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## Introduction



The image of a small portion of Michelangelo's fresco, "Creation," found above serves as metaphor for this page's means and ends.

- ? How would you characterize God's arm in the fresco?
- ? How would you characterize Adam's arm?
- ? What is the message in Adam's limp wrist? In the fact that his arm rests on his knee?
- ? How does Adam, as painted in Michelangelo's fresco, represent all of us as we engage in scripture study and seek to understand scripture, scripture's divine author and our relationship to Him?
- ? How does Adam, as painted in Michelangelo's fresco, represent all of us as we seek God's enlivening, strengthening, and saving influence and presence in our daily lives?

Michelangelo reminds us of our desperate need for God's presence in our lives if we are to follow Him and be all that He hopes us to be. In relation to this page and its purposes, we are in need of God's help as we seek to understand and apply scripture.

The questions we posed and our brief commentary concerning the fresco represent an example of our approach to each scripture reading.

Scripture readings are accompanied by general and passage-specific questions to ponder along with brief comments. In addition to the passage-specific questions associated with each reading, the reader can apply the following **general questions** to most readings. These questions come from the purposes of scripture as identified in the introduction to our site, ponderthescriptures.com, found on the site's home page

- What does this reading reveal about the character of God?
- How and what does this reading testify of Christ?
- What wisdom and knowledge does this reading provide?
- How does this reading direct the way you think and act?
- Of what dangers does this reading warn? How does it help you avoid these dangers?
- How does this reading gladden your heart, encourage you, and give you hope?
- How does this reading expand your vision and increase your expectations of the possible?
- What does this reading discern or "read" about you?
- How will you apply this reading to your life, to how you relate with others, and to how you relate to Father, Son, and Holy Spirit?

It is not intended that the reader ponder every question. We introduce numerous and varied questions in hopes that readers will find a question or two that catches their imagination and interest, seems pertinent to their lives, and provides an opportunity for meaningful pondering and further spiritual insight. In addition, if the reader wishes, the many and varied ponder questions allow the reader to spend additional time to consider passages from various perspectives.

Finally, we suggest that during and after your reading and pondering experience you consider how you can incorporate your thoughts and feelings from the scripture reading into your personal prayer life. As

you pray, share with Heavenly Father what you thought and felt as you studied and pondered. In your prayer, seek further insight from a God who is anxious to reveal himself, his will, and his interest in our lives. Incorporating your reading and pondering into your prayers can, we think, enliven a prayer life that can all too easily become mundane, mechanical, and rote.

## 1 Nephi 2.<sup>11-13</sup>— just scripture

Laman and Lemuel... did murmur in many things against their father, because he was a visionary man, and had led them out of the land of Jerusalem, to leave the land of their inheritance, and their gold, and their silver, and their precious things, to perish in the wilderness. And this they said he had done because of the foolish imaginations of his heart. And thus Laman and Lemuel, being the eldest, did murmur against their father. And they did murmur because they knew not the dealings of that God who had created them. Neither did they believe that Jerusalem, that great city, could be destroyed according to the words of the prophets....

### Qquestionary

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1. Nephi tells us that “Laman and Lemuel... did murmur in many things against their father.”
  - ? What does it mean to murmur, as you think of it?
  - ? About what things does Nephi mention his brothers complaining about in this passage?
  - ? How are the following complaints related to each other?
    - Lehi “was a visionary man.”
    - Lehi “led them out of the land of Jerusalem.”
    - Lehi led them “to leave the land of their inheritance, and their gold, and their silver, and their precious things.”
    - Lehi led them “to perish in the wilderness.”
  - ? What was it about the value of inheritance, gold, silver, and other precious things in times of societal collapse that Laman and Lemuel did not understand?
  - ? How would you feel about the suggestion that “visionary” people always find it necessary to leave behind the false security and comfort of materialistic culture?
  - ? Are you more inclined toward Lehi’s “contempt” of materialistic culture or Laman and Lemuel’s reliance on materialistic culture for comfort and security? Why do you answer as you do?
2. Nephi informs us that Laman and Lemuel did not “believe that Jerusalem, that great city, could be destroyed.”
  - ? Why is it that individuals of all civilization and societies come to believe that theirs is inevitable and invincible?
  - ? To what degree, do you feel, do people today feel about their nation or society as Laman and Lemuel felt about theirs?
  - ? How do you feel about yours? Why do you answer as you do?

## 1 Nephi 11.<sup>34-36</sup>— just scripture

<sup>34</sup>And after he was slain I saw the multitudes of the earth, that they were gathered together to fight against the apostles of the Lamb; for thus were the twelve called by the angel of the Lord.

<sup>35</sup>And the multitude of the earth was gathered together; and I beheld that they were in a large and spacious building, like unto the building which my father saw. And the angel of the Lord spake unto me again, saying: “Behold the world and the wisdom thereof; yea, behold the house of Israel hath gathered together to fight against the twelve apostles of the Lamb.”

<sup>36\*</sup>I saw and bear record, that the great and spacious building was the pride of the world; and it fell, and the fall thereof was exceedingly great. And the angel of the Lord spake unto me again, saying: “Thus shall be the destruction of all nations, kindreds, tongues, and people, that shall fight against the twelve apostles of the Lamb.”

## Questionary

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1 Nephi 11-14 represent a series of revelations Nephi received in response to his desire to understand the meaning and significance of his father’s dream, often referred to as “The Tree of Life Vision.” Based on a literary pattern found within Nephi’s series of visions, we understand Nephi to have received 14 visions. We will explore this pattern as we work our way through the narrative.\* In order to have manageably short readings, we will divide the 14 visions into some 40 separate daily readings.

In addition to being one of our “Just Scriptures,” today’s reading is the tenth in a series that explores Nephi’s fourteen visions, being the second that explores the ninth of the fourteen visions.

The first eight visions were focused on Christ and his earthly ministry. With the ninth vision Nephi saw Jesus’ death by crucifixion and that its “inspiration” came from a competing and opposing force, symbolized by the great and spacious building. Beginning with this ninth vision, Nephi’s visions explore the opposition the building represents to God and how he responds to that opposition.

1. This vision, like each vision, was granted Nephi in response to his request to know the interpretation and meaning of the tree he and his father had seen.  
? What does today’s reading contribute to your understanding concerning the meaning and significance of the tree?
2. This vision also reveals the character of the great and spacious building and its opposition to God.  
? What does today’s reading contribute to your understanding of the great and spacious building and its opposition to God?
3. The “great and spacious building” is described as:  
The world  
The wisdom of the world  
The pride of the world  
? What is meant by “the world?”

In thinking about this, consider the following verses.

John 15.<sup>19</sup>

John 17.<sup>16</sup>

Luke 12.<sup>29-31</sup>

Matthew 13.<sup>22</sup>

Romans 12.<sup>2</sup>

1 Corinthians 2.<sup>12</sup>

Galatians 1.<sup>4</sup>

1 John 2.<sup>15-16</sup>

Often in scripture, “the world” does not refer to our global world, but to a sphere of ideas, attitudes, ideologies, value systems, affections, etc.

4. The building also represents “the wisdom of the world.”

? What is “wisdom”?

At its most basic, “wisdom” is “knowledge,” “skill,” or “know-how.” It is often focused on application of information or facts. Perhaps the following questions will help get to the nature of the world’s wisdom—for scripture affirms that it is indeed wise in its own way. It possesses certain “skills.” It knows how to get some things done.

? What is the nature of the world’s “wisdom”?

? In what ways is the world “wise”?

? What is “the world” good at?

? What are the “skills” at which the world excels?

5. Finally, the building is the “pride of the world.”

? What is meant by the “pride of the world”?

We could reframe the question like this: In what does the world take pride?

? How would you answer this question?

As you consider the question, “In what does the world take pride?” consider another passage that is part of Nephi’s angelic tutorial concerning his father’s dream, 1 Nephi 13.<sup>4-9</sup>

“And he said unto me: ‘These are the nations and kingdoms of the Gentiles.’ \*I saw among the nations of the Gentiles the formation of a great church. And the angel said unto me: “Behold the formation of a church which is most abominable above all other churches, which slayeth the saints of God, yea, and tortureth them and bindeth them down, and yoketh them with a yoke of iron, and bringeth them down into captivity.”

\*I beheld this great and abominable church; and I saw the devil that he was the founder of it. And I also saw gold, and silver, and silks, and scarlets, and fine-twined linen, and all manner of precious clothing; and I saw many harlots. And the angel spake unto me, saying: “Behold the gold, and the silver, and the silks, and the scarlets, and the fine-twined linen, and the precious clothing, and the harlots, are the desires of this great and abominable church. And also for the praise of the world do they destroy the saints of God, and bring them down into captivity.”

\* I have removed the repetitive, “And it came to pass.”

Don’t think of the “great and abominable church” only in terms of official and organized “religion,” but in terms of institutions and their ideologies, value systems, desires, or the things in which they take pride and stand in opposition to the values and desires of God.

? How do the material things listed in these verses reflect the “wisdom of the world” (things that the world is skilled in obtaining) and the “pride of the world” (things that the world takes pride in)?

? How is such materialism as the great and spacious building represents in opposition to “the twelve apostles of the Lamb”?

? How does this passage apply to the establishment of a just society and how a just society looks in relation to materialism?

? How does it change your understanding of worldly “wisdom” and “pride” if we understand them to be focused on obtaining wealth, power, and prestige?

\* The 14 visions, of varying lengths, are: 11.<sup>1-7</sup>; 11.<sup>8-11</sup>; 11.<sup>12-18</sup>; 11.<sup>19-23</sup>; 11.<sup>24-25</sup>; 11.<sup>26-29</sup>; 11.<sup>30</sup>; 11.<sup>31</sup>; 11.<sup>32-36</sup>; 12.<sup>1-10</sup>; 12.<sup>11-23</sup>; 13.<sup>1-14</sup>; 14.<sup>8</sup>; 14.<sup>9-17</sup>; 14.<sup>18-30</sup>

## 1 Nephi 12.<sup>1-3</sup>— just scripture

<sup>1</sup>\*The angel said unto me: “Look, and behold thy seed, and also the seed of thy brethren.”

And I looked and beheld the land of promise; and I beheld multitudes of people, yea, even as it were in number as many as the sand of the sea. <sup>2</sup>\*I beheld multitudes gathered together to battle, one against the other; and I beheld wars, and rumors of wars, and great slaughters with the sword among my people. <sup>3</sup>\*I beheld many generations pass away, after the manner of wars and contentions in the land; and I beheld many cities, yea, even that I did not number them.

## Q

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Today’s reading is the eleventh in this series and is the first of three that explore the tenth of the fourteen visions.

The first eight visions were focused on Christ and his earthly ministry. With the ninth vision Nephi saw Jesus’ death by crucifixion and that its “inspiration” came from a competing and opposing force, symbolized by the great and spacious building. Beginning with this ninth vision, Nephi’s visions explore the opposition the building represents to God and how he responds to that opposition.

1. This vision, like each vision, was granted Nephi in response to his request to know the interpretation and meaning of the tree he and his father had seen.
  - ? What does today’s reading contribute to your understanding concerning the meaning and significance of the tree?
2. This vision also reveals the character of the great and spacious building and its opposition to God.
  - ? What does today’s reading contribute to your understanding of the great and spacious building and its opposition to God?
3. Nephi sees and speaks of “wars, and rumors of wars.” He repeats this phrase in 12.<sup>21</sup> (twice); 14.<sup>15</sup>; and 14.<sup>16</sup> as he sees other events during his vision.
  - ? What do you hear in this phrase?
  - ? How would you feel and what would you think if we understood this phrase to reflect “long, extended, habitual warfare”?
  - ? How do you feel about this phrase being used so often to reflect this planet’s history?
  - ? How accurately, do you think, does this phrase reflect human history?
  - ? How accurately does it reflect today’s world?
4. In a book that proclaims itself “Another Testament of Christ, we find roughly 15-20% of its pages devoted to “wars, and rumors of wars.”
  - ? How do you respond to this observation?
  - ? How does the report concerning the evils and preponderance of violence and warfare contribute to the Book’s testimony of Jesus Christ?

The Book of Mormon editor offers the following observations concerning “wars, and rumors of wars.”

“And thus ended the thirty and first year of the reign of the judges over the people of Nephi; and thus they had had wars, and bloodsheds, and famine, and affliction, for the space of many years. And there had been murders, and contentions, and dissensions, and all manner of iniquity among the people of Nephi; nevertheless for the righteous’ sake, yea, because of the



prayers of the righteous, they were spared. But behold, because of the exceedingly great length of the war between the Nephites and the Lamanites many had become hardened, because of the exceedingly great length of the war; and many were softened because of their afflictions, insomuch that they did humble themselves before God, even in the depth of humility” (Alma 62.<sup>39-41</sup>).

- ? How do wars and rumors of wars serve to distinguish the spiritually “hardened” from the “softened”?
- ? What do you see in your society that confirms the observation of these verses?
- ? What forms of hardness do you see in society today that might be a result of 20 years of American wars in the Middle East?

\* The 14 visions, of varying lengths, are: 11.<sup>1-7</sup>; 11.<sup>8-11</sup>; 11.<sup>12-18</sup>; 11.<sup>19-23</sup>; 11.<sup>24-25</sup>; 11.<sup>26-29</sup>; 11.<sup>30</sup>; 11.<sup>31</sup>; 11.<sup>32-36</sup>; 12.<sup>1-10</sup>; 12.<sup>11-23</sup>; 13.<sup>1-14.8</sup>; 14.<sup>9-17</sup>; 14.<sup>18-30</sup>

## **1**nephi 13.<sup>7-8</sup>— just scripture

And I also saw gold, and silver, and silks, and scarlets, and fine-twined linen, and all manner of precious clothing; and I saw many harlots. And the angel spake unto me, saying: Behold the gold, and the silver, and the silks, and the scarlets, and the fine-twined linen, and the precious clothing, and the harlots, are the desires of this great and abominable church.

### **Q**uestionary

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- ? How are we to think of the “great and abominable CHURCH” if we think of it as something more than a traditional religious institution with its religious leadership?
- ? How could we justify seeing it as including companies, banks, and other financial institutions and their executives?

## **2**nephi 9.<sup>51</sup>— just scripture

Wherefore, do not spend money for that which is of no worth, nor your labor for that which cannot satisfy. Hearken diligently unto me, and remember the words which I have spoken; and come unto the Holy One of Israel, and feast upon that which perisheth not, neither can be corrupted, and let your soul delight in fatness.

### **Q**uestionary

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- ? What is the nature of the “fatness” that God offers “your soul”?
- ? What do you do to obtain it?
- ? What evidences are there in relation to time spent, thoughts given, and efforts made that your priorities are placed on the things of God rather than the things of this world?

## **J**acob 1.<sup>15-16</sup>—just scripture

<sup>15</sup>\*The people of Nephi, under the reign of the second king, began to grow hard in their hearts, and indulge themselves somewhat in wicked practices, such as like unto David of old desiring many wives and concubines, and also Solomon, his son. <sup>16</sup>Yea, and they also began to search much gold and silver, and began to be lifted up somewhat in pride.”

## **Q**uestionary

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Today’s reading represents introductory verses to Jacob’s discourse found in chapter 2. In this discourse, Jacob addresses growing Nephite sin and pride.

1. Jacob accuses the Nephites of “indulg[ing] themselves somewhat in wicked practices.”
    - ? What do you see in your mind when you contemplate “wicked practices”?
    - ? What does it mean to you to “indulge” oneself?
  2. David and Solomon’s desire for and “possession” of multiple wives has been a common, almost universal desire and prerogative of powerful/wealthy/elite males throughout history.
    - ? What is the point of the multiplicity of wives?
    - ? How does it relate to the physical pleasures of sex?
    - ? How does it relate to the desire for societal prestige?
    - ? How does it relate to the desire to form political/economic alliances?
    - ? How does it influence your view of the text’s criticism concerning multiply wives to consider that many such “wives” never became sexual partners?
    - ? How does knowing that such women were often being used to increase the male’s power and prestige impact your understanding of the criticism that the Nephites “began to grow hard in their hearts”?
    - ? How is such “use” of women indicative of hardness of heart?
    - ? How is such “use” of women indicative of pride?
  3. As a second part to his societal critique, Jacob says that the Nephites “began to search much gold and silver.”
    - ? Should we imagine that previous to this time there was no interest or searching after gold and silver?
    - ? If there had previously been interest and searching for gold and silver, what, do you suppose has changed?
    - ? How much weight and meaning should we give to the word “much”: they “began to search MUCH gold and silver”?
    - ? What would be the difference between searching for gold and silver and searching for MUCH gold and silver?
    - ? When is “enough, enough”? When is “much” too much?
    - ? How do you feel about the search for “much gold and silver” being labeled a “wicked practice”? Why do you answer as you do?
    - ? How would such a search indicate a hardening of the heart?
- ? Where, do you feel, is your present culture and society in relation to these two “wicked practices”?
  - ? Where are you?
  - ? Why do you answer these final two questions as you do?
  - ? What can you do to impact/improve yourself and your society in regard to these two “wicked practices”?

## **J**acob 2.<sup>12-14</sup>—just scripture

<sup>12</sup>And now behold, my brethren, this is the word which I declare unto you, that many of you have begun to search for gold, and for silver, and for all manner of precious ores, in the which this land, which is a land of promise unto you and to your seed, doth abound most plentifully. <sup>13</sup>And the hand of providence hath smiled upon you most pleasingly, that you have obtained many riches; and because some of you have obtained more abundantly than that of your brethren ye are lifted up in the pride of your hearts, and wear stiff necks and high heads because of the costliness of your apparel, and persecute your brethren because ye suppose that ye are better than they. <sup>14</sup>And now, my brethren, do ye suppose that God justifieth you in this thing? Behold, I say unto you, Nay. But he condemneth you, and if ye persist in these things his judgments must speedily come unto you.

## **Q**uestionary

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Today's reading is a portion of a longer discourse Jacob, brother of Nephi, delivered in response to increasing sin and pride among his people. In a previous reading (1.<sup>15-16</sup>), we found that one of the "wicked practices" in which the Nephites were engaged was searching after "much gold and silver." Today's reading continues this theme.

1. The land was plentiful in "gold," "silver," and "all manner of precious ores," after which the Nephites searched.
  - ? How does the plentifulness of "gold, and for silver, and "all manner of precious ores" relate to the wickedness of searching for "much"?
  - ? Why should the plentifulness of "gold," and "silver," and "all manner of precious ores" that is found in the "land of promise" not be viewed as justification for searching out much?
2. In all the searching for "gold, and for silver, and for all manner of precious ores" great inequality arose.
  - ? Why is economic inequality evil?
  - ? What other evils does economic inequality engender?
  - ? In what sense is economic inequality a form of "persecution"?
3. Jacob says that "the hand of providence hath smiled upon you most pleasingly that you have obtained many riches."
  - ? How do you understand this?
  - ? Does this assume that God desires the "obtaining of many riches"? Why do you answer as you do?
  - ? Does this preclude the possibility of an individual or society "obtaining many riches" without it being a consequence of "the hand of providence smiling on them? Why do you answer as you do?

**Jacob 2.**<sup>17</sup>— just scripture

Think of your brethren like unto yourselves, and be familiar with all and free with your substance, that they may be rich like unto you.

**P**assage-specific questions to ponder

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1. Jacob speaks of others as “brethren.”
  - ? What does this suggest to you about the Lord’s expectations when it comes to how we treat those around us, specifically how we think of and treat others in terms of economic assistance?
  - ? Consider your response to your own family members who might be in need of economic assistance. How would you feel about and what would you do to assist them?
  - ? How do you feel about the Lord’s expectation that you will provide the same economic assistance to “strangers” that you provide to “family”?
  - ? How does this apply to the public policies you support in addition to your own private activities?
  - ? How does this relate to Jacob’s additional admonition that we be “familiar” with your economic resources?
2. Perhaps even more challenging, the Lord expects us to “think of” others “like unto yourselves.”
  - ? How do you feel about this expectation?
  - ? If you were in the midst of economic disruption and devastation, how would you want to be treated?
  - ? How is this expectation that we treat others as we would want to be treated consistent with what we see in Jesus’ behavior?
3. The Lord’s goal for our economic distribution is not simply the alleviation of worry and suffering among the vulnerable and poor. Rather, it is the much more comprehensive goal that “they may be rich *like unto you.*”
  - ? How do you feel about this larger goal?
  - ? How is it consistent with what you would hope for your own family members?
  - ? What are some of the justifications to both private and public resistance to such a divine imperative?

**Jacob 2.<sup>18-19</sup>**—just scripture

<sup>18</sup>But before ye seek for riches, seek ye for the kingdom of God. <sup>19</sup>And after ye have obtained a hope in Christ ye shall obtain riches, if ye seek them; and ye will seek them for the intent to do good—to clothe the naked, and to feed the hungry, and to liberate the captive, and administer relief to the sick and the afflicted.

**Q**uestionary

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1. Jacob provides 5 justifications for “seeking for riches.”
  - ? What are those four justifications?
  - ? What other “justifications” for seeking riches are often offered?
  - ? How do they fall short of justifying one’s search for riches?
2. Jacob says that with the proper motives one might “obtain riches” “*if ye seek them*”?
  - ? What does this “if ye seek them” suggest to you?
  - ? For what reason would one not “seek them”?
  - ? How do you feel about the fact that Jacob does not “encourage” individuals to “seek riches,” but only encourages them to consider their motivations for doing so?

## Mosiah 11.<sup>3-7</sup>— just scripture

<sup>3</sup>And he laid a tax of one fifth part of all they possessed, a fifth part of their gold and of their silver, and a fifth part of their ziff, and of their copper, and of their brass and their iron; and a fifth part of their fatlings; and also a fifth part of all their grain. <sup>4</sup>And all this did he take to support himself, and his wives and his concubines; and also his priests, and their wives and their concubines; thus he had changed the affairs of the kingdom. <sup>5</sup>For he put down all the priests that had been consecrated by his father, and consecrated new ones in their stead, such as were lifted up in the pride of their hearts. <sup>6</sup>Yea, and thus they were supported in their laziness, and in their idolatry, and in their whoredoms, by the taxes which king Noah had put upon his people; thus did the people labor exceedingly to support iniquity. <sup>7</sup>Yea, and they also became idolatrous, because they were deceived by the vain and flattering words of the king and priests; for they did speak flattering things unto them.

## Questionary

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Today's reading is the second of eight readings from the very important eleventh chapter of Mosiah. This chapter has much to teach us about the just society. It also, I believe, oddly enough provides interpretive clues as to the character of the Old Testament Solomon and his reign—something about which the Old Testament itself seems confused and torn.

1. King Noah, we are told “laid a tax of one fifth part of all they possessed.” I have on occasion heard this passage used to condemn the U.S. tax system. Consider Genesis 47.<sup>26</sup>.

“And Joseph made it a law over the land of Egypt unto this day, that Pharaoh should have the fifth part; except the land of the priests only, which became not Pharaoh's.

Joseph instituted the exact same “tax rate” as that of King Noah.

- ? Is the text of Genesis critical of Joseph for this policy? Are you?
- ? Why would the exact same tax rate elicit two very different reactions—Joseph's considered wise and just and Noah's considered unwise, unjust, and profligate.
- ? For what purposes did Noah use his tax revenues?
- ? How would you feel if the criticism of Noah's tax policies was due to the use to which Noah put his tax revenues, rather than the level of taxation?
- ? Do you suppose that Noah would have come under the same criticism if he had been using tax revenues to care for vulnerable portions of society—orphans, the aged, the poor, veterans, etc?

2. Noah “consecrated new” priests to replace those who served his Father. We should not think of the priests principally in “religious” terms. They were more “political staff” than “spiritual” guides and counselors. The “vain and flattering words” they spoke involved “political” ideals as much as “spiritual” ones—ideals on such things as taxations and the uses to which taxes were put, for example.

Among the differences between the new and old priests was that the new were “lifted up in the pride of their hearts.” This characterization is presented in the course of the discussion on taxes and the uses to which those taxes were put.

- ? What is the relationship between public officials' pride and the uses to which they put tax revenues?
  - ? How did the “idolatry” of the King and his royal officials—made possible through the self-aggrandizing use of tax revenues—contribute to the idolatry of the kingdom's citizenry?
  - ? What is the proper use of tax revenues, whatever their level?
  - ? Does current use of tax revenues contribute in any way to modern idolatry? If so, how and why?
- 
- ? How do you feel about government officials who allow their privileged associates to live off government tax revenues?



? How does this happen in today's society?

## Mosiah 11.<sup>16-19</sup>— just scripture

<sup>16</sup>\*The Lamanites began to come in upon his people, upon small numbers, and to slay them in their fields, and while they were tending their flocks. <sup>17</sup>And king Noah sent guards round about the land to keep them off; but he did not send a sufficient number, and the Lamanites came upon them and killed them, and drove many of their flocks out of the land; thus the Lamanites began to destroy them, and to exercise their hatred upon them.

<sup>18</sup>\*King Noah sent his armies against them, and they were driven back, or they drove them back for a time; therefore, they returned rejoicing in their spoil. <sup>19</sup>And now, because of this great victory they were lifted up in the pride of their hearts; they did boast in their own strength, saying that their fifty could stand against thousands of the Lamanites; and thus they did boast, and did delight in blood, and the shedding of the blood of their brethren, and this because of the wickedness of their king and priests.

## Q

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In verses 1-2, we found that the personal and public immoral life of the elite ruling class had a corrupting influence upon the population in general. In verses 3-7, we saw that the immoral and profligate—idolatrous—lifestyle of the ruling class was supported by tax revenues. The common people imitated the idolatry of the ruling class. In verses 8-11, we witnessed how tax revenues were not only used by the ruling elite for their own ends, but for building projects that were often nothing more than structures built for their own vanity. In verses 12-13, we were informed of additional building projects of an apparent military nature—that reflected government officials’ profligate and unfaithful ways. In 14-15, we witnessed the easy, relaxed, and luxurious lifestyle of the leadership. This luxurious lifestyle, as Paul warned Timothy concerning riches, caused them to “fall into temptation and a snare, and into many foolish and hurtful lusts... For the love of money is the root of all evil” (1 Timothy 6:9-10).

1. After discussing “domestic issues,” in today’s reading the text turns its attention to matters of “national security” during Noah’s reign. Several issues and evils arise in relation to national security.

? What issues and evils related to national security do you see?

2. You may find other national security issues and evils, but here are four that stand out to me.

“Lamanites began to come in upon [Noah’s] people, upon small numbers”

“Noah sent guards round about the land... but he did not send a sufficient number.”

“Because of [the Nephites’] great victory [they] boast in their own strength.”

“[The Nephites] did delight in blood, and the shedding of the blood of their brethren.”

- ? There is no doubt that the Lamanites were on the lookout for weakness in Nephite security measures. What do you think they saw in Nephite security measures that finally emboldened them to attack?
- ? What do you see as the cause of the initial laxness of security measures?
- ? How do you feel about the Nephite boast over their military victory?
- ? Have you seen such braggadocio in your own society’s response to war and isolated military victories?
- ? How do you feel about the “delight”—the increasing casualness and callousness—felt at the death of the enemy?
- ? Have you seen such inhumanity in your own society’s response to the death of enemies, including “collateral” deaths of war?
- ? As a member of society, how do you avoid adopting and condoning such evil attitudes so as to not be implicated in such evil?

**Mosiah 29.**<sup>17, 21-23</sup>— just scripture

<sup>17</sup>For behold, how much iniquity doth one wicked king cause to be committed, yea, and what great destruction!

<sup>21</sup>And behold, now I say unto you, ye cannot dethrone an iniquitous king save it be through much contention, and the shedding of much blood. <sup>22</sup>For behold, he has his friends in iniquity, and he keepeth his guards about him; and he teareth up the laws of those who have reigned in righteousness before him; and he trampleth under his feet the commandments of God; <sup>23</sup>And he enacteth laws, and sendeth them forth among his people, yea, laws after the manner of his own wickedness; and whosoever doth not obey his laws he causeth to be destroyed; and whosoever doth rebel against him he will send his armies against them to war, and if he can he will destroy them; and thus an unrighteous king doth pervert the ways of all righteousness.

**Q**uestionary

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1. We suggest that today's reading is sadly, but remarkably similar to recent and ongoing political events in the United States.
  - ? How do you feel about this assertion?
  - ? What similarities do you find between this description and the state of American politics?
  - ? How well does Donald Trump, his administration, and his supporters match the description of "an iniquitous king" and "his friends in iniquity"? Why do you answer as you do?
  - ? How has he "trampleth under his feet the commandments of God" in his private life?
  - ? How did he enact policies that advanced his own interests and the interests of his "friends in iniquity"?
  - ? How have his "friends in iniquity" revealed themselves?
  - ? How many people's reputations has he defamed to protect himself in his wickedness?
  - ? How has he attempted to destroy those who have attempted to hold him accountable for his crimes?

**Alma 1.**<sup>3</sup>— just scripture

“And thus, in their prosperous circumstances, they did not send away any who were naked, or that were hungry, or that were athirst, or that were sick, or that had not been nourished; and they did not set their hearts upon riches; therefore they were liberal to all, both old and young, both bond and free, both male and female, whether out of the church or in the church, having no respect to persons as to those who stood in need.

**Q**uestionary

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- ? What does it look like when individuals and societies are “liberal” in their assistance to vulnerable people?
- ? What are the signs and evidences that one has “set their hearts upon [their] riches”?
- ? How does one show “respect to persons as to those who [stand] in need”?

## **Alma 4.**<sup>6-9</sup>— just scripture

<sup>6</sup>And it came to pass in the eighth year of the reign of the judges, that the people of the church began to wax proud, because of their exceeding riches, and their fine silks, and their fine-twined linen, and because of their many flocks and herds, and their gold and their silver, and all manner of precious things, which they had obtained by their industry; and in all these things were they lifted up in the pride of their eyes, for they began to wear very costly apparel. <sup>7</sup>Now this was the cause of much affliction to Alma, yea, and to many of the people whom Alma had consecrated to be teachers, and priests, and elders over the church; yea, many of them were sorely grieved for the wickedness which they saw had begun to be among their people. <sup>8</sup>For they saw and beheld with great sorrow that the people of the church began to be lifted up in the pride of their eyes, and to set their hearts upon riches and upon the vain things of the world, that they began to be scornful, one towards another, and they began to persecute those that did not believe according to their own will and pleasure. <sup>9</sup>And thus, in this eighth year of the reign of the judges, there began to be great contentions among the people of the church; yea, there were envyings, and strife, and malice, and persecutions, and pride, even to exceed the pride of those who did not belong to the church of God.

## **Q**uestionary

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1. In verse six, the inspired writer informs us that members of the church of God began to sin in much the same ways that the world around them sinned.
  - ? What is the nature of that sin?
  - ? If you answered, “pride,” what was the cause and nature of the pride?
  - ? What is it about material wealth that it seems to inevitably cause “pride”?  
We read that members of the church were “lifted up in the pride of their eyes, for they began to wear very costly apparel.”
  - ? What does the conjunction, “for” tell you about pride and “costly apparel”?
  - ? What do you think and how do you feel when you read that “costly apparel” is a sign of inner sinfulness?
2. We learn that man of the church’s priests “were sorely grieved for the wickedness which they saw had begun to be among their people.”
  - ? What do you think and how do you feel about the pride that accompanies materialism being called “wickedness”?
  - ? What do you think and how do you feel when you consider that church leaders were “grieved” over the wickedness surrounding materialism?
  - ? One can justify wealth, as often happens, by saying that it is the attitude toward materialistic wealth rather than the wealth itself that is the problem. But, realistically, and historically speaking, how often does materialism not result in pride and wickedness?
  - ? If an individual or two is able, here and there, to avoid the wickedness of pride that flows from materialistic wealth, how often do entire societies resist the it?
  - ? What sorts of direction has God given societies to assist them avoid the wickedness and pride of materialism?
  - ? How well is our society doing?
  - ? How well are Christians doing?
3. As a result of the pride that flowed from materialistic wealth, church members “began to be scornful, one towards another, and they began to persecute those that did not believe according to their own will and pleasure.” We often think of this “scorn” and “persecution” in terms of doctrinal contention. However...
  - ? This scorn and persecution flowed from the materialist wealth. Do poorer people not contend over doctrine?
  - ? Since they most certainly do, what does this suggest about the nature of scorn and persecution that increases with the materialism?

- ? How might those who are using their materialistic wealth for purposes of self-gratification view and treat those who do not?
  - ? How might those who are using their materialistic wealth for purposes of self-gratification view and treat those who dare criticize their inappropriate use of materialistic resources?
  - ? In this context, then, what might the “persecution” look and sound like?
  - ? How are less advantaged populations of society “persecuted” as a result of their lack of resources?
4. The writer laments that the pride found in the church “exceed[ed] the pride of those who did not belong to the church of God.”
- ? How do you feel about this observation?
  - ? What might have been the doctrines and attitudes of church members that contributed to such a surprising turn of events?
  - ? Again we ask, how is the church doing today in comparison to the greater societal population?
- ? What is it about “riches” that produces “pride” so often and consistently among humans?
  - ? What is the real purpose of fashion or “very costly apparel”?
  - ? What active measures can you take to avoid the false pride of economic success, wealth, and fashion?

**Alma 4.**<sup>12-13</sup>— just scripture

Yea, he saw great inequality among the people, some lifting themselves up with their pride, despising others, turning their backs upon the needy and the naked and those who were hungry, and those who were athirst, and those who were sick and afflicted. Now this was a great cause for lamentations among the people, while others were abasing themselves, succoring those who stood in need of their succor, such as imparting their substance to the poor and the needy, feeding the hungry, and suffering all manner of afflictions, for Christ's sake, who should come according to the spirit of prophecy...

**Q**uestionary

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- ? If we consider things on the macro-historical level, how common is it for societal inequality NOT to result in the despising of and turning of the back upon the “needy,” “naked,” “hungry,” “thirsty,” and “afflicted”?
- ? How useful and even wise is it to consider the private exceptions to the rule when considering one's own wealth?

**Alma 31.**<sup>24-28</sup> — just scripture

<sup>24</sup>Now when Alma saw this his heart was grieved; for he saw that they were a wicked and a perverse people; yea, he saw that their hearts were set upon gold, and upon silver, and upon all manner of fine goods. <sup>25</sup>Yea, and he also saw that their hearts were lifted up unto great boasting, in their pride. <sup>26</sup>And he lifted up his voice to heaven, and cried, saying:

“O, how long, O Lord, wilt thou suffer that thy servants shall dwell here below in the flesh, to behold such gross wickedness among the children of men? <sup>27</sup>Behold, O God, they cry unto thee, and yet their hearts are swallowed up in their pride. Behold, O God, they cry unto thee with their mouths, while they are puffed up, even to greatness, with the vain things of the world. <sup>28</sup>Behold, O my God, their costly apparel, and their ringlets, and their bracelets, and their ornaments of gold, and all their precious things which they are ornamented with; and behold, their hearts are set upon them, and yet they cry unto thee and say—We thank thee, O God, for we are a chosen people unto thee, while others shall perish.”

**Q**uestionary

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1. Today's reading comes immediately after the report concerning what Alma witnessed in the Zoramite synagogues.  
? Take a moment to review the sort of worship service that Alma witnessed there (Al. 31.<sup>12-23</sup>). How would you characterize this worship?

2. Today's reading contains a portion of a prayer that Alma offered after witnessing Zoramite society and worship practices. After witnessing the society and its worship, he concluded that “they were a wicked and a perverse people.”

? What specific indicators does he offer in this portion of his prayer as evidence of Zoramite wickedness and perversity?

? What do you think and feel when you hear Alma identify materialism as wicked and perverse?

3. Alma seems to find Zoramite materialism and their prayerful claim of election as incongruous and hypocritical.

? What is incongruous about materialism and spiritual election?

It is very likely that the Zoramites explained the relationship between their wealth and election very differently, claiming, as “prosperity gospels usually do, that their wealth was in fact a sign of God's approval of them rather than a sign of wickedness and perversion.

? Have you witnessed such claims made by purveyors of “prosperity gospels”? How do you feel about them?

- ? What other passages of scripture comes to mind when you consider the linkage that Alma makes between materialism/ wealth and wickedness/ perversion?

- ? What do you do to combat heretical “prosperity gospels” that link wealth and election?



**Alma 31.**<sup>27-29</sup>— just scripture

<sup>27</sup>Behold, O God, they cry unto thee,  
and yet their hearts are swallowed up in their pride.  
Behold, O God, they cry unto thee with their mouths,  
while they are puffed up, even to greatness, with the vain things of the world.

<sup>28</sup>Behold, O my God, their costly apparel,  
and their ringlets, and their bracelets, and their ornaments of gold,  
and all their precious things which they are ornamented with;  
and behold, their hearts are set upon them,  
and yet they cry unto thee and say—

We thank thee, O God, for we are a chosen people unto thee,  
while others shall perish.

<sup>29</sup>Yea, and they say that thou hast made it known unto them that there shall be no Christ.

## Questionary

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Today's Read, Ponder, Pray passage is a portion of the prayer that Alma offered upon witnessing the arrogant prayer and apostate behavior of the Zoramites (Alma 31.<sup>26-35</sup>).

- ? First, based upon previous readings and your familiarity with the Zoramites, how would you characterize the Zoramite apostasy?
- 1. Verses 26 and 30-35 constitute Alma's request that he and his fellow ministers be comforted, strengthened, and blessed with success as they minister among the Zoramites. It is in verses 27-29, then, that Alma addresses Zoramite apostasy and behavior.
  - ? After rereading and considering verses 27-29, would you alter or add in any way your past characterizations of the Zoramite apostasy? If so, how?
  - ? How do you feel about Zoramite materialism being so central to Alma's thoughts and prayers concerning the Zoramite apostasy?
  - ? What is the relationship between extravagant materialism and an inflated and false sense of one's worth, exceptionalism, and superiority?

Consider these passages, all from the Book of Mormon

"...because some of you have obtained more abundantly than that of your brethren ye are lifted up in the pride of your hearts, and wear stiff necks and high heads because of the costliness of your apparel, and persecute your brethren because ye suppose that ye are better than they" (Jac. 2.<sup>13</sup>).

"And he began to be lifted up in the pride of his heart, and to wear very costly apparel..." (Al. 1.<sup>6</sup>).

"For those who did not belong to their church did indulge themselves in sorceries, and in idolatry or idleness, and in babblings, and in envyings and strife; wearing costly apparel; being lifted up in the pride of their own eyes..." (Al. 1.<sup>32</sup>).

"In the eighth year of the reign of the judges, the people of the church began to wax proud, because of their exceeding riches, and their fine silks, and their fine-twined linen, and because of their many flocks and herds, and their gold and their silver, and all manner of precious things, which they had obtained by their industry; and in all these things were they lifted up in the pride of their eyes, for they began to wear very costly apparel" (Al. 4.<sup>6</sup>).

"And now my beloved brethren, I say unto you, can ye withstand these sayings; yea, can ye lay aside these things, and trample the Holy One under your feet; yea, can ye be puffed up in

the pride of your hearts; yea, will ye still persist in the wearing of costly apparel and setting your hearts upon the vain things of the world, upon your riches?" (Al. 5.<sup>53</sup>).

"Yea, ye will lift him up, and ye will give unto him of your substance; ye will give unto him of your gold, and of your silver, and ye will clothe him with costly apparel; and because he speaketh flattering words unto you, and he saith that all is well, then ye will not find fault with him" (Hel. 13.<sup>28</sup>).

"And now, in this two hundred and first year there began to be among them those who were lifted up in pride, such as the wearing of costly apparel, and all manner of fine pearls, and of the fine things of the world" (3 Ne. 1.<sup>24</sup>).

"And I know that ye do walk in the pride of your hearts; and there are none save a few only who do not lift themselves up in the pride of their hearts, unto the wearing of very fine apparel, unto envying, and strifes, and malice, and persecutions, and all manner of iniquities; and your churches, yea, even every one, have become polluted because of the pride of your hearts" (Morm. 8.<sup>36</sup>).

- ? What is it about the materialistic wearing of "costly apparel" that makes it such a good barometer in gauging individual pride, societal pride, and religious apostasy?
  - ? How would you characterize the wearing of "costly apparel" and its accompanying materialism today? Prevalent? Rare? Accepted? View skeptically?
2. After describing Zoramite hyper-materialism and false sense of exceptionalism, Alma continues with "Yea, and they say that thou hast made it known unto them that there shall be no Christ."
- ? What is the import of Alma's "Yea"?
  - ? Is it to be read something like, "in addition," as if he was merely shifting gears and enumerating yet another part of Zoramite apostasy?

Or

- ? Should it be read something like, "yes," as if the materialism and false sense of exceptionalism is part and parcel with the denial of Jesus Christ?
- ? How is hyper-materialism and a false sense of exceptionalism a denial of Christ?
- ? As you consider the earthly ministry of Jesus, what role did materialism and a sense of exceptionalism play in his life?
- ? How did Jesus exhibit a sense of unity rather than separateness and superiority with those with whom he came into contact?
- ? What, do you suppose, would Alma say about your society's materialism and sense of exceptionalism if he were to visit today?
- ? What can you do to avoid the Zoramite errors?
- ? What can you do to influence your society so that it may recognize and avoid the Zoramite errors?

**Alma 34.**<sup>28-29</sup>— just scripture

And now behold, my beloved brethren, I say unto you, do not suppose that this is all; for after ye have done all these things, if ye turn away the needy, and the naked, and visit not the sick and afflicted, and impart of your substance, if ye have, to those who stand in need—I say unto you, if ye do not any of these things, behold, your prayer is vain, and availeth you nothing, and ye are as hypocrites who do deny the faith. Therefore, if ye do not remember to be charitable, ye are as dross, which the refiners do cast out, (it being of no worth) and is trodden under foot of men.

**Q**uestionary

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In today's reading, the eighth of 12 taken from Alma 34, Amulek addresses the poorer, humbler Zoramites after Alma's discourse delivered to the same audience (32.<sup>8</sup>-33.<sup>23</sup>). It is also a Just Scripture reading.

1. Amulek contends that even if we pray diligently and faithfully, our prayer is “vain” and “availeth” us “nothing” if we refuse to help the more vulnerable members of our society.
  - ? What is so important about caring for the vulnerable that, if left undone in one's life, even the most fervent prayer becomes a vanity that avails nothing?
  - ? How do you feel about this close relationship between prayer and assisting the vulnerable?
  - ? In light of this close relationship, how effective are your prayers likely to be?
2. Amulek goes further, contending that those who pray without assisting the vulnerable are “as hypocrites who do deny the faith” and that they are “as dross... of no worth” but to be “trodden under foot.”
  - ? How do you feel about this? Does it seem “reasonable” or “excessively harsh and exacting?”

**Alma 45.**<sup>7-10</sup>— just scripture

And there were many in the church who believed in the flattering words of Amalickiah, therefore they dissented even from the church; and thus were the affairs of the people of Nephi exceedingly precarious and dangerous. . . . Thus we see how quick the children of men do forget the Lord their God, yea, how quick to do iniquity, and to be led away by the evil one. Yea, and we also see the great wickedness one very wicked man can cause to take place among the children of men. Yea, we see that Amalickiah, because he was a man of cunning device and a man of many flattering words, that he led away the hearts of many people to do wickedly; yea, and to seek . . . to destroy the foundation of liberty which God had granted unto them, or which blessing God had sent upon the face of the land for the righteous' sake.

**Q**uestionary

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- ? How vulnerable to the “flattering words” and “cunning devices” of “one very wicked man,” the American Caligula, has the American Church shown itself to be?
- ? How are our “liberties” under assault and in danger—take the upcoming 2020 elections as but one example—at the evil cunning of this “one very wicked man”?
- ? What evils do his followers fall into through his flattery and cunning?

**Alma 45.**<sup>23</sup>— just scripture

But they grew proud, being lifted up in their hearts, because of their exceedingly great a riches; therefore they grew rich in their own eyes....

**Q**uestionary

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1. This text reports that wealthy individuals were “lifted up in their hearts”?
  - ? What does this lifting up in the heart mean to you?
  - ? What behaviors follow this inflated and exaggerated self of self-worth?
2. The text also reports that wealthy individuals “grew rich in their own eyes”?
  - ? What do you understand when you read of the wealthy “growing rich in their own eyes”?
  - ? What is it about money, possessions, and riches that nearly inevitably causes an inflated and exaggerated sense of self-worth and the demeaning of others?
  - ? How do you feel about connecting the demeaning of others with a high and inflated sense of self-worth?
  - ? What is it about money, possessions, and riches that human beings find not only physically but psychologically satisfying?
3. Consider the following passage.

“Whose adorning let it not be that outward adorning of plaiting the hair, and of wearing of gold, or of putting on of apparel; but let it be the hidden man of the heart, in that which is not corruptible, even the ornament of a meek and quiet spirit, which is in the sight of God of great price” (1 Peter 3.<sup>3-4</sup>).

  - ? How does this passage relate to today’s reading?
  - ? How does a true, God-centered sense of self-worth differ from the inflated and exaggerated sense of self-worth that comes from materialistic success?
  - ? How does a true, God-centered sense of self-worth squash the inclination of materialistic based self-worth to demean and devalue others?

**Alma 46.**<sup>4-7</sup>— just scripture

“And Amalickiah was desirous to be a king; and those people who were wroth were also desirous that he should be their king; and they were the greater part of them the lower judges of the land, and they were seeking for power. And they had been led by the flatteries of Amalickiah, that if they would support him and establish him to be their king that he would make them rulers over the people. Thus they were led away by Amalickiah to dissensions, notwithstanding the preaching of Helaman and his brethren, yea, notwithstanding their exceedingly great care over the church, for they were high priests over the church. And there were many in the church who believed in the flattering words of Amalickiah, therefore they dissented even from the church; and thus were the affairs of the people of Nephi exceedingly precarious and dangerous.

**Q**uestionary

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- ? When the author speaks of “lower Judges” is he talking about “lower judicial judges” or “lower government officials”?
- ? How is America’s Caligula like Amalickiah?
- ? How do you feel and what do you think when you read that “many in the church” were fooled by Amalickiah’s “flattery”?
- ? What is meant by “flattery”?

**Alma 50.**<sup>21</sup>— just scripture

And we see that these promises have been verified to the people of Nephi; for it has been their quarrelings and their contentions, yea, their murderings, and their plunderings, their idolatry, their whoredoms, and their abominations, which were among themselves, which a brought upon them their wars and their destructions.

### **Q**uestionary

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- ? This statement comes in the midst of Lamanite aggression and attacks against the Nephites. How is blaming the Nephites for the success of Lamanite aggression NOT blaming the victim?

**Alma 53.**<sup>9</sup>— just scripture

And thus because of iniquity amongst themselves, yea, because of dissensions and intrigue among themselves they were placed in the most dangerous circumstances.

**Q**uestionary

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1. Consider the following passages.

“...Surely God shall not suffer that we, who are despised because we take upon us the name of Christ, shall be trodden down and destroyed, until we bring it upon us by our own transgressions” (Alma 46.<sup>18</sup>).

“... it has been their quarrelings and their contentions, yea, their murderings, and their plunderings, their idolatry, their whoredoms, and their abominations, which were among themselves, which brought upon them their wars and their destructions” (Alma 50.<sup>21</sup>).

“... it was his first care to put an end to such contentions and dissensions among the people; for behold, this had been hitherto a cause of all their destruction.... (Alma 51.<sup>16</sup>).

“For were it not for the wickedness which first commenced at our head, we could have withstood our enemies that they could have gained no power over us” (Alma 60.<sup>15</sup>).

“Now this great loss of the Nephites, and the great slaughter which was among them, would not have happened had it not been for their wickedness and their abomination which was among them; yea, and it was among those also who professed to belong to the church of God. And it was because of the pride of their hearts, because of their exceeding riches, yea, it was because of their oppression to the poor, withholding their food from the hungry, withholding their clothing from the naked, and smiting their humble brethren upon the cheek, making a mock of that which was sacred, denying the spirit of prophecy and of revelation, murdering, plundering, lying, stealing, committing adultery, rising up in great contentions.... And because of this their great wickedness, and their boastings in their own strength, they were left in their own strength; therefore they did not prosper, but were afflicted and smitten...” (Helaman 4.<sup>11-13</sup>).

- ? How do these passages relate to today’s just scripture?
- ? How applicable to our day are these passages and their unified theme?
- ? To the extent that this can be applied to our day, what can we do as individual citizens to seek remedy for these societal dangers?
- ? How do you feel about the text’s belief that it is internal dissensions and evils as much as hostilities with the enemy and the evils that exist in them that are responsible for much of a society’s loss of national security?
- ? How is this not “blaming the ‘victim’”?



**helaman 4.**<sup>22-23</sup>— just scripture

And that they had altered and trampled under their feet the laws of Mosiah, or that which the Lord commanded him to give unto the people; and they saw that their laws had become corrupted, and that they had become a wicked people, insomuch that they were wicked even like unto the Lamanites. And because of their iniquity the church had begun to dwindle; and they began to disbelieve in the spirit of prophecy and in the spirit of revelation; and the judgments of God did stare them in the face.

**Q**uestionary

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- ? How do corrupt political leaders and the corrupt laws they pass corrupt individual citizens?
- ? What does it tell you about the members of the Church that as their society and government became ever more corrupted, they themselves partook of that corruption?
- ? How do members of God's Church keep sufficient distance between themselves and the national government so that they do not become enmeshed in the evils and collapse of that government?

## **helaman 5.**<sup>2-3</sup>— just scripture

For as their laws and their governments were established by the voice of the people, and they who chose evil were more numerous than they who chose good, therefore they were ripening for destruction, for the laws had become corrupted. Yea, and this was not all; they were a stiffnecked people, insomuch that they could not be governed by the law nor justice, save it were to their destruction.

### **Q**uestionary

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- ? What is Mormon telling us about the Nephites when he asserts that if the people were governed and tried in a just manner, it would produce their “destruction”?
- ? To what degree is this observation appropriate to the current legislative and judicial circumstances in the U.S.?
- ? How would the current occupant of the American White House, a.k.a., Caligula, fair if he were to be held to account today by God’s just laws?

## helaman 7.<sup>4-6</sup>— just scripture

“And seeing the people in a state of such awful wickedness, and those Gadianton robbers filling the judgment-seats—having usurped the power and authority of the land; laying aside the commandments of God, and not in the least aright before him; doing no justice unto the children of men; condemning the righteous because of their righteousness; letting the guilty and the wicked go unpunished because of their money; and moreover to be held in office at the head of government, to rule and do according to their wills, that they might get gain and glory of the world, and, moreover, that they might the more easily commit adultery, and steal, and kill, and do according to their own wills—now this great iniquity had come upon the Nephites, in the space of not many years...”

## Questionary

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- ? Ecclesiastes proclaims that “there is no new thing under the sun” (1.<sup>9</sup>). In light of Caligula’s innumerable evils, including the most recent revelations of Caligula’s treasonous behavior visa via Ukraine, how in the world can this passage not make one think of him and lead one to equate him and his co-conspirators with the infamous and society destroying Gadianton Robbers?
- ? This passage keeps coming to mind as I contemplate Caligula’s recent commutations of unquestionable and proven criminals’ sentences while, at the same time, he sought revenge on innocent, patriotic Americas who believed in and were committed to their oaths to country. How, in God’s name, is Caligula not a modern version of an ancient Gadianton robber?

## **helaman 12.**<sup>2-3</sup>— just scripture

Yea, and we may see at the very time when he doth prosper his people, yea, in the increase of their fields, their flocks and their herds, and in gold, and in silver, and in all manner of precious things of every kind and art; sparing their lives, and delivering them out of the hands of their enemies; softening the hearts of their enemies that they should not declare wars against them; yea, and in fine, doing all things for the welfare and happiness of his people; yea, then is the time that they do harden their hearts, and do forget the Lord their God, and do trample under their feet the Holy One—yea, and this because of their ease, and their exceedingly great prosperity. And thus we see that except the Lord doth chasten his people with many afflictions, yea, except he doth visit them with death and with terror, and with famine and with all manner of pestilence, they will not remember him.

## **Q**uestionary

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- ? How familiar and applicable to today is the assertion made in today's passage that humans are naturally inclined to forget God and become focused on temporal wealth?
- ? What do you do to combat this natural inclination?
- ? What do you do to combat this inclination in your society?

## Helaman 13.<sup>17-20</sup>— just scripture

<sup>17</sup>And behold, a curse shall come upon the land, saith the Lord of Hosts, because of the peoples' sake who are upon the land, yea, because of their wickedness and their abominations.<sup>18</sup>And it shall come to pass, saith the Lord of Hosts, yea, our great and true God, that whoso shall hide up treasures in the earth shall find them again no more, because of the great curse of the land, save he be a righteous man and shall hide it up unto the Lord. <sup>19</sup>For I will, saith the Lord, that they shall hide up their treasures unto me; and cursed be they who hide not up their treasures unto me; for none hideth up their treasures unto me save it be the righteous; and he that hideth not up his treasures unto me, cursed is he, and also the treasure, and none shall redeem it because of the curse of the land. <sup>20</sup>And the day shall come that they shall hide up their treasures, because they have set their hearts upon riches; and because they have set their hearts upon their riches, and will hide up their treasures when they shall flee before their enemies; because they will not hide them up unto me, cursed be they and also their treasures; and in that day shall they be smitten, saith the Lord.

## Questionary

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Today's reading is the fifth of eleven readings from Helaman 13.

1. Verse 17 is an important transitional verse. In the previous reading, Samuel spoke of Nephite "wickedness and abominations" without specificity as to the nature of the wickedness or abomination. In verse 17, Samuel speaks once more, and for the final time, of Nephite "wickedness and abominations." For the first time, Samuel mentions a "curse," which he will mention eight more times in the following six verses. Having not mentioned a "curse" before, it is clear that with verse 17 he shifts his focus.

In addition to the threat of a curse, repeated eight times in the six verses following verse 17, Samuel speaks of "treasure" or "treasures" eight times in the same span. In addition, he speaks of "riches" five times in the same verses. The threatened curse is aimed at the Nephite economy.

On the various pages of this site, we have spoken often of the "law of restoration." To put it briefly, this law stipulates that "rewards," whether positive or negative, are commensurate with actions, either good or bad. If someone is unmerciful, they will be treated unmercifully. If someone is threatening toward others, they will be threatened. There are times when a text does not stipulate the specific nature of the wickedness but will stipulate the punishment. The punishment tells us all we need to know about the sin, for the punishment is appropriate to and commensurate with the crime.

- ? So, Samuel had spoken initially of "wickedness and abomination" without specificity as to the nature of the wickedness. Now, Samuel speaks of an economic curse with great specificity. Taking the law of restoration into account, what does this suggest concerning the nature of Nephite "wickedness and abomination?"
- ? Can you see that the Nephite "wickedness and abomination" involved "treasures," "riches," or economic principles and practices?
2. In verse 8 and 12, Samuel accused the Nephites of having "hard hearts."
  - ? What does Samuel have to say in today's reading about Nephite hearts?
  - ? Again, what does this movement from generality to specificity tell you about the nature of Nephite sin?
  - ? What, do you think, does it mean to "hide up treasures" unto the Lord?
  - ? How would you feel and how would you answer if we rephrased the previous question as follows: "What does it mean to dedicate economic efforts and rewards to God?"
  - ? What is God likely to do with them (Not that he needs us to supply them)?
3. The opposite of "hiding up treasures unto the Lord" seems to be "setting the heart upon riches."
  - ? What does this setting of the heart up riches look like?

- ? On which side of the scale are you?
- ? On which side of the scale is our society?
- ? What would an economic “curse” look like in today’s world?
- ? Have we experienced such curses?
- ? Based upon our economic policies and the uses to which we put our economic gains, should we expect a societal economic curse?
  
- ? How does “punishment” or, better “consequence” inform one concerning the nature of the sin?  
How do consequence and sin relate to each other?
- ? What does it mean, do you think, to “hide up treasures unto the Lord”?
- ? What are the indications that one has “set their hearts upon their riches”?

## Helaman 13.<sup>32-37</sup>— just scripture

<sup>32</sup>And in the days of your poverty ye shall cry unto the Lord; and in vain shall ye cry, for your desolation is already come upon you, and your destruction is made sure; and then shall ye weep and howl in that day, saith the Lord of Hosts. And then shall ye lament, and say:

<sup>33</sup>O that I had repented, and had not killed the prophets, and stoned them, and cast them out. Yea, in that day ye shall say: O that we had remembered the Lord our God in the day that he gave us our riches, and then they would not have become slippery that we should lose them; for behold, our riches are gone from us. <sup>34</sup>Behold, we lay a tool here and on the morrow it is gone; and behold, our swords are taken from us in the day we have sought them for battle. <sup>35</sup>Yea, we have hid up our treasures and they have slipped away from us, because of the curse of the land. <sup>36</sup>O that we had repented in the day that the word of the Lord came unto us; for behold the land is cursed, and all things are become slippery, and we cannot hold them. <sup>37</sup>Behold, we are surrounded by demons, yea, we are encircled about by the angels of him who hath sought to destroy our souls. Behold, our iniquities are great. O Lord, canst thou not turn away thine anger from us? And this shall be your language in those days.

## Questionary

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1. Today's reading, the 10<sup>th</sup> in a 11 part series on Helaman 13, contains a remarkable lament—a lament that Samuel prophecies will be offered when the curses he has pronounced upon the Nephite nation (verses 17-23) come to fruition.  
? What emotional affect does this lament have upon you?
2. In cursing the nation, with its “treasures” and “riches,” Samuel did not specify, exactly, the nature of the curse though, of course, we assumed the nation would experience a loss of the “treasures” and “riches” that were its highest priority. In placing the nation's future lament on the lips of its citizens, however, Samuel does specify what would happen to the economic gains that meant so much to the nation.  
? What words does Samuel use to indicate the fate of the nation's economic well-being?  
? What thoughts and feelings accompany each of their wealth's fates?

Slippery (slip away)

Lost

Gone

Taken

3. The lamentation over the loss of the nation's riches is juxtaposed with the lament over their rejection and persecution of the prophets.  
? How does this help you understand the nature of the prophetic message that the nation rejected?  
? Why were the prophets so intent on delivering an economically based message?
4. Consider each of the following laments concerning the collapse of society that are found in Revelation 18.

“Babylon the great is fallen, is fallen, and is become the habitation of devils, and the hold of every foul spirit, and a cage of every unclean and hateful bird. For all nations have drunk of the wine of the wrath of her fornication, and the kings of the earth have committed fornication with her, and the merchants of the earth are waxed rich through the abundance of her delicacies” (verses 2-3).

“And the merchants of the earth shall weep and mourn over her; for no man buyeth their merchandise any more: the merchandise of gold, and silver, and precious stones, and of pearls, and fine linen, and purple, and silk, and scarlet, and all thyine wood, and all manner vessels of ivory, and all manner vessels of most precious wood, and of brass, and iron, and marble, and

cinnamon, and odours, and ointments, and frankincense, and wine, and oil, and fine flour, and wheat, and beasts, and sheep, and horses, and chariots, and slaves, and souls of men. And the fruits that thy soul lusted after are departed from thee, and all things which were dainty and goodly are departed from thee, and thou shalt find them no more at all. The merchants of these things, which were made rich by her, shall stand afar off for the fear of her torment, weeping and wailing, And saying,

‘Alas, alas, that great city, that was clothed in fine linen, and purple, and scarlet, and decked with gold, and precious stones, and pearls! For in one hour so great riches is come to nought’” (verses 11-17).

“And they [traders] cast dust on their heads, and cried, weeping and wailing, saying, ‘Alas, alas, that great city, wherein were made rich all that had ships in the sea by reason of her costliness! for in one hour is she made desolate. Rejoice over her, thou heaven, and ye holy apostles and prophets; for God hath avenged you on her’” (verses 19-20).

“Thus with violence shall that great city Babylon be thrown down, and shall be found no more at all. And the voice of harpers, and musicians, and of pipers, and trumpeters, shall be heard no more at all in thee; and no craftsman, of whatsoever craft he be, shall be found any more in thee; and the sound of a millstone shall be heard no more at all in thee; And the light of a candle shall shine no more at all in thee; and the voice of the bridegroom and of the bride shall be heard no more at all in thee: for thy merchants were the great men of the earth; for by thy sorceries were all nations deceived. And in her was found the blood of prophets, and of saints, and of all that were slain upon the earth” (verses 21-24).

- ? What “echoes” or similarities in language, mood, and meaning do you see between these laments from Revelation and that found in today’s reading from Helaman 13?
- ? What is the significance of the heavy emphasis on “economy” in both Helaman 13 and Revelation 18?
- ? Obviously, both ancient Nephite and latter-day societies have similar attitudes toward economic issues, and thus similar destructive outcomes. Where does our society stand today in relation to economic attitudes and the potential destructive outcomes?
- ? What is it about immoral economic attitudes and practices that is such a sure predictor of societal outcomes and such a sure indicator of looming collapse and destruction?



### 3 Nephi 6.<sup>10-12, 14</sup>— just scripture

<sup>10</sup>In the twenty and ninth year there began to be some disputings among the people; and some were lifted up unto pride and boastings because of their exceedingly great riches, yea, even unto great persecutions; <sup>11</sup>for there were many merchants in the land, and also many lawyers, and many officers. <sup>12</sup>And the people began to be distinguished by ranks, according to their riches and their chances for learning; yea, some were ignorant because of their poverty, and others did receive great learning because of their riches.... <sup>14</sup>And thus there became a great inequality in all the land, insomuch that the church began to be broken up...

### Questionary

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1. In verse 10, the inspired editor/writer, Mormon, writes of “pride and boastings” that led to “disputings” and “persecutions” among the Nephites. All these evils he attributes to “their exceedingly great riches.”
  - ? To whom does the pronoun, “their” refer? The entire culture in general or specific segments of the population?
2. We often get into the habit of reading scripture verses as if they are self-contained units with complete ideas nestled in them. However, we should note that verses 10-11 are one sentence and must be read together to extrapolate an entire message. Note, then, that after mentioning the “pride and boasting,” the “disputings,” and the “persecutions in verse 10, Mormon continues his sentence in verse 11 with “for.”
  - ? What does this “for” suggest to you?
  - ? Reread verses 10-11, replacing Mormon’s “for” with “because.” Does this alter your reading of these verses in any way? If so, how?
  - ? What do you think and how do you feel when you consider Mormon’s message: “There was great “pride and boasting” and “disputings,” and “persecutions” because there were many “merchants,” “lawyers,” and “officers”?”
  - ? Why, do you think, does the author link social “disputings” and “persecutions” with social elites?
3. Verse 12 discusses the creation and perpetuation of extreme economic and social inequality.
  - ? How do social elites create and perpetuate extreme economic and cultural inequality?
4. The author criticizes a culture in which educational opportunities are determined by the economic resources available to the individual.
  - ? How do you feel about this observation?
  - ? What would this author say after observing our current educational opportunities?
  - ? How do you feel about people being defined and divided according to their “riches and their chances for learning”? How does God define and divide individuals?
  - ? What do you think and how do you feel when you see that the author lays no blame on the poor or ignorant for their poverty or ignorance?
5. Verse 14 lays the weakening of God’s Church squarely on the shoulders of inequality.
  - ? How does economic and cultural inequalities contribute to the weakening of spirituality?
  - ? How does the following verse enhance your understanding and appreciation of today’s reading?

“Nevertheless, in your temporal things you shall be equal, and this not grudgingly, otherwise the abundance of the manifestations of the Spirit shall be withheld” (DC 70.14).
  - ? All in all, how similar or dissimilar do you feel American society is to that of Nephite society as Mormon describes it?
  - ? Who is speaking of the evils of inequality in today’s society? Who is silent about them? What does this suggest about the “inspiration” of the various social commentators, public officials, preachers, prophets, etc.?

- ? What is the relationship between the “disputings” and “persecutions” and there being many “social elites” (businessmen, judicial personnel, and government officials) who helped create and perpetuate an extreme economic and cultural inequality?

### 3 Nephi 27.<sup>30-32</sup>

<sup>30</sup>And now, behold, my joy is great, even unto fulness, because of you, and also this generation; yea, and even the Father rejoiceth, and also all the holy angels, because of you and this generation; for none of them are lost. <sup>31</sup>Behold, I would that ye should understand; for I mean them who are now alive of this generation; and none of them are lost; and in them I have fulness of joy.

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

### Questionary

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1. In this passage, Jesus informs his disciples that they and those who have accepted him have brought him great joy, “even unto fulness.” In addition, the Father and “all the holy angels” rejoice because of them.
  - ? How does this make you feel when you read it?
  - ? To what degree could it be said of you that you bring joy and rejoicing to Father, Son, and angels? Why do you answer as you do?
2. Jesus follows this up with the far less happy news that “the fourth generation from this generation,” far from bringing him joy and rejoicing, causes him sorrow.
  - ? Why does he sorrow over them?
  - ? What specific sin is at the heart of their rebellion and his sorrow for them?
  - ? What is the significance of the fact that Jesus focuses on the materialism of the fourth generation as the source of their rebellion and his sorrow?
  - ? How do you feel about Jesus’ emphasis on materialism rather than other sins that are so often thought of and mentioned as more serious?
3. Jesus suggests that in their sinful materialism, the fourth generation is following the example of “the son of perdition.”
  - ? To whom is Jesus referring?
  - ? What were the circumstances of his materialism?

Consider the following passage concerning Cain, or “the son of perdition.”

<sup>29</sup>And Satan said unto Cain: “Swear unto me by thy throat, and if thou tell it thou shalt die; and swear thy brethren by their heads, and by the living God, that they tell it not; for if they tell it, they shall surely die; and this that thy father may not know it; and this day I will deliver thy brother Abel into thine hands.”

<sup>30</sup>And Satan sware unto Cain that he would do according to his commands. And all these things were done in secret. <sup>31</sup>And Cain said: “Truly I am Mahan, the master of this great secret, that I may murder and get gain.” Wherefore Cain was called Master Mahan, and he gloried in his wickedness.

<sup>32</sup>And Cain went into the field, and Cain talked with Abel, his brother. And it came to pass that while they were in the field, Cain rose up against Abel, his brother, and slew him. <sup>33</sup>And Cain gloried in that which he had done, saying: “I am free; surely the flocks of my brother falleth into my hands.”

<sup>34</sup>And the Lord said unto Cain: “Where is Abel, thy brother?”  
And he said: “I know not. Am I my brother’s keeper?”

“...And Cain said unto the Lord: “Satan tempted me because of my brother’s flocks. And I was wroth also; for his offering thou didst accept and not mine...” (Moses 5.<sup>29-34, 38</sup>).

- ? What role did materialism play in Cain’s rebellion against God and his becoming “the son of perdition”?

- ? How do you feel about materialism being so intimately tied to “perdition”?
- ? What is it about materialism that makes it so intimately tied to “perdition”?
- ? Given the present state of materialism in the world today, many are playing with the fire of perdition. How do you feel about this observation?
- ? Given your present materialism, how close to the edge of perdition are you walking? Why do you answer as you do and how sure of your answer are you?
- ? Are changes in attitude and behavior in order? If so, what?

## 4 Nephi 1.<sup>2-3</sup>—just scripture

\*In the thirty and sixth year, the people were all converted unto the Lord, upon all the face of the land, both Nephites and Lamanites, and there were no contentions and disputations among them, and every man did deal justly one with another. And they had all things common among them; therefore there were not rich and poor, bond and free, but they were all made free, and partakers of the heavenly gift.

### Questionary

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1. This passage speaks of the lack of contention and disputation, of justice, of economic equality, and of the absence of either rich or poor.
  - ? What is the relationship between these elements of a just society?
  - ? What is the relationship between “contentions and disputations” and economic inequality?
  - ? How does economic inequality contribute to “contentions and disputations”?
  - ? What types of “contentions and disputations” do we see due to the extreme inequality found in American society?
2. The passage says that because of these societal conditions—the lack of contention and disputation, justice, economic equality, and the absence of either rich or poor—all partook freely “of the heavenly gift.”
  - ? What, do you think, is the “heavenly gift” that everyone so universally enjoyed?

Consider the following passage.

“Nevertheless, in your temporal things you shall be equal, and this not grudgingly, otherwise the abundance of the manifestations of the Spirit shall be withheld” (DC 70.<sup>14</sup>).

- ? How does this passage relate to the observations made in today’s reading?
  - ? What do you think and feel when you consider that “the heavenly gift” mentioned in today’s reading is related to and perhaps the same as experiencing “the abundance of the manifestations of the spirit”?
  - ? What do you think and feel when you contemplate that one’s access to the Spirit and its greatest gifts are in part contingent on economic conditions, especially the presence or absence of economic equality?
  - ? Given our current level of economic inequality found in our society, what is the likelihood that our citizenry, Christian or not, is partaking of “the heavenly gift” or “the abundance of the manifestations of the Spirit”?
3. Before mentioning the lack of contention and disputation, of justice, of economic equality, and of the absence of either rich or poor, the passage reports that “the people were all converted unto the Lord.”
    - ? How does an individual’s conversion to the Lord inspire and move them to act so as to eliminate contention, disputation, injustice, economic inequality, and the existence of rich or poor? Why do you answer as you do?
    - ? Given the relationship between true spiritual conversion and the desire to work for peace, justice, and economic equality, can one really think of themselves as “converted” if they do not desire advocate for, and work toward peace, justice, and economic equality?
    - ? Given this relationship, what is the nature and level of your conversion? Why do you answer as you do?
  4. There was not only an absence of “poor,” there was also an absence of “rich.”
    - ? What do you make of this observation?
    - ? How do you feel about there being no “rich”?

I have often listened, in dismay, as individuals debated about the meaning of “equality” when

discussing economic inequality—a discussion that always suggests to me that many are not comfortable with economic equality for fear that somehow, they may be shortchanged and someone else overly compensated. O.K., whatever. But there can be no doubt that under any definition our society is currently grossly unequal in economic matters and thus unconverted, devoid of the full benefits of the Holy Spirit, as today's reading suggests, and engrossed in sin: "It is not given that one man should possess that which is above another, wherefore the world lieth in sin" (DC 49.<sup>20</sup>).

? How do you respond to this assertion?

## 4 Nephi 1.<sup>24-26</sup>— just scripture

<sup>24</sup>And now, in this two hundred and first year there began to be among them those who were lifted up in pride, such as the wearing of costly apparel, and all manner of fine pearls, and of the fine things of the world. <sup>25</sup>And from that time forth they did have their goods and their substance no more common among them. <sup>26</sup>And they began to be divided into classes; and they began to build up churches unto themselves to get gain, and began to deny the true church of Christ.

### Questionary

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1. The inspired writer of scripture lists several indicators of apostacy and sin that crept into Nephite society after 200 years of remarkable righteousness.
    - ? What indicators of apostacy and sin do you find?
  2. The reader is welcome to number differently than I, but I find 5 indicators of apostacy and sin that crept into Nephite society.
    - They “were lifted up in pride, such as the 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.”
    - “They began to be divided into classes”
    - “They began to build up churches unto themselves to get gain.”
    - They “began to deny the true church of Christ.”
- ? How do you feel about these indicators of sin and apostacy? Surprised by them? Expect others? Surprised by any absences?
- ? After reviewing John the Baptist’s indicators of true repentance for various classes of people, consider the connection between his insights into repentance and those found here concerning sin and apostacy.
- “And the people asked him, saying, ‘What shall we do then?’  
He answereth and saith unto them, ‘He that hath two coats, let him impart to him that hath none; and he that hath meat, let him do likewise.’  
Then came also publicans to be baptized, and said unto him, ‘Master, what shall we do?’  
And he said unto them, ‘Exact no more than that which is appointed you.’  
And the soldiers likewise demanded of him, saying, ‘And what shall we do?’  
And he said unto them, ‘Do violence to no man, neither accuse any falsely; and be content with your wages’” (Luke 3.<sup>10-14</sup>).
- ? How do you feel about the signs of repentance, sin and apostacy being found in individual and societal attitudes and the uses of material resources?
- ? Why did not I make “lifted up in pride” and “wearing of costly apparel...” two separate indicators?
- ? How are our choices in “fashion” a reflection of our pride or humility?
- ? What is it about economic inequality that it becomes a good predictor of the internal moral character of the individual and society?
- ? What does it mean to “build up churches... to get gain”?
- ? How do we built up and twist doctrine to justify our natural drive to “get gain”?
- ? How does the perverted doctrine that “gain is righteousness” (see 1 Timothy 6.<sup>5</sup>) or “gain is indicative of right behavior” a “denial” of “the true church of Christ”?
- ? As you consider the inspired writers commentary on the state of sin and apostacy that was found in Nephite society, how do you suppose he would judge your society?
- ? What individual adjustments could you make in your life to avoid being spoken of in the same manner as Mormon speaks of Nephites?
- ? What could you do and encourage in relation to public policy in your society to try to assist it

in not being spoken of as Mormon speaks of Nephite society?



**Mormon 8.**<sup>35-37</sup>— just scripture

Behold, I speak unto you as if ye were present, and yet ye are not. But behold, Jesus Christ hath shown you unto me, and I know your doing. And I know that ye do walk in the pride of your hearts; and there are none save a few only who do not lift themselves up in the pride of their hearts, unto the wearing of very fine apparel, unto envying, and strifes, and malice, and persecutions, and all manner of iniquities; and your churches, yea, even every one, have become polluted because of the pride of your hearts. For behold, ye do love money, and your substance, and your fine apparel, and the adorning of your churches, more than ye love the poor and the needy, the sick and the afflicted.

**Q**uestionary

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It is hard to imagine Moroni being any more accurate about our present evil age than he is here. Note that, once again, it is society's materialism and its accompanying objectification and denial of the poor upon which God focuses his criticism.

- ? What specific modern-day societal attitudes, policies, and behaviors match Moroni's description?
- ? To what examples would you point to confirm Moroni's accusation that "churches" "love money, and your substance, and your fine apparel, and the adorning of your churches, more than ye love the poor and the needy, the sick and the afflicted" (do not limit yourself only to what they actively do or don't do institutionally, but to political choices and associations that they make as well)?

**Mormon 8.**<sup>38-40</sup>— just scripture

O ye pollutions, ye hypocrites, ye teachers, who sell yourselves for that which will canker, why have ye polluted the holy church of God? Why are ye ashamed to take upon you the name of Christ? Why do ye not think that greater is the value of an endless happiness than that misery which never dies—because of the praise of the world? Why do ye adorn yourselves with that which hath no life, and yet suffer the hungry, and the needy, and the naked, and the sick and the afflicted to pass by you, and notice them not? Yea, why do ye build up your secret abominations to get gain, and cause that widows should mourn before the Lord, and also orphans to mourn before the Lord, and also the blood of their fathers and their husbands to cry unto the Lord from the ground, for vengeance upon your heads?

**Q**uestionary

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1. After informing us that “Jesus Christ hath shown you unto me” (8.<sup>39</sup>), Moroni ask, “Why have ye polluted the holy church of God?”
  - ? To whom is Moroni speaking?
  - ? To what “holy church” is Moroni referring?
2. Moroni sees that latter-day American Christianity values “the praise of the world” over “the value of an endless happiness.”
  - ? How does latter-day American Christianity seek “the praise of the world”?
3. Moroni accuses members of latter-day American Christianity of letting the “hungry,” “needy,” “naked,” “sick,” and “afflicted” “pass by you” and of “notic[ing] them not.”
  - ? How do we ignore and refuse to help these vulnerable populations?
  - ? How do we let the “sick” “pass by” us and “notice them not”?
  - ? How does this apply to the lack of affordable health care for so many?
  - ? How does this language suggest a more hardened attitude toward the vulnerable than a simple statement that they refused to help them might suggest?
4. Moroni calls latter-day American Christianity, “Pollutions.”
  - ? How do you feel about this neglect of the vulnerable being labeled as a “pollution” of “the holy church of God”?
  - ? How applicable is Moroni’s criticism to American Christianity today?