

**BM#43 "How Could Ye Have Departed from the Ways
of the Lord?" - Mormon 1-6; Moroni 9**

- I. Introduction
- II. Mormon 1
- III. Mormon 2
- IV. Mormon 3
- V. Mormon 4
- VI. Mormon 5
- VII. Mormon 6
- VIII. Moroni 9
- IX. Conclusions

I. Introduction

Webster's New World Dictionary states,

"Hero. 2. any person, esp. a man, admired for courage, nobility, or exploits, esp. in war. 3. any person, esp. a man, admired for qualities or achievements and regarded as an ideal or model." (*Webster's New World Dictionary*. New York: Prentice-Hall, 1988, [1994], 632).

There are many individuals in the Book of Mormon whose lives are exemplary and would qualify to be selected as a hero. These are individuals who stood out from their peers due to their courage and determination to serve the Lord under difficult circumstances. Those who immediately come to my mind include Nephi, Alma, the four Sons of Mosiah, the Sons of Helaman, Captain Moroni, and Nephi 2. I would like to add yet another name to my list, Mormon. His resume is most impressive. It includes: (1) Writer. It is he for whom the Book of Mormon was named for he was its major abridger; (2) Keeper of sacred records. He not only abridged a major part of the Book of Mormon writings, he was also entrusted with the sacred records during his own lifetime; (3) General. At age 16, he was made the leader of the Nephite military, a position he held for most of his life, except for a thirteen year period; (4) Prophet. He prophesied especially regarding the latter days, and worried about the welfare of the wicked; and, (5) Father. He was Moroni's father and was concerned for his son's well-being. Moroni also loved and admired his father and included two of his letters and one of his talks is his own final writings. We have known Mormon as both Editor and Commentator, now we have the opportunity to know him as an

individual who lived most of his life during a time of great wickedness.

Overview of Mormon 1-6; Moroni 9:

- "Mormon 1: Prophet Ammaron gives charge to Mormon concerning the sacred records. Mormon taken south to Zarahemla by his father. Wars and wickedness of Nephites and Lamanites. Savior visits Mormon. Three Nephite disciples forbidden to preach; taken out of land. Mormon warned not to preach. Gadianton robbers.
- "Mormon 2: Mormon leads Nephite armies. Spirit of Lord departs from Nephites. Division of territory between Nephites and Lamanites.
- "Mormon 3: Mormon refuses to lead Nephite armies because of their wickedness. His words to future generations.
- "Mormon 4: Nephites wage war of revenge against Lamanites. Nephites begin to lose. Mormon removes sacred records from Hill Shim.
- "Mormon 5: [Mormon] again consents to lead Nephites. Terrible scenes of blood and carnage. Mormon writes to Gentiles and remnant of Israel.
- "Mormon 6: Final struggle between Nephites and Lamanites at Cumorah. Mormon deposits most of Nephite records in Hill Cumorah.
- "Moroni 9: Second pastoral epistle of Mormon to Moroni concerning Lamanite and Nephite atrocities, the work of the ministry, together with an affectionate admonition." (*Book of Mormon Compendium*. Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1968, 441, 483).

II. Mormon 1

Bryan Richards states to Mormon's record,

"Before we discuss Mormon's personal record, we should note

that [this book] marks an important transition from Mormon's role as abridger to personal historian. Mormon's greatest accomplishment was that he had abridged the Large Plates of Nephi from the days of Lehi to his own (WofM 1:3, 9). The portion of this record that we have today (Mosiah to 4 Nephi) spans a time period of over 450 years. For his prophetic condensing, editorializing, and admonishing, we will always be grateful. Apparently, this great work was accomplished prior to writing his own history as evidenced by the smooth transition from 4 Nephi to Mormon.

"Furthermore, we learn from the Words of Mormon that Mormon's work on the abridgement and his personal history took place just before the final battle of 385 A.D. (See Mormon 6:6 and WofM 1:1). This places his age over 70 and demonstrates his perspective as he abridges the record. Mormon is writing the words known as the Book of Mormon after collecting all the wisdom of age and experience." (www.gospeldoctrine.com/contents/Mormon-1).

Mormon 1:1-2

1 And now I, Mormon, make a record of the things which I have both seen and heard, and call it the Book of Mormon.

2 And about the time that Ammaron hid up the records unto the Lord, he came unto me, (I being about ten years of age, and I began to be learned somewhat after the manner of the learning of my people) and Ammaron said unto me: I perceive that thou art a sober child, and art quick to observe;

It is obvious that Ammaron, the last writer of 4 Nephi, who had buried the sacred records (see 4 Nephi 1:48-49), was directed by the Lord to the home of Mormon, who at the time was only ten years old. He had the qualities of being "a sober child, and...quick to observe" (Mormon 1:2).

Joseph Fielding McConkie, Robert L. Millet, and Brent L. Top state,

"It should not be thought that Mormon was somber; rather, he was sober--meaning that he was thoughtful and serious-minded, mature beyond his chronological age. Undoubtedly Mormon's soberness was as much spiritual as emotional. The things of the Lord were important to him even at such an early age, as evidenced by the visitation of the Lord to

him (see verse 15).” (*Doctrinal Commentary on the Book of Mormon*, Vol. 4. Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1992, 209).

David A. Bednar states,

“When we are quick to observe, we promptly look or notice and obey. Both these fundamental elements—looking and obeying—are essential to being quick to observe. And the prophet Mormon is an impressive example of this gift in action.” (“Quick to Observe,” in *Ensign*, December, 2006, 32).

“Sober and...quick to observe.” These are qualities a prophet of God noted in a otherwise appearing ordinary ten year old boy. Even at a young age, Mormon stood out among his peers.

Mormon 1:3-5

3 Therefore, when ye are about twenty and four years old I would that ye should remember the things that ye have observed concerning this people; and when ye are of that age go to the land Antum, unto a hill which shall be called Shim; and there I have deposited unto the Lord all the sacred engravings concerning this people.

4 And behold, ye shall take the plates of Nephi unto yourself, and the remainder shall ye leave in the place where they are; and ye shall engrave on the plates of Nephi all the things that ye have observed concerning this people.

5 And I, Mormon, being a descendant of Nephi, (and my father's name was Mormon) I remembered the things which Ammaron commanded me.

Mormon was instructed by Ammaron that fourteen years from this date, he, having kept a record of the events he observed regarding the people, was to go to the land Antum, unto a hill called Shim where he would find deposited ancient records.

Hugh W. Nibley states,

“*Shim* [means] *north* in any Semitic language...He [Ammaron] knew that the movement [of the people] would be northward. It would not be safe for them to remain south when they start into this long tragic retreat here.” (*Teaching of the Book of Mormon, Semester 4, Lecture 104. Transcripts of*

lectures, Honors Book of Mormon Class at Brigham Young University. Provo, Utah: Foundation for Ancient Research and Mormon Studies, 1993, 192).

Ammaron continued, You will take the plates written by Nephi and engrave upon them a record of your people as events occur during your lifetime. This must have seemed like a formidable assignment for a boy who was only ten years old!

Mormon 1:6-7

6 And it came to pass that I, being eleven years old, was carried by my father into the land southward, even to the land of Zarahemla.

7 The whole face of the land had become covered with buildings, and the people were as numerous almost as it were the sand of the sea.

Mormon's father is anxious that his son come to know the land and people where he lives. He is impressed with the number of buildings and the numerous number of people in the land southward.

In this same year, "there began a war between the [two parties] Nephites...and the Lamanites" (Mormon 1:8-9). The result was that the Nephites "did beat the Lamanites and did slay many of them...[and] the Lamanites withdrew their design and there was peace settled in the land...for the space of about four years" (Mormon 1:10-12). Despite that absence of conflict, there was another factor that continued to erode their civilization.

Mormon 1:13-14

13 But wickedness did prevail upon the face of the whole land, insomuch that the Lord did take away his beloved disciples, and the work of miracles and of healing did cease because of the iniquity of the people.

14 And there were no gifts from the Lord, and the Holy Ghost did not come upon any, because of their wickedness and unbelief.

As direct result of the nation's wickedness, the three disciples were withdrawn from their midst. Due to a lack of faith and repentance on the part of the people, both

miracles and healings, along with the other gifts of the Spirit, ceased. Increased wickedness was the prevailing attitude of the people.

Mormon 1:15

15 And I, being fifteen years of age and being somewhat of sober mind, therefore I was visited of the Lord, and tasted and knew of the goodness of Jesus.

Joseph Fielding McConkie, Robert L. Millet, and Brent L. Top states,

"Even though he was just a young man of fifteen years, Mormon was filled with faith and his life was one of righteousness to the point that he was privileged to see the resurrected Christ. At some point too he was privileged to see and know the three translated Nephites (see Mormon 8:11). Perhaps even greater than these visitations, Mormon knew the 'goodness of Jesus' by personally experiencing the blessings of the Atonement--through faith in Christ he was born again and being filled with the Spirit, had iniquity burned, as it were, from his soul. This spiritual transformation from the natural man who is an enemy of God to a 'new creature in Christ' is the application of 'the goodness of Jesus' we should also seek to know." (*Doctrinal Commentary on the Book of Mormon*, Vol. 4. Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1992, 211).

Mormon 1:16-17

**16 And I did endeavor to preach unto this people, but my mouth was shut, and I was forbidden that I should preach unto them; for behold they had wilfully rebelled against their God; and the beloved disciples were taken out of the land because of their iniquity.
17 But I did remain among them, but I was forbidden to preach unto them, because of the hardness of their hearts; and because of the hardness of their hearts the land was cursed for their sake.**

Joseph Fielding McConkie, Robert L. Millet, and Brent L. Top state,

"What the disciples, both ancient and modern, are allowed by the Spirit to teach is determined by the spiritual readiness of the listeners. The Lord has cautioned against

presenting more than the listeners are prepared to hear and heed. Mormon was forbidden to preach the gospel not only because of the people's spiritual unpreparedness but also perhaps because of the hardness of their hearts would have prompted them to 'turn against and rend' Mormon. They were not neutral nor passive when it came to hearing the truths of the gospel. They were willfully rebellious and were spiritually trampling underfoot the prophets of God, the words of God--even the very God of Israel himself (see 1 Nephi 19:7; D&C 3:13 15). When men's hearts become so hardened with the scar tissue of sin that they are 'past feeling' (see 1 Nephi 17:45), even the preaching of the word--which can be 'more powerful...than the sword' (see Alma 31:5)--cannot pierce them to their souls." (*Doctrinal Commentary on the Book of Mormon*, Vol. 4. Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1992, 211-212).

The fact that they once had the word of God, and were knowingly rebelling, now placed them under greater condemnation and judgment in contrast to those who were ignorant of the word of God.

Mormon 1:18-19

18 ...these Gadianton robbers, who were among the Lamanites, did infest the land, insomuch that the inhabitants thereof began to hide up their treasures in the earth; and they became slippery, because the Lord had cursed the land, that they could not hold them, nor retain them again.

19 And it came to pass that there were sorceries, and witchcrafts and magics; and the power of the evil one was wrought upon all the face of the land, even unto the fulfilling of all the words of Abinadi, and also Samuel the Lamanite.

Joseph Fielding McConkie, Robert L. Millet, and Brent L. Top state,

"The 'slippery' earth did not necessarily swallow up treasures in some mystical or magical way, but rather such treasures disappeared through the thievery and dishonest of the Gadiantons and others with similar motives (see Mormon 2:10). Not only could they not hold and retain their earthly treasures because they were being stolen by others, but also they could not retain them in an eternal sense. Hearts so set on the transitory things of the world will be

broken with a stark realization that the only real and lasting treasures are the riches of eternity (see Matthew 6:20; D&C 11:7; 19:38).” (*Doctrinal Commentary on the Book of Mormon*, Vol. 4. Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1992, 212).

Not only had Abinadi (Mosiah 12:8), and also Samuel the Lamanite (Helaman 13:8-10) prophesied the downfall of the Nephites, others had also. These included Nephi (1 Nephi 12:19), Alma (Alma 45:12), and Jesus Christ.

3 Nephi 27:32

32 But behold it sorroweth me because of the fourth generation from this generation, for they are led away captive by him even as was the son of perdition; for they will sell me for silver and gold, and for that which moth doth corrupt and which thieves can break through and steal. And in that day will I visit them, even in turning their works upon their own heads.

III. Mormon 2

Mormon 2:1-2

1 And it came to pass in that same year there began to be a war again between the Nephites and the Lamanites. And notwithstanding I being young, was large in stature; therefore the people of Nephi appointed me that I should be their leader, or the leader of their armies.

2 Therefore it came to pass that in my sixteenth year I did go forth at the head of an army of Nephites, against the Lamanites; therefore three hundred and twenty and six years had passed away.

According to calculations, Mormon was born in A.D. 310 or 311. He became commander of the Nephite Army at age sixteen (Mormon 2:2), or in A.D. 326. He resigned in A.D. 362 (Mormon 3:8-11) at the age of 52, after serving for approximately 36 years. He agreed to again serve as commander (Mormon 5:1) in A.D. 375, after an hiatus of approximately thirteen years. He was killed in battle in A.D. 385, after having served as the General of the Nephite army for an approximate total of 46 of his 75 years.

It was tragic to note when the “Lamanites did come upon us with exceedingly great power, insomuch that they did

frighten my armies; therefore they would not fight" (Mormon 2:3). Half of the battle in order to gain victory is found in the attitude of the soldiers. If they do not believe that they can defeat their opponents, their chances for victory are reduced. Their fear took control and thus began their retreat from the Lamanites and one defeat after another. (see Mormon 2:4-7.) The result of the war is then reflected upon by Mormon.

Mormon 2:8

8 But behold, the land was filled with robbers and with Lamanites, and notwithstanding the great destruction which hung over my people they did not repent of their evil doings; therefore there was blood and carnage spread throughout all the face of the land, both on the part of the Nephites and also on the part of the Lamanites; and it was one complete revolution throughout all the face of the land.

Finally, it appears "in the land of Joshua, which was in the borders west by the seashore...[King] Aaron...came against us with an army of forty and four thousand and behold, I withstood him with my army of forty and two thousand. And it came to pass that I beat him with my army that he fled before me" (Mormon 2:6,9). Mormon took hope that their mourning and sorrowing were for actions that had brought about this war.

Mormon 2:12-14

12 And it came to pass that when I, Mormon, saw their lamentation and their mourning and their sorrow before the Lord, my heart did begin to rejoice within me, knowing the mercies and the long-suffering of the Lord, therefore supposing that he would be merciful unto them that they would again become a righteous people.

13 But behold this my joy was vain, for their sorrowing was not unto repentance, because of the of the goodness of God; but it was rather the sorrowing of the damned, because the Lord would not always suffer them to take happiness in sin.

14 And they did not come unto Jesus with broken hearts and contrite spirits, but they did curse God, and wish to die. Nevertheless they would struggle with the sword for their lives.

Spencer W. Kimball states,

"The essence of the miracle of forgiveness is that it brings peace to the previously anxious, restless, frustrated, perhaps tormented soul. In a world of turmoil and contention this is indeed a priceless gift.

"The Nephite civilization did not learn this in time. As it began to funnel to a rough and tragic conclusion, the prophet Mormon thought he glimpsed a possibility of the people repenting and receiving forgiveness for their great sins. But he was mistaken. All his life, since his boyhood, he had decried the hardness of his people and watched with sadness and tears the approaching darkness. Finally his hope vanished." (*The Miracle of Forgiveness*. Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1969, [13th Printing, 1972], 363).

Mormon 2:15

15 And it came to pass that my sorrow did return unto me again, and I saw that the day of grace was passed with them, both temporally and spiritually; for I saw thousands of them hewn down in open rebellion against their God, and heaped up as dung upon the face of the land. And thus three hundred and forty and four year had passed away.

Spencer W. Kimball continues,

"It is true that the great principle of repentance is always available, but for the wicked and rebellious there are serious reservations to this statement. For instance, sin is intensely habit-forming and sometimes moves men to the tragic point of no return. Without repentance there can be no forgiveness, and without forgiveness all the blessings of eternity hang in jeopardy. As the transgressor moves deeper and deeper in his sin, and the error is entrenched more deeply and the will to change is weakened, it becomes increasingly nearer hopeless and he skids down and down until either he does not want to climb back up or he has lost the power to do so." (*The Miracle of Forgiveness*. Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1969, [13th Printing, 1972], 117).

Mormon 2:18-19

18 And upon the plates of Nephi I did make a full account of all the wickedness and abominations; but upon these plates I did forbear to make a full account of their wickedness and abominations, for behold, a continual scene of wickedness and abominations has been before mine eyes ever since I have been sufficient to behold the ways of man.

19 And wo is me because of their wickedness; for my heart has been filled with sorrow because of their wickedness, all my days; nevertheless, I know that I shall be lifted up at the last day.

At this point in his record, Mormon chooses to spare the reader the details of the continued wickedness he observed throughout his life, including his time on the battlefield. Often, under the pressures of war with its daily threat of death, some forsake their inhibitions and live only for today. Mormon chose to remember, despite the wickedness and abominations that surrounded him, how he had made sacred covenants that gave his life meaning and value today and eternally and he would not forsake them.

Again the army is both "hunted and driven" by the Lamanites until they came to the land and city of Shem in the north. (see Mormon 2:20.) It was at Shem, that Mormon took, as it were, a page from Captain Moroni. (see Alma 46:12-13.)

Mormon 2:23-25

23 And it came to pass that I did speak unto my people, and did urge them with great energy, that they would stand boldly before the Lamanites and fight for their wives, and their children, and their houses, and their homes.

24 And my words did arouse them somewhat to vigor, insomuch that they did not flee from before the Lamanites, but did stand with boldness against them.

25 And it came to pass that we did contend with an army of thirty thousand against an army of fifty thousand. And it came to pass that we did stand before them with such firmness that they did flee from before us.

While they were not fighting for their God and their freedom of religion, they were fighting for their homes,

their wives and their children. That was sufficient motivation and they were able to defeat 50,000 men, with 30,000!

Encouraged with their victory, they pursue the Lamanites and again defeated them. Mormon made it clear, however, that their victory was hollow, for "the strength of the Lord was not with us; yea, we were left to ourselves, that the Spirit of the Lord did not abide in us; therefore we had become weak like unto our brethren" (Mormon 2:26).

Bryan Richards notes,

"By using his own people as an example, Mormon provides us with a significant doctrinal teaching concerning the 'strength of the Lord' that comes by the power of the Holy Ghost through personal righteousness. 'I know, in the strength of the Lord thou canst do all things,' Lamoni testified (Alma 20:4). There is a real power, both physical and spiritual, that can come into the life of every man or woman who is filled with the Holy Ghost. That power constitutes the 'strength of the Lord'--a divine, unlimited power. Without that strength and power we are left only with the limited mortal abilities of man."
(www.gospeldoctrine.com/contents/Mormon-2).

Based upon some military success, the Nephites determined to make "a treaty with the Lamanites and the robbers of Gadianton, in which we did get the lands of our inheritance divided...[The Nephites received the] "land northward, yea even to the narrow passage which led into the land southward...[and] Lamanites [received] all the land southward" (Mormon 2:28-29). It was a treaty that ended the war, but it was negotiated out of a position of albeit temporary strength by the Nephites.

IV. Mormon 3

The treaty did hold "until ten years more" during which time, "I had employed my people, the Nephites, in preparing their lands and their arms against the time of battle" (Mormon 3:1).

Mormon 3:2

**2 And it came to pass that the Lord did say unto me:
Cry unto this people--Repent ye, and come unto me, and**

be ye baptized, and build up again my church, and ye shall be spared.

Joseph Fielding Smith states,

"That is our duty. When we see evil lurking, when we see dangers confronting the people, and especially the Latter-day Saints, it is our duty to raise the warning voice, and not only on behalf of the Latter-day Saints, but to warn all people, for our mission is one that is world-wide, and we should warn all men and give them the opportunity of repentance, of serving the Lord and keeping his commandments if they will. If they will not, then we have saved our souls. We are clear from the blood of this generation. That is our duty." (*Conference Report*, October 1933, 61).

Mormon 3:3

3 And I did cry unto this people, but it was in vain; and they did not realize that it was the Lord that had spared them, and granted unto them a chance for repentance. And behold they did harden their hearts against the Lord their God.

The Nephites did not realize, as a result of their wickedness, that their limited success on the battlefield had been the result of the Lord's mercy. The Nephites had been spared defeat, so they may have the opportunity to repent. If they would do so, they would be spared. Unfortunately, their hearts were hardened against the Lord, and they did not turn away from their wickedness.

After ten years had passed, the Lamanites came again against them in war. The Nephites determined to take their stand "by the narrow pass which led into the land southward. (see Mormon 3:4-6.) At this battle, the Nephites were victorious. After two years, the Lamanites again came in battle and "we did beat them again, and did slay a great number of them, and their dead were cast into the sea. (see Mormon 3:7-8.)

Mormon 3:9-10

9 And now, because of this great thing [2nd defeat of Lamanites] which my people, the Nephites, had done, they began to boast in their own strength, and began

to swear before the heavens that they would avenge themselves of the blood of their brethren who had been slain by their enemies.

10 And they did swear by the heavens, and also by the throne of God, that they would go up to battle against their enemies, and would cut them off from the face of the land.

The problem for the Nephites is two-fold. They began to boast, after two battles, in their own strength. And, as they did so, "they...swear against the heavens and also by the throne of God" (Mormon 3:10). It is one thing to get carried away in your own bravado, it is another to profane against God and his creations. The second error they made was to take the offensive against their enemy. Even in their apostate condition, they knew it was a grave offence against God to take the position of offence in battle. To do so, insured your eventual failure.

Mormon 3:11

11 And it came to pass that I, Mormon, did utterly refuse from this time forth to be a commander and a leader of this people, because of their wickedness and abomination.

Their actions are sufficient to cause General Mormon to refuse to be their leader and commander of the army. He resigned his appointment. He had held this responsibility since sixteen years of age. He had led them into battle, suffered their losses with them, mourned with them, and recently had pled for them to repent that they may enjoy the blessings of the Lord. He had done all this because he loved them. After approximately thirty-six years of military service, he was turning his responsibility over to another. General Mormon states,

Mormon 3:14-16 [underline added]

14 And when they had sworn by all that had been forbidden them by our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, that they would go up unto their enemies to battle, and avenge themselves of the blood of their brethren, behold the voice of the Lord came unto me, saying:
15 Vengeance is mine, and I will repay; and because this people repented not after I had delivered them,

behold, they shall be cut off from the face of the earth.

16 And it came to pass that I utterly refused to go up against mine enemies; and I did even as the Lord had commanded me; and I did stand as a idle witness to manifest unto the world the things which I saw and heard, according to the manifestations of the Spirit which had testified of things to come.

Jeffrey R. Holland states,

"It was a wrenching time for him [Mormon] because these were his people, and he loved them. Indeed, he loved them 'with all [his] heart'...In such frustration and sorrow, Mormon stepped back from leading an army that would not repent, and he refused to go up against their enemies. At the Lord's command, he stood as 'an idle witness' to his own generation while writing to a future generation the lessons his people had failed to learn." (*Christ and the New Covenant*. Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Co., 1997, 320).

The Prophet Mormon now turns his attention to the future. He speaks of the judgment that all mankind will face at the end of their mortal lives. Those who will play a major part, under Christ's direction will be "the twelve whom Jesus chose to be his disciples in the land of Jerusalem" (Mormon 3:18). "[T]he remnant of this people [in ancient America will], be judged by the twelve whom Jesus chose in this land; and [then] they will be judged by the other twelve whom Jesus chose in the land of Jerusalem" (Mormon 3:19).

Mormon then reiterates, "ye must all stand before the judgment-seat of Christ, yea, every soul who belongs to the whole human family of Adam; and ye must stand to be judged of your works, whether they be good or evil;" (Mormon 3:20).

Mormon 3:21-22

21 And also that ye may believe the gospel of Jesus Christ, which ye shall have among you; and also that the Jews, the covenant people of the Lord, shall have other witness besides him whom they saw and heard, that Jesus whom they slew, was the very Christ and the very [Son of] God.

22 And I would that I could persuade all ye ends of the earth to repent and prepare to stand before the judgment-seat of Christ.

For those who chose to hear the words of Mormon and exercise faith in Jesus Christ and seek repentance for their sin, they may obtain forgiveness. Those who chose to ignore this warning and come before the judgment seat of Christ, weighed down in their sin, received their just punishment.

V. Mormon 4

This chapter of Mormon's writing began with a record of the defeats of the Nephite army as they lost ground and suffered greatly at the hand of the Lamanites. Mormon observed,

Mormon 4:4-5

4 And it was because the armies of the Nephites went up unto the Lamanites that they began to be smitten; for were it not for that, the Lamanites could have had no power over them.

5 But, behold, the judgments of God will overtake the wicked; and it is by the wicked that the wicked are punished; for it is the wicked that stir up the hearts of the children of men unto bloodshed.

Charles W. Penrose states,

"...[W]e Latter-day Saints must watch ourselves and not give way to passion and desire to shed blood and to destroy, for that is the power of the evil one. We do not want to imitate any nation that is bent on a policy of destruction, to destroy where they cannot rule, to break down and trample under foot where they cannot dominate. If we have that desire, it is the spirit of the wicked one..

"There is a very great difference between arising to go forth for conquest, for blood, for plunder, to gain territory and power in the earth, and in fighting to defend our own possessions in the spirit of justice and righteousness and equality, and standing up like men for the things that we have a right to contend for."
(*Conference Report*, April 1917, 21-22).

Because of boasting, cursing of God, and the fact that they were the aggressors, not the defenders, of the action of war, God allowed them to be punished by their enemy. Mormon made it clear if the Nephites had repented and sought only to defend their lands when the Lamanites came against them, the Lamanites "could have had no power over them" (Mormon 4:4).

The Lamanites came against the city of Teancum and were defeated to the point that the Nephites did again boast in their strength and took possession again of the city of Desolation. Two years, following the Lamanite defeat, they again came against the Nephites in war. Again they were defeated.

Mormon lamented that when the Lamanites came again against them, "yet the Nephites repented not of the evil they had done, but persisted in their wickedness continually" (Mormon 4:10).

Mormon 4:11-12

11 And it is impossible for the tongue to describe, or for man to write a perfect description of the horrible scene of the blood and carnage which was among the people, both of the Nephites and of the Lamanites; and every heart was hardened, so that they delighted in the shedding of blood continually.

12 And there never had been so great wickedness among all the children of Lehi, nor even among all the house of Israel, according to the words of the Lord, as was among this people.

Following the Nephite defeat at the city of Desolation, because of the greater number of Lamanites, the Lamanites went to the city of Teancum, and "did take many prisoners both women and children, and did offer them up as sacrifices unto their idol gods" (Mormon 4:14). The barbaric practice of offering women and children to a idol, so angered the Nephites that they did rally their troops and "beat again the Lamanites, and [drove] them out of their lands" (Mormon 4:15).

Eight years later, in A.D. 375, the Lamanites again came to war against the Nephites. So great were they in number that Mormon notes the following lament.

Mormon 4:18

18 And from this time forth did the Nephites gain no power over the Lamanites, but began to be swept off by them even as a dew before the sun.

What a tragic observation in contrast to his prior statement, "for were it not for that [they had become the aggressor's of war], the Lamanites could have had no power over them" (Mormon 4:4). Oh how foolish we are when we ignore the commandments of God. Void of the spirit, on our own, we are nothing. Will we learn the lessons that history seeks to teach us or will we perish. Just as the Nephites had a choice, so do we.

Mormon 4:23

23 And now I, Mormon, seeing that the Lamanites were about to overthrow the land, therefore I did go to the hill Shim, and did take up all the records which Ammaron had hid up unto the Lord.

Mormon had previously gone to the hill Shim, as instructed by Ammaron, at the age of "twenty and four years, [A.D. 334]...ye shall take the plates of Nephi unto yourself...and ye shall engrave on the plates of Nephi all the things that ye have observed concerning this people" (Mormon 1:3-4). At age fifty-two, [A.D. 375], he retrieved from the hill Shim, the remainder of the sacred plates (Mormon 4:23).

VI. Mormon 5

Mormon 5:1-2

**1 And it came to pass that I did go forth among the Nephites, and did repent of the oath which I had made that I would no more assist them; and they gave me command again of their armies, for they looked upon me as though I could deliver them from their afflictions.
2 But behold, I was without hope, for I knew the judgments of the Lord which should come upon them; for they repented not of their iniquities, but did struggle for their lives without calling upon that Being who created them.**

Monte S. Nyman states,

"Mormon refused to be [the Nephites'] military leader in A.D. 362 (see Mormon 3:8-11). Therefore, if our assumption concerning the time is correct, he had not been leading the armies for thirteen or more years. He had undoubtedly been writing and abridging during this time...That he 'did repent of the oath' (Mormon 5:1) means that he reversed his decision, not that his previous decision was wrong or sinful. The people were just as wicked and probably more worked, but he came back knowing it was a lost cause (v.2). However, his return apparently inspired the men to fight more fiercely for their cities, and they were successful (vv.3-4)." (*I, Mormon, Make a Record*, Vol. 6. Orem, Utah: Granite Publishing and Distribution, LLC, 2004, 82).

Why was Mormon willing to again serve as the General of the Nephite Army? His willingness to serve, despite knowing the circumstances, are reminiscent of the words of Levi Savage after being told by James Willie that the handcart company would precede, after he had warned them of the severe dangers, if they continued their journey. He said:

"Brethren and sisters, what I have said I know to be true; but seeing you are to go forward, I will go with you, will help you all I can, will work with you, will rest with you, will suffer with you, and, if necessary I will die with you. May God in his mercy bless and preserve us." (Andrew D. Olsen. *The Price We Paid: The Extraordinary Story of the Willie & Martin Handcart Pioneers*. Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Co., 2006, 84).

While many in the company did die and suffered great privation, Levi Savage did survive.

I believe that Mormon, despite their wickedness, loved these men. He was willing to put his life on the line, knowing that if he returned to lead them, he would also perish with them.

For awhile, according to the record, the Nephites were victorious over their foes. They defended "the city of Jordan;...and there were also other cities which were maintained by the Nephites" (Mormon 5:3-4). However, "whatsoever lands we had passed by, and the inhabitants thereof were not gathered in, were destroyed by the

Lamanites, and their towns, and villages, and cities were burned with fire;" (Mormon 5:5).

In A.D. 380, the Lamanites again came against them in battle, "and we did stand against them boldly; but it was all in vain, for so great were their numbers that they did tread the people of the Nephites under their feet" (Mormon 5:6).

Mormon 5:8-9

8 And now behold, I, Mormon, do not desire to harrow up the souls of men in casting before them such an awful scene of blood and carnage as was laid before mine eyes; but I, knowing that these things must surely be made known, and that all things which are hid must be revealed upon the house-tops--

9 And also that a knowledge of these things must come unto the remnant of these people, and also unto the Gentiles, who the Lord hath said should scatter this people, and this people should be counted as naught among them--therefore I write a small abridgment, daring not to give a full account of the things which I have seen, because of the commandment which I have received, and also that ye might not have too great sorrow because of the wickedness of this people.

Jeffrey R. Holland states,

"As Mormon increasingly looked beyond the tragedy before him to a generation he hoped would profit from their mistakes, the destruction continued unabated. Mormon was torn not only by what he saw but also by what he must--and must not--write." (*Christ and His New Covenant*. Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Co., 1997, 320).

Bryan Richards states,

"Even Mormon's book (Mormon 1-7) is an abridgment. He was the author of a much fuller account which he describes in Mormon 2:18 [which notes that 'upon the plates of Nephi I did make a full account of all the wickedness and abominations]. These [abridged] seven chapters, then, are written with us in mind."

www.gospeldoctrine.com/contents/Mormon-4).

Mormon 5:10

10 And now behold, this I speak unto their seed, and also to the Gentiles who have care for the house of Israel, that realize and know from whence their blessings come.

1 Nephi 22:6-9

6 Nevertheless, after they (the House of Israel) shall be nursed by the Gentiles, and the Lord has lifted up his hand upon the Gentiles and set them up for a standard, and their children have been carried in their arms, and their daughters have been carried upon their shoulders, behold these things of which are spoken are temporal...

7 And it meaneth that the time cometh that after all the house of Israel have been scattered and confounded, that the Lord God will raise up a mighty nation among the Gentiles, yea, even upon the face of this land; and by them shall our seed be scattered.

8 And after our seed is scattered the Lord God will proceed to do a marvelous work among the Gentiles, which shall be of great worth unto our seed; wherefore, it is likened unto their being nourished by the Gentiles and being carried in their arms and upon their shoulders.

9 And it shall also be of worth unto the Gentiles; and not only unto the Gentiles but unto all the house of Israel, unto the making known of the covenants of the Father of heaven unto Abraham, saying: In thy seed shall all the kindreds of the earth be blessed.

In the words of Nephi, this is the meaning of Isaiah's words, quoted by Mormon, regarding the Gentiles caring for the house of Israel.

Mormon 5:11

11 For I know that such will sorrow for the calamity of the house of Israel; yea, they will sorrow for the destruction of this people; they will sorrow that this people had not repented that they might have been clasped in the arms of Jesus.

Bruce C. and Maria K. Hafen state,

"The inevitable of belonging either to Satan or to Christ is graphically portrayed by the scriptural imagery of that most human expression of belonging--to be embraced, or as the scriptures say, 'to be encircled about.' Those who follow Christ until they are accepted into his covenants of true belonging will be one, as was Father Lehi, 'encircled about eternally in the arms of his love.' (2 Nephi 1:15.) That is why Mormon lamented in his 'sorrow for the destruction of [his] people'...Mormon's sorrow was not just that his unrepentant people would be left unattended to continue wandering as they desired; rather, Mormon knew, as Alma explained, that 'this was a snare of the adversary, which he has laid to catch this people, that he might bring you into subjection unto him, that *he might encircle you about in his chains.*' (Alma 12:6; emphasis added.)" (*A Belonging Heart*. Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Co., 1994, 141).

Mormon 5:12, 14-15

12 Now these things are written unto the remnant of the house of Jacob [see Title page of Book of Mormon--"Written to the Lamanites, who are a remnant of the house of Israel]; and they are written after this manner, because it is known of God that wickedness will not bring them forth unto them; and they are to be hid up unto the Lord that they may come forth in his own due time.

14 And behold, they shall go unto the unbelieving of the Jews; [see Title page of Book of Mormon--and also to the Jew] and for this intent shall they go--that they may be persuaded that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of the living God; that the Father may bring about, through his most Beloved, his great and eternal purpose, in restoring the Jews, or all the house of Israel, to the land of their inheritance, which the Lord their God hath given them, unto the fulfilling of his covenant;

15 And also that the seed of this people may more fully believe his gospel, which shall go forth unto them from the Gentiles [Title page of Book of Mormon--and also..Gentiles]; for this people shall be scattered, and shall become a dark, a filthy, and a loathsome people, beyond the description of that which

ever hath been amongst us, yea, even that which hath been among the Lamanites, and this because of their unbelief and idolatry.

Rex C. Reeve Jr. states,

"In a special way, the Book of Mormon was written to the Lamanites, the descendants of Lehi, as a major tool to restore them to Christ. It seems that the righteous Nephite prophets, knowing the destruction of their own people, wrote with special feelings to the future Lamanite. (see Mormon 7:1; Moroni 10:1.)

"The Book of Mormon was written to all the world as another testament of Jesus Christ. In a special way, however, it was written and preserved to restore the Lamanites to the knowledge and testimony of Christ once had by their fathers and also to convince the Jew and Gentiles that 'Jesus is the Christ, the Eternal God' (title page, Book of Mormon)." ("We Labor Diligently to Persuade Our Children to Believe in Christ: 2 Nephi 25:21 to 26:11," in *The Book of Mormon: Second Nephi, The Doctrinal Structure*, Vol. 3. Edited by Monte S. Nyman and Charles D. Tate, Jr. Provo, Utah: Religious Studies Center, Brigham Young University, 1989, 266-267).

Mormon 5:16-18

16 For behold, the Spirit of the Lord hath already ceased to strive with their fathers; and they are without Christ and God in the world; and they are driven about as chaff before the wind.

17 They were once a delightsome people, and they had Christ for their shepherd; yea, they were led even by God the Father.

18 But now, behold, they are led about by Satan, even as chaff is driven before the wind, or as a vessel is tossed about upon the waves, without sail or anchor, or without anything wherewith to steer her; and even as she is, so are they.

Mormon lamented the tragic condition of the people he had been called upon to witness and record their downfall. They had now degenerated into "a dark, a filthy, and a loathsome people beyond the description of that which ever hath been amongst us...They [who] were once a delightsome people" (Mormon 5:15, 17).

Mormon 5:19-21

19 And behold, the Lord hath reserved their blessings, which they might have received in the land, for the Gentiles who shall possess the land.

20 But behold, it shall come to pass that they shall be driven and scattered by the Gentiles; and after they have been driven and scattered by the Gentiles, behold, then will the Lord remember the covenant which he made unto Abraham and unto all the house of Israel.

21 And also the Lord will remember the prayers of the righteous, which have been put up unto him for them.

Mormon now looked to the future when the Lord would remember his people and they would again come to know His Son, Jesus Christ. They would then receive the blessings they had lost as a result of their wickedness. We recall the prayer of Enos, as he sought a blessing on behalf of the Lamanites from the Lord. His prayer was that "he would preserve the records [Book of Mormon]; and he [Lord] covenanted with me that he would bring them forth unto the Lamanites in his own due time" (Enos 1:16). In modern revelation, the Lord revealed to the Prophet Joseph Smith, that he would remember his promise to the Lamanites in the last days. (see D&C 47-52.)

Bruce R. McConkie states,

"The long night of apostate darkness that left the remnants of Lehi's seed in their low and fallen and loathsome state is drawing to an end. Already the rays of gospel light are rising in the eastern sky and the day of gathering is dawning. Lamanites in the United States and Canada, in Mexico and Central America, and in the various nations of South America, together with the Lamanites in the islands of the South Pacific, whom we call Polynesians--all these are coming back, one by one as the divine decree requires. And when the day has fully dawned, as soon it must, they will be a glorious people indeed.

"Indeed, that day--the day of the Lamanites--shall dawn before the Second Coming. Its' arrival will be one of the signs of the times, and all those who can read the promised signs will thereby know that the coming of their Lord is nigh at hand..

"Having so announced, the Lord then relates all this to the gathering of Israel, including the Lamanite gathering. 'But before the great day of the Lord shall come,' he says, 'Jacob shall flourish in the wilderness, and the Lamanites shall blossom as the rose. Zion shall flourish upon the hills and rejoice upon the mountains, and shall be assembled together unto the place which I have appointed.' (D&C 49:23-25)." (*The Millennial Messiah*. Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Co., 1982, 210).

Mormon 5:22-24

22 And then, O ye Gentiles, how can ye stand before the power of God, except ye shall repent and turn from your evil ways?

23 Know ye not that ye are in the hands of God? Know ye not that he hath all power, and at his great command the earth shall be rolled together as a scroll?

24 Therefore, repent ye, and humble yourselves before him, lest he shall come out in justice against you-- lest a remnant of the seed of Jacob shall go forth among you as a lion and tear you in pieces, and there is none to deliver.

Mormon, as he concludes this section of his abridgment, again calls the Gentiles to repentance. (see 3 Nephi 30.)

Bryan Richards states,

"This is the fourth time since the Savior's visit that the Book of Mormon warns the Gentiles to repent (see 3 Ne 16:15; 20:15-17; 21:12-21). The scriptures do not repeat a concept four times as an idle threat. The Gentiles will reject the gospel and will suffer according to the word of the Lord, for the rejection of the gospel by the Gentiles is prophesied elsewhere (D&C 45:28-30). Their rejection of the truth marks the fulfillment of the times of the Gentiles (D&C 45:30)."

(www.gospeldoctrine.com/contents/Mormon-5).

Mark E. Peterson states,

"Mormon...wrote directly to us as modern Americans who now occupy this promised land...Can we ignore such a warning, directed specifically at this generation?" ("The Last Words of Moroni," in *Ensign*, November 1978, 59).

VII. Mormon 6

As we begin this chapter, the question is raised, "Where is the Hill Cumorah? Some, including Sidney B. Sperry, believe there are two Cumorahs. Some believe that it is in upstate New York, while others are just as adamant it is in Central America. Someday we will know for sure. Today, the words of Harold B. Lee are useful to consider.

Harold B. Lee states,

"Don't be concerned over Book of Mormon geography. Some say the Hill Cumorah was in southern Mexico (and someone pushed it down still further) and not in western New York. Well, if the Lord wanted us to know where it was or where Zarahemla was, He'd have given us latitude and longitude, don't you think? And why bother our heads trying to discover with archaeological certainty the geographical locations of the cities of the Book of Mormon like Zarahemla?

"The witness of the Book of Mormon is not found in the ruins of Central and South America. They may be outward evidences of a people long since disappeared. The real witness is that which is found in the Book of Mormon itself." (*The Teachings of Harold B. Lee*. Edited by Clyde J. Williams. Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1996, 155-156).

Mormon 6:1-3

- 1 And now I finish my record concerning the destruction of my people, the Nephites. And it came to pass we did march forth before the Lamanites.**
- 2 And I, Mormon, wrote an epistle unto the king of the Lamanites, and desired of him that he would grant unto us that we might gather together our people unto the land of Cumorah, by a hill which was called Cumorah, and there we could given them battle.**
- 3 And it came to pass that the king of the Lamanites did grant unto me the thing which I desired.**

At the request of Mormon, the Lamanite king agreed to meet the Nephite army at a hill called Cumorah, for battle. Here Mormon believed, "in a land of many waters, rivers, and fountains" (Mormon 6:4), they would have some advantage.

Mormon 6:6

6 And it came to pass that when we had gathered in all our people in one to the land of Cumorah, behold I, Mormon, began to be old; and knowing it to be the last struggle of my people, and having been commanded of the Lord that I should not suffer the records which had been handed down by our fathers, which were sacred, to fall into the hands of the Lamanties, (for the Lamanites would destroy them) therefore I made this record out of the plates of Nephi, and hid up in the hill Cumorah all the records which had been entrusted to me by the hand of the Lord, save it were these few plates which I gave unto my son Moroni.

Bryan Richards states,

"Mormon's abridgment of Mosiah through Mormon was all written very late in his life. He first abridged the record of Lehi, then found and added the small plates of Nephi to the record, then proceeded to find his abridgment of the large plates (WofM 1:1-9)...At the time of this writing, Mormon had witnessed almost all the destruction of his people but has not even started abridging Mosiah - Mormon. By his own admission, he must have been abridging the record not too long before the final battle."
(www.gospeldoctrine.com/contents/Mormon-6).

Sidney B. Sperry states,

"Before the last great battle ensued between the Nephite and Lamanite armies at Cumorah in the year 385 A.D., Mormon entrusted the plates containing his abridgement of the plates of Nephi to his son, Moroni. (Mormon 6:6.) Nevertheless, after the battle--in which he was wounded--Mormon again obtained the plates and added some final words found in chapters six and seven respectively of the book called after his own name. All the other records of his people he previously had hidden up in the Hill Cumorah."
("The Story Of The Writing Of The Title Page To The Book Of Mormon," in *A Book of Mormon Treasury*. Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1959, [2nd Printing, 1976], 122).

Mormon 6:7-8

7 And it came to pass that my people, with their wives and their children, did now behold the armies of the

Lamanites marching towards them; and with that awful fear of death which fills the breasts of all the wicked, did they await to receive them.

8 And it came to pass that they came to battle against us, and every soul was filled with terror because of the greatness of their numbers.

Reviewer: James E. Smith states,

"The account of the gathering of all the Nephite people in the lands around Cumorah, and the way Mormon refers to his women and children, men, and people, somewhat interchangeably, introduces some ambiguity into his account. Could it have been that in their last-ditch effort at survival, preparing as they were for a prearranged great battle, Mormon and the 22 other leaders divided the whole Nephite people, rather than just the armies, into contingents of ten thousand each? If so, the victims of the slaughter at Cumorah were 230,000 men, women, and children, all of the Nephites who had gathered around Cumorah." (John C. Kunich. "Multiple Exceedingly: Book of Mormon Population Sizes." Reviewed by James E. Smith. *FARMS: Journal of Book of Mormon Studies*, Vol. 6, No. 1, 1994, 231-267).

Bryan Richards states,

"Perfect love casteth out all fear (Moroni 8:16). But the Nephites had cast out perfect love, and awful fear was all that was left." (www.gospeldoctrine.com/contents/Mormon-6).

Mormon 6:11, 15

11 And when they had gone through and hewn down all my people save it were twenty and four of us, (among whom was my son Moroni) and we having survived the dead of our people...

15 And it came to pass that...yea, even all my people...had fallen; and their flesh, and bones, and blood lay upon the face of the earth, being left by the hands of those who slew them to molder upon the land, and to crumble and to return to their mother earth.

Jeffrey R. Holland states,

"Mormon himself fell wounded, but his life, for a time, was spared as the Lamanite armies swept on. Only he, Mormon, and twenty-four other Nephites remained; 230,000 of their nation had fallen.

"The scope and significance of this horrible slaughter may be seen more readily when we realize that the great American Civil War of the 1860's, the costliest war, in terms of human life, that the United States has ever known, took the lives of 140,000 [Union soldiers] in a five-year period. Here, 230,000 fell in a single day." ("Mormon: The Man and the Book, Part 1," in *Ensign*, March 1978, 18).

Mormon lamented the awful carnage and death he beheld as he surveyed the battlefield.

Mormon 6:17, 19-20

17 O ye fair ones, how could ye have departed from the ways of the Lord! O ye fair ones, how could ye have rejected that Jesus, who stood with open arms to receive you!

19 O ye fair sons and daughters, ye fathers and mothers, ye husbands and wives, ye fair one, how is it that ye could have fallen!

20 But behold, ye are gone, and my sorrows cannot bring your return.

Mormon had spent his life trying to serve his people in hope that they would repent from their wickedness and abominations. Most did not. They rejected Jesus' offer to be forgiven and again receive the blessings he had for them.

Mormon 6:21-22

21 And the day soon cometh that your mortal must put on immortality, and these bodies which are now moldering in corruption must soon become incorruptible bodies; and then ye must stand before the judgment-seat of Christ, to be judged according to your works; and if it so be that ye are righteous, then are ye blessed with your fathers who have gone before you.
22 O that ye had repented before this great destruction had come upon you. But behold, ye are gone, and the Father, yea, the Eternal Father of

heaven, knoweth your state; and he doeth with you according to his justice and mercy.

Mormon knew that all who lived in mortality, would eventually stand before the judgment seat of God. Here, each would receive, according to his grace, the reward or punishment their lives merited. Today, tomorrow, and each day hereafter, through our daily thoughts and actions, we determine the judgment we will receive. It is important that we prepare accordingly.

Ezra Taft Benson observed,

"Great nations do not usually fall because of external aggression; they first erode and decay inwardly, so that, like rotten fruit, they fall off themselves...The greatest threat to the freedom of any nation is erosion--not erosion of the soil, but erosion of the national morality and character. What we have to fear is not force from without, but weakness from within...I believe personally there is a strong relationship between being a strong, prosperous nation and the faith and righteousness of its people." (This Nation Shall Endure. Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Co., 1977, [1979], 84-85).

As we noted regarding the Nephites during the time of Captain Moroni as well as during General Mormon, it is the righteousness of the people that determined the outcome of the battle. When the people are wicked, the Lord is grieved, and if they do not repent, they will face destruction, which is also true for our own nation.

VIII. Moroni 9

This chapter contains a second epistle Mormon wrote to his son, Moroni. The first is found in Moroni, Chapter 8, which he wrote "soon after...[his son's call] to the ministry" (Moroni 8:1). This letter, written prior to the final battle, addresses the wickedness and atrocities of the Nephites and their suffering.

Moroni 9:3-5

3 And now behold, my son, I fear lest the Lamanites shall destroy this people; for they do not repent, and Satan stirreth them up continually to anger one with another.

4 Behold, I am laboring with them continually; and when I speak the word of God with sharpness they tremble and anger against me; and when I use no sharpness they harden their hearts against it; wherefore, I fear lest the Spirit of the Lord hath ceased stirring with them.

5 For so exceedingly do they anger that it seemeth me that they have lost their love one towards another; and they thirst after blood and revenge continually.

Mormon, in his introductory comment, notes the qualities that are indicative of the loss of the Spirit of the Lord. These included: an unwillingness to repent; a hardness of heart regarding hearing the word of the Lord; anger and revenge towards others, and, an absence of love towards others.

Hugh Nibley states,

"Mormon and Moroni supply the epilogue to the Book of Mormon, the son drawing freely on his father's notes and letters. The picture that these two paint of their world, which in their minds has a significant resemblance to our own, is one of unrelieved gloom. The situation is unbelievably bad and, in view of the way things are going, quite without hope. The scenes of horror and violence, culminating in the sickening escalation of atrocities by Lamanites and Nephites in the 9th chapter of Moroni, need not news-photographs to make their message convincing to the modern world. The Nephites, like the great heroes of tragedy--Oedipus, Macbeth, Achilles--as they approach their end, are hopelessly trapped by a desperate mentality in which the suppressed awareness of their own sins finds paranoid expression in a mad, ungovernable hatred of others: 'They have lost their love, one towards another; and they thirst after blood and revenge continually.' (Mormon 9:5)." (*Since Cumorah*. The Collected Works of Hugh Nibley: Vol. 7. John W. Welch, General Editor. Salt Lake City and Provo, Utah: Deseret Book Co., and Foundation for Ancient Research and Mormon Studies, 1967, [Second Edition, 1988], 399).

Moroni 9:6

6 And now, my beloved son, notwithstanding their hardness, let us labor diligently; for if we should cease to labor, we should be brought under

condemnation; for we have a labor to perform whilst in this tabernacle of clay, that we may conquer the enemy of all righteousness, and rest our souls in the kingdom of God.

Joseph Fielding McConkie, Robert L. Millet, and Brent L. Top state,

"This one verse contains an entire discourse on the importance of enduring to the end and always being found doing one's duty. Both Mormon and Moroni could have easily given up hope on their people, lost the motivation to continue in their prophetic callings, and become fatalistic. Instead, Mormon exhorts Moroni to continue to labor in his divinely inspired duty. From their examples we learn that diligence in doing one's duty is not to be dependent upon the receptiveness of others. We must do our duty, be diligent in fulfilling the Lord's commands, regardless of how others choose to conduct their lives or how they respond to our efforts. To do otherwise is to let go of the iron rod, to cease enduring to the end, which brings one under condemnation (compare 2 Corinthians 5:9; Jacob 1:19." (*Doctrinal Commentary on the Book of Mormon*, Vol. 4. Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1992, 360).

In Moroni, Chapter 9, Verses 8-10, 16-18, Mormon, in his letter to his son described the depravity of both the Lamanites and the Nephites. It included feeding the Nephite women and children the flesh of their husbands and fathers; violent rape, including torture until death by the Nephites of the daughters of the Lamanites and then devouring their flesh as a token of their bravery, as well as taking food left by the Lamanites for themselves, thereby depriving those who were in great need of food to die of starvation!

Moroni 9:19

19 And they have become strong in their perversion; and they are alike brutal, sparing none, neither old nor young; and they delight in everything save that which is good; and the suffering of our women and our children upon all the face of this land doth exceed everything; yea, tongue cannot tell, neither can it be written.

After describing the atrocities committed by the Lamanites, Mormon states, "it does not exceed that of our people in

Moriantum." Of all the cruelties he may have noted, Mormon states that they then deprived the daughters of the Lamanites of, "that which was most dear and precious above all things, which is chastity and virtue" (Moroni 9:9).

Spencer W. Kimball states,

"Chastity and virtue are 'most dear and precious above all things' (Moroni 9:9), more valuable than rubies or diamonds, than herds and flocks, than gold and silver, or than automobiles and land. But, sadly, in many cases they are on sale at the cheapest shops and at the cheapest prices.

"These virtues cannot be purchased with money, but may be enjoyed by all people, even those of humble birth and humble circumstances as well as the rich, as much by the high school student as by those who are the professors of the universities. Everyone may enjoy these great blessings by living for them.

"The lack of chastity, fidelity, and virtue--fast becoming great worldwide sins which need to be repented of--cause rivers of tears to flow, breaks numerous homes, deprives and frustrates armies of innocent children. Loss of virtue, as you know has toppled many nations and civilizations. Moral decadence is a villain and his forehead is branded with the words, *dishonesty, bribery, irreverence, selfishness, immorality, debauchery, and all forms of sexual deviation.*

"Each of us is a son or a daughter of God and has a responsibility to measure up to a perfect, Christlike life of self-mastery, finally returning to God with our virtue." ("We Need a Listening Ear," in *Ensign*, November, 1979, 5).

Mormon then lamented to his son, Moroni,

Moroni 9:11-14

11 O my beloved son, how can a people like this, that are without civilization--

12 (And only a few years have passed away, and they were a civil and a delightful people)

13 But O my son, how can a people like this, whose delight is in so much abomination--

14 How can we expect that God will stay his hand in judgment against us?

Mormon concluded,

Moroni 9:20

20 And now my son, I dwell no longer upon this horrible scene. Behold, thou knowest the wickedness of this people; thou knowest that they are without principle, and past feeling; and their wickedness doth exceed that of the Lamanites.

When we violate the commandments and no longer follow the direction of our Lord and Master, Jesus Christ, we are on the devil's side of the line. We are then subject to his influence. Having rejected the Spirit of Jesus Christ, and his influence for good, we have now aligned our lives with Satan and his servants.

Joseph Fielding McConkie and Robert L. Millet state,

"Righteousness and truth result in order, while evil and wickedness lead to confusion and disorder. In describing the depraved state of things at the close of the Nephite narrative, Mormon spoke of his people as 'without civilization,' 'without principle,' 'past feeling,' and, interestingly enough, 'without order and without mercy' (Moroni 9:11, 18, 20). Whereas faithfulness and adherence to the light of Christ and to moral codes and standards bring forth peace and decency and enhanced organization among the sons and daughters of God, indifference towards or defiance of divine law brings forth chaos and division. Nephi explained that 'the Spirit of the Lord will not always strive with man. And when the Spirit ceaseth to strive with man then cometh speedy destruction.' (2 Nephi 26:11.) Those who no longer enjoy the influence of the Spirit 'are without Christ and God in the world; and they are driven about as chaff before the wind' (Mormon 5:16). When the Spirit ceases to strive with men and women, Satan has 'full power over the hearts of the people' and they are 'given up unto the hardness of their hearts, and the blindness of their minds' (Ether 15:19). The Holy Spirit is an organizing principle, and the nearer we approach our Heavenly Father the greater will be our grasp of reality, our ability to see things as they really are and to value

our true relationship to man and God." (*Joseph Smith: The Choice Seer*. Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1996, 164-165).

Moroni 9:21-22

21 Behold, my son I cannot recommend them unto God lest he should smite me.

22 But behold, my son, I recommend thee unto God, and I trust in Christ that thou wilt be saved; and I pray unto God that he will spare thy life, to witness the return of his people unto him, or their utter destruction; for I know that they must perish except they repent and return unto him.

In one of the final battles with the Lamanites in which 230,000 lives were lost, both the lives of Mormon and his son, Moroni, were spared along with twenty-two others (see Mormon 6:11.)

Mormon now instructed his son in his letter,

Moroni 9:24-26

24 ...wherefore write somewhat a few things, if thou art spared and I shall perish and not see thee; but I trust that I may see thee soon; for I have sacred records that I would deliver up unto thee.

25 My son, be faithful in Christ; and may not the things which I have written grieve thee, to weigh thee down unto death; but may Christ lift thee up, and may his sufferings and death, and the showing of his body unto our fathers, and his mercy and long-suffering, and the hope of his glory and of eternal life, rest in your mind forever.

26 And may the grace of God the Father, whose throne is high in the heavens, and our Lord Jesus Christ, who sitteth on the right hand of his power, until all things shall become subject unto him, be, and abide with you forever. Amen.

Joseph Fielding McConkie, Robert L. Millet, and Brent L. Top state,

"Despite the terrible scenes of wickedness and warfare he had observed and described to Moroni, Mormon ends his epistle with hope and encouragement that is centered on Christ. He prays for the protection of his beloved son and

gives a final exhortation to Moroni not to despair because of the terrible things happening around them, but to be of good cheer in Christ. 'Be faithful in Christ,' was this loving father's closing counsel and blessing to his son. We do not know whether Moroni received later letters or had any further contact with his father after this, but at least according to the Book of Mormon account this is the last that Moroni (and we) read of the great Nephite prophet-abridger, Mormon. 'May Christ lift thee up...And may the grace of God the Father...abide with you forever.' What greater hope for and blessing of a son or daughter could a father leave that his final testimony and blessing of Mormon's?" (*Doctrinal Commentary on the Book of Mormon*, Vol. 4. Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1992, 362).

IX. Conclusions

Like a sick, disgusting movie, but nevertheless real, we draw ever closer to the concluding battle between the Lamanites and Nephites. We become eyewitnesses to the abominations and wickedness that had become rampant among those who were once a Zion people. Were it not for the important lessons we are to learn, we would have walked out after the first few minutes of the movie in disgust and demanded our money back. Unfortunately, this may also be the condition of our nation, if we as citizens fail to learn the lessons of the past, including those recorded in the Book of Mormon.

In Mormon, Chapter One, we learn that Mormon, being only ten years of age, was called by a prophet of God, Ammaron, to be the keeper of the sacred records. He was to keep a record of his observations of his people. We also learn that war had commenced between the Nephites and Lamanites as a result of the Nephite wickedness. At age fifteen, while living amidst the wickedness and abomination of his people, Mormon was visited by Jesus Christ. It must have been a special visit that resulted in his being spiritually strengthened for the responsibilities of his life. As a result of the increased wickedness, Mormon was forbidden to preach the truth to them.

Mormon, Chapter Two, at the age of sixteen, Mormon was called to be the General over the Nephite army. The army, due to the wickedness of the nation, suffered numerous losses. Mormon admonished the army to fight for their homes, their wives and children and they won a battle.

Finally, a treaty was signed and the land northward from the narrow passage, goes to the Nephites and the land south, to the Lamanaites.

In Mormon, Chapter Three, the Nephites do not realize that the Lord had enabled them to be successful on the battlefield so that they may repent. They did not take advantage of the Lord's grace, and instead become even more hardened in their hearts and cursed God. As a direct result of their boasting, the opposite of humility, and their decision to become the aggressors--in direct contrast to the direction of the Lord to be only defenders--Mormon, at age 52, refused to continue to serve as their commander. He reminds us that someday each of us will stand before the judgment seat of God to be judged for our action during mortality.

Mormon, Chapter Four, we learn that the depravity and wickedness of the Nephites had now resulted in their being "delighted in the shedding of blood continually" (Mormon 4:11). It was only a matter of time, but following a brief series of victories over the Lamanties, Mormon declared, "for this time forth did the Nephites gain no power over the Lamanites" (Mormon 4:18). Mormon returned to the hill Shim and retrieved all the sacred records. (see Mormon 4:23.)

In Mormon, Chapter Five, after a thirteen year absence, Mormon agreed to return to serve as the commander of the Nephite army. The losses of the Nephite army continued as did their wickedness. Mormon wrote of the scattering of the house of Israel and their eventual gathering. One of the purposes of the coming forth of the Book of Mormon is to bring the Lamanites, as well as the Jews and Gentiles, to Christ.

Mormon, Chapter Six, at General Mormon's encouragement, the Lamanite king agreed to gather at the Hill Cumorah for the final battle. After the battle, 230,000 Nephites have perished with only twenty-four remaining including Mormon, who is wounded, and his son, Moroni. Ezra Taft Benson reminds us that the defeat of the Nephites was due to their wickedness from within. Their wickedness resulting from the erosion of their national morality and character. (see Ezra Taft Benson. *This Nation Shall Endure*. 84-85.)

In Moroni, Chapter Nine, Moroni included in his writings a letter from his father, Mormon. Mormon addressed the atrocities committed by both the Lamanites and Nephites. He reminded his son of the importance of enduring in faithfully fulfilling our duty to the Lord. In his closing words, Mormon sought to comfort his son, Moroni, to "Be faithful in Christ" (Moroni 9:25).

It was difficult to continue to read of the decline of the Nephites and their wickedness and abominations. It was almost beyond our imagination to believe that a nation could reach such a level of barbaric behavior. The sad truth is that what we witnessed is only the final result of those who choose to reject the goodness Christ offers and instead fully embrace the evil of Satan.

Our next lesson [BM#44], focuses upon the words of "warnings and counsel given by Mormon and Moroni to people living in the latter days." (*Book of Mormon Gospel Doctrine Teacher's Manual*. Salt Lake City: The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 1999, 194).