Autumn, 1999): 461-476; <http://www.jstor.org/stable/3268184>.

20. John C. Poirier, "Jesus as an Elijianic Figure in Luke 4:16-30," *The Catholic Biblical Quarterly*, 71/2 (April 2009): 349-363; <http://www.jstor.org/stable/43726546>.

21. Croatto, "Jesus, Prophet like Elijah."

22. Evans, "Luke's Use of the Elijah/Elisha Narratives."

23. Brodie, "The Departure for Jerusalem."

24. Adam Winn, *Mark and the Elijah-Elisha Narrative: Considering the Practice of Greco-Roman Imitation in the Search for Markan Source Material* (Eugene, OR: Pickwick Publications, 2010), Kindle edition.

25. Thomas L. Brodie, *The Crucial Bridge: The Elijah-Elisha Narrative as an Interpretive Synthesis of Genesis-Kings and a Literary Model for the Gospels* (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 2000), as cited by Winn, *Mark and the Elijah-Elisha Narrative*, 120.

26. Wolfgang Roth, *Hebrew Gospel: Cracking the Code of Mark* (Oak Park, IL: Meyer Stone, 1988), as cited by Winn, *Mark and the Elijah-Elisha Narrative*, 120.

Mark, sometimes with significantly different results.<sup>27</sup> Mark Whitters, also examining the Gospel of Mark, finds evidence that Elijah themes are applied both to John the Baptist and Christ.<sup>28</sup>

The first explicit reference to Elijah in the Book of Mormon comes in the words of Christ as He quotes Malachi chapters 3 and 4 (3 Nephi 24, 25). Malachi 4:5–6 is the often-cited passage prophesying that the Lord would send Elijah before the great and dreadful day of the Lord, and that He would turn the hearts of the children to the fathers and vice versa. That statement is preceded by a command to remember the Law of Moses, the Lord’s servant, who received the law “in Horeb” (3 Nephi 25:4). Appropriately, Moses and Elijah are both linked to Christ in the New Testament and in the Book of Mormon.

The appearance of Christ to the Nephites in 3 Nephi 11 invokes the “still small voice” from Elijah’s theophany on Mount Horeb (1 Kings 19:9-15), where Elijah first witnessed the destructive forces of wind, earthquake, and fire (1 Kings 19:11–12). (Elijah’s experience on Horeb also naturally recalls the theophany of Moses on the same mountain.) The destructive elements Elijah witnessed occur in the destruction reported in 3 Nephi 8, which begins with a great storm (v. 5) bringing a “great and terrible tempest” (v. 6; see also vv. 17, 19) and whirlwinds (vv. 12, 16), the shaking of the earth “as if it was about to divide asunder” (v. 6; quaking of the earth is also mentioned in v. 12 and other seismic activity in vv. 9, 10, 18, 19), and destruction by fire in the city of Zarahemla (v. 7; with other cities destroyed by fire in v. 14), perhaps due to lightning strikes, v. 7, or the apparent volcanic activity at that time.<sup>29</sup> A storm with fierce winds, the shaking of the earth, and fire

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27. Adam Winn, for example, critiques W. Roth’s attempt to see John the Baptist in an Elijah role and Christ in a contrasting Elisha-like role. Winn, *Mark and the Elijah-Elisha Narrative*, 56.

28. Mark F. Whitters, “Why Did the Bystanders Think Jesus Called upon Elijah before He Died (Mark 15:34–36)? The Markan Position,” *The Harvard Theological Review*, 95/1 (Jan, 2002): 119–124; <http://www.jstor.org/stable/4150741>.

29. Benjamin R. Jordan, “Volcanic Destruction in the Book of Mormon: Possible Evidence from Ice Cores,” *Journal of Book of Mormon Studies* 12/ 1 (2003): 78–87; <http://publications.mi.byu.edu/fullscreen/?pub=1402&index=8> (HTML) or [http://publications.mi.byu.edu/publications/jbms/12/1/S00008-5\\_0e5fa62cbc4c9Jordan.pdf](http://publications.mi.byu.edu/publications/jbms/12/1/S00008-5_0e5fa62cbc4c9Jordan.pdf) (PDF). For detailed analysis from a geologist, see Jerry D. Grover Jr., *Geology of the Book of Mormon* (Vineyard, UT: Grover Publications, 2014), available at [http://www.academia.edu/18172439/Geology\\_of\\_the\\_Book\\_of\\_Mormon](http://www.academia.edu/18172439/Geology_of_the_Book_of_Mormon). Also see “What Caused the Darkness and Destruction in the 34th Year?,” KnoWhy #197, *Book of Mormon Central*, September 28, 2016; <https://knowwhy.bookofmormoncentral.org/content/what-caused-the-darkness-and-destruction-in-the-34th-year>.

are the destructive elements, in that order, that initiate the destruction in 3 Nephi 8.

The period of destruction is immediately followed by the voice of the Lord speaking to the surviving Nephites, explaining what has happened, and urging them to repent (3 Nephi 9). Then, after “many hours” of silence (3 Nephi 10:2), that voice comes again and urges the people again to repent and be saved (3 Nephi 10:3–7). But the term “small voice,” like the “still small voice” from the Lord finally heard by Elijah (1 Kings 19:12), is not used in 3 Nephi until the third time a voice speaks to the surviving Nephites, which may have been months later as the Nephites gather at the temple in Bountiful.<sup>30</sup> There, the people are surprised by a voice from heaven which at first they cannot understand. It is described as a “small voice” that pierces them to the center (3 Nephi 11:3) and causes their frames to shake. It takes three times before they can understand this message, and then they can hear the voice of the Father, saying, “Behold my Beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased, in whom I have glorified my name — hear ye him” (3 Nephi 11:7). This voice causes their hearts to burn (3 Nephi 11:3; cf. Helaman 5:30) as Christ begins His majestic descent to them.

The ascension of Christ, said by Lunn to complete Mark’s use of the Elijah theme by having Christ ascend with language similar to that describing Elijah’s ascent, is also present in 3 Nephi 18:38–39 but with different language. Here it is a cloud that shields Christ from view as He ascends, while Elijah “went up by a whirlwind into heaven” with a chariot of fire and horses of fire that separated Elijah from Elisha (2 Kings 2:11) and caused that Elisha “saw him no more” (2 Kings 2:12). While the cloud in 3 Nephi overshadows the people such that “the multitude . . . could not see Jesus” (3 Nephi 18:38), the disciples “saw and did bear record that he ascended again into heaven” (3 Nephi 18:39).

Christ’s ascension is also described as being part of a divinely timed plan, for Christ announces His temporary departure in 3 Nephi 17 with “Behold, my time is at hand” (v. 1) and “now I go unto the Father” (v. 4). While He delays His departure out of compassion for the yearning Nephites, right before His ascent He again announces the plan: “And now I go unto the Father, because it is expedient that I should go unto the

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30. S. Kent Brown, “When Did Jesus Visit the Americas?” in *From Jerusalem to Zarahemla: Literary and Historical Studies of the Book of Mormon* (Provo, UT: Religious Studies Center, Brigham Young University, 1998), 146–56; <https://rsc.byu.edu/archived/jerusalem-zarahemla-literary-and-historical-studies-book-mormon/when-did-jesus-visit>.



Father for your sakes” (3 Nephi 18:35). The theme of assumption by plan is an aspect in Brodie’s analysis of parallels between Luke and the Old Testament:

The Lord’s ... plan for taking up Elijah is recounted in (2 Kings 2:1): “Now when the Lord was about to take Elijah up to heaven by a whirlwind ...” And the text goes on to emphasize, in an account that is almost as repetitious as the death decree: the Lord is really going to do it (cf. 2 Kings 2: 3, 5).

The NT suggests the presence of a ... plan for the assumption (*analēmpsis*) of Jesus: “When the days were drawing near [literally], “were being filled up” (*en tō symplērousthai*) for him to be taken up, he set his face ... ” [Luke 9:51].<sup>31</sup>

Another aspect of the ascension that may connect with the Elijah-Elisha account is the use of the word *tarry*. Just as Elisha resists the departure of Elijah and seeks to stay with him longer, so also when Christ is about to depart for the first time, the Nephites sorrow and yearn for Him to “tarry” longer (3 Nephi 17:5). The word *tarry* is used repeatedly in 2 Kings 2:1–12 (three times, vv. 2, 4, and 6) to describe Elijah’s attempts to depart from Elisha, though it is Elijah who asks Elisha to “tarry” in particular spots while he moves on. Perhaps the yearning of the Nephites for Christ to “tarry” alludes to the same word in Elijah’s departure but in a literary reversal. (This word is used more prominently later to describe the Three Nephites, who would “tarry,” as noted below.)

Further, before Christ ascends again into heaven, He does what Elijah did with Elisha: He passes on power and authority, that the divine ministry might continue. In 3 Nephi 18:36–37, immediately before His ascension, Christ touches each disciple with His hand, one by one, and speaks to them, giving them power to give the Holy Ghost. This power is on miraculous display the next day in 3 Nephi 19, and again may be described with subtle references to Elijah.

In general, Christ’s ministry among the Nephites elicits comparison to Elijah as well as Elisha. First, He is the Anointed One, and Elijah, like Elisha, was one of the few explicitly anointed prophets in the Old Testament. Like Elijah, the Savior performs miracles, and some of these miracles relate to Elijah’s miracles. Christ also healed the sick, as Elijah healed a sick boy who had apparently died (1 Kings 17:17–23). While the record does not explicitly attribute raising the dead to Christ’s acts

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31. Brodie, “The Departure for Jerusalem,” 102.

in 3 Nephi, His disciple, Nephi<sub>3</sub>, son of the Elijah-like Nephi<sub>2</sub>, did raise his brother from the dead (3 Nephi 19:4) through the power of Christ. Relationships to one of the miracles in the Elijah-Elisha account may be especially interesting in 3 Nephi 20.

### **The Miraculous Feeding of a Large Multitude in 3 Nephi 20**

As Elijah provided grain and oil for a woman in a time of famine (1 Kings 17:10–16) and as Elisha multiplied a woman’s oil (2 Kings 4:1-7) and also miraculously fed a crowd with just 20 loaves of barley (2 Kings 4:42–44), so Christ miraculously provided bread and wine for the large crowd of Nephites on His second day of ministering (3 Nephi 20:3-9; note also the miracle of ravens providing Elijah with bread in 1 Kings 17:6). That miracle among the Nephites clearly recalls the two times He miraculously fed crowds of people in the New Testament (five thousand in Mark 6:30–44, and four thousand in Mark 8:1–9), which, according to Winn, have deliberate parallels to 2 Kings 4:42–44. Among the various clues in the text of Mark that the story was written to allude to Elisha is the command given to others to pass out the food, such as “Give ye them to eat” in Mark 6:37, parallel to “Give the people, that they may eat” in 2 Kings 4:43.<sup>32</sup> In 3 Nephi 20, Christ likewise commands the disciples “that they should break bread, and give unto the multitude” (v. 4) and “that they should give [wine] unto the multitude” (v. 5).

The large number of people apparently fed by Elisha (about 100 according to 2 Kings 4:43) is bettered by the thousands fed by Christ. Winn sees this as an important progression (“intensification”) that gives emphasis to the greater nature of Christ’s miracles.<sup>33</sup> The Book of Mormon, of course, refers to a “multitude,” probably even more than the 5,000 in Mark 6. The account of day one of Christ’s ministry to the Nephites ends with a count of 2,500 people as eyewitnesses (3 Nephi 17:25). They then labor tirelessly throughout the night to spread the word and gather even more people for the next day, and when they gather, there are now too many to be taught in one single group, so the 12 disciples break them up into 12 groups to rehearse the words of Christ from day one (3 Nephi 19:2–5) before Christ comes and ministers to them and feeds them miraculously. This is a logical intensification: the minor miracle of Elisha is magnified by the mortal Messiah among the Jews and then even further by the resurrected Lord among the Nephites.

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32. Winn, *Mark and the Elijah-Elisha Narrative*, 81–83.

33. *Ibid.*, 83.



Winn also finds it significant that in the miracles of Mark, Christ begins with a smaller amount of food than Elisha did: five loaves and two fishes in Mark 6:41 and seven loaves in Mark 8:5 versus 20 loaves in 2 Kings 4:42.<sup>34</sup> The line of progression continues: Christ's miraculous feeding of the Nephites is done with no bread or wine to begin with (3 Nephi 20:6–7), the ultimate intensification of this aspect of the story.

Another feature in the Elisha story noted by Winn is that the command to give to the people is given twice, which has a seemingly weak parallel in Mark with the command to the people to be seated (a second command) in Mark 6:39 and 8:6.<sup>35</sup> But in 3 Nephi 20, the command to give to the multitude is explicitly stated twice, once for the bread and once for the wine (vv. 4–5). Another parallel from Winn is that Elisha's servant gives the bread to the crowd, as the apostles give to the crowd for Christ.<sup>36</sup> Likewise, it is the Nephite disciples who distribute the miraculously provided bread and wine to the multitude.

Further, Winn notes that extra food remains after Elisha's miracle (2 Kings 4:44), just as baskets of extra food remain after Christ feeds the crowds (Mark 6:43 and 8:8).<sup>37</sup> Whether food remained among the Nephites is not mentioned in the text, but the word *remnant* is used immediately after the miracle: "when they had all given glory unto Jesus, he said unto them: Behold, now I finish the commandment which the Father hath commanded me concerning this people, who are a *remnant* of the house of Israel" (3 Nephi 20:10). Christ again speaks of gathering the scattered "remnants" of Israel in v. 13.

Finally, Winn notes that the Elisha account occurs in a time of famine ("a dearth in the land," 2 Kings 4:38), in parallel to the hunger from going a day or longer without food in Mark 6:31 and 8:1–2.<sup>38</sup> The hunger is implicit in 3 Nephi 20, since the Nephites who were present on day one of Christ's ministry have been laboring apparently nonstop through the night to spread the word of the Messiah's appearance to bring crowds to Bountiful the next day and naturally may have neglected food with so much work to do and so great a miracle before them. Their hunger may be alluded to when Christ explicitly mentions hunger and thirst after He leads the sacramental rite, saying, "He that eateth this bread eateth of my body to his soul; and he that drinketh of this wine

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34. Ibid.

35. Ibid., 82.

36. Ibid.

37. Ibid.

38. Ibid.

drinketh of my blood to his soul; and his soul shall never *hunger* nor *thirst*, but shall be filled” (3 Nephi 20:8, *emphasis added*).

Overall, Winn proposes eight parallels that relate the Elisha story to the miraculous feeding accounts in Mark. They are shown in Table 1; parallels in 3 Nephi 20 are also shown.

**Table 1. Common Elements in the Miraculous Feedings in Mark and in the Elisha Account, Adapted from a Table by Adam Winn,<sup>39</sup> Compared with 3 Nephi.**

<b>Elisha (2 Kings 4:42–44)</b>	<b>Christ in Mark 6:30–44 and 8:1–10</b>	<b>3 Nephi 20</b>
Hunger/famine in land (38)	Hunger implied: day or days without food (6:31, 8:1–2)	Implicit, since those present on first day labored through night to bring a larger crowd. Hunger and thirst are mentioned also in v. 8
Small amount of food: 20 barley loaves and fig cakes (42)	Small amount of food: 5 loaves + 2 fish (6:38), 7 loaves and a few fish (8:5, 7)	The miracle begins with no food or wine present (vv. 6–7)
Command to pass out food: “Give to the men so they may eat” (42)	Command to provide food: explicit (6:37) and implied (8:2–3)	Christ commands the disciples to give bread and wine to the multitude (vv. 4–5)
Servant responds with doubt/hesitation (43)	Disciples respond with doubt/hesitation (6:37, 8:4)	Doubt is absent. The disciples and multitude respond with faith and unity (vv. 1, 9–10)

39. Ibid.

<b>Elisha (2 Kings 4:42–44)</b>	<b>Christ in Mark 6:30–44 and 8:1–10</b>	<b>3 Nephi 20</b>
Command is repeated (43)	Command to the disciples to sit the people down (6:39, 8:6)	The command to give to the people is repeated: once for bread, once for wine (vv. 4–5)
Food distributed by a servant (44)	Food distributed by disciples (6:41, 8:6)	Food distributed by disciples (vv. 4–5)
A large number of people eat: 100 (44)	A large number of people eat: 5,000 (6:42) and 4,000 (8:8)	Multitude is several times larger than the 2,500 of the previous day (3 Nephi 17:25, 19:2–5)
Extra food remains (44)	Extra food remains: 12 baskets full (6:43) and 7 baskets full (8:8)	Remnants of food not mentioned, but remnants of Israel are cited immediately after the miraculous feeding (vv. 10, 13)

Interestingly, of the eight elements in the story of Christ’s miraculous feedings that Winn lists as having parallels with the 2 Kings 4 account of Elisha, seven of these are also found in 3 Nephi 20, sometimes with further logical intensification. What is missing is the parallel element of doubt expressed by Elisha’s servant and Christ’s apostles (2 Kings 4:43, Mark 6:37 and 8:4). This absence, however, is consistent with the emphasis on the greater faith of the Nephites at this stage. Among this tried and faithful people, Christ is able to work greater miracles, as Christ tells them in 3 Nephi 19:35. The absence of doubt as a parallel is a reasonable and appropriate reversal of the pattern apparently alluded to in 2 Kings 4 (Winn observes that reversals of themes are often used in ancient literature when building on a previous text<sup>40</sup>). Thus one can argue that Mark’s use of Elisha’s miraculous feeding in the account of two of Christ’s miracles is used with equal detail and resonance in 3 Nephi 20,

40. Ibid, 13–14, 29, 79–81, 112.

while differing from Mark in some significant and appropriate ways rather than being a clumsy copy.

### **Taken Up**

The most dramatic aspect of Elijah is his being taken up to heaven in a chariot of fire, an incident that may have a relationship to the disappearance of Moses.<sup>41</sup> The assumption of Elijah appears to be alluded to in the New Testament description of the ascension of Christ and perhaps also in the Book of Mormon's description of Christ's initial ascension from among the Nephite people. Interestingly, the Book of Mormon provides other parallels to Elijah's assumption.

The first Book of Mormon character who may have been "taken up" by the Lord is Alma<sub>2</sub>, around 73 BC, who was "taken up by the Spirit, or buried by the hand of the Lord, even as Moses" (Alma 45:19). His disappearance is preceded by a journey as he "departed out of the land of Zarahemla, as if to go into the land of Melek," after which he was never seen again (Alma 45:18).

Before his departure, he transferred the sacred records in his care and apparently the interpreters and possibly other sacred relics into the hands of his son, Helaman (Alma 37). Helaman continued his ministry in the stead of Alma<sub>2</sub>. These events have parallels with Elijah, whose disappearance is preceded by a journey and is accompanied with a transfer of a symbol of authority to his follower, Elisha, who calls Elijah "my father" and continues the ministry and works of Elijah (2 Kings 2:1-14).

The same pattern later occurs with Helaman's son, the prophet Nephi<sub>2</sub>, who shortly before the birth of Christ transferred sacred records and sacred relics ("all those things which had been kept sacred from the departure of Lehi out of Jerusalem") to his son, Nephi<sub>3</sub> (3 Nephi 1:2) and then "departed out of the land, and whither he went, no man knoweth" (3 Nephi 1:3); he apparently vanished, as had his grandfather.

However, the parallels to the ascent of Elijah are more detailed in the account of the disciples of Christ, as discussed below.

### **Fire and Translation**

As with the burning bush on Sinai and as with Elijah's departure in a chariot of fire (2 Kings 2), one of the striking elements in the 3 Nephi

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41. Peter J. Leithart, "Elijah and Moses," *Biblical Horizons Newsletter* 51 (July 1993), <http://www.biblicalhorizons.com/biblical-horizons/51/>.

account of the Lord's ministry to the Nephites is the word *fire*. The theme of fire and burning begins with the first hint of the Lord's appearance, as the "small voice" from the heavens pierced the souls of the people gathered at the temple and "did cause their hearts to burn" (3 Nephi 11:3). After Christ appeared and spoke, He said that those who believed in Him would be visited "with fire and the Holy Ghost" (3 Nephi 11:35). Being baptized with "fire and the Holy Ghost" is mentioned again in 3 Nephi 12:1–2. Dramatically, in 3 Nephi 17:24, the little children in the group are encircled by heavenly fire.

The transfiguration of Christ, an important Exodus and Elijah theme in Mark 9, also plays a large role in 3 Nephi, where transfiguration occurred for Christ and His disciples (3 Nephi 19:14, 24–25), a scene in which "the light of [Christ's] countenance did shine upon them" (v. 25) and caused the disciples' faces and clothing to glow white, like Christ, in this mystical transfiguration scene, apparently alluding to the way that Moses's face shone when he came down from Sinai (Exodus 34:35). The surrounding of the children in 3 Nephi 17 with divine fire also resembles a transfiguration scene. Even the declaration of the Father introducing the Son in 3 Nephi 11:7, following the language from the Father about the Son on the mount of transfiguration (Luke 9:35), may recall Moses, as Craig A. Evans explains in his discussion of Luke: "The command of the heavenly voice to 'listen to him' [Luke 9:35] probably echoes Deuteronomy 18:15 and so strengthens the link to the Moses tradition."<sup>42</sup>

Finally, the translation of the three Nephite disciples should also be considered. Here Lunn's analysis of the transfiguration of Christ in Mark 9, relevant to the many ways Mark alludes to the Exodus in his writings, also has relevance to 3 Nephi. One of the parallels between Mark 9 and the Exodus is that "Moses and Jesus both take with them three named persons (Exodus 24:1, 9; Mark 9:2)."<sup>43</sup> The Three Nephites who are translated/transfigured and given power to live until Christ returns would seem to fit that pattern, but their names are withheld, except as listed among the twelve (3 Nephi 28:1–17). The word *transfiguration* is used twice to describe the change (3 Nephi 28:15, 17), which was accompanied by being caught up into heaven as the dramatic change took place (3 Nephi 28:13–15). This not only recalls the transfiguration of Moses and the story of Elijah (see below), but as 3 Nephi 28:15 tells us,

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42. Craig A. Evans, "Luke's Use of the Elijah/Elisha Narratives and the Ethic of Election," *Journal of Biblical Literature*, 106/1 (March 1987): 75–83; <http://www.jstor.org/stable/3260555>.

43. Lunn, *The Original Ending of Mark*, 256.

this change made it so “they could behold the things of God,” which may also allude to Enoch, who in Moses 6:36 is changed so he “beheld also things which were not visible to the natural eye.”

### **Elijah and the Disciples: Further Parallels**

Several Elijah themes may be built into the record regarding the disciples of Christ. An example is the scene in 1 Kings 18 in which Elijah overthrows the evil priests of Baal. One possible relationship to Elijah that may not have been previously discussed in Book of Mormon studies is the way in which the newly called 12 disciples lead the Nephite people after the first day of Christ’s ministry while waiting for Christ to return on the second day. This scene, which may reflect the way Christ’s authorized servants are to lead His people in the time between the First Coming and the Second Coming, shows some interesting parallels to Elijah in his dealing with the priests of Baal. In that Old Testament scene, after Elijah has criticized the false priests, he prepares a sacrifice in which the miraculous power of the Lord will be shown. First, Elijah repairs the altar of the Lord, rebuilding it with 12 stones, chosen to represent the 12 tribes of Israel (vv. 30–32). The body of a sacrificial ox is then divided into pieces and drenched with a total of 12 barrels of water (vv. 33–35). Elijah then prays to the Lord, imploring His miraculous acceptance of the sacrifice so the people might know the Lord and turn their hearts back to him (vv. 36–37). At this point, divine fire descends from heaven (v. 38), and the people fall to the earth in wonder, worshipping the Lord (v. 39). The evil priests of Baal are then cast out and slain (v. 40).

Surprisingly, elements of this scene from Elijah’s victory over the priests of Baal have parallels in the ministry of the newly authorized disciples of Christ in 3 Nephi 19, between the ascent of Christ on day one of His ministry to the Nephites and His second visitation on day two. These disciples, who have now been touched and presumably anointed by the Savior and given divine power, bring the people together on day two and lead them in turning their hearts and minds to the Savior to prepare for His coming. These actions cannot include offering sacrifice or dividing the body of an animal into multiple pieces on an altar of 12 stones because Christ has just instructed the people no longer to offer up animal sacrifices (3 Nephi 9:19). Instead, they “shall offer for a sacrifice unto me a broken heart and a contrite spirit” (3 Nephi 9:20). The disciples then divide the body of the people into 12 bodies (3 Nephi 19:5), and each of the 12 disciples then leads the people in prayer to the Father in the name of Jesus (3 Nephi 19:6–7), after which each disciple teaches



his group the very things which Christ taught the day before. They are, in a sense, offering up broken hearts and contrite spirits as they seek the return of the Savior, and this is associated with the number 12, as in the Elijah account.

At this point, there is a drenching of the 12 disciples as they are baptized, beginning with and under the direction of Nephi<sub>3</sub> (v. 10–12), again an association of the number 12 with water, as in Elijah’s story. After baptism, the 12 disciples, the righteous priests of the Lord, then receive the gift of the Holy Ghost, which “did fall upon them” (v. 13), just as fire “fell” upon the wicked priests of Baal (1 Kings 18:38). Indeed, as the Holy Ghost falls upon the disciples, so does divine fire from heaven, for they are “filled ... with fire” (3 Nephi 19:13) and “they were encircled about as if it were by fire” (v. 14). As the people around Elijah saw his miracle, the Nephite “multitude did witness it, and did bear record” (v. 15). Angels then descend, and soon Christ is standing in the midst of the disciples, as day two of His ministry to the Nephites begins.

An emphasis on 12, prayer led by an anointed servant of God, a drenching with water, the descent of divine fire upon priests, and a multitude witnessing the miracle that helps strengthen their faith in God are common elements between 3 Nephi 20 and the account of the miraculous sacrifice offered by Elijah. In a sense, this scene completes the eradication of Satan’s power and the reign of righteousness among the Nephites.

Another ascent-related parallel may be found in an event just before the Lord’s final recorded ascent in 3 Nephi. That event in 3 Nephi 28 again involves the use of the word *tarry*, mentioned above in discussing 3 Nephi 17:5 and Elijah’s use of *tarry* with respect to Elisha, but here it is applied to the disciples. In 3 Nephi 28, Christ parts from His disciples, after giving them a final blessing, including special powers to the Three Nephites before the Lord ascends. These are “the three who were to tarry” after Christ’s departure (3 Nephi 28:12). In 4 Nephi 1:14, they are the “three who should tarry.” *Tarry* is again used to describe them in 4 Nephi 1:30 and 37, Mormon 8:10, and Mormon 9:22, the latter verse being one of the questioned verses that includes words found in the longer ending of Mark.

The blessing the Three Nephites received reminds us of the blessing Elijah gave to Elisha, passing on his mantle in 2 Kings 2. To His Nephite disciples, Christ said, “What is it that ye desire of me, after that I am gone to the Father?” (3 Nephi 28:1). When He addresses the reticent Three Nephites specifically, He again asks, “What will ye that I should do unto



you, when I am gone unto the Father?” (3 Nephi 28:4). This is similar to the words of Elijah to Elisha: “Ask what I shall do for thee, before I be taken away from thee” (2 Kings 2:9). In fact, the second question to the Three more closely follows the wording of Elijah to Elisha.

“And Elisha said, I pray thee, let a double portion of thy spirit be upon me” (2 Kings 2:9), meaning that he wanted power to work the miracles that Elijah had done. In the Book of Mormon, after Christ then touches all the disciples except “the three who were to tarry” (3 Nephi 28:12), He departs, then the heavens open, and it is the Three who, like Elijah, “were caught up into heaven, and saw and heard unspeakable things” (3 Nephi 28:13). They were changed in some way and then proceeded to do grand miracles that served as signs that they have received power from Christ (3 Nephi 28:18–23), just as Elisha went forth doing miracles with the power he received from Elijah.

While Christ may be the “new Elijah/Elisha” in the Gospel of Mark, His elect Three Disciples also seem to play that role in the Book of Mormon. Like Elijah, they are “caught up into heaven,” though not permanently. Like Elijah and Elisha, they work great miracles after having received divine authority. Like Elisha, they are associated with the word *tarry* multiple times, as they are the ones who will tarry following the physical ascent of their Master.

3 Nephi may thus display not only intentional allusions to Exodus themes but also make references to Elijah in ways similar to Mark’s subtle but pervasive themes that unify his Gospel.

An objection to Christ as Elijah in the Gospel of Mark is that Mark identifies John the Baptist as a type of Elias/Elijah. Mark 1 introduces John the Baptist as the messenger preparing the way for Christ, “clothed with camel’s hair, and with a girdle of a skin about his loins” (Mark 1:6), an allusion to 2 Kings 1:8, where we read that Elijah was a “hairy man, and girt with a girdle of leather about his loins,” a visual link. Elijah is mentioned several times in Mark 9 in the middle of that Gospel, where in v. 13 Christ states that “Elias is indeed come, and they have done unto him whatsoever they listed, as it is written of him,” referring to the recent martyrdom of John the Baptist. If John is Elias, how can Elias be Christ? The issue is resolved by recognizing that Elias can be a role or an archetype who can involve more than one agent or more than one aspect of the role. Christ, in working miracles, showing divine authority, and ascending majestically to the Father, acts as an Elijah/Elias.

A similar issue is found in the Book of Mormon. Christ ascends to heaven and displays the miraculous powers of Elijah, but His successors

in a miraculous ministry, the Three Nephites, take up the mantle and work wonders like Elisha, while they themselves are “caught up” into heaven for a while.

### **Forerunners of Christ: Elias/Elijah Figures in the Book of Helaman**

In addition to the Elijah themes in the account of Christ’s ministry, the role of Elijah as a forerunner or an “Elias” to prepare the way for the Savior, like John the Baptist, is paralleled in the Book of Mormon by Nephi<sub>2</sub>. The son of Helaman and father of the prophet Nephi<sub>3</sub>, another worker of miracles, Nephi<sub>2</sub> was ministered to by angels and like Elijah, disappeared without a known burial (3 Nephi 1:3), as mentioned above.

*Book of Mormon Central* recently highlighted the relationship between Nephi<sub>2</sub> and Elijah.<sup>44</sup> In Nephi<sub>2</sub>’s theophany in Helaman 10, the Lord gives Nephi<sub>2</sub> power to “smite the earth with famine” (Helaman 10:6), and the power to “seal” and “loose” “on earth” and “in heaven” (v. 7). Nephi<sub>2</sub>, seeking to help the Nephites break out of their suicidal pattern of warfare and wickedness, figuratively “seals” the heavens to cause a drought that results in famine (Helaman 11). This parallels the first recorded words of Elijah when he tells wicked king Ahab that “there shall not be dew nor rain these years, but according to my word” (1 Kings 17:1). “Elijah, just like Nephi<sub>2</sub>, used the priesthood to ‘seal’ the heavens to keep it from raining.”<sup>45</sup> In fact, Elijah says that “rain” will cease “according to my words” (1 Kings 17:1), while Nephi<sub>2</sub> also says that “rain” will cease “according to my words” (Helaman 11:13). Such parallels in wording seem intentional.

Several more parallels between Nephi<sub>2</sub> and Elijah are listed at *Book of Mormon Central*. For example, both experience divine power involving fire, an earthquake, and a soft voice from God (Helaman 5:23,30–31; 1 Kings 19, further discussed below). Both warn the unrepentant that they will be eaten by dogs (Helaman 7:19; 2 Kings 9:36). Both have an experience in which they stand before the Lord (Helaman 10:1–12; 1 Kings 17:1, 18:15). Both are taken by the spirit from place to place (Helaman 10:16–17; 1 Kings 18:12, 2 Kings 2:16). Finally, as mentioned above, both depart the earth without a recorded death or burial (3 Nephi 1:3; 2 Kings 2:11). Thus the tapestry of Elijah themes in 3 Nephi

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44. “How Did Nephi Use the Power to Seal on Earth and in Heaven?” *Book of Mormon Central*, KnoWhy#182, Sept. 7, 2016; <https://knowwhy.bookofmormoncentral.org/content/how-did-nephi-use-the-power-to-seal-on-earth-and-in-heaven>.

45. Ibid.

extends into the “forerunner” book of Helaman, where an Elijah-like figure prepares the way for the ministry of Christ. This is particularly noteworthy in Helaman 5. Table 2, from *Book of Mormon Central*, highlights these parallels. *Book of Mormon Central* observes that such parallels are “made even more interesting by the fact the Elijah story itself shares much in common with the Moses story,”<sup>46</sup> citing Marvin A. Sweeney’s *I & II Kings: A Commentary*.<sup>47</sup>

**Table 2. Parallels Involving Sealing Powers of Elijah and Nephi<sub>2</sub>.**

<b>Elijah and the Sealing Power</b>	<b>Nephi and the Sealing Power</b>
Elijah causes a famine by “sealing” the heavens.	Nephi causes a famine by “sealing” the heavens.
Elijah experiences a fire and an earthquake in connection with hearing a soft voice from God (1 Kings 19).	Nephi experiences a fire and an earthquake in connection with hearing a soft voice from God (Helaman 5:23, 30–31).
Elijah warns that the unrepentant will be eaten by dogs (2 Kings 9:36).	Nephi warns that the unrepentant will be eaten by dogs (Helaman 7:19).
Elijah has an experience in which he stands before the Lord (1 Kings 17:1; 18:15).	Nephi has an experience in which he stands before the Lord (Helaman 10).
Elijah says that “rain” will cease “according to my words” (1 Kings 17:1).	Nephi says that “rain” will cease “according to my words” (Helaman 11:13).
Elijah is taken by the spirit from place to place (1 Kings 18:12; 2 Kings 2:16).	Nephi is taken by the spirit from place to place (Helaman 10:16–17).
Elijah does not have a recorded death or burial (2 Kings 2:11).	Nephi does not have a recorded death or burial (3 Nephi 1:3).

46. Ibid.

47. Marvin A. Sweeney’s *I & II Kings: A Commentary* (Louisville, KY: Westminster/John Knox, 2007), 223, as cited in “How Did Nephi Use the Power to Seal on Earth and in Heaven?” *Book of Mormon Central*.

There are further parallels in Helaman in an episode that fits into the category of Elias-like activities to prepare way for the coming of the Messiah to the Nephites.

### **Helaman 5: Prefiguring the Ministry of Christ**

Helaman 5 may have some especially noteworthy relationships to Elijah and Elisha. In light of Lunn's analysis of the role of Elijah themes in Mark, we can better appreciate the role played by the Book of Helaman in anticipating the ministry of Christ in 3 Nephi. A dramatic scene in Helaman 5 in particular brings together several of the concepts that Lunn examines.

Helaman gives final counsel to his two sons, Nephi<sub>2</sub> and Lehi<sub>2</sub>, bearing witness of Jesus Christ "who shall come" and pointing to His atoning blood as the only means through which man can be saved (v. 9). Echoing the New Testament account of the annunciation of Christ's birth, Helaman tells them that the Father has "sent his angels to declare the tidings of the conditions of repentance, which bringeth unto the power of the Redeemer" (v. 11). Then in v. 12 he alludes to the foundation that the Savior gives men, making them able to withstand the mighty winds, hail, and storms from the Adversary, similar to the counsel of Christ in Matthew 7:24–27 regarding those built on a rock (those who keep His sayings) in contrast to those who are built upon the sand and are destroyed when the floods and winds come.

Helaman 5 then records that Nephi<sub>2</sub> and Lehi<sub>2</sub> "went forth" (consistent with the later commission of Christ to His apostles and disciples) among the Nephites and converted many. They preached with great power, having the words "they should speak given unto them" (v. 18) as would happen in 3 Nephi 19:24: when the disciples prayed unto Christ "it was given unto them what they should pray."

After Lehi<sub>2</sub> and Nephi<sub>2</sub> "had gone forth among all the people of Nephi," they kept preaching as they then went south to the Lamanites and converted 8,000, baptizing them. These troublemakers were soon taken by an army and imprisoned when they dared go to the land of Nephi in the heart of Lamanite territory to preach. Later, when a group of about 300 came to the prison to take them and slay them, a miraculous scene occurred (vv. 23–52) that transformed disbelief into fervent faith for the 300 and catalyzed further missionary work to such an extent that hostilities between the Lamanites and Nephites ceased.

The land of Nephi was the place where Nephi<sub>1</sub> first settled and built a temple. It was a meaningful area for the Nephites that had been lost to

the Lamanites, though temporarily taken over by a group of Nephites, led by Zeniff, who fell into captivity to the Lamanites after flourishing for a time, eventually escaping and returning to Zarahemla. For Lehi<sub>2</sub> and Nephi<sub>2</sub> to return there to preach was a brave and significant act, made particularly appropriate by Helaman's words calling them to emulate the good works of their eponymous forefathers. It is fitting that one of the greatest miracles of deliverance in the Book of Mormon would take place there, one that would prepare many people for the coming of Christ. In retrospect, we can see that for Mormon or for the writers he was drawing upon, the account is interwoven with allusions that look forward to the ministry of Christ to the Nephites in ways that, like Mark's treatment of Christ's ministry, point to Moses, the Exodus, and possibly to Elijah.

And after they had been cast into prison many days without food, behold, they went forth into the prison to take them that they might slay them.

And it came to pass that Nephi and Lehi were encircled about as if by fire, even insomuch that they durst not lay their hands upon them for fear lest they should be burned. Nevertheless, Nephi and Lehi were not burned; and they were as *standing in the midst of fire and were not burned*.

And when they saw that they were encircled about with a *pillar of fire*, and that it burned them not, their hearts did take courage. ...

And it came to pass that Nephi and Lehi did stand forth and began to speak unto them, saying: Fear not, for behold, it is God that has shown unto you this marvelous thing, in the which is shown unto you that ye cannot lay your hands on us to slay us.

And behold, when they had said these words, the earth shook exceedingly, and the walls of the prison did shake as if they were about to tumble to the earth; but behold, they did not fall. ...

And it came to pass that they were overshadowed with a *cloud* of darkness, and an awful solemn fear came upon them.

And it came to pass that there came a voice as if it were above the *cloud* of darkness, saying: Repent ye, repent ye, and seek no more to destroy my servants whom I have

sent unto you to declare good tidings. (Helaman 5:22–29, *emphasis added*)

Like Moses before the burning bush on Sinai and like Elijah ascending in a chariot of fire, a divine fire does not burn Nephi and Lehi (v. 23) and is part of a theophany. This may also serve as a reversal to Elijah incidents when he called down fire from heaven that incinerated a sacrifice and led to the slaughter of priests of Baal (1 Kings 18:38–40) and when he called down fire that destroyed two groups of 50 soldiers who had come to take Elijah (2 Kings 1:9–12).

In Helaman 5:24, the fire is relabeled as a “pillar of fire,” strongly recalling the pillar of fire experienced by fleeing Israel as they also faced destruction by an army but were led by a pillar of fire and the presence of the Lord in a cloud and also recalling the pillar of fire Lehi encountered in his theophany (1 Nephi 1:6). Exodus 13:21–22 refers to the “pillar of a cloud” in the day and the “pillar of fire” at night that guided Israel as they fled Egypt. At the critical moment as the armies of Pharaoh neared, the “pillar of a cloud” moved to the rear to protect them (Exodus 14:19), and “throughout the night the cloud brought darkness to the one side and light to the other side” (Exodus 14:20; NIV, with “a cloud and darkness” in the KJV). Finally, the Lord “looked unto the host of the Egyptians through the pillar of fire and of the cloud” and troubled them (Exodus 14:24). Here the deliverance of Moses and Israel from destruction at the hands of an army is associated with a pillar of fire and a cloud that has properties of bringing light to one side but darkness to the other. These elements appear to be deliberately paralleled in Helaman 5, where there is a cloud of darkness (dark unto those seeking to harm the Lord’s servants) and a pillar of fire that is obviously full of light for those experiencing the theophany, just as we may presume was like the cloud that shielded Christ from the Nephites in His initial ascent to heaven (3 Nephi 18:38–39).

The divine cloud continues to play a role in Exodus 16:10, as the Lord speaks from within the cloud in the wilderness and again on Sinai in Exodus 19:9, 16 and 24:15–18 and later to show His presence at the tabernacle (Exodus 40:34–38) and in many other passages of the Old Testament.<sup>48</sup>

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48. Matthew L. Bowen notes that “This ‘cloud of darkness’ evokes the theophanic cloud which was said to surround Yahweh and which Yahweh was said to reside (Psalm 97:2, 1 Kings 8:12/2 Chronicles 6:1) ... as well as the ‘cloud’ in the storm-god imagery sometimes used to describe Yahweh’s presence in the Hebrew Bible (see Psalm 104:3; Isaiah 19:1; Jeremiah 4:13; Ezekiel 38:9).” He also compares it to the



The parallels to the Exodus may go beyond the fire and the cloud. In Helaman, the people are threatened with but spared from the collapse of the walls of the prison, which trembled with divine power. In Exodus, the Israelites are spared from the collapse of the walls formed from the separated waters of the Red Sea (“the waters were a wall unto them on their right hand, and on their left” in Exodus 14:22 and 29), walls that would collapse and take the lives of the Egyptian army.

The “good tidings” of Helaman 5:29 reflect New Testament language about the coming of Christ (Luke 2:10), but the phrase is also found in the Old Testament (e.g., Isaiah 40:9, 41:27, and 52:7, a passage from a chapter that appears to have been highly influential in Nephite religion<sup>49</sup>).

Helaman 5 continues with details that recall Elijah on Mount Horeb (1 Kings 19:9–15), as he experienced the trembling of the earth in an earthquake and the rending of rocks in a mighty wind (1 Kings 19:11) as well as a fire, only to find the Lord in “a still small voice” (1 Kings 19:12). The description in Helaman 5 seems to look back to Elijah while looking forward to what the Nephites would experience with the ministry of Christ, when a still small voice speaking three times would also help the Nephites look to Christ:

And it came to pass when they heard this voice, and beheld that it was not a voice of thunder, neither was it a voice of a great tumultuous noise, but behold, it was *a still voice of perfect mildness*, as if it had been a whisper, and it did pierce even to the very soul —

And notwithstanding the mildness of the voice, behold *the earth shook exceedingly*, and the walls of the prison trembled again, as if it were about to tumble to the earth; and behold the *cloud* of darkness, which had overshadowed them, did not disperse —

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cloud that initially veiled the Lord from the brother of Jared (Ether 2:4–15; 14). See Matthew L. Bowen, “My People Are Willing’: The Mention of Aminadab in the Narrative Context of Helaman 5–6,” *Interpreter: A Journal of Mormon Scripture* 19 (2016): 83–107; <http://www.mormoninterpreter.com/my-people-are-willing-the-mention-of-aminadab-in-the-narrative-context-of-helaman-5-6/>.

49. Jeff Lindsay, “Arise from the Dust’: Insights from Dust-Related Themes in the Book of Mormon (Part 2: Enthronement, Resurrection, and Other Ancient Motifs from the ‘Voice from the Dust’),” *Interpreter: A Journal of Mormon Scripture* 22 (2016): 233–77; <http://www.mormoninterpreter.com/arise-from-the-dust-insights-from-dust-related-themes-in-the-book-of-mormon-part-2-enthronement-resurrection-and-other-ancient-motifs-from-the-voice-from-the-dust/>.



And behold the voice came again, saying: Repent ye, repent ye, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand; and seek no more to destroy my servants. And it came to pass that the earth shook again, and the walls trembled.

And also again the *third time the voice came*, and did speak unto them marvelous words which cannot be uttered by man; and the walls did tremble again, and the earth shook as if it were about to divide asunder. (Helaman 5:30–33, *emphasis added*)

The cloud of darkness prevents the army and the Nephite dissenters with them from fleeing in fear, and instead, with the help of one of those dissenters who recalls the basics of their former religion, they come to realize that Lehi<sub>2</sub> and Nephi<sub>2</sub> are participating in a theophany and a scene of transfiguration:

And it came to pass that the Lamanites could not flee because of the cloud of darkness which did overshadow them; yea, and also they were immovable because of the fear which did come upon them.

Now there was one among them who was a Nephite by birth, who had once belonged to the church of God but had dissented from them.

And it came to pass that he turned him about, and behold, he saw through the cloud of darkness the faces of Nephi and Lehi; and behold, they did shine exceedingly, even as the faces of angels. And he beheld that they did lift their eyes to heaven; and they were in the attitude as if talking or lifting their voices to some being whom they beheld. (Helaman 5:34–36)

The theophany has thus become a transfiguration. Nephi<sub>2</sub> and Lehi<sub>2</sub> now “shine exceedingly” with faces like those of glowing angels. This recalls the assumption of Elijah in the midst of fire and both horses and horsemen of fire (2 Kings 2:11–12). It also recalls the transfiguration of Moses, who, after 40 days and nights on Mount Sinai, a time spent fasting (Exodus 34:28) just as Nephi<sub>2</sub> and Lehi<sub>2</sub> had gone without food for many days, then comes down from the presence of God, not realizing that his face is now shining (Exodus 34:29–30); and it would shine again and need to be veiled after speaking again with the Lord (vv. 34–35). Of

course, this transfiguration scene also foreshadows the transfigurations of 3 Nephi, previously discussed (see particularly 3 Nephi 19:14, 25).

With the help of a Nephite dissenter who recognizes what is happening, the crowd in the prison is able to turn and see the faces of Nephi<sub>2</sub> and Lehi<sub>2</sub> as they converse with angels, encircled in divine fire, a scene that foreshadows the theophany in 3 Nephi 17 when angels came and conversed with the little children that Jesus had just blessed:

And he [Christ] spake unto the multitude, and said unto them: Behold your little ones.

And as they looked to behold they cast their eyes towards heaven, and they saw the heavens open, and they saw angels descending out of heaven as it were in the midst of fire; and they came down and encircled those little ones about, and they were encircled about with fire; and the angels did minister unto them. (3 Nephi 17:23–24)

The Nephite dissenter is Aminadab, a name obviously significant to Mormon, who repeats it three times (Helaman 5:39, 41). Aminadab tells the people that Nephi<sub>2</sub> and Lehi<sub>2</sub> are conversing with the angels of God. In fear and wonderment, they ask what they must do “that this cloud of darkness may be removed from overshadowing” them. They are willing to repent, and in discussing the widespread conversion among the Lamanites described in Helaman 5, Mormon in Helaman 6:36 mentions the “willingness to believe” in the Lord’s words, accompanied by the great outpouring of the Spirit upon that people.

Significantly, as Matthew L. Bowen points out in a careful analysis of yet another clever wordplay in the Book of Mormon, the name Aminadab in Hebrew can mean “my kinsman is *willing*” or “my people are *willing*.”<sup>50</sup> Bowen argues that this name can refer to the Lord as the willing kinsman who redeems us, as well as the blessings that come when a people are willing to accept Him. The willingness of the people to pray and repent is quickly manifest, and they then partake in the glorious miracle as they, too, become surrounded by and are baptized in divine fire, filled with joy.

The wordplay involving “willingness” and Mormon’s mention of the blessings brought by the Lamanites’ “willingness” in Helaman 6:36 points to the future wording of the sacrament prayer in the blessing of the bread (Moroni 4:3), which we partake to show our willingness to

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50. Bowen, “‘My People Are Willing’: The Mention of Aminadab in the Narrative Context of Helaman 5–6.”

follow the Savior. That language is drawn from the words of the Savior to the Nephites when He administered the sacrament to them and explained that “this doth witness unto the Father that ye are willing to do that which I have commanded you” (3 Nephi 18:10). Those words were spoken shortly before He gave the disciples the power to give the gift of the Holy Ghost (3 Nephi 18:36–37) and then ascended again to the Father as “there came a cloud and overshadowed the multitude that they could not see Jesus” (3 Nephi 18:38–39).

Continuing with Helaman 5:41–50 (*emphasis added*):

And Aminadab said unto them: You must repent, and cry unto the voice, even until ye shall have faith in Christ, who was taught unto you by Alma, and Amulek, and Zeezrom; and when ye shall do this, the cloud of darkness shall be removed from overshadowing you.

And it came to pass that they all did begin to cry unto the voice of him who had shaken the earth; yea, they did cry even until the cloud of darkness was dispersed.

And it came to pass that when they cast their eyes about, and saw that the cloud of darkness was dispersed from overshadowing them, behold, they saw that they were encircled about, yea every soul, by a pillar of fire.

And Nephi and Lehi were in the midst of them; yea, they were encircled about; yea, they were as if in the midst of a flaming fire, yet it did harm them not, neither did it take hold upon the walls of the prison; and they were filled with that joy which is unspeakable and full of glory.

And behold, *the Holy Spirit of God did come down from heaven*, and did enter into their hearts, and they were filled as if with fire, and they *could speak forth marvelous words*.

And it came to pass that there came a voice unto them, yea, a pleasant voice, as if it were a whisper, saying:

Peace, peace be unto you, because of your faith in my Well Beloved, who was from the foundation of the world.

And now, when they heard this they cast up their eyes as if to behold from whence the voice came; and behold, they saw the heavens open; and *angels came down out of heaven* and ministered unto them.

And there were about three hundred souls who saw and heard these things; and they were *bidden to go forth* and *marvel not, neither should they doubt*.

And it came to pass that *they did go forth*, and did minister unto the people, declaring *throughout all the regions round about* all the things which they had heard and seen, insomuch that the more part of the Lamanites were convinced of them, because of the *greatness of the evidences* which they had received.

As in 3 Nephi 11 at the time of the descent of Christ, the voice of the Father speaks to them, again in a pleasant, still small voice (v. 46). Foreshadowing the descent of Christ in the majestic theophany of 3 Nephi 11, “the Holy Spirit of God did come down from heaven” (v. 45), and “angels came down out of heaven” (v. 48) to minister to them.

In v. 45, those filled with the Holy Spirit, who were “filled as if with fire,” were able to “speak forth marvelous words,” anticipating the scene during the ministry of Christ to the Nephites when He blessed the Nephite children on day one of His visit (3 Nephi 17:12–25) and again on day two after baptism and partaking of the sacrament (3 Nephi 19:10–34). Christ would later explain in His words following the great destruction at the time of His death, when He said “whoso cometh unto me with a broken heart and a contrite spirit, him will I baptize with fire and with the Holy Ghost, even as the Lamanites, because of their faith in me at the time of their conversion, were baptized with fire and with the Holy Ghost, and they knew it not” (3 Nephi 9:20).

The theophany of Lehi<sub>2</sub> and Nephi<sub>2</sub> becomes a shared theophany for the group, all experiencing the power of baptism by heavenly fire and by conversing with angels.

Like Nephi<sub>2</sub> and Lehi<sub>2</sub> earlier in Helaman 5 and like the future disciples and apostles, these new converts are commanded “to go forth” to share the gospel message (Helaman 5:49). The words “go forth” remind us of the commission of Christ to both the apostles (Mark 16:15, where it is “go forth into all the world”) and the New World disciples (Mormon 9:22, though there it is simply “go ye into all the word”).

Reminding them not to doubt also recalls the final scene in the long ending of Mark, where Christ upbraids the apostles for not believing and being hard in their hearts (Mark 16:11–14), consistent with the ongoing theme of opposing disbelief and hardness of hearts throughout Mark. But the command to “not doubt” more closely follows the language of Christ in the commission to the disciples, where He says “whosoever

shall believe in my name, doubting nothing, unto him will I confirm all my words” (Mormon 9:25), and two verses later, “Doubt not, but be believing” is also Mormon’s injunction (Mormon 9:27).

The 300 fulfill their commission, for “they did go forth” like the disciples and apostles “throughout all the regions round about” (v. 50). Just as the signs given to Moses and the signs that would follow the apostles and disciples would help remove doubt and build faith, the “greatness of the evidences” from these great miracles witnessed by so many willing converts convinces the majority of the Lamanites, and they become a righteous people. The signs and evidences of Moses leading to the Exodus and the signs and evidences Christ gave in His ministry to the Nephites are alluded to and foreshadowed in Helaman 5, just as Mark links Exodus and other themes to the ministry of Christ in his subtly unified work, long ending included.

Helaman 5 looks forward to 3 Nephi in several ways, including the gift of the Holy Ghost, theophanies and the coming down of divine beings, transfiguration, the divine cloud, and willingness to repent and accept Christ.

### **Elijah, Elisha, and Clothing as a Symbol of Authority**

Though the Book of Mormon does not mention the prophetic “mantle” of Elijah and Elisha, it clearly teaches the importance of passing on divine authority and provides related concepts of clothing as a symbol of authority or covenant making. Of course, garments as symbols of authority and divine covenants are found in several contexts in ancient Christianity and Judaism and in the Bible,<sup>51</sup> where, for example, the “coats of skins” given to Adam and Eve in Genesis 3:21 are described with the same Hebrew word, *kēthoneth* (כְּתוֹנֶת), used for the embroidered coats or linen coat the Lord instructs Moses to prepare for Aaron and the sons of Aaron as part of their covenant-related temple garb.<sup>52</sup>

Garments are also found as symbols of authority and covenants in the Book of Mormon. In Jacob 2:2, for example, in a scene at the temple,

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51. See, for example, Nissan Rubin and Admiel Kosman, “The Clothing of the Primordial Adam as a Symbol of Apocalyptic Time in the Midrashic Sources,” *The Harvard Theological Review*, 90/2 (Apr. 1997): 155–74; <http://www.jstor.org/stable/1510070>, and Blake Ostler, “Clothed Upon: A Unique Aspect of Christian Antiquity,” *BYU Studies* 22/1 (Winter 1982): 31–45; <http://www.jstor.org/stable/43040878>.

52. Strong’s H3801, *Blue Letter Bible*, <https://www.blueletterbible.org/lang/lexicon/lexicon.cfm?Strong's=H3801&t=KJV>. Compare its use in Genesis 3:21 to Exodus 28: 4, 39, 40; 29: 5, 8; 39: 27; and 40:14; Leviticus 8: 7, 13; 10:5; and 16:4.

the Nephite priest and prophet Jacob declares that he seeks to “rid [his] garments” of the Nephites’ sins by declaring the word of God to them (cf. 2 Nephi 9:9; Jacob 1:19; Mosiah 2:28; Mormon 9:35; Ether 12:38); and the faithful, including those who receive the priesthood and live up to its covenants, are told many times that their garments will be washed white in the blood of the Lamb (Alma 13: 11–12; cf. 1 Nephi 12:10–11; Alma 5:21, 24, 27; 7:25; 34:36; 3 Nephi 19:25; 27:19; Ether 12:37; 13:10). The “beautiful garments” of Isaiah 52:1, put on by the faithful as they shake off the dust of death and sin and accept the covenants of the Lord and associated enthronement, are part of an important complex of themes in the Book of Mormon from a passage on the brass plates that appears to have broad if not foundational importance in Nephite religion.<sup>53</sup>

Indeed, the importance of garments, and particularly garments made of animal skins, may mean much more than readers of the Book of Mormon have realized, thanks to the intriguing new analysis of Ethan Sproat, who provides compelling evidence from the Book of Mormon text that the skins of the Nephites, said to be “dark” in Alma 3:5–6 and elsewhere, refers to animal skins worn by the Lamanites in possible imitation of symbols of authority worn by the Nephites.<sup>54</sup> Apart from interesting implications for better understanding of what the Book

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53. Jeff Lindsay, “‘Arise from the Dust’: Insights from Dust-Related Themes in the Book of Mormon (Part 1: Tracks from the Book of Moses),” *Interpreter: A Journal of Mormon Scripture* 22 (2016): 179–232; <http://www.mormoninterpreter.com/arise-from-the-dust-insights-from-dust-related-themes-in-the-book-of-mormon-part-1-tracks-from-the-book-of-moses/>, and Lindsay, “‘Arise from the Dust’ (Part 2).”

54. Ethan Sproat, “Skins as Garments in the Book of Mormon: A Textual Exegesis,” *Journal of Book of Mormon Studies* 24 (2015): 138–65; <http://publications.mi.byu.edu/fullscreen/?pub=3592&index=6>. Sproat carefully examines the use of skins in Alma 3:5–6, which first describes the (animal) skins that the Lamanites wore, and then in the next sentence declares that the “skins of the Lamanites were dark.” In context, the second sentence could very well parallel the previous sentence and may not be a statement about human skins, but about symbols of authority that might worn by humans. If so, Sproat argues that Alma 3:5–6, with the most detailed statements relevant to Lamanite skins and “marks” upon skin, could be a Rosetta stone for interpreting other references to Lamanite skins in the Book of Mormon. The argument is buttressed by consideration of temple themes in the Book of Mormon, the use of animal skins therein to describe enemies of the Nephites, particularly those challenging the religion and authority of the Nephites, the ability of rebels to apply self-inflicted “marks” on their skin as symbols of their cursed state, and also the use of the indefinite article before *skin* in both the Book of Mormon and the KJV Bible, suggesting also that “a skin of darkness” in 2 Nephi 5:21 is an animal skin that represents a bogus claim to authority (Sproat, 140).



of Mormon does and doesn't say about race in the Book of Mormon, Sproat's analysis points to the importance of clothing as a symbol of authority and covenant making (or breaking) in the text.

Though speculative, concepts related to Elijah's mantle may be hinted at, for example, in the story of Moroni and the title of liberty, formed from a portion of his own rent coat or garment held up on a pole like a banner to rally defenders of liberty to his cause.

Regarding Elijah and his mantle, Fred E. Woods explains that the description of Elijah as a "hairy man" (2 Kings 1:8) most likely refers to the hairy garment he wore, which is likely the mantle given to Elisha as a symbol of divine authority (1 Kings 19:13, 19; 2 Kings 2:8, 13–14), as D.M. Stec determined in an analysis of the Hebrew text.<sup>55</sup> This garment is also paralleled in the description of John the Baptist's wearing a garment of camel's hair (Matthew 3:4; cf. Mark 1:6) and is alluded to in Zechariah, who literally refers to the "hairy mantle" of prophethood (Zechariah 13:4; the NIV has "prophet's garment of hair").<sup>56</sup> Upon receiving this mantle from Elijah as he ascends, Elisha first rends his own garment into two pieces (2 Kings 2:12), apparently in grief at Elijah's departure.

Just as the hairy garment of John the Baptist appears to be an allusion to the garment of Elijah that was a symbol of his prophetic authority, so the title of liberty formed from Moroni's garment appears to have been a symbol of his authority as a military leader, leading the people in making a covenant to defend their religion and their families against the wicked Amalickiah, who seeks the throne. Moroni in his anger over the threat from the Nephite rebel takes his "coat" in Alma 46:12 and rends it, writing on a piece of it "in memory of our God, our religion, and freedom, and our peace, our wives, and our children." He mounts the rent coat on a pole, forming a banner, which he calls the "title of liberty" (v. 13), prays aloud as he kneels for their freedom (vv. 13–18), then waves the rent part of his "garment" in the air to rally the Nephites and leads them in making a covenant to keep God's covenants and defend their freedom, or, should they fall into transgression, to be rent even as they were rending their garments in token of accepting the covenant (vv. 19–22).

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55. D. M. Stec, "The Mantle Hidden by Achan," *Vetus Testamentum*, 41/3 (July 1991): 356–59; <http://www.jstor.org/stable/1519078>.

56. Fred E. Woods, "Elisha and the Children: The Question of Accepting Prophetic Succession," *BYU Studies* 32/3 (Summer 1992): 47–58; <http://www.jstor.org/stable/43041552>.

The symbol Moroni has placed on the pole to lead the people in a covenant is described both as his “coat” and his “garment,” which could have been made from an animal skin or a woven fabric. Then he refers to an account from the brass plates (which we no longer have) involving Jacob and a fragment of Joseph’s coat of many colors that had not decayed, a symbol of a portion of the house of Joseph that would be preserved (vv. 23–27). It is reasonable that the reference to Moroni’s “coat” would use the same word or be directly associated with the word translated as “coat” in Joseph’s coat of many colors. In Genesis 37, in the tale of Joseph’s coat of many colors, the word translated as “coat” is the same word used for the “coats” of skins given to Adam and Eve and the sacred coats given to Aaron and his sons for temple rituals (see vv. 3, 23, 31–33), *kēthoneth* (כְּתוֹנֶת), as mentioned above. All occurrences of that word in the Pentateuch refer either to the clothing given to Adam and Eve, to Aaron and his sons, or to Joseph.

Moroni’s coat/garment, the garment of the inspired defender of the Nephite people in a time of crisis, may have served as a symbol of authority and covenant making, with ritual overtones. Could the word *garment*, also used to describe the title of liberty, refer more directly to the garment or mantle of Elijah (see 1 Kings 19:13, 19; 2 Kings 2:8, 13–14)? Elijah’s mantle is ‘*addereth* (אֲדָרֶת) which the KJV usually translates a “mantle” or “garment,” though it can also mean “glory.”<sup>57</sup> In a time of trouble, Elijah calls upon Elisha to follow him as he “cast his mantle upon him” (1 Kings 19:19); might this relate to Moroni’s call to the Nephites to rise up and follow him as he waves his garment before them and as they in response “cast” their garments at the feet of Moroni to make a covenant with him (Alma 46:22)? Might there also be a relationship with Elisha’s act of rending his own clothes into two pieces as he sees Elijah ascend into heaven before he takes up the mantle of Elijah that falls from him (2 Kings 2: 11–13)? The relationships, though tenuous, may merit further investigation.

### A Note on the Importance of Signs

Signs following those who believe is a recurring theme in the scriptures and should hardly be a surprise in coming from the words of Christ to the Nephites.

In examining the themes in the early Christian *Apocalypse of Elijah*, David Frankfurter observes that its treatment of “saints” and the

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57. Strong’s H155, *Blue Letter Bible*, <https://www.blueletterbible.org/lang/lexicon/lexicon.cfm?Strong's=H155&t=KJV> .

persecution they face shows “a millennialist ideology and self-definition, ‘saints,’ clearly rooted in Jewish apocalypticism and its tradition of ‘signs,’ Adversaries, and exalted prophets.”<sup>58</sup> In Helaman, 3 Nephi, and 4 Nephi, the texts bracketing the ministry of Christ among the Nephites, we find marvelous signs and wonders given to prepare the people for Christ, to teach the people of Christ, to bless the people in the ministry of Christ, and to bear witness of Christ. As in the Gospels, the New World testament of Christ teaches that signs truly do follow those who believe and have been commissioned as His servants, and they were particularly prominent around the time of His ministry. It should be no surprise that Christ would teach the importance of signs to the Nephites, as quoted in Mormon 9, or to His apostles in the longer ending of Mark.

### Conclusion

Modern scholarship provides excellent resolutions to the alleged Book of Mormon problem of Christ quoting from the longer ending of Mark in His words to the Nephites in the Book of Mormon. Extensive external and internal evidence weakens the arguments against and provides powerful evidence for the authenticity of Mark 16:9–20. There is no reason to suppose that Christ did not speak those words and give His apostles the apostolic commission found at the end of Mark. There is no inherent problem with the similar commission given to the disciples in the New World by the Savior.

Further, the lines of analysis provided by Nicholas Lunn and others who support the integrity of Mark also have bearing on the Book of Mormon, for they provide insights into subtle themes in that New World account. Just as Mark saw Exodus and Elijah themes in Christ’s ministry, similar themes appear to have been woven into the Book of Mormon account in ways that make sense for ancient lovers of the Hebrew scriptures who understood the majesty of the ministry of Christ. As always, there is more to the Book of Mormon than meets the eye.

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58. David Frankfurter, “The Cult of the Martyrs in Egypt before Constantine: The Evidence of the Coptic ‘Apocalypse of Elijah,’” *Vigiliae Christianae*, 48/1 (March 1994): 25–47, quote at 27; <http://www.jstor.org/stable/1584374>.

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