

BM#06 - "Free to Choose Liberty and Eternal Life"
2 Nephi 1-2

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I. Introduction

2 Nephi is the second book written by Nephi, the son of Lehi. Besides Mormon, Nephi is the only author of the Book of Mormon who wrote more than one book.

Brian D. Gardner states,

"2 Nephi is a record of four witnesses—Lehi, Nephi, Isaiah, and Jacob—all bearing testimony of the reality of Jesus Christ. Lehi...is quoted in four chapters (1-4); Nephi in ten chapters (5, 11, 25-26, 28-33); Jacob, Nephi's brother, three chapters (6, 9-10), and Isaiah in sixteen chapters (7-8, 12-24, 27)...the words "Jesus Christ" are not found in 1 Nephi, while they are collectively mentioned sixty-two times in 2 Nephi." (*Search These Things Diligently*. Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Co., 2003, 44).

In this section of the Book of Mormon, our focus is upon the words of Father Lehi. You might ask yourself, "If you were going to leave this life tomorrow, what words of admonition, counsel, and blessing would you want recorded for your loved ones to reflect upon? Lehi may well have considered this very question as he recorded his thoughts, not only for the benefit of his family, but also for those of us who would read his words.

The merit or value of the words left by the deceased is often determined by the relationship of the listener. Lehi's words should have meaning for each of us as we have come to know him as a prophet of God. He is one of God's special witnesses. He has seen our days. The words that Lehi now shares were given just a few days before his death.

II. 2 Nephi 1

2 Nephi 1:1-3

1 And now it came to pass that after I, Nephi, had made an end of teaching my brethren, our father, Lehi, also spake many things unto them, and rehearsed unto them, how great things the Lord had done for them in bringing them out of the land of Jerusalem.

2 And he spake unto them concerning their rebellions upon the waters, and the mercies of God in sparing their lives, that they were not swallowed up in the sea.

3 And he also spake unto them concerning the land of promise, which they had obtained--how merciful the Lord had been in warning us that we should flee out of the land of Jerusalem.

Lehi begins his words of blessing and admonition by reminding his family they had been greatly blessed by the Lord. Despite periods of rebellion, the Lord had protected them from drowning in the sea and brought each of them safely to the promised land.

2 Nephi 1:4

4 For, behold, said he, I have seen a vision, in which I know that Jerusalem is destroyed; and had we remained in Jerusalem we should also have perished.

Bryan Richards states,

"It is only by revelation from God that Lehi could know of Jerusalem's destruction. It is only by revelation that Lehi could know that if his family had stayed in Jerusalem, they would have been destroyed. Many of the rich and wise were killed but many, like Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah were preserved by the Babylonians, the king spake unto Ashpenaz...that he should bring *certain* of the children of Israel, and of the king's seed, and of the princes; Children in whom was no blemish, but well favoured, and skillful in all wisdom, and cunning in knowledge, and understanding science (Daniel 1:3-4). The Lord knew that Lehi would not be preserved as Daniel would be, had he remained in Jerusalem."

www.gospeldoctrine.com/contents/2Nephi-1).

Lehi continues in his expression of profound gratitude to the Lord for the blessings his family has received.

2 Nephi 1:5

5 But, said he, notwithstanding our afflictions, we have obtained a land of promise, a land which is choice above all other lands; a land which the Lord God hath covenanted with me should be a land for the inheritance of my seed. Yea, the Lord hath covenanted this land unto me, and to my children forever, and also all those who should be led out of other countries by the hand of the Lord.

Lehi states that "there shall none come to this land save they shall be brought by the hand of the Lord" (2 Nephi 1:6). The promised blessings to those who will serve him, include: (1) "a land of liberty unto them;" (2) "shall never be brought down into captivity;" (3) "land kept from knowledge of other nations:" (4) "there shall be none to molest them, nor to take away the land:" and, (5) "they shall dwell safely forever" (See 2 Nephi 1:7-9). These blessings, however, are conditional upon "their keeping the commandments" (2 Nephi 1:9), and honoring "the Holy One of Israel, the true Messiah, their Redeemer and their God" (2 Nephi 1:10). If they reject their Messiah and Redeemer, the judgments of God would then be upon them.

Lehi saw that the profound blessings of the promised land would continue only if the inhabitants of the land did not fall into wickedness.

2 Nephi 1:13

13 O that ye would awake; awake from a deep sleep, yea, even from the sleep of hell, and shake off the awful chains by which ye are bound, which are the chains which bind the children of men, that they are carried away captive down to the eternal gulf of misery and woe.

Mark E. Peterson states,

"...We Americans must learn that [our nation] can continue to exist only as it aligns itself with the powers of heaven. If we turn our back upon the Almighty, even by ignoring him, we jeopardize our national future. If we deliberately

oppose his purposes, we place ourselves in danger of destruction. These stern facts have been taught to Americans from the beginning of our national history, starting with our first President, George Washington. He realized and he publicly announced that we obtained our independence through an act of providence, since we were far too weak to gain it by ourselves. Knowing this, he warned that if we are to survive as a free and independent nation, we must obey the Almighty God who brought us into being. Abraham Lincoln, another inspired President, said virtually the same thing, warning that if we fail to obey the commandments of God, we shall go down to ruin...It is no imaginary ruin that faces our nation if we reject Jesus Christ, as Lincoln pointed out so dramatically. And it is possible that our greatness can be buried in profound obscurity if we refuse to turn to God." (*Conference Report*, April, 1968, 59, 61).

Lehi states his major concern for his sons.

2 Nephi 1:16, 20

16 And I desire that ye should remember to observe the statutes and the judgments of the Lord; behold, this hath been the anxiety of my soul from the beginning.

20 And he [Lord] hath said that: Inasmuch as ye shall keep my commandments ye shall prosper in the land; but inasmuch as ye will not keep my commandments ye shall be cut off from my presence.

2 Nephi 1:20, is repeated several times throughout the Book of Mormon including the books of First and Second Nephi, Jarom, Alma, and Heleman. As a nation and individuals, we may rely upon being kept safe from our enemies, if we are obedient, but if we are disobedient, we will be unworthy of the Lord's protection.

2 Nephi 1:23

23 Awake, my sons; put on the armor of righteousness. Shake off the chains with which ye are bound, and come forth out of obscurity, and arise from the dust.

Alexander Pope observed,

"Vice is a monster of so frightful mien,

As, to be hated, needs but to be seen;
Yet seen too oft, familiar with her face,
We first endure, then pity, then embrace."
(An Essay on Man. *The International Thesaurus of
Quotations*. Compiled by Rhoda Thomas Tripp. New York:
Harper and Row, 1970, 1023. Vice, 22).

Marvin J. Ashton states,

"Who among us hasn't felt the chains of bad habits? These habits may have impeded our progress, may have made us forget who we are, may have destroyed our self-image, may have put our family life in jeopardy, and may have hindered our ability to serve our fellowmen and our God...Shaking off restrictive chains requires action...It requires commitment, self-discipline and work. Chains weigh heavily on troubled hearts and souls...They cause us to be confused and lose the spirit." ("Shake Off the Chains with Which Ye Are Bound," in *Conference Report*, October 1986).

For those who are determined to make the requisite changes, there is one to whom we can turn for strength and support. Jesus Christ knows of the chains we are experiencing. He has experienced ours and more. He will bless us so that we can loosen the chains by which we are bound. We can arise from the dust.

2 Nephi 1:25-27

25 ...for behold, ye have accused him [Nephi] that he sought power and authority over you; but I know that he hath not sought for power nor authority over you but he hath sought the glory of God, and your own eternal welfare.

26 And ye have murmured because he hath been plain unto you. Ye say that he hath used sharpness; ye say that he hath been angry with you; but behold, his sharpness was the sharpness of the power of the word of God, which was in him; and that which ye call anger was the truth, according to that which is in God, which he could not restrain, manifesting boldly concerning your iniquities.

27 And it must needs be that the power of God must be with him, even unto his commanding you that ye must obey. But behold, it was not he, but it was the Spirit of the Lord which was in him, which opened his mouth to utterance that he could not shut it.

Lehi was attempting to teach his sons regarding the working of the spirit. When we are in need of repentance, the spirit may speak through the words of another in order to cause us to humble ourselves so that we may again be receptive to the words of the spirit. Because we have strayed from the spirit, at time the words spoken may be sharp and cause us to believe they are spoken in anger. However, they are the words of the spirit of truth. As we heed the counsel we are given, these words will lead us to repentance and the spirit will return again. This was the desire of Lehi for his sons.

2 Nephi 1:28-29

28 And now my son, Laman, and also Lemuel and Sam, and also my sons who are the sons of Ishmael, behold, if ye will hearken unto the voice of Nephi ye shall not perish. And if ye will hearken unto him I leave unto you a blessing, yea, even my first blessing.
29 But if ye will not hearken unto him I take away my first blessing, yea, even my blessing, and it shall rest upon him.

George Reynolds and Janne M. Sjodahl state,

"*My first blessing.* This promise is given especially to Laman, Lemuel, Sam, and the sons of Ishmael. If they would hearken to Nephi, the blessing of his father would be theirs. See vv. 7 [land of liberty], 20 [prosper in the land keep commandments], 22 [not be cursed unto destruction, the eternal destruction of both soul and body]." (*Commentary on the Book of Mormon, Vol. 1.* Edited and arranged by Philip C. Reynolds. Salt Lake City: Deseret News Press, 1955, [1976], 240).

These blessing were conditional upon faithful service to the Lord and obedience to his commandments. They also included the position of leadership in the land. If his older sons were not faithful, these blessings would be taken from them and given to Nephi, even though he was his younger son. One of the greatest source of conflict for the older brothers regarding Nephi has been, and will continue to be, his position of presiding over them though they are older. [See 1 Nephi 2:22.]

Lehi now pronounced blessings upon Zoram.

2 Nephi 1:31

31 Wherefore, because thou hast been faithful thy seed shall be blessed with his [Nephi] seed, that they dwell in prosperity long upon the face of this land; and nothing, save it shall be iniquity among them, shall harm or distrub their prosperity upon the face of this land forever.

Zoram and his family have proved themselves to be faithful in their obedience to the commandments and did not rebel against Nephi as his older brothers. If he will continue to be obedient, the blessings will continue to abide with his posterity.

III. 2 Nephi 2:1-10

Lehi turned now to giving a blessing to his younger son, Jacob. In his youth, Jacob was obedient to the commandments. In his blessing to Jacob, Lehi taught his son regarding the coming of the Messiah and his atonement. This doctrine is of such importance to their salvation, if it were initially given only to Jacob, it would later be taught to each of Lehi's children.

2 Nephi 2:5

5 And men are instructed sufficiently that they know good from evil. And the law is given unto men. And by the law no flesh is justified; or, by the law men are cut off. Yea, by the temporal law they were cut off; and also, by the spiritual law they perish from that which is good, and become miserable forever.

Joseph Fielding McConkie and Robert L. Millet states,

"Obedience to the law, be it the law of Moses or the fullness of gospel law, will not resurrect or exalt a man. Had there been no atoning sacrifice there would be no resurrection, no eternal life, no celestial kingdom, no saved beings. Only in that which Christ did for us, that which we could not do for ourselves, is the hope of salvation granted to men." (*Doctrinal Commentary on the Book of Mormon, Vol.1*. Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1987, [11th Printing, 1999], 192-193).

2 Nephi 2:6-7

6 Wherefore, redemption cometh in and through the Holy Messiah; for he is full of grace and truth.

7 Behold, he offereth himself a sacrifice for sin, to answer the ends of the law, unto all those who have a broken heart and a contrite spirit; and unto none else can the ends of the law be answered.

Joseph Fielding McConkie and Robert L. Millet continue,

"Redemption wrought by Christ is not a matter of grace alone, but rather is found in 'grace and truth.' Surely, there is no salvation to be found in error or falsehood or in declarations of praise to some image of Christ that exists only in the minds of men. Without truth, there is no salvation. Grace is efficacious only in the midst of truth. (*Doctrinal Commentary on the Book of Mormon, Vol.1.* Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1987, [11th Printing, 1999], 193).

2 Nephi 2:8

8 Wherefore, how great the importance to make these things known unto the inhabitants of the earth, that they may know that there is no flesh that can dwell in the presence of God, save it be through the merits, and mercy, and grace of the Holy Messiah, who layeth down his life according to the flesh, and taketh it again by the power of the Spirit, that he may bring to pass the resurrection of the dead, being the first that should rise.

Joseph Fielding McConkie and Robert L. Millet continue,

"As there is none other name by which men can be saved, so there is none other way than through a total reliance upon that which Christ did for us, that which we could not have done for ourselves.

"As Mary's son, Christ submitted to the inevitable consequence of mortality--physical death. As God's son, he had power to take up his body again--doing so by the power of the Spirit." (*Doctrinal Commentary on the Book of Mormon, Vol.1.* Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1987, [11th Printing, 1999], 193).

As an infant born of a mortal mother, Christ was subject to the consequence of mortality—physical death. From God Eternal, who was his father, he also possessed the power of life after death. He had the power of living after death and is able to grant that power to others.

2 Nephi 2:9-10

9 Wherefore, he is the first--fruits unto God, inasmuch as he shall make intercession for all the children of men; and they that believe in him shall be saved.

10 And because of the intercession for all, all men come unto God; wherefore, they stand in the presence of him, to be judged of him according to the truth and holiness which is in him. Wherefore, the ends of the law which the Holy One hath given, unto the inflicting of the punishment which is affixed, which punishment that is affixed is in opposition to that of happiness which is affixed, to answer the atonement--

Joseph Fielding McConkie and Robert L. Millet state,

"Man did not create himself, nor is he the master of his destiny. Both creation and destiny rest in the hands of God. He alone is the author of the plan by which salvation or damnation is granted to men. It is out of that plan which called for the Fall and the subsequent atonement that the doctrine of advocacy, intercession or mediation grows. In his atoning sacrifice Christ paid the penalty for the sins of all men, on condition of repentance, so that all might escape the judgments decreed for disobedience. As taught by Abinadi, this law is that God gave, 'the Son power to make intercession for the children of men,' and that he thereby 'redeemed them, and satisfied the demands of justice; (Mosiah 15:8-9). Those for whom no intercession is made, Abinadi taught, are damned, for they have sought their own carnal will, refused the Lord, and remained unrepentant (Mosiah 16:5)...Christ...is [our]mediator, intercessor, and advocate with the Father. To seek others as mediators between themselves and God is to deny Christ's role as Redeemer and Savior." (*Doctrinal Commentary on the Book of Mormon, Vol.1*. Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1987, [11th Printing, 1999], 194-195).

Russel M. Nelson offers an explanation of the word, "atonement,"

"In the English languages, the components are *at-one-ment*, suggesting that a person is at one with another. Other languages employ words that connote either *expiration* or *reconciliation*. *Expiation* means 'to atone for.' *Reconciliation* comes from Latin roots *re*, meaning 'again'; *con*, meaning 'with'; and *sella*, meaning 'seat.' *Reconciliation*, therefore, literally means 'to sit again with'... In Hebrew, the basic word for atonement is *kaphar*, a verb that means 'to cover' or 'to forgive.' Closely related is the Aramaic and Arabic word *kafat*, meaning 'a close embrace'—no doubt related to the Egyptian ritual embrace..While the words *atone* or *atonement*, in any of their forms, appear only one in the King James translation of the New Testament [Romans 5:11], they appear 35 times in the Book of Mormon. As another testament of Jesus Christ, it sheds precious light on His Atonement." ("The Atonement," in *Ensign*, November 1996, 34-35).

It was imperative to Lehi that his sons understood the role of the Savior as our Redeemer and Advocate with the Father. He knew that without a change of heart on the part of his older sons, and the sons of Ishmael, their eternal progress would be limited for they did not humble themselves in response to the whispering of the spirit; they sought to follow their own will; they were, for the most part, unrepentant, even though they had been taught the truths of the gospel, they did not seek in faith, to know the Lord and his desire for them. All Lehi could do was to teach his sons and trust that through the Spirit, they would learn the truth.

IV. 2 Nephi 2:11-30

Lehi now seeks to teach his sons the importance of the divinely inspired plan regarding the importance of their being opposition in all things. Without Adam and Eve's transgression, there would be no opportunity for them, or us, to be able to choose between good and evil.

2 Nephi 2:11-12

11 For it must needs be, that there is an opposition in all things. It not so, my first-born in the wilderness, righteousness could not be brought to

pass, neither wickedness, neither holiness nor misery, neither good nor bad. Wherefore, all things must needs be a compound in one; wherefore, if it should be one body it must needs remain as dead, having no life neither death, nor corruption nor incorruption, happiness nor misery, neither sense nor insensibility. 12 Wherefore, it must needs have been created for a thing of naught; wherefore there would have been no purpose in the end of its creation. Wherefore this things must needs destroy the wisdom of God and his eternal purposes, and also the power, and the mercy, and the justice of God.

What is essential in order for freedom of choice to exist? There must be at least two choices and an individual must be free to make a choice. Without choice, or if all were forced to do good, there would be no purpose for our coming to mortality. One of the purposes of our coming to earth was to achieve a physical body. Another was for us to determine for ourselves if we, outside of the Father's presence, would chose to follow his commandments when we were being influenced with opposing choices.

2 Nephi 2:15-16

15 And to bring about his eternal purposes in the end of man, after he had created our first parents, and the beasts of the field and the fowls of the air, and in fine, all things which are created, it must needs be that there was an opposition; even the forbidden fruit in opposition to the tree of life; the one being sweet and the other bitter.

16 Wherefore, the Lord God gave unto man that he should act for himself. Wherefore, man could not act for himself save it should be that he was enticed by the one or the other.

Ezra Taft Benson states,

"...the Father's plan, which requires that all people obtain mortal bodies, be tried and proven in all things, and have opportunity to choose of their own free will...Lucifer—a personage of prominence—sought to amend the plan, while Jehovah sustained the plan. The central issue in that council, then, was: Shall the children of God have untrammelled agency to choose the course they should follow, whether good or evil, or shall they be coerced and forced

to be obedient? Christ and all who followed Him stood for the former proposition—freedom of choice; Satan stood for the latter—coercion and force. Because Satan and those who stood with him would not accept the vote of the council, but rose up in rebellion, they were cast down to the earth, where they have continued to foster the same plan." ("The Constitution: A Heavenly Banner," *Brigham Young Devotional Speeches*, 16 September 1980, 2-3).

2 Nephi 2:17-18

17 And I, Lehi, according to the things which I have read, must needs suppose that an angel of God, according to that which is written, had fallen from heaven; wherefore, he became a devil, having sought that which was evil before God.

18 And because he had fallen from heaven, and had become miserable forever, he sought also the misery of all mankind. Wherefore, he said unto Eve, yea, even that old serpent, who is the devil, who is the father of all lies, wherefore he said: Partake of the forbidden fruit, and ye shall not die, but ye shall be as God, knowing good and evil.

The devil, having fallen from heaven and becoming miserable forever, came to earth with his followers. Their desire is to continue to provide opposition to the Father's plan for his children.

By the use of a half-truth, the devil enticed Eve to partake of the fruit of the tree of knowledge of good and evil, and then persuade Adam to partake. Satan's lie was if she or Adam partook of the forbidden fruit, contrary to God's promise, they would not die. His truth was that they would have the opportunity to become as the Gods.

Eve informs Adam that because she had partaken of the fruit, she would now be cast out of the garden. Adam would then be left alone. In order to maintain his marital relationship with Eve; Adam, knowingly, partook of the fruit.

When God the Father and His Son, Jesus Christ, appeared to Adam and Eve, they were informed that they would no longer be able to remain in the Garden of Eden. They were now told that a Savior had been provided for them. If they would make a covenant of obedience, a way was provided for

them, through the covenant of obedience, to return to God's presence. Eve then covenanted to obey Adam as he obeys the Father; and, Adam covenanted to obey God and keep his commandments. Once outside the garden, Adam and Eve now had the opportunity to have children. In accordance with the Father's Plan, their transgression in the Garden of Eden, became a blessing to them, and for us.

2 Nephi 2:19-21

19 And after Adam and Eve had partaken of the forbidden fruit they were driven out of the garden of Eden, to till the earth.

20 And they have brought forth children, yea, even the family of all the earth.

21 And the days of the children of men were prolonged, according to the will of God, that they might repent while in the flesh; wherefore, their state became a state of probation, and their time was lengthened, according to the commandments which the Lord God gave unto the children of men. For he gave commandments that all men must repent; for he showed unto all men that they were lost, because of the transgression of their parents.

While many in the Christian world see the Fall of Adam as a "fall backward," the truths of the Book of Mormon teach that it was instead a "fall forward." It is because of the foreknowledge of the Father, that a plan was in place to enable Adam and Eve, by the exercise of their agency, to be cast out of the garden of Eden and to use Satan's desire to thwart's God's plan to provide the necessary opposition. It also enabled us as spirit children of God to come to earth.

**Chart 1. Status of Adam And Eve Before and After the Fall
As Taught in 2 Nephi 2:15-25**

| Status of Adam and Eve Before the Fall | Status of Adam and Eve After the Fall |
|---|--|
| They were in the presence of God. | They were cast out of the presence of God—that is, they suffered a spiritual death. |
| They were not mortal—that is, they were not subject to physical death (2 Ne.2:22). | They became mortal—that is subject to physical death. |
| They were in a state of innocence—that is, they did | They knew good and evil. |

| | |
|--|--|
| not know the difference between good and evil (2 Ne.2:23). | |
| They "would have had no children (2 Ne.2:23)." | They could now have children (2 Ne.2:20) |

Reference: (Daniel H. Ludlow. *A Companion to Your Study of the Book of Mormon*. Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Co., 1976, 127).

2 Nephi 2:24-25

24 But behold, all things have been done in the wisdom of him who knoweth all things.
25 Adam fell that men might be; and men are, that they might have joy.

The effects of the Fall had been anticipated by the Father prior to the presentation of his plan during our premortal existence. He, knowing that his children would sin, sought one to serve as the Savior and Redeemer of mankind.

2 Nephi 2:26-27

26 And the Messiah cometh in the fullness of time, that he may redeem the children of men from the fall. And because that they are redeemed from the fall they have become free forever, knowing good from evil; to act for themselves and not to be acted upon, save it be by the punishment of the law at the great and last day, according to the commandments which God hath given.
27 Wherefore, men are free according to the flesh; and all things are given them which are expedient unto man. And they are free to choose liberty and eternal life, through the great Mediator of all men, or to choose captivity and death, according to the captivity and power of the devil; for he seeketh that all men might be miserable like unto himself.

Joseph B. Wirthlin states,

"The Lord has given you the gift of agency (see Moses 7:32) and instructed you sufficiently to know good from evil (see 2 Ne.2:5). You are free to choose (see 2 Ne.2:27) and are permitted to act (see 2 Ne. 10:23; Hel. 14:30), but you are not free to choose the consequences. With absolute certainty, choices of good and right lead to happiness and

peace, while choices of sin and evil eventually lead to unhappiness, sorrow, and misery." ("Running Your Marathon," in *Ensign*, November 1989, 75).

We are free during our mortal journey to make choices. Some of these choices will have little consequence upon our life. Other choices will have a major impact upon our lives here and hereafter. These choices are often between good and evil. While we are free to choose, we are not free to choose the consequences that follow our choices. These will continue to impact our lives for good or evil throughout our mortal journey. It is important, therefore, that we choose wisely.

2 Nephi Chapter 2 contains the doctrine of the Creation (2 Nephi 2:14-15); the Fall (2 Nephi 2:4-5, 8, 18-25); and, the Atonement (2 Nephi 2:3-4, 6-10; 26-27).

Joseph Fielding McConkie and Robert L. Millet state,

"The most transcendent event in all history was the atoning sacrifice of Christ. The Atonement came in answer to the Fall. Without an understanding of the Fall there can be no meaningful understanding of the Atonement. In turn, to understand the Fall one must understand the nature of the Creation, for it is from the original state in which things were created that they have fallen, and to which, through the Atonement, they are in large measure intended to return. The three principles—the Creation, the Fall and the Atonement—are inseparable.

"Within the covers of the Bible we can read an account of the Creation, of Adam's fall, and of the events that surrounded Christ's atoning sacrifice. Yet it is to the Book of Mormon that we must turn to learn *why* things were created as they were, *why* it was essential to the eternal plan for the salvation of man that Adam fall, and *why* the blood of Christ needed to be shed in an infinite sacrifice. To this end, few verses have ever been penned that are more instructive than those here written by father Lehi."

(*Doctrinal Commentary on the Book of Mormon, Vol.1*. Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1987, [11th Printing, 1999], 199-200).

Bruce R. McConkie states,

"The three pillars of eternity, the three events, preeminent and transcendent above all others are the

creation, the fall, and the atonement. These three are the foundation upon which all things rest. Without any one of them all things would lose their purpose and meaning, and the plans and designs of Deity would come to naught.

"If there had been no creation, we would not be, neither the earth, nor any form of life upon its face. All things, all the primal elements, would be without form and void. God would have no spirit children; there would be no mortal probation; and none of us would be on the way to immortality and eternal life.

"If there had been no fall of man, there would not be a mortal probation. Mortal man would not be, nor would there be animals or fowls or fishes or life of any sort upon the earth. And, we repeat, none of us would be on the way to immortality and eternal life.

"If there had been no atonement of Christ, all things would be lost. The purposes of creation would vanish away. Lucifer would triumph over men and become the captain of their souls." ("The Three Pillars of Eternity," in *Brigham Young University Speeches*, 1981. 17 February 1981, 1).

As we continue our study of the Book of Mormon, we will come to understand more clearly the words of the Lehi as they apply to "The Three Pillars of Eternity," as noted by Bruce R. McConkie.

V. Choices

As we conclude this section we have focused upon the teachings of Father Lehi as he taught eternal truths to his son Jacob, and certainly all of those in the company. Each day, as previously noted, we are called upon to make choices. Lehi provides us with some divine truths to assist us as we are confronted with some of the common beliefs found in the world today.

**Chart 2. False Teaching Contrasted With Divine Truths
By Father Lehi**

| FALSE TEACHINGS OF THE WORLD | DIVINE TRUTHS BY FATHER LEHI |
|----------------------------------|--|
| There is no good or evil. | "Men are instructed sufficiently that they know good from evil" (2 Ne.2:5). |
| There is no law. | "The law is given unto men" |

| | |
|---|--|
| | (2 Ne.2:5). |
| There is no Christ. | "Redemption cometh in and through the Holy Messiah" (2 Ne.2:6). |
| There is no existence after this life. | "All men [will] stand in the presence of [God], to be judged of him" (2 Ne.2:10). |
| There is no God. | "There is a God" (2 Ne2:14). |
| Life had no purpose. | "Men are that they might have joy" (2 Ne.2:25). |
| Our actions are determined by genetics and environment. | We are free "to act for [our]selves and not to be acted upon;" We are "free to choose liberty and eternal life...or to choose captivity and death" (2 Ne.2:26-27). |

Reference: (Book of Mormon Gospel Doctrine Teacher's Manual. Salt Lake City: The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 1999, 28).

As we reflect upon the teachings of Father Lehi, it is important that we do not underestimate the role of the devil in his efforts to win the hearts and minds of mankind.

Brigham Young states,

"The adversary presents his principles and arguments in the most approved style, and in the most winning tone, attended with the most graceful attitudes; and he is very careful to ingratiate himself with popular parties, floating into offices of trust and emolument by pandering in popular feeling, though it should seriously wrong and oppress the innocent." (*Discourses of Brigham Young*. Compiled by John A. Widtsoe. Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Co., 1954, [Edition 1961], 69).

In the sixties, there was a popular black comedian named Flip Wilson. When he was confronted with his wrongful actions, he always stated, "The devil made me do it." Even today, some seem to hold on to this false belief, believing that men are powerless to resist the temptations and allurements the devil offers them. We are blessed to have the words of the Prophets that teach us this belief is false.

Brigham Young gave us these words of insight and understanding as to how the power of God and the devil operate in our choices today,

"You are aware that many think that the Devil has rule and power over both body and spirit. Now, I want to tell you that he does not hold any over man, only so far as the body overcomes the spirit that is in man, through yielding to the spirit of evil. The spirit that the Lord puts into a tabernacle of flesh, is under the dictation of the Lord Almighty; but the spirit and body are united in order that the spirit may have a tabernacle, and be exalted; and the spirit is influenced by the body, and the body by the spirit.

"In the first place the spirit is pure, and under the special control and influence of the Lord, but the body is of the earth, and is subject to the power of the Devil, and is under the mighty influence of that fallen nature that is of the earth. If the spirit yields to the body, the Devil then has power to overcome the body and spirit of that man, and he loses both.

"Recollect, brethren and sisters, everyone of you, that which evil is suggested to you, when it arises in your hearts, it is through the temporal organization. When you are tempted, buffeted, and step out of the way inadvertently; where you are overtaken in a fault, or commit an overt act unthinkingly; where you are full of evil passion, and wish to yield to it, then stop and let the spirit, which God has put into your tabernacles, take the lead. If you do that, I will promise that you will overcome all evil, and obtain eternal lives. But many, very many, let the spirit yield to the body, and are overcome and destroyed." (*Discourses of Brigham Young*. Compiled by John A. Widtsoe. Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Co., 1954, [Edition 1961], 69-70).

It is a great blessing to be "free to choose" as this hymn states:

**"Know this, that ev'ry soul is free to choose his life
and what he'll be;
For this eternal truth is giv'n: That God will force
no man to heav'n.
He'll call, persuade, direct aright, And bless with
wisdom, love, and light,**

In nameless ways be good and kind, But never force the human mind.

**May we no more our pow'rs abuse. But ways of truth and goodness choose;
Our God is pleased when we improve His grace and seek his perfect love."**

Text: Anon. ca. 1805, Boston.

Music: Roger L. Miller, b. 1937.

(Hymn #240. "Know This, That Every Soul is Free." *Hymns of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints*. Salt Lake City: The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 1985, 240).

VI. Conclusions

These chapters give important counsel to each of us. Father Lehi was speaking to the members of his family, but he is also speaking to us. With his dying words, he seeks to give each of us words of admonition, counsel, and blessing for us to reflect upon during our lives.

Lehi reminded his family members to be grateful for the many blessings the Lord had given them, including their being preserved from the destruction of Jerusalem. He also brought them to a land of promise, a land that was choice above all other lands. Here they were protected from other nations and were able to dwell in safety. These blessings, however, are predicated upon their worshipping the God of this land, who is Jesus Christ and being obedient to his commandments. If they failed to heed this counsel, they would not survive upon the land.

He counseled his older sons regarding the workings of the spirit. Nephi's words of admonition to them were not spoken because he desired to have power over them, or out of anger with them. They were the words of spirit that sought to humble them so that they would be led to repentance. Lehi reminded them that the blessings of the Lord including liberty, prosperity, and blessings of their body and spirit would to be given only if they lived lives of righteousness. If they rejected the spirit and didn't follow the commandments, they would lose these blessings, including the privilege of presiding.

Lehi, in his blessing to Jacob, admonished that the law had been given to man to know the difference between good and evil, the only hope of salvation, or eternal life, is found in the atoning sacrifice of Jesus Christ. Christ "offereth himself a sacrifice for sin...unto all those who have a broken heart and a contrite spirit; and unto none else" (2 Nephi 2:6). Only Christ has the power and ability to be our Redeemer.

One of the purposes for our earth life is to be able to exercise our free agency. In order for this process to occur it was necessary "there there is an opposition in all things" (2 Nephi 2:11). Only when we were able to freely choose the plan of Our Heavenly Father in contrast to the plan of wickedness as presented by Satan, are we able to become like Our Heavenly Father. It was, therefore, necessary that we be tempted so that we would be able to choose for ourselves. This was also true in the Garden of Eden where Adam and Eve were able to make choices while being tempted by Satan. Because of the Fall, Adam and Eve became mortal. They suffered both a spiritual and physical death, knew good and evil, and now could have children. It was truly a Fall forward, rather than a Fall backward.

The three transcendent events are the Creation, the Fall, and the Atonement. These three work together in God's plan to provide a foundation upon which all other things rest. Because of the Creation, we have a place upon which we can dwell; because of the Fall, we can experience a mortal probation; and, because of the Atonement, we have a Savior and Redeemer who overcame the physical death. He also made it possible for us to overcome the spiritual death through the grace of Jesus Christ when combined with us honoring and keeping sacred covenants.

It is true that we have choices to make, important choices, if we are desirous of returning to live with Our Heavenly Father. We are not left on our own. We have the words of the Prophets and Apostles, to teach us divine truths so that we may then make informed choices. We are most blessed to have the truths that are found in the Book of Mormon to guide and direct us in making these choices. In the end, however, it is our decision to choose liberty and eternal life or captivity and death.

In our next lesson, BM#07, we are introduced to the role that Joseph Smith will play regarding the Book of Mormon.

We will also learn about both the sadness and joy that Nephi experienced in his desire to live righteously.