

CHAPTER 52

Ether 11–15

Introduction

The book of Ether's account of the tragic destruction of a once-great nation helps us see the inevitable consequences of rejecting the prophets and the devastating results of unrestrained sin. In contrast, we also read some profound instruction on faith in Jesus Christ. The combined teachings of the prophets Ether and Moroni demonstrate that faith leads to repentance, brings about miracles, and turns personal weakness into strength. Sadly, the Jaredites refused to heed Ether's teachings and turned away from the truth that could have saved them. As you read Ether, chapters 11–15, ask yourself the question "What lessons are there in these chapters for me and the generation I live in?"

Commentary

Ether 11. The Final Stages of Jaredite Civilization

- As with the Nephites, the Jaredite society repeatedly moved through the cycle of prosperity, apostasy, judgment, repentance, prosperity, and so on. Eventually, as with the Nephites, the depths of apostasy and wickedness became increasingly fatal. (See diagram "The Cycle of Righteousness and Wickedness" in the appendix, p. 414.) Ether 11 recounts the final stages of the Jaredite cycle of apostasy. They rejected, mocked, and reviled the prophets. Though King Shule had passed a law protecting the prophets and punishing those who persecuted them (see Ether 7:23–26), a later king made it policy to execute the prophets (see Ether 11:5). Finally, the wickedness became so rampant that the prophets "mourned and withdrew from among the people" (Ether 11:13). (See commentary for Helaman 12:5–6 on p. 278).

Ether 11:2–5, 13, 20–22. They Rejected the Words of the Prophets

- The prophet Amos taught that one role of a prophet is to warn people of impending destruction (see 2 Nephi 25:9; see also Ezekiel 33:7–10). Ether 11 clearly demonstrates the consequences of not heeding prophetic warnings. Consider what President Henry B. Eyring of the First Presidency said concerning the cost of rejecting prophetic counsel and the safety that comes from heeding prophets:

"Looking for the path to safety in the counsel of prophets makes sense to those with strong faith. When a prophet speaks, those with little faith may think that they hear only a wise man giving good advice. Then if his counsel seems comfortable and reasonable, squaring with what they want to do, they take it. If it does not, they consider it either faulty advice or they see their circumstances as justifying their being an exception to the counsel. Those without faith may think that they hear only men seeking to exert influence for some selfish motive. . . ."

"Every time in my life when I have chosen to delay following inspired counsel or decided that I was an exception, I came to know that I had put myself in harm's way. Every time that I have listened to the counsel of prophets, felt it confirmed in prayer, and then followed it, I have found that I moved toward safety" (in Conference Report, Apr. 1997, 32–33; or *Ensign*, May 1997, 25).

Ether 11:7–8. Natural Disasters Can Lead to Repentance

- We read that as a result of the wars, famines, pestilences, and destructions, the people began to repent of their iniquity. President Joseph F. Smith (1838–1918) helped us understand that sometimes the Lord uses natural disasters to bring about repentance in the lives of His children:



"The Latter-day Saints, though they themselves tremble because of their own wickedness and sins, believe that great judgments are coming upon the world because of iniquity; they firmly believe in the statements of the Holy Scriptures, that calamities will befall the nations as signs of the coming of Christ to judgment. They believe that God rules in the fire, the earthquake, the tidal wave, the volcanic eruption, and the storm. Him they recognize as the Master and Ruler of nature and her laws, and freely acknowledge his hand in all things. We believe that his judgments are poured out to bring mankind to a sense of his power and his purposes, that they may repent of their sins and prepare

themselves for the second coming of Christ to reign in righteousness upon the earth. . . .

"We believe that these severe, natural calamities are visited upon men by the Lord for the good of his children, to quicken their devotion to others, and to bring out their better natures, that they may love and serve him" (*Gospel Doctrine*, 5th ed. [1939], 55; for additional references to the Lord using the elements of nature to speak to people who refuse to repent, see Helaman 12:3; D&C 43:21–25; 88:88–91).

Ether 12:4. "An Anchor to the Souls of Men"

- President Gordon B. Hinckley (1910–2008) taught concerning the need to center our lives on Jesus Christ: "We live in a world of uncertainty. For some, there will be great accomplishment. For others, disappointment. For some, much of rejoicing and gladness, good health, and gracious living. For others, perhaps sickness and a measure of sorrow. We do not know. But one thing we do know. Like the polar star in the heavens, regardless of what the future holds, there stands the Redeemer of the world, the Son of God, certain and sure as the anchor of our immortal lives. He is the rock of our salvation, our strength, our comfort, the very focus of our faith" (in Conference Report, Apr. 2002, 107; or *Ensign*, May 2002, 90).



ETHER 12:4

What relationship do you see between Ether 12:4; Mormon 5:18; and Helaman 5:12?  When has your faith been like an anchor to your soul?

Ether 12:6. "The Trial of Your Faith"

- Trials of faith do not always come in the form of adversity. Elder Richard G. Scott of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles taught that sometimes "the trial of

[our] faith" is simply a matter of exercising our faith: "You can learn to use faith more effectively by applying this principle taught by Moroni: 'Faith is things which are hoped for and not seen; wherefore, dispute not because ye see not, for ye receive no witness until after the *trial of your faith*' [Ether 12:6; italics added]. Thus, every time you *try your faith*—that is, act in worthiness on an impression—you will receive the confirming evidence of the Spirit. Those feelings will fortify your faith. As you repeat that pattern, your faith will become stronger" (in Conference Report, Apr. 2003, 79; or *Ensign*, May 2003, 76).

- Elder Jeffrey R. Holland of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles wrote of the various levels of faith we experience and the prerequisites for the expression of them: "Preparatory faith is formed by experiences in the past—by the known, which provides a basis for belief. But redemptive faith must often be exercised toward experiences in the future—the unknown, which provides an opportunity for the miraculous. Exacting faith, mountain-moving faith, faith like that of the brother of Jared, *precedes* the miracle and the knowledge. He had to believe *before* God spoke. He had to act *before* the ability to complete that action was apparent. He had to commit to the complete experience in advance of even the first segment of its realization. Faith is to agree unconditionally—and in advance—to whatever conditions God may require in both the near and distant future" (*Christ and the New Covenant* [1997], 18–19).

- President Gordon B. Hinckley illustrated this principle of receiving our witness "after the trial" of faith:

"Let me give you a story of a woman in São Paulo, Brazil. She worked while going to school to provide for her family. I use her own words in telling this story. She says:

"The university in which I studied had a regulation that prohibited the students that were in debt from taking tests. For this reason, when I received my salary I would first separate the money for tithing and offerings, and the remainder was allotted for the payment of the school and other expenses.

“I remember a time when I . . . faced serious financial difficulties. It was a Thursday when I received my salary. When I figured the monthly budget, I noticed that there wouldn’t be enough to pay [both] my tithing and my university. I would have to choose between them. The bimonthly tests would start the following week, and if I didn’t take them I could lose the school year. I felt great agony. . . . My heart ached. I had a painful decision before me, and I didn’t know what to decide. I pondered between the two choices: to pay tithing or to risk the possibility of not obtaining the necessary credits to be approved in school.

“This feeling consumed my soul and remained with me up to Saturday. It was then that I remembered that when I was baptized I had agreed to live the law of tithing. I had taken upon myself an obligation, not with the missionaries, but with my Heavenly Father. At that moment, the anguish started to disappear, giving place to a pleasant sensation of tranquility and determination. . . .

“That night when I prayed, I asked the Lord to forgive me for my indecision. On Sunday, before the beginning of sacrament meeting, I contacted the bishop, and with great pleasure I paid my tithing and offerings. That was a special day. I felt happy and peaceful within myself and with Heavenly Father.

“The next day I was in my office; I tried to find a way to be able to take the tests that would begin on Wednesday. The more I thought, the further I felt from a solution. . . .

“The working period was ending when my employer approached and gave the last orders of the day. When he had done so, with his briefcase in his hand he bid farewell. . . . Suddenly he halted, and looking at me he asked, “How is your college?” I was surprised, and I couldn’t believe what I was hearing. The only thing I could answer with a trembling voice was, “Everything is all right!” He looked thoughtfully at me and bid farewell again. . . .



“Suddenly the secretary entered the room, saying that I was a very fortunate person! When I asked her why, she simply answered: “The employer has just said that from today on the company is going to pay fully for your college and your books. Before you leave, stop at my desk and inform me of the costs so that tomorrow I can give you the check.”

“After she left, crying and feeling very humble, I knelt exactly where I was and thanked the Lord for His generosity. I . . . said to Heavenly Father that He didn’t have to bless me so much. I only needed the cost of one month’s installment, and the tithing I had paid on Sunday was very small compared to the amount I was receiving! During that prayer the words recorded in Malachi came to my mind: “Prove me now herewith, saith the Lord of hosts, if I will not open you the windows of heaven, and pour you out a blessing, that there shall not be room enough to receive it” (Malachi 3:10). Up to that moment I had never felt the magnitude of the promise contained in that scripture and that this commandment was truly a witness of the love that God, our Heavenly Father, gives to His children here on earth” (in Conference Report, Apr. 2002, 85–86; or *Ensign*, May 2002, 73–74).

ETHER 12:6

How did Alma and Amulek, Nephi and Lehi (sons of Helaman), and Ammon and his brethren demonstrate the principle taught?

Ether 12:8–22. Faith and Miracles

- Ether 12:8–22 is filled with examples of “wonders and marvels done by faith” (chapter summary for Ether 12). The *Lectures on Faith* explain that faith is the principle of power to do miracles:

“Faith is not only the principle of action, but of power also, in all intelligent beings, whether in heaven or on earth. . . .

“. . . It was by faith that the worlds were framed. God spake, chaos heard, and worlds came into order by reason of the faith there was in Him. So with man

also; he spake by faith in the name of God, and the sun stood still, the moon obeyed, mountains removed, prisons fell, lions' mouths were closed, the human heart lost its enmity, fire its violence, armies their power, the sword its terror, and death its dominion; and all this by reason of the faith which was in him" ([1985], 3, 5).

Ether 12:27. Weakness, Humility, and Grace

- Weakness comes to men and women through the Fall of Adam. The physical body and mind is susceptible to disease and decay. We are subject to temptation and struggle. Each of us experiences personal weaknesses. Nevertheless, the Lord clearly teaches that as we come unto Him in humility and faith, He will help us turn weakness into strength. His grace is sufficient to make this transformation by lifting us above our own natural abilities. In a very personal way, we experience how the power of the Atonement overcomes the effects of the Fall.

Elder Neal A. Maxwell (1926–2004) of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles spoke of how the Lord can help us overcome our weaknesses. "When we read in the scriptures of man's 'weakness,' this term includes the generic but necessary weakness inherent in the general human condition in which the flesh has such an incessant impact upon the spirit (see Ether 12:28–29). Weakness likewise includes, however, our specific, individual weaknesses, which we are expected to overcome (see D&C 66:3; Jacob 4:7). Life has a way of exposing these weaknesses" (*Lord, Increase Our Faith* [1994], 84).

Furthermore, Elder Maxwell described how recognizing our weaknesses is one way that the Lord has chosen to increase our learning:

"When we are unduly impatient with an omniscient God's timing, we really are suggesting that we know what is best. Strange, isn't it—we who wear wristwatches seek to counsel Him who oversees cosmic clocks and calendars.

"Because God wants us to come home after having become more like Him and His Son, part of this developmental process, of necessity, consists of showing unto us our weaknesses. Hence, if we have ultimate hope we will be submissive because, with His

help, those weaknesses can even become strengths (see Ether 12:27).

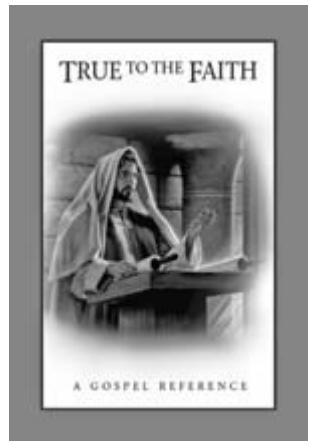
"It is not an easy thing, however, to be shown one's weaknesses, as these are regularly demonstrated by life's circumstances. Nevertheless, this is part of coming unto Christ, and it is a vital, if painful, part of God's plan of happiness" (in Conference Report, Oct. 1998, 79; or *Ensign*, Nov. 1998, 63).

The scriptures testify that Jesus Christ can save us from our inadequacies as well as our sins:

1. "Most gladly therefore will I rather glory in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me" (2 Corinthians 12:9).
2. "Let us therefore come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need" (Hebrews 4:16).
3. "The Lord God sheweth us our weakness that we may know that it is by his grace . . . that we have power to do these things" (Jacob 4:7).
4. "I know that I am nothing; as to my strength I am weak; therefore I will not boast of myself, but I will boast of my God, for in his strength I can do all things" (Alma 26:12).
5. "If ye shall deny yourselves of all ungodliness, and love God with all your might, mind and strength, then is his grace sufficient for you, that by his grace ye may be perfect in Christ" (Moroni 10:32).

Moroni taught that not only must we exercise faith in the Lord, but we must humble ourselves as well.

The book *True to the Faith* explains the meaning of true humility: "To be humble is to recognize gratefully your dependence on the Lord—to understand that you have constant need for His support. Humility is an acknowledgement that your talents and abilities are gifts from God. It is not a sign of weakness, timidity, or fear; it is an indication that you know where your true strength lies" (*True to the Faith: A Gospel Reference* [2004], 86).



- In the Guide to the Scriptures we read that grace is “the enabling power from God that allows men and women to obtain blessings in this life and to gain eternal life and exaltation after they have exercised faith, repented, and given their best effort to keep the commandments. Such divine help or strength is given through the mercy and love of God” (“Grace”).
- President Thomas S. Monson gave the following words of comfort: “Should there be anyone who feels he is too weak to change the onward and downward course of his life, or should there be those who fail to resolve to do better because of that greatest of fears, the fear of failure, there is no more comforting assurance to be had than the words of the Lord: ‘My grace,’ said He, ‘is sufficient for all men that humble themselves before me; for if they humble themselves before me, and have faith in me, then will I make weak things become strong unto them’” (in Conference Report, Apr. 2000, 61–62; or *Ensign*, May 2000, 48).

ETHER 12:32

According to Ether 12:32; Moroni 7:40–41; and Doctrine and Covenants 138:14, what should our hope be centered in? How can you do this better?

Ether 12:33–37. This Love Is Charity

- The Savior showed the most perfect charity or sacrificial love when He gave His life and atoned for each of us. We must pray that we “may be filled with this love” so we can inherit eternal life (Moroni 7:48). Elder Marvin J. Ashton (1915–94) of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles explained what it means to have charity:

“*Charity* is, perhaps, in many ways a misunderstood word. We often equate charity with visiting the sick, taking in casseroles to those in need, or sharing our excess with those who are less fortunate. But really, true charity is much, much more.

“Real charity is not something you give away; it is something that you acquire and make a part of

yourself. And when the virtue of charity becomes implanted in your heart, you are never the same again. It makes the thought of [putting others down] repulsive.

“Perhaps the greatest charity comes when we are kind to each other, when we don’t judge or categorize someone else, when we simply give each other the benefit of the doubt or remain quiet. Charity is accepting someone’s differences, weaknesses, and shortcomings; having patience with someone who has let us down; or resisting the impulse to become offended when someone doesn’t handle something the way we might have hoped. Charity is refusing to take advantage of another’s weakness and being willing to forgive someone who has hurt us. Charity is expecting the best of each other” (in Conference Report, Apr. 1992, 24; or *Ensign*, May 1992, 18–19).



Ether 12:41. Abide

- After spending a year in Chile, Elder Jeffrey R. Holland shared the following insight concerning the word *abide*: “‘Abide in me’ is an understandable and beautiful enough concept in the elegant English for the King James Bible, but *abide* is not a word we use much anymore. So I gained even more appreciation for this admonition from the Lord when I was introduced to the translation of this passage in another language. In Spanish that familiar phrase is rendered *permaneced en mi*. Like the English verb *abide*, *permanecer* means ‘to remain, to stay,’ but even [English-speakers] like me can hear the root cognate there of ‘permanence.’ The sense of this, then, is ‘stay—but stay forever’” (in Conference Report, Apr. 2004, 32; or *Ensign*, May 2004, 32).

Ether 13:1–12. New Jerusalem

- Ether 13:1–12 describes what a great seer Ether was. Ether was shown many marvelous things by the Lord,

including the establishment of a New Jerusalem prior to the Second Coming. Note what Ether said about the New Jerusalem:

1. It will be “the holy sanctuary of the Lord” (Ether 13:3).
2. It will be built on the American continent for the remnant of the seed of Joseph (see vv. 4–6).
3. It will be a holy city like the Jerusalem built unto the Lord (see vv. 8–9).
4. It will stand until the earth is celestialized (see v. 8).
5. It will be a city for the pure and righteous (see v. 10).

President Joseph Fielding Smith (1876–1972) wrote the following about the New Jerusalem:

“The prevailing notion in the world is that this [the New Jerusalem] is the city of Jerusalem, the ancient city of the Jews which in the day of regeneration will be renewed, but this is not the case. We read in the Book of Ether that the Lord revealed to him many of the same things which were seen by John. Ether, as members of the Church will know, was the last of the prophets among the Jaredites, and the Lord had revealed to him much concerning the history of the Jews and their city of Jerusalem which stood in the days of the ministry of our Savior. In his vision, in many respects similar to that given to John, Ether saw the old city of Jerusalem and also the new city which has not yet been built, and he wrote of them as follows as reported in the writings of Moroni:

“[Ether 13:2–11.] . . .

“In the day of regeneration, when all things are made new, there will be three great cities that will be holy. One will be the Jerusalem of old which shall be rebuilt according to the prophecy of Ezekiel. One will be the city of Zion, or of Enoch, which was taken from the earth when Enoch was translated and which will be restored; and the city Zion, or New Jerusalem, which is to be built by the seed of Joseph on this the American continent” (*Answers to Gospel Questions*, comp. Joseph Fielding Smith Jr., 5 vols. [1957–66], 2:103–4).

ETHER 13:1–12

What are the characteristics of the New Jerusalem listed in these verses? How can we better cultivate these same characteristics?

Ether 13:15–31. Coriantumr

• Coriantumr had devoted a great deal of time to studying “all the arts of war and all the cunning of the world” (Ether 13:16), yet he rejected the simple message of Ether, which would have brought him peace in a way that all his military skills could not.

Note the prophet Ether’s promise to Coriantumr in Ether 13:20–21 as well as its fulfillment (see Ether 15:1–3, 26–32; Omni 1:20–22).



Robert Barrett, © 1986 [RI]

Ether 14–15. The Final Jaredite Battle

• Coriantumr and Shiz allowed all of their followers to be killed without ending the conflict. We cannot fully comprehend the horror of the final Jaredite battle in which even women and children were armed and sent to war (see Ether 15:15). This does, however, provide a graphic picture of what people become when the Spirit of the Lord withdraws and no longer strives with them (see v. 19).



Robert Barrett, © 1996 IRI

Points to Ponder

- In what ways has the enabling power of the Atonement transformed your weaknesses into strengths?
- In what ways does the book of Ether serve as a warning to the nations of the earth today?
- Anger and hatred played a major role in the destruction of the Jaredites. What role do you

see anger and hatred playing in the world today? How can you combat this in your own sphere of influence?

- How has your faith or spiritual resolve been tried? How did these trials of your faith bring you additional “witness” of Jesus Christ or understanding of eternal truths?

Suggested Activities

- Identify a personal shortcoming or deficiency that has come to you through mortal weakness. Using Ether 12:27 as your guide, outline a strategy whereby it can be turned into a strength.
- Ponder the plea from Moroni that we “seek this Jesus of whom the prophets and apostles have written, that the grace of God the Father, and also the Lord Jesus Christ, and the Holy Ghost . . . may be and abide in you forever” (Ether 12:41). Write a short paper outlining what you can do to “seek Jesus” and to obtain “the grace of God the Father.”