

Transcript from the Zion Symposium

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See, that's the purpose behind the voice, it's easier to feel the spirit during singing than it is during someone speaking, because our voices were only intended for singing. They don't talk in the Spirit World, they don't need do and the voices get used there for singing. You can hear each other without the voice. If it were up to me, I'd have nothing but singing go on today, because I'm using the wrong instrument. See you have to feel the Spirit while I'm using my voice to talk instead of sing.

As Nephi paraphrased Isaiah in the concluding chapter of Nephi's use of Isaiah and his material, he left out a phrase that appears in Isaiah 29 and I believe he did it very wittingly. I believe he did it so that as you look at the material, you'll ask yourself why did he leave that out? And you'll think about the omission. *"And the vision of all is become unto you as the words of a book that is sealed."* He left out "the vision of all." Well, you're talking about Zion here, yesterday and today, and as is usual any time you get to a substantive topic that's worth paying a lot attention to, the Book of Mormon has something to say. In fact, while it doesn't comment at extraordinary length, the substance of what it has to say on this subject is really quite startling, and that is described for us in 4 Nephi.

But before 4 Nephi picks up, the last verse of Chapter 30 of 3 Nephi is a precaution to us-- that are going to inherit this book, which Mormon made sure was inserted at this point in the narrative. What's remarkable as you look at that verse is how it then ties into the description of what were going to receive of about the practice of Zion among those in the Book of Mormon, *"Turn, all ye Gentiles, from your wicked ways; and repent of your evil doings, of your lyings and deceivings, and of your whoredoms, and of your secret abominations, and your idolatries, and of your murders, and your priestcrafts, and your envyings, and your strifes, and from all your wickedness and abominations, and come unto me, and be baptized in my name, that ye may receive a remission of your sins, and be filled with the Holy Ghost, that ye may be numbered with my people who are of the house of Israel"* (3 Nephi, 30: 2).

Keep in mind that list of defects as we look into the things that are right and proper in the Zion that we find in 4 Nephi. In 4 Nephi, verse 2, it tells us that, *"the people were all converted unto the Lord, upon all the face of the land, both Nephites and Lamanites* [and that's all good and well, but it goes on to say] *and there were no contentions and disputations among them* [which you have to add, because if you've been to any gospel doctrine class or any High Priest group meeting Elders Quorum or Relief Society, there's always that fellow or gal or group, who have an incapacity to depart from contention. So it's not just being converted, see they're narrowing it down, you get converted, but then you reach at some point a unanimity or an agreement upon what the Gospel really means. And, well take a look around] *"O ye Gentiles, turn from your wicked ways,"* and ask yourself, ok confine it to your own ward, to your own quorum to your own Relief Society group, to your own Stake, confine to whatever you want it to be confined to - are there no contentions of disputations among them?

It's a serious defect, it's a serious challenge and it's one that we aren't meeting very well, and it's one of the reasons why we tend to neglect the Book of Mormon, because the Book of Mormon is always stepping on our toes. The relentless message of the Book of Mormon is – hey repent, you suck, you're just a mess, YOU, not them, I mean it's not a matter of I've got religion, I'm safe, I've got a recommend, I'm on the IN club, I can get into those buildings that other people can't – that doesn't matter, you still, you've got to repent. You're a defective item incapable of resonating at the right frequency and receiving the Spirit of the Lord and finding-- not contention, but love in bringing people together and coming to become ONE. You can be absolutely in disagreement over a doctrine, and lovingly, and gently, and patiently persuade them to come unto Christ. Or, you can hold a Council, and kick them out.

So, after they manage not only to have the same faith and to eliminate from him contentions and disputations, then they go on and, *"every man did deal justly one with another."* See, there's a difference between mercy and justice. Justice is a tougher standard. We don't want justice. We want a merciful Redeemer, who will come in and who will make up for our defects. But this is saying, *"Every man [Me, inside me, this is the stuff we're talking about], did deal justly [the higher standard] with one another."* You don't have to give me mercy, because I'm going to give YOU justice. I'm going to be tougher on myself. It is fair that I do this for you. Oh no, no, you don't have to do that. No, no, no, the standard by which they are evaluating their conduct internal to themselves is the more difficult standard. They're going to deal justly with one another. I will break my heart, I will break my wallet, I will break my life before I will not deal justly with you and give you everything that you're entitled to. See, it's putting the shoe on the other foot and it's not the more relaxed and kindly and gentle standard, because when they're dealing with one another they want to deal justly [a real problem for all those car dealers among us].

So after we fixed the religious diversity and we fixed the contentions and the disputation and we've grown enough now that we're willing to treat ourselves as the one upon whom justice has reign, then they get to the point that they had all things common among them. Anytime in the Book of Mormon, they're ticking off a list and they do it everywhere in the Book of Mormon, this and this and this, and this-- generally what the writer is doing, because they've had a lot of time to reflect upon it and they're etching on metal plates, which is a difficult thing to do, they are being extraordinarily careful with the material that they're committing to you. So when you count a list, you ought to look at it and say to yourself, is this a progression? Is what they're doing is telling you here is how you get from one point to another and we've encountered that already in 4 Nephi, you encounter it throughout. The Book of Mormon is a manual on how to return to God and we read it like, well, like we do in gospel doctrine, when we're cover 8 chapters in 50 minutes.

So now that we've gotten to the point that we're able to do these things, then and only then did they have all things common among them. Therefore, [and this as a logical result of what happened before], as an inevitability, there were no rich and there were no poor, and there were no bond, and there were no free, but they were all made free, and partakers of the heavenly gift. This is NOT a description of a social-economic order alone. The foundation of Zion shows up here yet again - it's the heavenly gift. It's the presence and the abundance of the things of the Spirit. It's not that we have now solved the social-welfare state, because the social-welfare state is the arm

of flesh effort to try and imitate something that we all, in our gut, think is probably a fair thing to do, to have everyone be on an equal plane and have everyone deal with one another so that there are no rich and poor, or bond or free, but it doesn't work and it doesn't work, because to get where you need to get in order for the things to work, it has to be the heavenly gift. It has to be people in harmony with each other, because they are in harmony with the Lord. By getting in harmony with the Lord you find that, well, YOU are a lot more tolerable to others and others are suddenly more tolerable to you. Even defective others are more tolerable to you, if you're in harmony with the Lord. Because if you can see them as the Lord sees them--they are beautiful, they are wonderful! Everyone you have ever met is a child of your Heavenly Father and if you can get the heavenly gift then you stop seeing things through the lens of this world and you start seeing things as they really are.

So, now we're in the 37th year. If you skip over you're going to find that this stuff is going to break down in verse 24 at the 201st year, so really we've got this 169, or 168 year interval in which we have the appearance of Zion and we're going to cover all of the events of that entire period beginning in verse 4 and ending in verse 24. And while you might think that's an abbreviation, it's actually everything we need to know and it's startling in what it tells us. There's an abundance of information that is downloaded in a rapid-fire fashion. So, look at verse 5 at what happens once you have the presence of the heavenly gift. In verse 5 you find that they healed the sick, they raise the dead, they cause the lame to walk, the blind to receive their sight, the deaf to hear; and all manner of miracles did they work among the children of men; and in nothing did they work miracles save it were in the name of Jesus, as the song just mentioned, it is about Him and it is about His work and is about bringing about His will. And why was it then, His will that the sick among them be healed and the dead rise again? Why is it that during this period of time it was in conformity with His will that the lame walk and the blind receive their sight and the deaf hear and all manner of miracles occur? Why during this time period, when they've got the heavenly gift, and when you would say, you know, that's sort of unfair, I mean, they got all things in common, they've solved the problems of the social-welfare state, they've got this great societal thing going on, you know, don't they need cripples? Don't they need the blind? Don't they need people to whom they ought to be ministering to? Shouldn't there be a group of them, who, unlike the verse mentioned earlier, are in bondage to the ailments of the body? And the answer is -- well, apparently not. Apparently, we need it. Apparently it serves an extraordinarily useful purpose for us, but in their setting they've got bigger things to do, they've got more important things to do and it will tell us what that is, tell us about it repeatedly. We'll come back to some of this, because I don't know if we have time for all of it.

Verse 10, it says, *"The people of Nephi did wax strong, and did multiply exceedingly fast."* In verse 11 it says, *"And they were married, and given in marriage, and were blessed according to the multitude of the promises which the Lord had made unto them."* And on page 467, it says they multiplied exceedingly and they filled the whole land. So, at first blush you say, "whoa there's a lot of sex going on during that Zion thing," and I'm reasonably confident that no matter what I say someone is going to walk away from here and say, "hey, what did brother Snuffer talk about...Zion and the Book of Mormon?" And someone is going to say he talked about a lot of sex that goes on during the time of Zion. But that's not the point; the point is what is the bigger fish to fry, what is more important? What is it about Zion that results in this baby boom? Anyone got any idea?

Audience answers: "Plural marriage? Well, there's plural marriage, that's part of it. There's no fear when people are devoted entirely to the Lord, then they can have another child? There's no sickness and death--you're going to get rid of the infant mortality problem, yeah. It provides a purpose of the Lord to bring spirits to the earth? Yeah, family life. Would you like to see Zion being practiced right this minute? I don't care where you go in the world; you can find it inside the family. That's the little microcosm of Heaven, that's the little...do you expect, well I don't know, there might be some Dickensian folk here...do you expect child labor, you know how stuff...there we are...do you expect child labor for your kid to earn the right to be clothed and housed, and fed? Audience: "They should have jobs." They should have jobs, but if your child needs food and your child needs clothing and your child needs shelter...when Christ used in His analogies the idea of the Father - which of you if his child asks of him for bread, gives him a rock? Speaking to some fairly hard-headed people, many of whom would conspire together to cause His death and He is saying to them--I know how you can relate to the principles of the Gospel—think about your own children. And these people in this setting [Zion] have as their priority, the family, the nurture and the raising of children. And the family is the place where, if we don't find it anywhere else, we will find the presence of Zion, even in the hovels of third-world countries.

See, as a consequence [and we're going back to verse 7], as a consequence of the way in which they were living, the Lord did prosper them exceedingly in the land insomuch that they did build cities again, where there had been cities burned. These people are busy, they're engaged in activities...they're not just sitting about, they're accomplishing something, but they're not accomplishing something in the way in which we accomplish something. If you wanted to rebuild a city among us, the way in which we set about to rebuild cities is extraordinarily inefficient. We divide up the capital that's used to finance the construction and we create a whole industry and people out there that never produce anything, except let people use their money, and that's all they do and they become really quite wealthy as a consequence of that. There are some people that do some small component and all they do is that small component and they sell it at a high price and whether it's easy or whether it's difficult, the purpose behind that is their own self-interest and we have managed to figure out how to get along in a society with every single person working for their own self-interest, and we've never come together to say, how might we benefit one another by the contribution of whatever our unique gifts are [by the way when the Lord talks about gifts in section 46, He talks about gifts as the property belonging to, not the person who has the gift, but the church itself. It's not a commodity that someone owns; it is the presence of God in the life of a person that is intended to elevate and to benefit and to bless everyone and they are proceeding on the basis that - the presumption is-- everything is to be done for the benefit and the glory of Zion. Well, they talk about the destruction there.

In verse 10, *"Behold it came to pass that the people of Nephi did wax strong, and did multiply exceedingly fast, and became an exceedingly fair and delightsome people."* Exceedingly fair and delightsome people, one of the themes the early saints in the valley talked about was the children that were given to those who were practicing plural marriage, were exceedingly fair and delightsome, their children were blessed and they were benefited. And from what we now know about genetics, the more diverse you get into a gene pool the more healthy is the progeny of those that are there. What is happening here, is that the children are being blessed and the children are turning out to be these wonderful, delightful children, but this process is happening

not in some violation of the laws of biology, they're happening in conformity with the way it would always happen if we were living in a certain fashion.

Verse 11 says, *"And they were married, and given in marriage, and were blessed according to the multitude of the promises which the Lord had made unto them."* The multitude of the promises, "the married and given in marriages," - think about that for a moment. We have just had the fulsome restoration of the benefits of the Gospel by the coming of the Christ in which He has restored some things that are too sacred to be committed into the written account of the events and now it says in passing, "they're given in marriage and He blessed them according to these promises." Well what's He telling us? It's the covenant of Abraham... it's the temple marriage. He's saying that these people enter into the covenant of marriage and as a consequence of the covenant of marriage they realize the benefits of the promises made and what are the promises made that you associate with the covenant of Abraham? Well, it's not just benefits that pertain to this life; it's benefits that pertain to all eternity. It's the promise of exaltation. It's the promise that you become part of the Church of the Firstborn, you become part of the General Assembly, you become part of the citizens, not just of a society here on this earth, but a society that includes a heavenly body and you have the right to commune with all of those that are participants in this larger organization. You need to go through and read the descriptors of those in D&C 76, beginning at verse 66 and I apologize, I do have a set of the D&C from the RLDS church, but it's at home and I didn't bring it with me, so I can't give you the cross reference, but D&C 76 beginning at verse 66, *"these are those who are come unto Mount Zion [see Zion in this context is a mount, because it's up, a symbolic elevation of the way folks live], and unto the city of the living God, the heavenly place, the holiest of all" [Oh my]. "These are they who have come to an innumerable company of the angels, to the general assembly and the church of Enoch, and of the Firstborn. These are they whose names are written in heaven, where God and Christ are judge of all. These are just men made perfect."* Now while this is a description in section 76 of the afterlife and ultimate arrival, the description as is often the case, is not merely a description of the afterlife alone, because, well as we are signing off, verse 117 of this same revelation, after talking about those who love Him and purify themselves before Him, it's added: *"to whom he grants this privilege of seeing and knowing for themselves; that through the power and manifestation of the Spirit, while in the flesh, they may be able to bear his presence in the world of glory."*

So, keep that in mind as you read verse 11, *"blessed according to the multitude of the promises, which the Lord made unto them."* These now are citizens with dual citizenship. They may be born in Mexico, but they have a work permit in the United States. They are still confronted with the obligation of enduring to the end, but they have a residency prepared for them elsewhere and these folks, tying the marriage covenant and the blessings, according to the multitude of the promises, which the Lord had made unto them, should not be constricted. Oh, and they didn't walk anymore after the performances and ordinances of the Law of Moses--very useful--animals were pleased to hear that. I imagine during the Millennium when the lamb and the lion lie down together, we're not going to be eating both of them. *"...but they did walk after the commandments which they had received from their Lord and their God, continuing in fasting and praying, and in meeting together oft both to pray and to hear the word of the Lord."* You know, fasting and prayer and in meeting together oft, meeting together oft, meeting together on the Sabbath? It doesn't say that. Meeting together in order to correlate the activities of the Stake, as we do at 0630 in

morning every Sunday. Meeting together to hold some presidency meeting or other--none of that. Meeting together oft and what were they doing when they got together? They're fasting, they're praying, they're meeting together, they're bearing testimony, and they're listening to the word of God. Listening to the word of God. Oh, oh I know what that is, that's the scriptures, they're reading the scriptures. It doesn't say and reading together the scriptures. They got together to hear the word of God.

Used to be [or if you're from Alabama, used to "was"] when we baptize folks, we expect the abundance of the gifts of the Spirit to be manifest and quite often in the journals of those in the earliest part of the Restoration, folks would prophesy as they came up from the waters of baptism. You read the account, well we can, turn to it in Joseph Smith History, verse 74, this after the baptized, well back up to verse 73: *"Immediately on our coming up out of the water after we had been baptized, we experienced great and glorious blessings from our Heavenly Father. No sooner had I baptized Oliver Cowdery, than the Holy Ghost fell upon him, and he stood up and prophesied many things, which should shortly come to pass. And again, so soon as I had been baptized by him, I also had the spirit of prophecy, when, standing up, I prophesied concerning the rise of this Church, and many other things."* And then look at verse 74, *"Our minds being now enlightened, we began to have the scriptures laid open to our understandings, and the true meaning and intention of their more mysterious passages revealed unto us in a manner which we never could attain to previously, nor ever before had thought of."* I don't imagine they were getting together to rehash and reiterate a limited and redundant correlated curriculum, that tends to make high priests of us all, that is to put us to sleep. I imagine there was something exciting about it!

When I first joined the church, I was astonished at all of the flood of new information that came and I was astonished in reading those old, New Testament passages that had been pounded into my head by a devoted Baptist mother, who never succeeded in making a Baptist of me, despite her best efforts. I've said this a number of times and apologize if you've heard it before, my Mom was always afraid I was going to hell, because I didn't join the Baptist Church and then I became a Mormon and removed all doubt. I was astonished at how much new information there was and the Gospel was exciting, it was delightful. They word that gets used by Lehi is delicious and it was, and it took about 5 years and then, it was Hamlet's soliloquy about flat, stale and unprofitable and redundant, and what happened? We've reached the end of the road - Can you tell me more? Can you tell me more? I was in search of a mentor. I was in search of new information and I knew more than anyone in any group that I sat in. I read everything I could get my hands on--there was nothing new. What just happened? We crossed a threshold. Now we're going to idle, endure to the end? That does not mean to be bored until the end! And I searched, I searched for 7 years before I ran into a guy, I don't know his first name, I know that he worked in the church office building and I know that he was one of the good guys and he taught as part of "Know Your Religion" series in Sandy. At the time I was living in Utah County and had to drive up there, but I drove up there and I found someone that could teach me and I was astonished, because there was the guy. And he taught, and he seemed to really dislike the audience, but he taught. And he told a story about when he first became a member of the high council and they were holding a church court and he showed up at the church court and when he arrived, he was the only person in the room that was ready for what was about to take place, that was in the Spirit and in tune and ready to confront the difficult issues that were going to be laid in front of

them. And how the rest of the room took forever to get up-to-speed, and get the Spirit to the point that they could judge the matter. And he wasn't talking about the high council; he was talking about the infernal room. Well, he endured and I had him as a mentor for a few years and was so grateful for that, but he announced he was quitting, and there was a big groan from the audience, because he made life easier for a lot of them, they could bring their notepad and they never had to do any work and he just handed it over, but he was through with that. He had been through with that for a long time. You know, as I think back about that moment, some things about that are really quite poignant, that probably ought not be shared, but I went up and I talked to him--this was the first time I had spoken with him, in the entire time I had been there learning for a number of years learning from the fellow— and I shook his hand and said, “you know I’ve never spoken to you, I’ve always sat on the back row, but I really appreciate what you’ve done.” He looked me in the eye and held my hand longer than, you know it was almost French, it was uncomfortable, and he said to me, “the only reason I have been here for the last year is the back row.” You know, sometimes you can look out at an audience and you can see who’s getting it.

Well, these guys did not find what was going on unhappy, unpleasant, unexciting--this was an eager thing, so eager in fact that they met together oft and they pursued things. Joseph Smith said, “I would encourage you to search deeper and deeper into the mysteries of God.” He does not say, I would encourage you to keep your feet on concrete at all times, so as not to sink deeper into anything. We tend to have a real aggressive view about doing exactly the opposite of what the Book of Mormon invites us to do, which is to search into the mysteries of God. In any event, so they’re meeting together, both to pray and to hear the word of the Lord, and I would not read, “hear the word of the Lord,” as a limiting expression of a monotonous repetition of a limited curriculum, but something that is just delicious.

“...There was no contention among all the people, in the land; but there were mighty miracles wrought among the disciples of Jesus.” So we lose some of them, except the three [Disciples] and verse 15, *“And it came to pass that there was no contention in the land, because of the love of God which did dwell in the hearts of the people.”* See this is now the third time that they’ve mentioned, “no contention.” They mention it back in verse 2, no disputations, and no contentions among them. They mention again in verse 13 and they mention it again in verse 15 and they talk about *“the love of God which did dwell in the hearts of the people.”* Etching is hard work. There’s absolutely no reason for redundancy, therefore, you have to conclude that while they thought they had gotten rid of contention, they found another level of harmony among them. And then when they thought they had achieved a perfection of that harmony, they found yet another level of harmony among themselves – Oh, three degrees. Well, that’s interesting. *“Because of the love of God, which did dwell in the hearts of people.”* The love of God: Faith, Hope, Charity - these three, well such irony. Here we have Charity now, where we have finally arrived at the point where there is such a fulsome elimination of the problem that you have to use the word, but you don’t have to mean the same thing with it.

So, look at what we got rid of in verse 16, *“there were no envyings.”* Well, go back to that (last chapter of 3 Nephi], turn all ye gentiles and repent of your crap you’re doing and it says, in that long list of stuff, it associates, *“and your priestcrafts and envyings.”* Ew, now I’m uncomfortable, because if envyings get associated with priest-crafts, well I don’t like that at all, and yet what a

wonderful system we have. We have upward mobility in the church. We have your elders and you have your elder's quorum presidents and you have your wards and you have your bishops, and you have your stake presidents who rule and reign over your bishops and you have your area presidents, who rule and reign over your stake presidents and you have your general authorities and you have your first presiding authorities in the quorum of the twelve and the first presidency and then you have your first presidency and then you have your president. And all along scattered in there, there's lot's and lot's of opportunity for envyings, because we're suffering from the defect that the Savior noted among His own disciples about wanting those chief seats. A Savior, who knelt and washed the feet, the most menial act that you can engage in, in that society, is dealing with the problem of disciples, an inner circle, who want recognition, they want those seats, and He says, look, look, don't do that, don't even think about that. Go sit in the back of the room, get called up. And I think about Nephi in the crowd at the temple Bountiful and how the Lord had to call him up. Nephi wasn't up there saying, "the great and wonderful, His holiness has appeared, I'm here to introduce him." Because really all that is, is a diversion of attention to the one—(like Chaucer in Knight's tale). Nephi did not make of himself Chaucer; he sat in the back, blended in with the crowd, and required the Lord to call him up. Christ addressed this problem directly. I know people, well, I mean I know people, you know people, we all know them, whose life's ambition is to have some office in the church. And my life's ambition, I had an opportunity to substitute in my little daughter, Carson's, 7- year-old primary class. My ambition is to be a 7-year-old primary teacher if I can ever get that calling, that, that is wonderful. I can't imagine dealing with the affliction. Neil Maxwell talked about it, he said yeah, it's out there, but you just don't inhale. But the way my wife has characterized, and I think it's the perfect characterization, is the curse of celebrity- dome. We turn them into celebrities; we want to turn them into Britney Spears, because that's the ultimate end of celebrity-dome. It is hollow, it is stale, it is flat and it is unprofitable--there is nothing to it. Why do you think Britney Spears is the mess she is? Because fame and fortune is nothing. And I suspect those who enjoy the envy of position, who ultimately wind up in a position in which "they are now there," they managed to weasel or brown-nose their way to where they thought it would be great, arrive at that point and look around and say, "well this is just like where I was, nothing has changed;" because the change has to be a change internal to the person and not a mere geography or topography—going from the third floor to the tenth floor, it doesn't change you. You're still that same hollow, miserable, envious chap.

So there's no envyings and there's no strifes, and as a result of that there are no political conventions. I mean that's all a tumult is; it's just a lot of noise in a concentrated collection of folk, in which, we have a revival, we have a Republican Party breakout just all of a sudden, no tumults. And, despite all of the rapid increase in the population and the familial life that's going on there, there is no whoredoms. Well, tumults, politics, and whoredoms, they go hand-in-hand. The only guy in the entire assortment of folk that were running as candidates that had not had more than one wife was the Mormon, and he's not running anymore. Nor whoredoms. What was that headline about John McCain in the New York Times? Well, if we're going to have whoredoms, of course we have its corollary, lyings, because those go together, and there are no murders or any manner of lasciviousness. Now take that list and ask yourself, upon which any of these things is our culture, is our society, is our economy based? You can't, Viva – yeah, it's no longer Las Vegas, it's Viagra [laughter]. Ok, take that list of stuff and say, we're going to eliminate this from the storylines of prime time television. What's left? The only thing that's left is, "Are You Smarter

than a Fifth Grader,” because everything else, this is the stuff we eat, this is our daily fare, this is who we are, this is the definition of us. You know what, we’re going to make you envy with each year’s new car model. Why do we buy new cars? Why would anyone ever buy a new Dodge truck after they’ve gotten a Dodge truck that has a lifetime warranty? And do you know why Dodge can give you a truck with a lifetime warranty? Because it’s only for the life of the original owner and guess what, you’re not going to own that vehicle past 50,000 miles, because you’re going to envy the new model that they’ve got on the drawing board. Envy is the stuff that Wall Street uses. Lusts, and whoredoms—I mean we don’t sell chewing gum, without sex. Everything about our society; take that verse and photocopy it, so you’re not messing your scriptures up, take that verse and sit down and watch an evening of primetime television and start crossing it off, you probably won’t be 15 minutes in before you’ve recognized in the story that they’re telling you and the commercials that interject themselves, you’re going to check off everything on that list. THIS IS US, Oh Ye Gentiles! So we’re here and we’re talking about Zion and we’re wondering why it’s not here in full bloom at this point. This garbage is in our DNA. We have a hard time even thinking in terms that would allow us to relate to these people. The plot lines of all of our great western stories involve this stuff - *“nor murders, or any manner of lasciviousness.”* The story of the latter end of the Jaredites is full of murders, lyings, and all manner of lasciviousness. The ultimate end of the Nephites is going to be a repetition of that. And we don’t learn from the patterns that were shown that says, here’s the road to hell and here’s the road to Zion, and we march down the road to hell and we talk about Zion.

So then it says, *“and surely there could not be a happier people among all the people who had been created by the hand of God.”* To us, in our cultural setting that seems really incongruent, because everything that drives us, everything that our economy is based upon, everything that our entertainment portrays in front of our minds is based upon these kinds of conflicts and tumults, and envyings, and whoredoms, and desperate housewives. It’s all tied into this stuff. CSI, how many murder-based shows are there on TV? The only thing that’s interesting anymore are the murder shows, because the forensics of Crime Scene Investigation ultimately get you to the real guy and you notice in the background, there’s always pole dancer or two, because they just presume we’re all in to that stuff. You know and among lyings and this stuff, the Marriott hotel in which we’re currently talking, owned by the Marriott Corporation, the CEO of which is a Latter Day Saint and whose father built the Marriott Center at Brigham Young University, has enough pressure on them from those who use their hotels, that they offer X-rated movies in the privacy of your room as part of the services provided. I haven’t checked, but I assume it’s true in Provo, because if it’s true in one place, it most certainly would be true everywhere. Because they will actually lose patrons, they will lose customers if they don’t offer that garbage in the hotel room. And so, market-driven forces require them to offer this kind of stuff, and we sit back, scratch our head, and say, “oh those decadent Romans with that Coliseum,” – What? Whoa, what’s the difference between Jaws [the movie] and the boat battles in the Coliseum that the Romans were notorious for flooding, and killing, and mayhem, and carnage? Now, ours is a mechanical shark, and Roy Scheider is just so ineffective anyway, but the blood in the water is the real color and your mind cannot tell the difference between what you take into it in a fictional way, and what you take into it in a reality way. That’s one of the reasons why I don’t read fiction, because I hate messing up and remembering something that was out of a novel instead of out of some bit of history that I’d read and boy, history is much stranger than fiction. Should read history, it’s

perverse, man. It will twist you.

But these people who have been separated from our common fare, there could not be a happier people than among all the children of God, because you know what? There comes a point when you have separated yourself from the crap, that your capacity to incorporate more and more truth and light, allows you to say, "well, this is more interesting than that was anyway." There's something more engaging about truth and light and there's something more fascinating about the things of eternity than there is about any of this stuff. We are all weak, we are all vulnerable, we are all carbon-based mud-piles at the moment and this carbon-based pile of mud around which my spirit has been wrapped into, it gets tired, it has appetites, it has weaknesses, but the reason why they threw fasting in there was to subordinate that body and to teach it that the spirit is something that ought to be in control. There comes a point at which if you've allowed the spirit to have its way, you find that the things that are fascinating to this pile of mud that you walk around in, are far less interesting than the things of the Spirit. And whatever principle of intelligence you attain to in this life is going to rise with you and if it does, then you're going to have so much the advantage in the world to come. And why is that? Because in the world to come, the crap that's here has no utility, it has no value. It's here to test you, it's here to try you, and it's here to give you an opportunity to overcome it, but it's not here for you to revel in, it's for you to dig yourself out from.

So, there's no robbers. Ok, there goes the banking industry, the law industry, yeah; there goes the government. Nor murders neither were there Lamanites, or any manner of -ites. But they were all in one, the Children of Christ and heirs of the Kingdom of God.

We're running short on time, so I'm going to skip forward and talk about what happens to Zion. In verse 24, *"...two hundred and first year there began to be among them those who were lifted up in pride, [see it starts with this pride] and wearing of costly apparel, and all manner of fine pearls, and of the fine things of the world. And from that time forth they did have their goods and their substance no more common among them. And they began to be divided into classes; and they began to build up churches unto themselves to get gain."* So, institutionally, as soon as you get the mischief going, as soon as you begin the process of corrosion, the very first thing we want to build, the very first thing we've got to fetch for ourselves is churches. That ought to sit sort of as a curiosity to you. Now why is that? Why is it that as soon as this process of degeneration begins to unfold, the first thing they want to get is churches? [Audience answers: "I think it's because you feel insecurity right away and you want security back again"]. Yeah, because you know you're wrong. Well, let's take one step back from that statement. Everyone who has a body, everyone who is here in mortality, knows Christ, chose Christ, accepted the plan of the Father, and came down and inherited this estate as a consequence of having kept the first estate. Whether they are in tune enough with their spirit, whether they are in tune enough with the voice of God in this life, or not, they know at some very fundamental level that what they're doing is wrong, when they are doing wrong--everyone does! That's why a convert to the church feels like they're coming home, they feel like there's something familiar. They feel like in the teachings of the Gospel of Christ that have been restored through the Prophet Joseph Smith there is a resonance there with something inside them that was empty that this now fills. And when you take a step back from that, when you reject that, when you say I'm departing, even though at this point they may be

departing so little, that to us these people at this point in this decay of Zion, would be our superiors--they know that they've lost something. And because they know they've lost something they have to repair that damage. So what do you need? To repair the damage you need someone to tell you, "don't worry at the last day God will beat you with a few stripes but it will be ok, all is well in Zion, Zion is prospering. Check out the wardrobes in our congregation, things are ok, we're building a lot of new chapels, there's a lot of brickwork going on, things look economically viable. If we were ranked among the Fortune 500 companies, we'd be right up there, all is certainly, certainly well in Zion. And with a 1.53 percentage rate growth increase in the United States last year, the LDS church qualifies as being one of the top growing churches in America, because so many of the others are in state of decline--whoosh, all is well in Zion."

So they build up churches when they've divided into classes, because the first institution you want when you know that you're racked with guilt is religion. It's always about false religion. The entire story of the Book of Mormon, all of the anti-heroes, have religion. Even the Rameumptom folks are steeped in religion, devoted to religion. The problem is not the absence of religion; it's the presence of false religion and the presence of things within the religion that is false. *"...unto themselves to get gain and began to deny the true church of Christ."* See, churches [plural], true church of Christ [singular]. Why plural, why singular? Well, because churches [plural], there's different personality types, there's different kinds of ego trips, there's different kinds of folks wanting to salve a peculiar form of sin that they're participating in, and so they need different kinds of churches to tell them, "that's ok, that's ok." But if you look at what began the process of degeneration in verse 24, it all begins with one particular problem—pride. "I'm proud of my church, I'm proud of my neighborhood, I'm proud of what we've accomplished, through hard work, through a capitalist, and protestant, and Elizabethan and puritanical tradition that has managed to come into an even flow to the consciousness of us as Latter Day Saints and by damn I'm proud of it." And so, look here now were I a resident in Zion at this point, verse 24 shows you where I'd show up, I'd be right there saying, "let's break this mold, let's...this harmony, it's incessant, I mean, look at us, we're wearing uniforms, we all look alike, you all sound alike, let's do something new, let's do something different. I found this plant and if you smoke it, that's really...and the music here sucks, have you noticed that, it's all hymns, I mean why can't we have some rock and roll, and we have rock and roll and we have rock and roll stars and we have rock and roll stars and get limos and more pearls and costly apparel, and it'll be fine, it'll work out, this is going to be nice" – pride! I mean pride manifests itself in so many divergent ways, that just the word alone tells you something about the insidious nature of the decay. See, if the Book of Mormon is only part history and is also prophecy, that is, they selected from their history those portions, which most relevantly bear upon us and our condition, and if you would like to know what is going to happen in the Millennium at the end of that season when Satan has been bound, and the beginning of that little season when Satan is loosed and how we managed to wind up then with the loss of Zion at the end of the Millennium, before that great tumult that is described in the book of Revelation, after the Millennium, the word pride, ought to resonate with you. Pride suggests that you know better than God. Pride suggests that at that moment when everyone has been resurrected and everything has been wrapped up and everything is now at "post-second resurrection" state, that you can look about and say, "I know better than God," that is, "His judgments are unjust," that is "Satan was right all along, because look, I'm Telestial, look I've been quickened by a portion of the Terrestrial world, well look, I've been quickened by a portion of the

Celestial world, but my friend was quickened only by a portion of the Telestial world...and it's not fair, it's not right." And what is that, at the end, that's pride, which is what we're really here preparing to confront is that argument at the end of the Millennium. And so, when you arrive at that blessed day and you're confronted in that moment and you want to know how we're going to get from where we are at that moment to the end of the war that is about to unfold, yet again, before they are cast out into their place and the saints inherit the earth--check or calibrate your pride, and realize that the God and Father of us all has been right all along, His plan has been perfect all along, He is merciful, and He is just and it is not our place to judge Him, but it is our place to be judged by Him.

Well, if you go through [we're out of time], if you go through and look at the rest of the description of the decay into where they wind up with, you are reading once again a re-introduction into that society of our cultural mores--they are becoming progressively more like us. So, we still weep for Zion, it has fled. There are two models that you can consider from the scriptures as possibilities for Zion in the last days. The one model is the Book of Mormon model in which Zion gets introduced after destruction and after the return of the Lord and after folks have a season to incorporate the information and the teachings, the ordinances that Christ restores at His coming. Under that model, we will not see Zion until sometime post-Second Coming. There's a second model that we find in the scriptures, however, and that model is the one that Christ suggests, He says "as it was in the days of Noah, so also shall it be at the time of the coming of the Son of Man." And what was it that was going on contemporaneous with Noah? – it was the city of Enoch, in which a people, separated themselves, and they found Zion. Melchizedek was able to do the same thing. The people of the Nephites were able to do the same thing. Whether the model that will actually apply is the model that Christ suggested about the City of Enoch and a righteous people ready to meet the Lord, or the model that the Book of Mormon suggests --a post- holocaust, a post-second coming establishment of Zion, is YOUR choice, and that ought to be the most sobering comment of all. Let me end by bearing testimony to you that what I've been trying to do today is the same thing I've been trying to do in every book I've written and that is – to remove the condemnation under which we labor, because we don't take the Book of Mormon seriously enough. Joseph Smith did not write that book. It is a gift of God. It is the Vision of All. It is the message for the last days. You can get closer to God and closer to understanding Him and His ways, by abiding by what is in the Book of Mormon than you can in any other book. It is NOT a watered down version, it's not the Gospel-lite and "ooh, we can't wait for the rest of this stuff when they break the seal and bust it out." If you're attentive to what you have now, you're going to find out that all that's going to happen when the seal is broken and you read the rest of it is, "yeah, you were right, you did pick it up, because it's all in there."

In the name of Jesus Christ, Amen.