

Come Follow Me Lesson 3
1 Nephi 8-10 – January 13-19

1 Nephi 8

Lehi sees a vision of the tree of life—He partakes of its fruit and desires his family to do likewise—He sees a rod of iron, a strait and narrow path, and the mists of darkness that enshroud men—Sariah, Nephi, and Sam partake of the fruit, but Laman and Lemuel refuse. [Between 600 and 592 B.C.]

1 AND it came to pass that we had gathered together all manner of ^aseeds of every kind, both of grain of every kind, and also of the seeds of fruit of every kind. (They thought they would be living in the desert, not going over seas.)

2 And it came to pass that while my father tarried in the wilderness he spake unto us, saying: Behold, I have ^adreamed a dream; or, in other words, I have ^bseen a ^cvision. (This vision is the central message of the Book of Mormon.)

3 And behold, because of the thing which I have seen, I have reason to rejoice in the Lord because of ^aNephi and also of Sam; for I have reason to suppose that they, and also many of their seed, will be saved. ("Respecting the foreknowledge of God, let it not be said that divine omniscience is of itself a determining cause whereby events are inevitably brought to pass. A mortal father, who knows the weaknesses and frailties of his son, may by reason of that knowledge sorrowfully predict the calamities and sufferings awaiting his wayward boy. He may foresee in that son's future a forfeiture of blessings that could have been won, loss of position, self-respect, reputation and honor; even the dark shadows of a felon's cell and the night of a drunkard's grave may appear in the saddening visions of that fond father's soul; yet, convinced by experience of the impossibility of bringing about that son's reform, he foresees the dread developments of the future, and he finds but sorrow and anguish in his knowledge. Can it be said that the father's foreknowledge is a cause of the son's sinful life? The son, perchance, has reached his maturity; he is the master of his own destiny; a free agent unto himself. The father is powerless to control by force or to direct by arbitrary command; and, while he would gladly make any effort or sacrifice to save his son from the fate impending, he fears for what seems to be an awful certainty. But surely that thoughtful, prayerful, loving parent does not, because of his knowledge, contribute to the son's waywardness. To reason otherwise would be to say that a neglectful father, who takes not the trouble to study the nature and character of his son, who shuts his eyes to sinful tendencies, and rests in careless indifference as to the probable future, will by his very heartlessness be benefiting his child, because his lack of forethought cannot operate as a contributory cause to dereliction. "Our Heavenly Father has a full knowledge of the nature and disposition of each of His children, a knowledge gained by long observation and experience in the past eternity of our primeval childhood; a knowledge compared with which that gained by earthly parents through mortal experience with their children is infinitesimally small. By reason of that surpassing knowledge, God reads the future of child and children, of men individually and of men collectively as communities and nations; He knows what each will do under given conditions, and sees the end from the beginning. His foreknowledge is based on intelligence and reason. He foresees the future as a state which naturally and surely will be; not as one which must be because He has arbitrarily willed that it shall be."—James E. Talmage, *The Great Apostasy*, pp. 19-20.)

4 But behold, ^aLaman and Lemuel, I fear exceedingly because of you; for behold, methought I saw in my dream, a dark and dreary wilderness.

5 And it came to pass that I saw a ^aman, and he was dressed in a white ^brobe; and he came and stood before me. (This guide is similar to the attendant who stands beside us in the temple.)

6 And it came to pass that he spake unto me, and bade me follow him.

1 Ne 8:7-33 The symbolism in Lehi's dream

SYMBOL (what Lehi saw)	MEANING
1. Large and spacious field (v.9)	the world (v. 20)
2. Tree (v.10)	the love of God (1 Ne 11:22) Jesus Christ.
3. Fruit(v.10)	the love of God or eternal life (1 Ne 15:36)
4. River of water (v.13)	depths of the river=depths of hell (1 Ne 12:16)
5. Rod of iron (v.19)	the word of God (1 Ne 11:25)
6. Strait and narrow path (v.20)	the way to eternal life (2 Ne 31:18)
7. Mist of Darkness (v.23)	the temptations of the devil (1 Ne 12:17)
8. Great and spacious building	the vain imaginations and pride of the world (1 Ne 11:36, 12:18)
SYMBOL (what Nephi saw)	MEANING
9. Fountain of living waters (1 Ne 11:25)	the love of God (1 Ne 11:25) Holy Ghost
10. Terrible gulf (1 Ne 12:18)	the justice of the Eternal God (1 Ne 12:18)

7 And it came to pass that as I followed him I beheld myself that I was in a dark and dreary waste.
8 And after I had traveled for the space of many hours in darkness (the effects of sin), I began to pray unto the Lord that he would have ^amercy on me, according to the multitude of his tender mercies. (We all need the Lord's mercy to obtain forgiveness from our sins. The pattern: Darkness – sin, cry for mercy – repentance, forgiveness through the atonement, joy because of a remission of our sins through the atonement, then desiring to share the joy.)

9 And it came to pass after I had prayed unto the Lord I beheld a large and spacious ^afield.
10 And it came to pass that I beheld a ^atree (Christ), whose ^bfruit (The Atonement) was desirable to make one ^chappy. (Elder Jeffrey Holland taught that **the tree of life is a symbol of Jesus Christ.** He said: **“The images of Christ and the tree [are] inextricably linked... At the very outset of the Book of Mormon... Christ is portrayed as the source of eternal life and joy, the living evidence of divine love, and the means whereby God will fulfill his covenant with the house of Israel and indeed the entire family of man, returning them all to their eternal promises.”** Christ and the New Covenant, p. 160-162.)

11 And it came to pass that I did go forth and partake of the ^afruit thereof; and I beheld that it was **most sweet, above all** that I ever before tasted. Yea, and I beheld that the fruit thereof was white, **to exceed all** the ^bwhiteness that I had ever seen. (Alma describes the same tree in Alma 32:28-42.)

12 And as I partook of the fruit thereof it filled my soul with **exceedingly great** ^ajoy (a remission of sins through the atonement); wherefore, I began to be ^bdesirous that my family should partake of it also (apply the atonement in their lives, too); for I knew that it was ^c**desirable above all** other fruit (Salvation is only through Christ's atonement).

13 And as I cast my eyes round about, that perhaps I might discover my family also, I beheld a ^ariver of water (Lehi didn't notice that the water was filthy, but Nephi did.); and it ran along, and it was near the tree of which I was partaking the fruit.

14 And I looked to behold from whence it came; and I saw the head thereof a little way off; and at the head thereof I beheld your mother Sariah, and Sam, and ^aNephi; and they stood as if they knew not whither they should go.

15 And it came to pass that I beckoned unto them; and I also did say unto them with a loud voice that they should come unto me, and partake of the fruit, which was desirable above all other fruit. (The divine responsibility to lead his family to partake of the fruits of the gospel rested with the father.)

16 And it came to pass that they did come unto me and partake of the fruit also.

17 And it came to pass that I was desirous that Laman and Lemuel should come and partake of the fruit also; wherefore, I cast mine eyes towards the head of the river, that perhaps I might see them.

18 And it came to pass that I saw them, but they would ^anot come unto me and partake of the fruit.

(Laman and Lemuel are in group 4, never intending to get on the path.)

19 And I beheld a ^arod of iron, and it extended along the bank of the river, and led to the tree by which I stood. (Ezra Taft Benson said: “We must engage in activities that bring spiritual power. I speak of such activities as immersing ourselves in the scriptures. **There is a power that flows into our lives when we read and study the scriptures on a daily basis that cannot be found in any other way.**” (1987-1988 *BYU Devotional and Fireside Speeches*, pp. 53-54, as taken from *Latter-day Commentary on the Book of Mormon* compiled by K. Douglas Bassett, p.31) Merrill J. Bateman said: “**A casual, infrequent exposure to the scriptures will generally not open the door to the whisperings of the Spirit or provide insights...There are certain blessings obtained when one searches the scriptures. As a person studies the words of the Lord and obeys them, he or she draws closer to the Savior and obtains a greater desire to live a righteous life. The power to resist temptation increases, and spiritual weaknesses are overcome. Spiritual wounds are healed...**According to the vision, the only way to reach the tree and become a permanent partaker of the fruit was to ‘continually [hold] fast’ to the iron rod (1 Ne 8:30). What was the rod of iron? Nephi defined it as the ‘word of God’—the words of the living prophets and the scriptures which point people to Christ. Nephi further stated that those who hearkened and held fast to the word of God would never perish (See 1 Ne 15:24 - And I said unto them that it was the ^aword of God; and whoso would hearken unto the word of God, and would ^bhold fast unto it, they would never perish; neither could the ^ctemptations and the fiery ^ddarts of the ^eadversary overpower them unto blindness, to lead them away to destruction.)...Holding fast to the iron rod builds faith in Christ and his work....President Benson, in the April 1986 general conference, expressed these thoughts: **‘However diligent we may be in other areas, certain blessings are to be found only in the scriptures, only in coming to the word of the Lord and holding fast to it as we make our way through the mists of darkness to the tree of life.’**” (*Ensign*, May 1986, p. 82, as taken from *Latter-day Commentary on the Book of Mormon* compiled by K. Douglas Bassett, p.30) George Q. Cannon said: “Though impenetrable darkness should surround us, we ought, as a people and as individuals, to cling to that truth which the Lord has revealed concerning this work; cling to the Priesthood; cling to the ‘rod of iron,’ which is the word of God, and the word of God comes through the Priesthood. Let each one say: ‘I will serve God, no matter what happens; I will cling to His Priesthood, which God has put in His Church to govern it, no matter what the consequences may be.’ That is the integrity we should cherish, and which we should teach to our children. Unless we do, we will never accomplish that which God designs for us.” (*Collected Discourses 1886-1898*, vol. 5, edited by Brian H. Stuy, George Q. Cannon, April 5, 1897))

20 And I also beheld a ^astrait (Joseph Fielding Smith said: “Mark you, this word *strait* is spelled s-t-r-a-i-t and not s-t-r-a-i-g-h-t. While no doubt, that path which leads into the presence of God is *straight*, it is also *strait*, which means that those who enter into it will find it restricted; it is narrow; they cannot take with them that which does not apply, or which does not belong to the kingdom of God. All such things must be left behind when we enter into this narrow way which leads in to the presence of God, where we can receive life eternal. ‘Few there be that find it.’” (*Doctrines of Salvation*, vol. 2. pp. 13-14 as taken from *Latter-day Commentary on the Book of Mormon* compiled by K. Douglas Bassett, p.31-2) Bruce R. McConkie said: “The course leading to eternal life is both strait and straight. It is *straight* because it has an invariable direction -- always it is the same. There are no diversions, crooked paths, or tangents leading to the kingdom of God. It is *strait* because it is narrow and restricted, a course where full obedience to the full law is required. Straightness has reference to direction, straitness to width. The gate is strait; the path is both strait and straight. (2 Ne. 9:41; 31:9, 17-18; 33:9; Alma 37:44-45; Hela. 3:29-30; 3 Ne. 14:13-14; 27:33; D. & C. 22; 132:22; Matt. 7:13-14; Luke 13:23-24; Heb. 12:13; Jer. 31:9.) **Thus by entering in at the strait gate (which is repentance and baptism) a person gets on the ‘straight and narrow path which leads to eternal life.’** (2 Ne. 31:17-18.)” (Bruce R. McConkie, *Mormon Doctrine*, p.

769)) and narrow path (Neal A. Maxwell said: “**The strait and narrow path, though clearly marked, is a path, not a freeway nor an escalator. Indeed, there are times when the only way the strait and narrow path can be followed is on one’s knees! And we are to help each other along the path.**” (*Ensign*, May 1982, p.38 as taken from *Latter-day Commentary on the Book of Mormon* compiled by K. Douglas Bassett, p.32) Delbert L. Stapley said: “To enter the straight gate implies obedience to gospel requirements, and the narrow way that leads to life connotes additional requirements, rites, and ordinances for all who desire salvation and exaltation....I should like to ask, ‘What is the straight gate spoken of by the Savior by which we should enter?’ **All who have repented and then been baptized and received the Holy Ghost by authorized servants of God have entered in by the strait gate. The narrow way can only be followed by obedience and faithfulness to all the sacred ordinances and requirements of the higher gospel plan, obtained in the holy temples of God.**” (*Conference Report*, Apr. 1955, pp. 66-68 as taken from *Latter-day Commentary on the Book of Mormon* compiled by K. Douglas Bassett, p.32)), which came along by the rod of iron, even to the tree by which I stood; and it also led by the head of the fountain, unto a large and spacious field, as if it had been a ^bworld.

21 And I saw numberless concourses of people (“Lehi beheld ‘numberless concourses of people, many of whom were pressing forward, that they might obtain the path which led unto the tree by which [he] stood.’ It is just so today. **Multitudes of the earth’s inhabitants respond regularly to the Light of Christ and seek to know more of the will of him whose they are. They seek to get on that path which leads directly to peace here and eternal life hereafter. But navigating the strait and narrow path takes care and caution. One’s eyes must ever be fixed upon the Lord and his glory, and thus the traveler must be willing to forsake the extraneous and the unnecessary things which the world offers so readily. The Prophet Joseph Smith wrote in 1839 that ‘there are many yet on the earth among all sects, parties, and denominations, who are blinded by the subtle craftiness of men, whereby they lie in wait to deceive, and who are only kept from the truth because they know not where to find it’ (D&C 123:12). In some cases, even those who find the truth are not able to forsake the world and its trappings and thus travel unencumbered down the narrow gospel passageway. Indeed, it is not difficult to live the principles of the gospel and thus to hold to the iron rod, except where one also attempts to maintain a concurrent grasp on the world.**” (McConkie, Millet, and Top, *Doctrinal Commentary on the Book of Mormon*, vol. 1, p. 59)), many of whom were ^apressing forward, that they might obtain the ^bpath which led unto the tree by which I stood.

22 And it came to pass that they did come forth, and commence in the path which led to the tree. (Merrill J. Bateman said: “Lehi beheld four groups of people traveling in different directions, some toward the tree and others away from it. The **first group** found the path and began the journey toward the tree. Along the way they encountered a mist of darkness which caused them to wander off and become lost. Others pressed forward, caught hold of the rod of iron, pressed through the mist by clinging to the rod, arrived at the tree, and partook of the fruit. Even though they tasted the sweetness of the fruit, they did not persist. They succumbed to the mocking of finely dressed people who inhabited a great and spacious building across the river. The scoffing and finger-pointing of the well-dressed caused the **second group** to become ashamed, and they drifted away into forbidden paths and were lost. The **third group** pressed forward onto the path and caught hold of the rod. By continually holding to the rod of iron, they reached the tree, fell down, and partook of the fruit. Nephi’s record of his father’s vision does not elaborate more with regard to these people. However, it is obvious that these are the faithful, those who continually hold to the rod, those who are humbled by the tree and its fruit. This is the only group that falls down at the foot of the tree before partaking of the fruit. The **fourth group** in Lehi’s vision felt their way towards the great and spacious building. They had little or no interest in searching for the tree or the life it provides. After entering the building, they joined the others in pointing the finger of scorn at Lehi and those eating

the fruit. Lehi, Sariah, Sam, and Nephi did not heed the people in the large building. But Laman and Lemuel refused to travel the path toward the tree and partake of the fruit. This upset Lehi, as he feared that the two eldest sons would be cast off from the presence of the Lord. Nephi states that after father Lehi had related all the words of the dream, he exhorted his older sons ‘with all the feeling of a tender parent, that they would hearken to his words’ (1 Ne. 8:37). Lehi's vision contains many symbols, including the strait and narrow path, the rod of iron, the mist of darkness, the large and spacious building, the river of water, and the tree of life. **Each symbol has a special meaning, but the central message concerns the tree and its fruit.**” (*Heroes from the Book of Mormon*, p. 19.))

23 And it came to pass that there arose a ^amist of darkness; yea, even an exceedingly great mist of darkness, insomuch that they who had commenced in the path did lose their way, that they wandered off and were ^blost. (Group 1 – Those who start on the path but then become lost in the mist of darkness.)

24 And it came to pass that I beheld others pressing forward, and they came forth and caught hold of the end of the rod of iron; and they did press forward through the mist of darkness, ^aclinging to the rod of iron, even until they did come forth and partake of the ^bfruit of the tree.

25 And after they had partaken of the fruit of the tree they did cast their eyes about as if they were ^aashamed.

26 And I also cast my eyes round about, and beheld, on the ^aother side of the river of water, a great and ^bspacious building; and it stood as it were in the ^cair, high above the earth. (Neal A. Maxwell: **“We see a few around us who simply can't stand to be separated from the ‘politically correct’ multitudes in the great and spacious building. These multitudes are ‘in the attitude of mocking and pointing their fingers towards those who had come at and were partaking of the fruit’ (1 Nephi 8:26-27). The ‘finger of scorn’ has its own way of separating the faithful from those who have little or no faith (see 1 Nephi 8:33). Like Lehi, the faithful in our time will endure the pointing fingers of scorn from the world and ‘[heed] them not,’ even when the ironical fact is that some of those pointing fingers of scorn once grasped the iron rod.”** (*Lord, Increase Our Faith*, p. 99.))

27 And it was filled with people, both old and young, both male and female; and their manner of dress was exceedingly fine; and they were in the ^aattitude of ^bmocking and pointing their fingers towards those who had come at and were partaking of the fruit. (The greatest thing that stops the Lord's work is our fear of what other people think. N. Eldon Tanner, *His Life and Service*, p. 314)

28 And after they had ^atasted of the fruit they were ^bashamed, because of those that were ^cscoffing at them; and they ^dfell away into forbidden paths and were lost. (Group 2 – Those who hold to the rod of iron until they reach the tree and partake of the fruit, but then become ashamed and fall away.)

29 And now I, Nephi, do not speak ^aall the words of my father.

30 But, to be short in writing, behold, he saw other multitudes pressing forward; and they came and caught hold of the end of the ^arod of iron; and they did press their way forward, continually holding fast to the rod of iron, until they came forth and fell down (We will kneel at the feet of Jesus.) and partook of the fruit of the tree. (Group 3 – Those who hold to the rod of iron until they reach the tree and partake of the fruit, and who then remain faithful.)

31 And he also saw other ^amultitudes feeling their way towards that great and spacious building. (These never intended to be on the path. The great and spacious building has to do with our religion. Hugh Nibley, *Teachings of the Book of Mormon*, 1:180.)

32 And it came to pass that many were drowned in the ^adepths of the ^bfountain; and many were lost from his view, wandering in strange roads.

33 And great was the multitude that did enter into that strange building. And after they did enter into that building they did point the finger of ^ascorn at me and those that were partaking of the fruit

also; but we heeded them not. (Group 4 – Those who never start on the path but instead go directly toward the great and spacious building. These four groups are similar to those found in the parable of the soil found in Matthew 13:3-8, 18-23. 3 And he spake many things unto them in parables, saying, Behold, a sower went forth to sow; 4 And when he sowed, some *seeds* fell by the way side, and the fowls came and devoured them up: 5 Some fell upon ^astony places, where they had not much earth: and forthwith they sprung up, because they had no deepness of earth: 6 And when the sun was up, they were scorched; and because they had no root, they withered away. 7 And some fell among ^athorns; and the thorns sprung up, and choked them: 8 But other fell into good ground, and ^abrought forth fruit, some an hundredfold, some sixtyfold, some thirtyfold. 18 ¶ ^aHear ye therefore the parable of the sower. 19 When any one heareth the word of the kingdom, and ^aunderstandeth *it* not, then cometh the wicked *one*, and ^bcatcheth away that which was sown in his heart. This is he which received seed by the way side. (Group 4) 20 But he that received the seed into ^astony places, the same is he that heareth the word, and anon with joy receiveth it; 21 Yet hath he not root in himself, but dureth for a while: for when ^atribulation or ^bpersecution ariseth because of the word, by and by ^che is offended. (Group 2) 22 He also that received seed among the thorns is he that heareth the word; and the care of this ^aworld, and the ^bdeceitfulness of ^criches, choke the word, and he becometh unfruitful. (Group 1) 23 But he that received seed into the good ground is he that ^aheareth the word, and ^bunderstandeth *it*; which also beareth ^cfruit, and bringeth forth, some an hundredfold, some sixty, some thirty. (Group 3))

34 These are the words of my father: For as many as ^aheeded them, had fallen away.

35 And ^aLaman and Lemuel partook not of the fruit, said my father.

36 And it came to pass after my father had spoken all the words of his dream or vision, which were many, he said unto us, because of these things which he saw in a vision, he exceedingly feared for Laman and Lemuel; yea, he feared lest they should be cast off from the presence of the Lord.

37 And he did ^aexhort them then with all the feeling of a tender parent, that they would hearken to his words, that perhaps the Lord would be merciful to them, and not cast them off; yea, my father did preach unto them. (This verse, more than any other, shows the great love and concern that father

Lehi had for Laman and Lemuel. **Nephi accurately portrays the anguish of soul felt by parents with wayward children. It is probably the same anguish that Father in Heaven feels when we are sinful and disobedient.** Lehi's difficulty with his children is similar to many parents today.

Many parents have worked hard to teach their children righteous principles and bring them up in the Lord only to find their children spiteful, proud, boasters, inventors of evil things, disobedient to parents, without understanding, covenant breakers, without natural affection (Rom 1:30). Parents often make the mistake of second guessing their efforts, blaming themselves, or losing hope when faced with wayward children. Laman and Lemuel had good parents, and yet, by their agency, they were disobedient to the commandments of the Lord. They had an "attitude" problem. Lehi never gave up on his sons, even when a vision had shown him that they would not partake of eternal life.

Lehi did not waste time blaming himself or Sariah, but rather spent his time exhorting them with all the feeling of a tender parent. The restored gospel of Jesus Christ is a message of hope, a voice of consolation. More than anything else, the gospel message sets forth the eternal truth that our Father loves us, that he is concerned with our welfare, that he will do all he can to ensure our happiness and well-being, and that no one will be forgotten or overlooked. The primary responsibility to teach the gospel to children rests with their parents, not with the Church or any of its auxiliaries. Nevertheless there are those children who, despite the best efforts of their parents, will choose to stray from their teachings and example. Though their hearts will ache, there is reason for faithful parents, whose children are heirs of the covenant, to have hope even for those who wander. **'When a seal is put upon the father and mother, it secures their posterity, so that they cannot be lost, but will be saved by virtue of the covenant of their father and mother'**

(*Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith*, p. 321). Elder Orson F. Whitney expounded on this great

doctrine of hope: “‘The Prophet Joseph Smith declared-and he never taught more comforting doctrine-that the eternal sealings of faithful parents and the divine promises made to them for valiant service in the Cause of Truth, would save not only themselves, but likewise their posterity. Though some of the sheep may wander, the eye of the Shepherd is upon them, and sooner or later they will feel the tentacles of Divine Providence reaching out after them and drawing them back to the fold. Either in this life or the life to come, they will return. They will have to pay their debt to justice; they will suffer for their sins; and may tread a thorny path; but if it leads them at last, like the penitent Prodigal, to a loving and forgiving father’s heart and home, the painful experience will not have been in vain. Pray for your careless and disobedient children; hold on to them with your faith. Hope on, trust on, till you see the salvation of God.’ (In Conference Report, April 1929, p. 110.)” (McConkie, Millet, *Joseph Smith, the Choice Seer*, chap. 20) We remember that the prodigal son wasted his inheritance, and when it was all gone he came back to his father’s house. There he was welcomed back into the family, but his inheritance was spent. Mercy will not rob justice, and the sealing power of faithful parents will only claim wayward children upon the condition of their repentance and Christ’s Atonement. Repentant wayward children will enjoy salvation and all the blessings that go with it, but exaltation is much more. It must be fully earned. The question as to who will be exalted must be left to the Lord in His mercy. President James E. Faust, *Ensign*, May 2003, p. 62. Perhaps these are they who will inherit one of the lesser degrees in the Celestial Kingdom, and not be exalted.)

38 And after he had preached unto them, and also prophesied unto them of many things, he bade them to keep the commandments of the Lord; and he did cease speaking unto them.

Explain that Lehi saw many other people in his dream. Write the accompanying chart on the board. Divide the class into four groups. Have each group take one row of the chart and compare the accomplishments and failures of the people described in 1 Nephi 8 with those described in Matthew 13.

Lehi’s Dream	Comparison	Parable of the Sower
1 Nephi 8:21–23		Matthew 13:3–4, 19
1 Nephi 8:24–28		Matthew 13:5–6, 20–21
1 Nephi 8:30		Matthew 13:8, 23
1 Nephi 8:31–33		Matthew 13:7, 22

Have the groups write their findings in the “Comparison” column on the board, and discuss them as a class. Ask questions like the following:

- To whom was the fruit of the tree available?
- What prevented some from partaking of the fruit?
- Did tasting the fruit guarantee joy and eternal life? Why or why not?
- Why do you think some never got to the tree?
- Why do you think some tasted the fruit but then fell away?
- Why do you feel some were able to faithfully partake of the fruit of the tree?

1 Nephi 9

Nephi makes two sets of records—Each is called the plates of Nephi—The larger plates contain a secular history; the smaller ones deal primarily with sacred things. [Between 600 and 592 B.C.]

(Nephi was commanded to keep both the large plates and the small plates. He stated that he had been commanded to keep the small plates for a “wise purpose” in the Lord. That purpose would not be fully realized until the year 1828 when Joseph Smith would be involved (with Martin Harris) in the loss of the first 116 manuscript pages of the Book of Mormon, pages translated from the large plates. At that point the Lord commanded Joseph Smith to turn to the small plates and undertake a translation of material which would cover approximately the same time period as that which had been lost. DCBM, 1:62.)

1 AND all these things did my father see, and hear, and speak, as he dwelt in a tent, in the ^avalley of Lemuel, and also a great many more things, which cannot be written upon **these plates**.

2 And now, as I have spoken concerning **these plates**, behold they are not the plates upon which I make a full account of the history of my people; for the ^aplates upon which I make a full account of my people I have given the name of Nephi; (The large plates of Nephi) wherefore, they are called the plates of Nephi, after mine own name; and **these plates** (the small plates) also are called the plates of Nephi.

PREACH MY GOSPEL: THE BOOK OF MORMON TESTIFIES OF CHRIST: WHAT REASONS DID THE BOOK OF MORMON PROPHETS GIVE FOR WRITING THEIR RECORDS? 1 Nephi 6:4-6; 1 Nephi 9:3-5; 2 Nephi 4:15-16; 2 Nephi 25:23-29; 2 Nephi 26:15-16; 2 Nephi 29:11-14; 2 Nephi 33:13-15; Jacob 1:4-7; Jacob 4:1-6, 12; Enos 1:13; Jarom 1:2; Omni 1:25-26; Words of Mormon 1:3-8; Alma 37:2, 14; 3 Nephi 5:14-15; Mormon 8:35; D&C 3:16-20; D&C 10:46-48. ³ Nevertheless, I have received a commandment of the Lord that I should make **these plates**, (The small plates of Nephi) for the special ^apurpose that there should be an account engraven of the ^bministry of my people.

4 Upon the **other plates** (the large plates) should be engraven an account of the reign of the kings, and the wars and contentions of my people; wherefore **these plates** (the small plates) are for the more part of the ministry; and the ^aother plates (the large plates) are for the more part of the reign of the kings and the wars and contentions of my people.

5 Wherefore, the Lord hath commanded me to make **these plates** (small plates) for a ^awise purpose in him, which purpose I know not. (The foreknowledge of God had anticipated the blunder of the 116 lost pages of the book of Lehi. It was for this reason that the Lord commanded Nephi to write an abridged version of the same history on the small plates. He was to include the more plain and precious parts (1 Ne 19:3). This spiritual record would be translated instead of retranslating the book of Lehi contained on the large plates. Thus, the Lord would show that his wisdom is greater than the cunning of the devil. D&C 10: 38-43 contains the Lord’s commands to Joseph Smith to translate the small plates of Nephi to replace the history lost in the 116 pages: ‘And now, verily I say unto you, that an account of those things that you have written, which have gone out of your hands (the 116 pages), is engraven upon the (small) plates of Nephi; Yea, and you remember it was said in those writings that a more particular account was given of these things upon the plates of Nephi. And now, because the account which is engraven upon the plates of Nephi is more particular concerning the things which, in my wisdom, I would bring to the knowledge of the people in this account-- Therefore, you shall translate the engravings which are on the (small) plates of Nephi, down even till you come to the reign of king Benjamin, or until you come to that which you have translated, which you have retained; (i.e. those portions of Mosiah that had been translated but were not given to Martin Harris) And behold, you shall publish it as the record of Nephi (instead of Lehi); and thus I will confound those who have altered my words. I will not suffer that they shall destroy my work; yea, I will show unto them that my wisdom is greater than the cunning of the devil. Behold, they have only got a part, or an abridgment of the account of Nephi. Behold, there are many things engraven upon the plates of Nephi which do throw greater views upon my gospel; therefore, it is wisdom in me that you should translate this first part of the

engravings of Nephi, and send forth in this work.’ (D&C 10: 38-43) At least part of the Lord’s “wise purpose” (1 Nephi 9:5; Words of Mormon 1:7) for having Nephi keep two records became apparent when Joseph Smith translated the Book of Mormon. Joseph originally translated Mormon’s abridgment of the large plates of Nephi. Martin Harris, who had been helping Joseph, wanted to show his wife and family the translation. Reluctantly, the Prophet allowed him to take the 116 pages of manuscript that had been completed up to that time. The pages were stolen, and the translation stopped. After Joseph Smith went through a period of repentance, the Lord told him not to retranslate the lost portion. Instead He commanded him to translate the small plates, which covered the same period of time. He warned Joseph that those who had taken the 116 pages had changed them and planned to use them to discredit the work. But the Lord had foreseen this many hundreds of years earlier and had provided the second record to thwart Satan’s plan. (See *History of the Church*, 1:20–23; D&C 10:38–46.)

6 But the Lord ^aknoweth all things from the beginning; wherefore, he prepareth a way to accomplish all his works among the children of men; for behold, he hath all ^bpower unto the fulfilling of all his words. And thus it is. (Egyptian literary writings regularly close with the formula *iw-f-pw* “thus it is” “and so it is.” Nephi ends the main sections of his book with the phrase, “And thus it is. Amen.” Hugh Nibley, *Lehi in the Desert and the World of the Jaredites*, p. 18) Amen. (It seems that Nephi had finished abridging the record of his father (1 Nephi 1:17) and was ready to proceed with his own record. Before doing so, however, he explained the difference between the two sets of plates he was working on. Elder James E. Talmage has given us further insight into these two sets of plates: **The Plates of Nephi are so named from the fact that they were prepared and their record was begun by Nephi, son of Lehi. These plates were of two kinds, which may be distinguished as the larger plates and the smaller plates. Nephi began his labors as a recorder by engraving on his plates a historical account of his people from the time his father left Jerusalem. This account recited the story of their wanderings, their prosperity and distress, the reigns of their kings and the wars and contentions of the people; the record was in the nature of a secular history... By command of the Lord, Nephi made other plates, upon which he recorded particularly what may be called in a broad sense the ecclesiastical history of his people, citing only such instances of other events as seemed necessary to the proper sequence of the narrative.** Articles of Faith, p. 263-64. Institute Manual, p. 10. “Without the knowledge of all things God would not be able to save any portion of his creatures; for it is by reason of the knowledge which he has of all things, from the beginning to the end, that enables him to give that understanding to his creatures by which they are made partakers of eternal life; and if it were not for the idea existing in the minds of men that God had all knowledge it would be impossible for them to exercise faith in him” (Joseph Smith, comp., *Lectures on Faith* [1985], 51–52).)

1 Nephi 10

Lehi predicts the Babylonian captivity—He tells of the coming among the Jews of a Messiah, a Savior, a Redeemer—He tells also of the coming of the one who should baptize the Lamb of God—Lehi tells of the death and resurrection of the Messiah—He compares the scattering and gathering of Israel to an olive tree—Nephi speaks of the Son of God, of the gift of the Holy Ghost, and of the need for righteousness. [Between 600 and 592 B.C.]

1 AND now I, Nephi, proceed to give an account upon ^athese plates of my proceedings, and my reign and ministry; wherefore, to proceed with mine account, I must speak somewhat of the things of my father, and also of my brethren. (Nephi has finished the abridgment of his father’s record, and now he is starting his own record.)

2 For behold, it came to pass after my father had made an end of speaking the words of his ^adream, and also of exhorting them to all diligence, he spake unto them concerning the Jews—

3 That after they should be destroyed, even that great city ^aJerusalem, and many be ^bcarried away

captive into ^cBabylon, according to the own due time of the Lord, they should ^dreturn again, yea, even be brought back out of captivity; and after they should be brought back out of captivity they should possess again the land of their inheritance.

4 Yea, even ^asix hundred years from the time that my father left Jerusalem (**The time of the Messiah's first coming like the precise time of his second coming in glory, was a set and fixed time; prophets knew and taught that in six hundred years the meridian of time – literally the midpoint in the sense of central events – would burst upon the world, and the Lord of Life would make his mortal appearance.** DCBM, 1:64), a ^bprophet would the Lord God raise up among the ^cJews—even a ^dMessiah, or, in other words, a Savior of the world. (All true prophets testify of the Christ.)

5 And he also spake concerning the prophets, how great a number had ^atestified of these things, concerning this Messiah, of whom he had spoken, or this Redeemer of the world.

6 Wherefore, all mankind were in a ^alost and in a ^bfallen state, and ever would be save they should rely on this Redeemer. (**Man has no more power to save and redeem himself than he has power to create himself; in fact, the redemption of the human soul is essentially the re-creation of man. It is and can be accomplished only by one greater than man – by a God. This is the true doctrine of salvation by grace, taught by all the holy prophets since the world began.** DCBM, 1:65.)

7 And he spake also concerning a ^aprophet who should come before the Messiah, to prepare the way of the Lord— (How is it that John was considered one of the greatest prophets? First, he was entrusted with a divine mission of preparing the way before the face of the Lord. Whoever had such a trust committed to him before or since? No man. Secondly, he was entrusted with the important mission, and it was required at his hands to baptize the Son of Man. Whoever had the honor of doing that? Whoever had so great a privilege and glory? Thirdly, John at that time, was the only legal administrator in the affairs of the kingdom there was then on the earth, and holding the keys of power. TPJS, p. 275-76)

8 Yea, even he should go forth and cry in the wilderness: ^aPrepare ye the way of the Lord, and make his paths straight; for there standeth one among you whom ye know not; and he is mightier than I, whose shoe's latchet I am not worthy to unloose. And much spake my father concerning this thing.

9 And my father said he should baptize in ^aBethabara, beyond Jordan; and he also said he should ^bbaptize with water; even that he should baptize the Messiah with water.

10 And after he had baptized the Messiah with water, he should behold and bear record that he had baptized the ^aLamb of God, who should take away the sins of the world.

11 And it came to pass after my father had spoken these words he spake unto my brethren concerning the gospel (In a broad sense, the gospel embraces all truth, comprehending the verities of science, philosophy, and the arts. In a saving sense or as used in the scriptures, however, the gospel is the proclamation of peace that salvation is in Christ, and the principles of the gospel are those articles of adoption to which one must subscribe to gain citizenship in the kingdom of God. DCBM, 1:67, TPJS, p. 328) which should be preached among the Jews, and also concerning the ^adwindling of the Jews in ^bunbelief. And after they had ^cslain the Messiah, who should come, and after he had been slain he should ^drise from the dead, and should make himself ^emanifest, by the Holy Ghost, unto the Gentiles.

12 Yea, even my father spake much concerning the Gentiles, and also concerning the house of Israel, that they should be compared like unto an ^aolive-tree (The Lord chose an olive tree to dramatize the destiny of his chosen people. An olive tree almost never dies. It may be pruned and worked with over numerous generations before the fruit is such as to satisfy the owner of the vineyard; this is often after many and varied cuttings and trimmings and replantings. So it is with the house of Israel. That house is stubborn and often requires constant and enduring care. It frequently requires chastening and pruning, actions painful at the time but ultimately accepted as a blessing and perhaps the only means of preservation. As it is with the dedicated gardener, so it is with the Lord – his mercies and tender regard will simply not allow him to let his chosen people go; he pleads with his people Israel to cleave unto him as he cleaves unto them. DCBM, 1:69), whose ^bbranches should be broken off and should be ^cscattered upon all the face of the earth. (**Lehi's comparison of the house of Israel to an olive tree could have**

come from his reading of the brass plates, for we know they contained the allegory of the olive trees later quoted by Jacob in Jacob 5. Institute Manual, p. 11)

13 Wherefore, he said it must needs be that we should be led with one accord into the ^aland of promise, unto the fulfilling of the word of the Lord, that we should be scattered upon all the face of the earth.

14 And after the house of ^aIsrael should be scattered they should be ^bgathered together again; or, in fine, after the ^cGentiles had received the fulness of the ^dGospel, the natural branches of the ^eolive-tree, or the ^fremnants of the house of ^gIsrael, should be grafted in, or ^hcome to the knowledge of the true Messiah, their Lord and their Redeemer.

15 And after this manner of language did my father prophesy and speak unto my brethren, and also many more things which I do not write in this book; for I have written as many of them as were expedient for me in mine ^aother book.

16 And all these things, of which I have spoken, were done as my father dwelt in a ^atent, in the valley of Lemuel. (How much did Lehi have to take with him to travel into the wilderness? Consider this from Lynn M. Hilton and Hope Hilton: With only six persons listed in Lehi's original party, how many donkeys would they need to leave Jerusalem? We estimate from nine to twelve to carry the provisions, personal belongings, and tents. We were assured by the Bedouins with whom we visited that tents would weigh about 500 pounds and would have been packed separately as walls, partitions, and roof on three different donkeys. Thus, with three donkeys needed for one tent, and a donkey per person for provisions, we arrive at a *minimum* figure of nine donkeys. The arrival of Ishmael's group would swell the livestock, of course. If the tents we saw pitched throughout the Arabian peninsula were typical of those the inhabitants had used for centuries, we could get a pretty good idea of Lehi's tents. Actually, this is not an unfair assumption to make, for historians say that the *beit shaar* (house of hair) has not substantially changed with the passing of time. The Old Testament describes tents as "black" (Song 1:15), made of "goat's hair" and containing partitions or "curtains" (Ex. 36:14), with a "hanging for the door of the tent" (Ex. 26:36). The houses of hair we visited and studied were oblong and had a long pitched roof with drooping ends. The smallest tents had nine poles, the three tallest marching down the center with the three shorter running down each side. Guy ropes, also handwoven from goat hair, extended outward to stakes (also called *nails* anciently) driven in the ground. (See Judg. 4:21.) Each tent is divided laterally into two or more living sections by a curtain or curtains: at least one section for the men and one for women and children. We have no way of knowing if Lehi's tents befitted his economic status as a wealthy man or if he deliberately chose common black tents. We saw ancient but luxurious and beautiful tents in Cairo made of heavy, canvas-like material—probably wool or heavy cotton—on which careful artists had appliquéd flowers and geometric designs. The art of tent appliqué, according to Egypt's former deputy minister of state, Salah El Agamawi, has been handed down from generation to generation by women. The tent panels that we saw in Cairo were rectangular, hanging on square wooden frames that were set in the earth and lashed together overhead. These tents were like houses, with ceilings as high as twenty feet, and were richly furnished with rugs, carpets, mats, pillows, bolsters, and cushions. Of course, we also saw tents in Cairo furnished with modern tables and chairs, innocent anachronisms that cheerfully testified to the utter adaptability of the tents. These tents reminded us of a description we had read by Ibn Jubayr, a famous traveler in the twelfth century a.d. who gave us one of the best descriptions extant of the *Haj*, or the Islamic pilgrimage to Mecca. He described one caravan encampment of an Amir of Iraq as "beautiful to look upon and superbly provided, with large handsome tents ... and wonderful pavilions and awnings, for it was surrounded by a linen screen like a wall, in form of closed-in garden. ... Within this were the pitched pavilions, all black on a white background and dappled and variegated as if they were flowers in a garden. ... In these wall-like screens were tall doors, like those of lofty castles, through which one entered into vestibules and mazes." (Paul Linde, "Caravans to Mecca," *Aramco World Magazine*, Nov.–Dec. 1974, 25:9.) Would well-to-do Lehi have lived in such luxury in the wilderness? We were already familiar with how Bedouin tents were constructed. Fifteen years earlier we had seen Bedouin women gather at Beer-sheba, bringing their annual accumulation of

goat or camel hair. Together they wove panels for a new tent on an ancient loom that was owned by the entire tribe. They later presented the panels to a new bride in a custom much like our pioneer house-raising. A camel gives about ten pounds of hair a year; goats produce less. The hair is spun into strong threads by hand-held spindles. This thread makes a fabric as thick as carpet, very heavy and strong, but also very prickly and coarse. This is the “sack cloth” worn by mourners in Bible times (see, e.g., Isa. 32:11), and running a hand across it convinced us that wearing a shirt of it would have been true misery. The “house of hair” provides cooling shade in the hot summer, yet with the side panels tied down, it is warm in the winter. The tents are heavy, and even though they are mobile, it was obvious that Father Lehi would need pack animals to transport them. The average Bedouin tent is about thirty feet long and half as wide. (Whiting, p. 66.) A camel could carry one small tent; another animal would bear the tent poles, some as thick as a baseball bat in diameter, usually with one end dragging in the sand. The tents of sheiks would correspond in size with their wealth, but they are built of the same material in the same way, in sections with lacings to fasten them together, each section designed as a load for a single animal. *In Search of Lehi’s Trail*, p. 52, 68-70)

PREACH MY GOSPEL: WHAT DO THE SCRIPTURES TEACH ABOUT LEARNING THE GOSPEL? 1 Nephi 10:17-19; D&C 50:19-22; D&C 88:118; D&C 11:21-22

17 And it came to pass after I, Nephi, having heard all the ^awords of my father, concerning the things which he saw in a ^bvision, and also the things which he spake by the power of the Holy Ghost, which power he received by faith on the Son of God—and the Son of God was the ^cMessiah who should come—I, Nephi, was ^ddesirous also that I might see, and hear, and know of these things (In speaking of making one’s calling and election sure and subsequently gaining the blessings of the Second Comforter – the right to the literal presence of the Savior – Joseph Smith taught: “God hath not revealed anything to Joseph, but what He will make known unto the Twelve, and even the least Saint may know all things as fast as he is able to bear them. TPJS, p.149), by the power of the ^eHoly Ghost, which is the ^fgift of God unto ^gall those who diligently seek him, as well in times of ^hold as in the time that he should manifest himself unto the children of men. **(Those who live worthy of the companionship of the Holy Spirit – whenever and wherever they may live – are blessed equally with those who experienced the Savior’s ministry among them in mortality. DCBM, 1:72)**

18 For he is the ^asame yesterday, to-day, and forever; and the way is prepared for all men from the foundation of the world, if it so be that they repent and come unto him.

19 For he that diligently ^aseeketh shall find; and the ^bmysteries of God shall be unfolded unto them, by the power of the ^cHoly Ghost, as well in these times as in times of old, and as well in times of old as in times to come; wherefore, the ^dcourse of the Lord is one eternal round. (The Father knows the past, present, and future, since all their dimensions are continually before Him, said the Prophet Joseph Smith, constituting “one eternal now.” TPJS, in *One More Strain of Praise*, p. 47)

PREACH MY GOSPEL: OUR LIFE ON EARTH: PROBATION OR TESTING PERIOD 2 Nephi 2:21; Alma 12:21-24; Abraham 3:25-26; 2 Nephi 9:27; Alma 34:31-35; Mosiah 3:19; Alma 42:2-10 CHOICE 2 Nephi 2:26-29; Joshua 24:15; GOOD AND EVIL Moroni 7:12-19; SIN Romans 3:23; 1 John 1:8-10; 1 John 3:4; THE UNCLEAN CANNOT BE WITH GOD 1 Nephi 10:20-21; 3 Nephi 27:19; Moses 6:57; Alma 41:10-11

20 Therefore remember, O man, for all thy doings thou shalt be brought into ^ajudgment.

21 Wherefore, if ye have sought to do ^awickedly in the days of your ^bprobation **(For those who have adequate opportunity to receive and accept the gospel in this life, the day of probation – the time of mortal testing and trial – ends at death. For those who do not have such opportunities on earth to walk in the glorious gospel light, the time of probation continues beyond the veil of death into the world of spirits. There is no second chance for salvation. DCBM, 1:73),** then ye are found ^cunclean before the judgment-seat of God; and no unclean thing can dwell with God; wherefore, ye must be cast off forever. **(Those who revel in uncleanness in mortality will be cleansed by suffering and repentance during the thousand years they spend in hell at the time of the earth’s millennium;**

they will come forth from the grave clean and free from sin but will suffer a spiritual death in that their opportunity to live eternally in celestial realms with their Father in Heaven is forever lost.

These are they who suffer the wrath of God on earth. These are they who suffer the vengeance of eternal fire – they are destroyed by the glory and brightness of the Savior’s return. These are they who are cast down to hell and suffer the wrath of Almighty God until the fullness of times, when Christ shall have subdued all enemies under his feet, and shall have perfected his work. D&C 76:104-106, DCBM, 1:73)

22 And the Holy Ghost giveth ^aauthority that I should speak these things, and deny them not.