


CHAPTER 6

1 Nephi 19–22

Introduction

As he studied the brass plates, Nephi encountered many prophecies concerning the mission of Jesus Christ. Among these were the writings of Isaiah, Zenos, Zenock, and Neum. Nephi read these prophecies to his people. He also included a portion of them on the small plates hoping to persuade his people and future readers to believe in the Redeemer (see 1 Nephi 19:18, 23–24 .

As you study 1 Nephi 19–22, look for evidence of the Lord’s great love for His children. Nephi recorded prophecies that demonstrate that scattered Israel would eventually be restored to the fulness of the gospel and gathered together. Furthermore, Nephi taught that even though great wickedness will cover the earth during the last days, “the righteous need not fear” (1 Nephi 22:17) because the Lord’s protective hand will be upon them. Never in the course of history has the Lord forgotten His people, nor will He forget them now, for He has “graven [them] upon the palms of [His] hands” (1 Nephi 21:16).

Commentary

1 Nephi 19:1–6. Two Sets of Plates

- Nephi wrote about the two sets of plates he made (see 1 Nephi 9). The large plates of Nephi contained a detailed account of his people. The small plates of Nephi were a sacred religious record. In 1 Nephi 19:1–6, “first plates” and “other plates” refers to the large plates of Nephi; “these plates” refers to the small plates of Nephi (see commentary for Words of Mormon on p. 134).



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1 Nephi 19:7–9. The World Shall Judge Him to Be a Thing of Naught

- Nephi recorded that Jesus Christ was smitten because people of His day judged Him “to be a thing of naught.” The Savior was unimportant to them. He was deemed to be “good for nothing, but to be . . . trodden under foot of men” (Matthew 5:13). Elder Neal A. Maxwell (1926–2004) of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles noted how men today often follow the same fateful thinking: “For many moderns, sad to say, the query ‘What think ye of Christ?’ (Matthew 22:42) would be answered, ‘I really don’t think of Him at all!’” (in Conference Report, Oct. 1995, 27; or *Ensign*, Nov. 1995, 22–23).

- On another occasion Elder Maxwell taught that regardless of what the world says, we must stand fast in our testimony of the Savior: “At the center of the Father’s plan is Jesus Christ, mankind’s Redeemer. Yet, as foreseen, many judge Jesus ‘to be a thing of naught’ (1 Nephi 19:9), or ‘consider him’ merely ‘a man’ (Mosiah 3:9). Whether others deny or delimit Jesus, for us He is our Lord and Savior! Comparatively, brothers and sisters, it matters very little what people think of us, but it matters very much what we think of Him. It matters very little, too, who others say we are; what matters is who we say Jesus is” (in Conference Report, Apr. 1984, 27; or *Ensign*, May 1984, 21).



1 Nephi 19:10–16. Zenock, Neum, and Zenos

- Nephi quoted from Zenock, Neum, and Zenos. These were prophets of Old Testament times whose detailed prophecies of Jesus Christ were recorded on the brass plates; therefore we know they lived before 600 B.C. They spoke plainly about the life and ministry of the Messiah and the destiny of the house of Israel (see also Helaman 8:19–20). Without the Book of Mormon, we would know nothing about these three prophets or their witnesses of Christ.

1 NEPHI 19:11

While not all physical calamities are a result of divine punishment, what appears to be the purpose of the natural disasters spoken of?

1 Nephi 19:21–24. Likening the Scriptures unto Ourselves

- Nephi read the scriptures to his people and “did liken all scriptures unto [them]” (v. 23 ). How do we liken the scriptures unto ourselves for “profit and learning”? (v. 23 ). Questions like the following ones can help us profitably apply the scriptures to our lives:

What significance does this particular event or principle have for me today? For example: What does the rebellion of Laman and Lemuel teach me? What can I learn about faithfulness from Nephi’s obedience?

If I were in this particular situation or faced with this challenge or question, how would I react? What flaws or strengths would I find in my own character? Am I like Lehi’s family members who murmured in the wilderness, or am I like Nephi and Sam? Do I complain when things get difficult, or do I trust in God no matter what the circumstances?



What do I learn about God and His dealings with His children from this event? As I study the lives of men and women in the scriptures, what do I learn about the things that

please or displease God? Why was this particular concept, principle, or event included in the scriptures?

1 Nephi 20–21. Introduction to the Writings of Isaiah

- Why did Nephi include Isaiah 48–49 (1 Nephi 20–21) at this point in his record? We find an answer to this question in 1 Nephi 19:21: “And [the Lord] surely did show unto the prophets of old [including Isaiah] all things concerning them [the Jews in Jerusalem]; and also he did show unto many concerning us [the Nephites in America].”

Overview of 1 Nephi, Chapters 20–21

The prophets (including Isaiah) were shown “them,” referring to the Jews.

The prophets (including Isaiah) were shown “us,” referring to the Nephites.

1 Nephi 20 (Isaiah 48) is about “them”—the Jews in Jerusalem.

1 Nephi 21 (Isaiah 49) is about “us”—the Nephites in America.

The Lord showed the Jews to Isaiah—1 Nephi 20 (Isaiah 48).

The Lord showed the Nephites to Isaiah—1 Nephi 21 (Isaiah 49).

- Why did Nephi include other writings of Isaiah throughout his record (particularly 2 Nephi 12–25)?

Nephi began the first of his Isaiah citations with these words: “Hear ye the words of the prophet, ye who are a remnant of the house of Israel, a branch who have been broken off; hear ye the words of the prophet, which were written unto all the house of Israel, and liken them unto yourselves, *that ye may have hope* as well as your brethren from whom ye have been broken off; for after this manner has the prophet written” (1 Nephi 19:24; italics added).

Isaiah’s writings testify that Jesus Christ is the only true source of hope for men and women living in a fallen world. Consequently, Nephi cited hundreds of verses Isaiah wrote that testify of the Savior. One scholar noted that “of the 425 separate verses of Isaiah which are quoted in the Book of Mormon, 391 say something about the attributes or mission of Jesus Christ” (Monte S. Nyman, “*Great Are the Words of Isaiah*” [1980], 7).

Moreover, Nephi recognized that Isaiah’s testimony was similar to his own, as both had seen the Lord. Nephi explained:

“And now I, Nephi, write more of the words of Isaiah, for my soul delighteth in his words. For I will liken his words unto my people, and I will send them forth unto all my children, for he verily saw my Redeemer, even as I have seen him.

“And my brother, Jacob, also has seen him as I have seen him; wherefore, I will send their words forth unto my children to prove unto them that my words are true. Wherefore, by the words of three, God hath said, I will establish my word. Nevertheless, God sendeth more witnesses, and he proveth all his words” (2 Nephi 11:2–3).

The greatest validation of Isaiah’s writings came from the Savior Himself. While ministering to the Nephites, Jesus declared:

“And now, behold, I say unto you, that ye ought to search these things. Yea, a commandment I give unto you that ye search these things diligently; for great are the words of Isaiah.

“For surely he spake as touching all things concerning my people which are of the house of Israel; therefore it must needs be that he must speak also to the Gentiles.

“And *all things that he spake have been and shall be*, even according to the words which he spake” (3 Nephi 23:1–3; italics added).

- What happened during Isaiah’s lifetime, and why are his prophecies still being fulfilled today?

Isaiah prophesied from approximately 740–701 B.C. During his lifetime the kingdoms of Israel and Judah rose in prosperity and struggled with idolatry. The unrighteousness of the people led to spiritual weakness and political peril. In a short period of time, Israel and Judah became weak vassal states cowering under the mighty Assyrian empire. In fact, the scattering of Israel began during Isaiah’s lifetime, as many Israelites from the northern kingdom of Israel were carried away captive by the Assyrians.

Isaiah repeatedly warned of the consequences of wickedness and foretold the calamities that would fall upon the house of Israel as a result, including the scattering of Israel from their lands of inheritance and the loss of the blessings of the covenant. He also testified repeatedly that Israel’s only hope could come from redemption through the Messiah. Many of Isaiah’s prophecies concern the coming of the Savior to the earth, both in the meridian of time and at the millennial day. Furthermore, he gave specific details concerning

the latter-day gathering of Israel and the restoration of the gospel covenant.

- Why is Isaiah difficult to understand?

As Nephi selected passages from Isaiah for his record, he knew that many readers would struggle to understand them. Even many of the people in Nephi’s day could not grasp their meaning. He mentioned three specific reasons for this difficulty:

1. They did not know “the manner of prophesying among the Jews” (2 Nephi 25:1).
2. They were not “filled with the spirit of prophecy” (v. 4).
3. They were not “taught after the manner of the things of the Jews” (v. 5).

In addition to the reasons Nephi gave, other difficulties exist for modern readers:

1. Most of Isaiah’s writings are in poetic form. The beauty and depth of poetry in one language does not easily translate into other languages.
2. Many of Isaiah’s prophecies are dualistic in nature. Consequently, the prophecies can be fulfilled in many circumstances at different times in history.
3. Isaiah used extensive symbolism. Many of the objects and events he referred to were contemporary to his day and are difficult for us to understand today.

In summary, just as Jesus taught profound truths through parables that concealed their meaning from those not prepared to understand, Isaiah spoke in a manner that required more of his listeners than casual consideration.

- What can help readers understand Isaiah’s words?

Three basic guidelines assist anyone who wishes to understand what Isaiah wrote:

1. Study other scripture. The scriptures themselves offer many insights into the meaning of Isaiah’s writings. The Bible Dictionary states, “The reader today has no greater written commentary and guide to understanding Isaiah than the Book of Mormon and the Doctrine and Covenants” (“Isaiah,” 707). Not only do these books of scripture interpret passages of Isaiah, they contain doctrines and prophecies that shed light on Isaiah’s words. These modern scriptures fill in details that are not as evident in the Bible.

2. Seek the spirit of prophecy. As Nephi mentioned, those who were not “filled with the spirit of prophecy” (2 Nephi 25:1) in his day could not understand the meaning of Isaiah’s writings. The same is true today. Each serious student of Isaiah must seek revelation through the Holy Ghost to enlighten their mind and to help them read the words by the same Spirit in which they were written—in the testimony of Jesus Christ (see Revelation 19:10).



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3. Study diligently. Elder Bruce R. McConkie (1915–85) of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles encouraged Latter-day Saints to devote themselves to serious study of Isaiah: “Read, ponder, and pray—verse by verse, thought by thought, passage by passage, chapter by chapter! As Isaiah himself asks: ‘Whom shall he teach knowledge? and whom shall he make to understand doctrine?’ His answer: ‘them that are weaned from the milk, and drawn from the breasts. For precept must be upon precept, precept upon precept; line upon line, line upon line; here a little, and there a little.’ (Isa. 28:9–10.)” (“Ten Keys to Understanding Isaiah,” *Ensign*, Oct. 1973, 83).

1 Nephi 20:1–2. “They Call Themselves of the Holy City”

- In 1 Nephi 20:1–2, the prophet Isaiah chastised the house of Israel for claiming to follow the Lord without keeping His commandments. They felt that because they were His covenant people and lived in the holy city of Jerusalem, God would always protect them. Isaiah taught that it is not where you live but how you live that is important (see vv. 18–22).

1 Nephi 20:10. “Furnace of Affliction”

- Intense heat refines metal and removes impurities. Elder Dallin H. Oaks of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles observed that affliction can likewise refine and purify each of us: “Most of us experience some measure of what the scriptures call ‘the furnace of affliction’ (Isaiah 48:10; 1 Nephi 20:10). Some are submerged in service to a disadvantaged family member. Others suffer the death of a loved one or the loss or postponement

of a righteous goal like marriage or childbearing. Still others struggle with personal impairments or with feelings of rejection, inadequacy, or depression. Through the justice and mercy of a loving Father in Heaven, the refinement and sanctification possible through such experiences can help us achieve what God desires us to become” (in Conference Report, Oct. 2000, 43; or *Ensign*, Nov. 2000, 33–34).

- Elder Robert D. Hales of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles described the personal sanctification he experienced following three major surgeries:

“In the past two years, I have waited upon the Lord for mortal lessons to be taught me through periods of physical pain, mental anguish, and pondering. I learned that constant, intense pain is a great consecrating purifier that humbles us and draws us closer to God’s Spirit. If we listen and obey, we will be guided by His Spirit and do His will in our daily endeavors.

“There were times when I have asked a few direct questions in my prayers, such as, ‘What lessons dost Thou want me to learn from these experiences?’

“As I studied the scriptures during this critical period of my life, the veil was thin and answers were given to me as they were recorded in lives of others who had gone through even more severe trials.

“‘My son, peace be unto thy soul; thine adversity and thine afflictions shall be but a small moment;

“‘And then, if thou endure it well, God shall exalt thee on high’ (D&C 121:7–8).

“Dark moments of depression were quickly dispelled by the light of the gospel as the Spirit brought peace and comfort with assurances that all would be well.

“On a few occasions I told the Lord that I had surely learned the lessons to be taught and that it wouldn’t be necessary for me to endure any more suffering. Such entreaties seemed to be of no avail, for it was made clear to me that this purifying process of testing was to be endured in the Lord’s time and in the Lord’s own way” (in Conference Report, Oct. 2000, 3–4; or *Ensign*, Nov. 2000, 6).

1 Nephi 20:14, 20. Babylon

- As with other great ancient empires, Babylon’s ascendancy to wealth and glory was accompanied by moral decay, wickedness, and iniquity. Babylon’s corruption was so extensive that the very name became a symbol for worldliness, spiritual wickedness, and Satan’s kingdom.



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God decreed that the Medes should completely destroy Babylon in its wickedness (see Isaiah 13:17–22). Under the rule of Cyrus the Great, an alliance of Medes and Persians dammed the mighty Euphrates River and marched through the riverbed and under the walls of Babylon to capture the city and overthrow the empire around 538 B.C. When Isaiah spoke of Babylon, he referred to both the actual empire as well as spiritual Babylon. Isaiah foresaw the graphic destruction of the Babylon of his day as a result of the great wickedness of its people. Consequently, he used the term *Babylon* in his prophecies to typify the spiritual condition of the latter days and the judgment that would come upon the world at the Second Coming of Jesus Christ (see D&C 1:16).

The Doctrine and Covenants clarifies Isaiah’s exhortation to “go ye forth of Babylon” (1 Nephi 20:20). Those who “bear the vessels of the Lord” must be clean, leaving the wickedness of the “spiritual Babylon” behind them (D&C 38:42; 133:5, 14).

1 Nephi 21:13–16. Can a Woman Forget Her Child?

- Just as it seems impossible for a woman to forget a nursing baby, Elder Jeffrey R. Holland of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles explained that it would be even more impossible for the Savior to forget us: “This poetic passage provides yet another reminder of Christ’s saving role, that of protective, redeeming parent to Zion’s children. He comforts his people and shows mercy when they are afflicted, as any loving father or mother would toward a child, but, as Nephi here reminds us through Isaiah, much more than any mortal father and mother could do. Although a mother may forget her sucking child (as unlikely as any parent might think that could be), Christ will not forget the children he has redeemed or the covenant he has made with them for salvation in Zion. The painful reminders of that watch care and covenant are the marks of the Roman nails graven upon the palms of his hands, a sign to his disciples in the Old World, his Nephite congregation in the New World, and to us in latter-day Zion that he is the Savior of the world and was wounded in the house of his friends” (*Christ and the New Covenant* [1997], 84).

1 Nephi 21:23. Nursing Fathers and Mothers

- Nephi explained that the Lord would raise up a gentile nation to nurse scattered Israel (see 1 Nephi 22:6–9). As part of the fulfillment of this prophecy, the gospel was restored in the United States of America, a gentile nation (see D&C 109:60). The gospel is the Lord’s “standard to the people” (1 Nephi 21:22), restoring the new and everlasting covenant to the children of men (see D&C 66:2) and feeding the need of a spiritually famished Israel (see Amos 8:11–13) scattered throughout the world. The analogy of the Restoration of the gospel is that of a “feast of fat things” taken to the world to nurse them to spiritual health (see D&C 58:6–11).

1 Nephi 22:4. “The Isles of the Sea”

- A scholar explained the meaning of “the isles of the sea”: “Nephi not only refers to the isles of the sea as the location of other remnants of the house of Israel, but he also indicates that he and his people were then living

upon an ‘isle of the sea’ when he quite clearly is referring to the great land mass known as the American continent. (2 Nephi 10:20–21.)” (Daniel H. Ludlow, *A Companion to Your Study of the Book of Mormon* [1976], 121).

- For more information on the scattering of Israel, refer to “Brief History of the Scattering of Israel” in the appendix (p. 415).

1 Nephi 22:6–9. “A Mighty Nation” and “a Marvelous Work”

- The phrase “the Lord God will raise up a mighty nation among the Gentiles” (1 Nephi 22:7) refers to the United States of America in 1776. The First Amendment to the Constitution of the United States included a proclamation of freedom of religion. These amendments were ratified on December 15, 1791. The Constitution of the United States was where freedom of religion first took root in the modern world.
- In 1 Nephi 22:8, Nephi referred to “a marvelous work among the Gentiles” in the latter days. This great work includes the Restoration of the gospel of Jesus Christ and the priesthood keys necessary to bring the covenants of God to “all the kindreds of the earth” (v. 9).

The events in verse 7 had to precede those in verse 8. The world was typically full of countries with forced state religions. For the gospel to be restored, it required a country that both legally professed and practiced freedom of religion. Joseph Smith was born in December 1805, just 14 years after the ratification of the amendments to the Constitution.

1 Nephi 22:6–12. The Gathering of Israel

- For more information on the gathering of Israel, refer to “The Gathering of Israel” in the appendix (p. 416).

1 Nephi 22:10–12. “Make Bare His Arm”

- Nephi spoke of God making “bare his arm in the eyes of all the nations” (1 Nephi 22:11). Isaiah used a similar phrase (Isaiah 52:10). An arm is a symbol of power. The metaphor that God will make “bare his arm” means that God will show his power to the entire world.

1 NEPHI 22:13–17

What is one reason Satan’s host will not prevail over the people of God? What else will keep the righteous from being overpowered?

1 Nephi 22:17, 22. “The Righteous Need Not Fear”

- While Nephi recorded that “the righteous need not fear” (1 Nephi 22:17, 22) because the Lord’s protective hand will be over them during the calamities of the last days, the wicked have no promise of protection from these events. Elder Bruce R. McConkie taught: “We do not say that all of the Saints will be spared and saved from the coming day of desolation. But we do say there is no promise of safety and no promise of security except for those who love the Lord and who are seeking to do all that he commands” (in Conference Report, Apr. 1979, 133; or *Ensign*, May 1979, 93).

1 Nephi 22:24. “Calves of the Stall”

- President Joseph Fielding Smith (1876–1972) taught that children who will be raised during the Millennium “shall grow up ‘as calves of the stall’ unto righteousness, that is, without sin or the temptations which are so prevalent today” (*The Way to Perfection* [1970], 299).
- Contemplate the difference between a calf that is raised out on the range or in the mountains and one that is raised in a barn. The calf on the range is subject to all the forces of nature: inclement weather, predatory animals, and occasional scarcity of food and water. On the other hand, the calf raised in the barn or in a stall is protected from poor weather and predatory animals. Likewise, food and water are regularly provided. Nephi taught that “the time cometh speedily that the righteous must be led up as calves of the stall” (1 Nephi 22:24).

One commentator said: “Those who are left after the judgment of the Second Coming will be able to raise up their children as calves are raised in a stall. The calf is protected from the elements, and his environment is controlled (Malachi 4:2; 1 Nephi 22:24). The children in the Millennium will similarly ‘grow up without sin

unto salvation' (D&C 45:58). The telestial element will be removed, and with Satan being bound (Revelation 20:1–3; 1 Nephi 22:26; D&C 101:28), the environment will be more controlled" (Monte S. Nyman and Farres H. Nyman, *The Words of the Twelve Prophets: Messages to the Latter-day Saints* [1990], 145).

1 Nephi 22:26. How Will Satan Be Bound?

- Nephi gave a very clear definition in scripture of how Satan is to be bound during the Millennium. Elder Bruce R. McConkie wrote the following explanation concerning this important verse:


"What does it mean to bind Satan? How is he bound? Our revelation says: 'And in that day Satan shall not have power to tempt any man.' (D&C 101:28.) Does this mean that power is withdrawn from Satan so that he can no longer entice men to do evil? Or does it mean that men no longer succumb to his enticements because their hearts are so set on righteousness that they refuse to forsake that which is good to follow him who is evil? Clearly it means the latter. Satan was not bound in heaven, in the very presence of God, in the sense that he was denied the right and power to preach false doctrine and to invite men to walk away from that God whose children they were; nay, in this sense, he could not have been bound in heaven, for even he must have his agency.

"How, then, will Satan be bound during the Millennium? It will be by the righteousness of the people" (*The Millennial Messiah* [1982], 668).

Points to Ponder

- Nephi explained in 1 Nephi 19:18 that he wrote to "persuade" his people to "remember the Lord their Redeemer." How can remembering Nephi's reason for writing help you in your personal study of the scriptures?
- Ponder the meaning of the phrase in 1 Nephi 21:16 that the Savior has "graven thee upon the palms of [His] hands." How can this give you confidence that the Lord will always remember you?

Suggested Assignments

- Nephi cited the prophecies of Zenock, Neum, and Zenos (see 1 Nephi 19:10). These prophets lived in Old Testament times, but their prophecies are not found in the Bible. Using the scripture index or the Guide to the Scriptures as a resource, list several other prophecies that Zenock and Zenos made. What particular importance did their prophecies have to the Nephites? (see 3 Nephi 10:16). Why are they important to you?
- Answer the first question from each paragraph in the commentary for 1 Nephi 19:21–24  (p. 43).
- In the meridian of time, Jesus "was judged to be a thing of naught" (1 Nephi 19:7, 9). Identify ways that the world today still judges Jesus "to be a thing of naught." Write a paragraph outlining ways you can combat these worldly influences and develop your testimony of the Savior.