



Type: Magazine Article

---

## "A Marvelous Work and a Wonder"

Author(s): Milton R. Hunter

Source: *Improvement Era*, Vol. 61, No. 12 (December 1958)

Published by: The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints

Page(s): 930–933

---

**Abstract:** This article states that the Book of Mormon fulfills prophecies of Isaiah. The phrase “marvelous work and a wonder” (used by both Isaiah and Nephi) has a three-fold meaning: the true gospel of Jesus Christ would be restored, the covenants the Lord made with the children of Israel would be fulfilled, and the records of the ancient American people would be given to all of the world.



the Christ. The adversary, powerful as he is in the world today, will be defeated in his plans and in his purposes. The end of evil, so rampant in the world, will come when the gospel of the kingdom has been preached as a witness in all the world and when the power of Satan is broken.

The Church stands for the principles of eternal truth proclaimed by Jesus Christ and the holy prophets. The appointed mission of the Church is to

preach the gospel and to administer the ordinances thereof. The work is going forward today, at home and abroad, and we have reason, you and I, to rejoice at its success; and so I say, again, God's work will not diminish in the world or in the Church, it will continue its onward course. It has survived attacks from without and crises and threats from within, but it has never weakened. It is full of vitality and power.

The large gathering of Latter-day Saints here and in other places, the recent expansion and the enlarged projects now under way, are evidences of virility and strength. The work being done is destined to conquer and to touch the human heart and even where Christian sentiments are still slumbering.

I was interested this morning when Elder Hinckley read from Section 122 of the Doctrine and Covenants. They were words of reassurance to the Prophet Joseph Smith. They came at a moment when he needed to be reassured, when he was being maligned, betrayed, and imprisoned. They were given to him in Liberty Jail where he received words of comfort and strength from his Heavenly Father. Few men have dis-

charged their responsibility with greater confidence and a firmer trust in God than did Joseph Smith. I marvel as I contemplate the soundness of his program and the durability of his teachings.

I recall the words of the Savior about John the Baptist. He said:

"What went ye out into the wilderness to see? A reed shaken with the wind?"

"... A man clothed in soft raiment?" (Matt. 11:7-8.) They went out to see a man who had been true to his calling, a spiritual giant, a great prophet.

You may rest assured that no worldly allurements could swerve him from his sacred calling. When you find a man who discharges his obligations to God, first and foremost, you will find a strong man, an unconquerable spirit, not a reed shaken by the wind. He is not swayed by popular motives nor by passing currents. He stands on a foundation that will never give way.

When you find a group of men and women similarly endowed, devoted to a God-given trust, counseling together and working for a divine cause in the service of God, you will find an invincible community struggling and striving for the betterment of all.

## "A MARVELOUS WORK AND A WONDER"

*Milton R. Hunter*

*of the First Council of the Seventy*

In this morning's session of the conference, President Stephen L. Richards stated that Isaiah prophesied that in the last days the Lord would establish "a marvelous work and a wonder" among the children of men. In connection with that marvelous work and a wonder, Isaiah said:

"And thou shalt be brought down, and shalt speak out of the ground, and thy speech shall be low out of the dust, and thy voice shall be, as of one that hath a familiar spirit. . . ." (Isaiah 29:4.)

"And the vision of all is become unto you as the words of a book that is sealed, which men deliver to one that is learned, saying, Read this, I pray thee: and he saith, I cannot; for it is sealed:

"And the book is delivered to him that is not learned, saying, Read this, I pray thee: and he saith, I am not learned. (*Ibid.*, vs. 9-12.)

"Therefore, behold, I will proceed to do a marvellous work among this people, even a marvellous work and a

wonder: for the wisdom of their wise men shall perish, and the understanding of their prudent men shall be hid. (*Ibid.*, vs. 14.)

"And in that day shall the deaf hear the words of the book, and the eyes of the blind shall see out of obscurity, and out of darkness.

"The meek also shall increase their joy in the Lord, and the poor among men shall rejoice in the Holy One of Israel." (*Ibid.*, vs. 18, 19.)

The Prophet Nephi, who lived about a hundred years after Isaiah died, was commanded by the Lord that he and his posterity should write a religious record which should contain especially testimonies and evidences that Jesus is the Christ, the Savior of the world. It would contain the gospel of Jesus Christ as revealed to his people. As part of that revelation from the Lord, Nephi wrote:

"For, behold, saith the Lamb: I will manifest myself unto thy seed, that they shall write many things which I shall minister unto them, which shall be plain and precious; and after thy seed shall be destroyed, and dwindle in unbelief, and also the seed of thy brethren, behold, these things shall be hid up, to come forth unto the Gentiles, by the gift and power of the Lamb.

"And in them shall be written my

gospel, saith the Lamb, and my rock and my salvation." (1 Nephi 13:35-36.)

Nephi was picked up by the Spirit of the Lord and taken on top of a high mountain. There he was shown a glorious vision of the history of the world. As part of that vision, Nephi saw that in the latter days the Spirit of God would come down upon a man. He would get in a ship and cross a large body of water and come to the "promised land," or the land which was inhabited by the seed of his brethren. History indicates that Columbus was this man.

Nephi also saw that following the discovery of this land—America—by the man who was brought here by the Spirit of the Lord, that the Spirit of God would come down upon many people who lived in the countries across the large body of water. Seeking religious freedom, they would leave their native homes and, crossing "the many waters," come to "the promised land." He saw that there they would develop a young nation; and this young nation would be prospered and blessed by the Lord. It would rise up in revolt against its mother nation. And then he saw that the Spirit and power of God would rest down upon the inhabitants of this young nation, "and also that the wrath of God was upon all those who were

In the year 1831, the Latter-day Saints gathered in Kirtland, Ohio. They were poor from the standpoint of worldly possessions, but they had been taught correct principles of government. They lived in peace. They were united in their common cause. Within the short period of five years they had built homes for themselves, they had made civic improvements, and they had built a temple which cost them \$75,000. It was a stupendous sum in those days, yet economically, they were on a par with their neighbors and friends.

The year following the settlement in Kirtland a part of the Church settled in Jackson County, Missouri. What they accomplished there within a year or two incited the hatred and envy of their neighbors. A series of persecutions commenced which resulted in the expulsion of the Latter-day Saints. They were driven from their homes and despoiled of their property.

They moved into the counties northward.

In 1838, according to Church history, four years after being driven from Jackson County, there were in Far West, Caldwell County, Missouri, one hundred fifty dwellings, seven stores, six blacksmith shops, two hotels, and a

printing house prepared to issue a Church periodical. Schoolhouses were erected, and homes had been built in the country round about. The exodus from Missouri to Illinois with its suffering, exposure, hardship, and trial, has few parallels in history.

The destination of the people was a bog which had to be reclaimed to make it fit for human habitation. This was in 1839. And in 1844, five years later, the population of their city had reached 20,000. Did the Lord bless the Latter-day Saints in those early days? These refugees built comfortable homes, public buildings, schools, and a temple which cost the enormous sum of one million dollars. How could they accomplish this thing? All of this, as you know, they abandoned and left to their enemies so the Latter-day Saints could worship God according to the dictates of their consciences. They wanted to be free from persecution and malice.

The next movement was to the Rocky Mountains, beyond the confines of civilization in the great unexplored West. The Salt Lake Basin was at that time regarded as an irredeemable waste. What has happened in this intermountain region, you already know. The desert has blossomed as a

rose. The climate has been tempered. Miracles have been wrought and the precious things of the earth are coming to light.

I mention these things, brethren and sisters, not to bring up the past but to point out the constructive spirit of the Mormon faith. I conclude that any worthy project which will enhance God's work can be accomplished by the Latter-day Saints—for God's work will not fail. It will triumph in the world beyond the wildest dreams of those who laid so firmly the foundation of all we have and are. The same authority which actuated and inspired Joseph Smith and Brigham Young is directing the present leaders of the Church today. I know this to be a fact.

I know God is with his people. I know his inspiration is resting upon those who are directing its affairs, and I know God's work will triumph in the earth and the Latter-day Saints will carry forward the great program successfully until it is fully realized, for God is still blessing his people.

May we always remember it and may we live worthily before him so that these blessings can come to all of us, I pray, in the name of Jesus Christ. Amen.

gathered together against them to battle." He saw that the inhabitants of the young nation would win their independence from the mother nation and that they ". . . were delivered by the power of God out of the hands of all other nations." (*Ibid.*, 13:12-19.)

It is evident that Nephi saw in vision the coming of the Pilgrims and others, the rise of the thirteen colonies, the Revolutionary War, and the establishment of the United States of America.

As his vision continued, he observed that through the power of God this young nation would become a free nation, a nation which would be "lifted up by the power of God above all other nations." (*Ibid.*, 13:30.) It would be established in a "choice land above all lands," the land which the Lord had covenanted with Lehi to give to his seed for an inheritance.

Now, why should the Lord, as is evidenced from what I have said, make the United States a free nation, a greater and more powerful nation than any other nation under heaven?

Nephi gives us the exact reason. He said that in the latter days that Christ was going to establish such a nation and people upon this the promised land so that he would have a place and a people where he would perform his "marvelous work and a wonder." Let

us quote the words of Jesus Christ which were given through his Prophet, Nephi:

"Therefore, I will proceed to do a marvelous work among this people, yea, a marvelous work and a wonder, . . ." (2 Nephi 27:26.)

"For the time cometh, saith the Lamb of God, that I will work a great and a marvelous work among the children of men; a work which shall be everlasting, either on the one hand or on the other—either to the convincing of them unto peace and life eternal, or unto the deliverance of them to the hardness of their hearts and the blindness of their minds unto their being brought down into captivity, and also into destruction, both temporally and spiritually, according to the captivity of the devil, . . ." (1 Nephi 14:7.)

Now, what is this marvelous work and a wonder prophesied about by both Isaiah and Nephi?

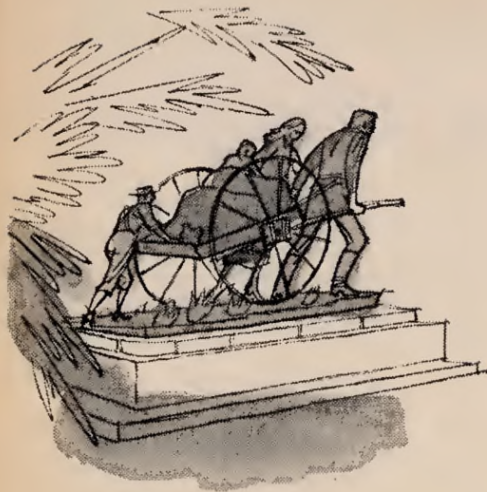
The Prophet Nephi tells us in detail what this marvelous work is. First, he declared that in the latter days and on this land of promise the Savior would restore his gospel and establish his Church and kingdom. The true gospel of Jesus Christ would be revealed from heaven to a prophet; and that prophet's name, according to Father Lehi, would be Joseph and his father's name would

be Joseph. Certainly Joseph Smith fits all of the requirements.

Another phase of "a marvelous work and a wonder" would be the fulfilling of the covenants made by the Lord with the children of Israel. Nephi predicted that at the time that Jehovah would establish his gospel among the Gentiles in the land of promise he would remember the covenants he had made with the house of Israel—the covenant to return the Jews to Palestine, the covenant to establish Ephraim with the birthright in the promised land, the covenants with the Lamanites—and he would fulfil all of these covenants.

Third, the record of the Nephites, the Book of Mormon, would be given to this American prophet. He would translate and publish a book which would contain the gospel of Jesus Christ. Nephi predicted that the words of this book will judge the inhabitants of the earth at the last day. (2 Nephi 25:18.)

And, fourth, the Book of Mormon, as a portion of this "marvelous work and a wonder," would be given through the seed of Ephraim—who would have the birthright—or as Nephi stated, through the Gentiles, to the Jews, to the Lamanites, and to all of the dispersed of the house of Israel, wherever they are throughout the world. This book would come forth to bear witness that



Jesus is the Christ, the Savior of the world, to be a new witness to the Bible, and to help proclaim the gospel to the honest throughout the earth.

Now, let us see how these prophecies have been fulfilled. In the spring of 1820, in the state of New York, a boy named Joseph Smith retired to a grove of trees, and there he knelt down and prayed to his eternal Father, asking which of all the churches he should join. In answer to this prayer, one of the most glorious and marvelous heavenly manifestations that has ever been seen by man occurred. The eternal Father and his Only Begotten Son appeared to this boy-prophet. The latter told him to join none of the Christian churches, that Christ's true Church wasn't upon the earth, and that Joseph had been selected to be an instrument in the hands of God through which the true Church would be established.

Thus the Eternal Father and his Only Begotten Son inaugurated this "marvelous work and a wonder" with this greatest and most wonderful heavenly manifestation that mortal man has seen in the latter days.

John the Revelator looked down through the stream of time and he saw the day about which Nephi had prophesied. He wrote:

"And I saw another angel fly in the midst of heaven, having the everlasting gospel to preach unto them that dwell on the earth, and to every nation, and kindred, and tongue, and people,

"Saying with a loud voice, Fear God, and give glory to him; for the hour of his judgment is come: and worship him that made heaven, and earth, and the sea, and the fountains of waters." (Rev. 14:6-7.)

Certainly reason tells us that if the gospel of Jesus Christ were upon the earth at that time there would have been no need for an angel to "fly in the midst of heaven, having the everlasting gospel" to bring to earth again.

On September 21, 1823, that angel did fly in the midst of heaven. He appeared to the Prophet Joseph Smith, and declared himself to be the Angel Moroni, the last of a great race of ancient Americans. He told Joseph Smith about that sacred record which God had preserved to be brought forth in the latter days. Four years later the record was given to the Prophet. Through the gift and power of God and the Urim and Thummim, he translated the Book of Mormon and published it on March 26, 1830, thus fulfilling this portion of the marvelous work and a wonder.

Eleven days later the Prophet Joseph Smith established, as the result of a

direct revelation from the Savior, the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, which was accepted by the Master as his, declaring it to be "... the only true and living church upon the face of the whole earth, with which I, the Lord, am well pleased, ..." (D & C 1:30.)

Previous to this time Joseph Smith had received the Holy Melchizedek Priesthood, also, as part of this marvelous work and a wonder; and as time passed he received through revelation and heavenly visitations all of the ordinances and doctrines necessary to the salvation and the exaltation of the human family.

As another important phase of "a marvelous work and a wonder," the Prophet was commanded that he and the Church members should take the gospel and the Book of Mormon to every nation, kindred, tongue, and people, searching out the honest in heart, in order that all of the covenants that had been made with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob and others of the house of Israel might be fulfilled. Thus through this missionary work, Christ would fulfil his covenants which he had made with the children of men by sending his messengers throughout the earth, declaring the restoration of the gospel and proclaiming Jesus to be the Christ, the only name given under heaven whereby man can be saved. (2 Nephi 25:20.) The honest in heart—those who would receive the Book of Mormon and the restored gospel and take upon themselves the name of Christ by joining his Church—were sought out of the world preparatory for the second coming of Christ, that his kingdom might be fully established here upon the earth.

## "IN CONSEQUENCE OF EVILS AND DESIGNS . . ."

**Joseph L. Wirthlin**  
Presiding Bishop

President McKay, my brethren and sisters, I sincerely trust that the Lord will give me the inspiration and the desire I have in my heart to bear testimony to you that I know Joseph Smith was indeed a prophet, that he actually saw the Father and the Son. There appeared to him an angel called Moroni, and through Moroni, he received the golden plates from which the Book of Mormon was translated and made available to the people of the world.

The Book of Mormon in and of itself is important because we have the history that has to do with the people who lived upon this, the American continent. In it we find the prophets of old indicating that Jesus Christ, the Son of God, would be upon this, the American continent, which event took place when he appeared to the Nephites after his resurrection. He organized the Church, and gave them the same privileges and opportunities that existed among the people in Jerusalem.

Through Joseph Smith, we received the priesthood, both the Aaronic and the Melchizedek. John the Baptist appeared to the Prophet and Oliver Cowdery and bestowed upon them the Aaronic Priesthood, the priesthood that he held at the time he baptized the Christ nearly two thousand years ago.

Later Peter, James, and John appeared and bestowed upon Joseph Smith and Oliver Cowdery the Melchizedek Priesthood.

The Prophet Joseph was visited by Elijah, the prophet of old, who gave him the authority and direction whereby he was to go forward with the work for the dead, that families would have the opportunity of being sealed for time and eternity in our marvelous temples. He was given many other revelations, those that had to do with the organization of the Church itself, the Church of Jesus Christ as it existed over two thousand years ago. It was called the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, by revelation.

He received many other revelations. And I sincerely hope and trust, my brethren and sisters, that all of us will

Thereupon the Prophet Joseph Smith inaugurated the greatest and most extensive missionary program that has ever been known in the world. During more than one hundred years' time since the Church was founded, thousands and thousands of missionaries have proclaimed the everlasting gospel throughout most of the world; and missionary activities are going forward today even at a greater momentum than ever before. The honest in heart are being searched out, and the kingdom of God is being developed.

According to the word of the Lord through his ancient prophets, Ephraim was to receive the birthright through his father Joseph. Jacob gave his son Joseph a blessing in which he said:

"Joseph is a fruitful bough, even a fruitful bough by a well; whose branches run over the wall. . . .

"The blessings of thy father have prevailed above the blessings of my progenitors unto the utmost bound of the everlasting hills: they shall be on the head of Joseph. . . ." (Gen. 49:22, 26.)

If we select a spot away from Palestine, where could the utmost bound of the everlasting hills be better located than here in the Rocky Mountains, centered here in Salt Lake City. This certainly is the place.

Micah looked down through the stream of time and also made a confirmatory prophecy. He said:

"But in the last days it shall come to pass, that the mountain of the house of the Lord shall be established in the top of the mountains and it shall be exalted above the hills; and people shall flow unto it.

"And many nations shall come, and say, Come, and let us go up to the

mountain of the Lord, and to the house of the God of Jacob; and he will teach us of his ways and we will walk in his paths: for the law shall go forth out of Zion, and the word of the Lord from Jerusalem." (Micah 4:1-2.)

The Salt Lake Temple stands on this Temple Square not far distant from this tabernacle where we are assembled. It is the house of the Lord; and so the Lord's house has been established in the top of the mountains and exalted above the hills. Through the missionary program during the past hundred years converts have been gathered from all nations of the earth. Many of the Saints have made their homes in the valleys of the Rocky Mountains. As they have migrated here to build their homes and also as they have come to Salt Lake City to attend general conference twice each year, they say: "Come ye, and let us go up to the mountain of the Lord, to the house of the God of Jacob; and he will teach us of his ways," that they might walk in his path.

The "Law of the Lord" has gone forth from Zion in the Doctrine and Covenants, in the Book of Mormon, in the Pearl of Great Price, and through the inspired teachings of the holy prophets of this dispensation to confirm the "Word of the Lord" which has gone forth from Jerusalem in the Holy Bible.

Thus the prophecies made by these ancient prophets have been and are being fulfilled.

In humility and from the depths of my heart, I want to bear testimony that I know that "a marvelous work and a wonder" has been established—the true Church of Jesus Christ is here upon the earth founded through the Prophet Joseph Smith. I know as I know that

I am alive that he is a prophet of God, one of the greatest that the world has known. I also solemnly bear witness that all the presidents who have presided over the Church in this dispensation, including our beloved President David O. McKay, are prophets of the true and living God. President McKay holds the keys of the kingdom, which keys and position of prophet, seer, and revelator, he shall continue to hold through divine appointment until death and then another will be appointed by the Lord to replace him.

The holy prophets have declared that the kingdom of God has been established, never to be taken from the earth again, nor given to another people—thus Nebuchadnezzar's dream, interpreted by Daniel, is being fulfilled. The God of heaven has set up his kingdom upon the earth in these the last days, "which shall never be destroyed: and the kingdom shall not be left to other people." Like "the stone cut out of the mountain without hands," it shall roll forth until it fills the whole earth. (Dan. 2:44-45, 34-35.) And "the saints of the Most High shall . . . possess the kingdom for ever, even for ever and ever." (*Ibid.*, 7:18.)

The climax of this whole marvelous work and a wonder will be the coming of Jesus Christ through the clouds of heaven to his kingdom to reign as King of kings and Lord of lords. (Rev. 19:16.) To him shall be given ". . . dominion, and glory, and a kingdom, that all people, nations, and languages, should serve him." (Dan. 7:14.)

These things I know through the power of the Holy Ghost which has borne testimony to my heart; and I bear this testimony to you humbly in Jesus' name. Amen.

read these revelations and understand what they mean to us as individuals and what they can do for us in our families and particularly in contact with those not of our faith.

One revelation in particular I am interested in. It is called the Word of Wisdom. It was given to the Prophet Joseph on February 27, 1833. This marvelous revelation had to do with the use of tobacco and alcohol, and also indicated what we should take into our bodies to keep them sweet, clean, and strong.

Now, it has been a hundred and twenty-five years since the Prophet Joseph gave this marvelous revelation to the world. It has taken medical science a long time to discover that tobacco and alcohol are not good for the body.

In section 89, the Doctrine and Covenants, verse 4 it reads:

"Behold, verily, thus saith the Lord unto you: In consequence of evils and designs which do and will exist in the hearts of conspiring men in the last days, I have warned you, and forewarn you, by giving unto you this word of wisdom by revelation—"

There are some individuals in the Church who feel that the Word of Wisdom did not come by revelation, but here we have it, in the words of the Lord. We have received it as revelation.

When he said, ". . . In consequence of evils and designs which do and will exist in the hearts of conspiring men in the last days . . .," surely these are the last days when great companies are

endeavoring to sell to men and women over the country, regardless of age, alcohol and tobacco.

In 1956, the American people spent \$10,500,000,000 for alcohol. They spent for tobacco in 1956, \$5,373,000,000, proving the truth of this statement made by the Prophet that in the last days conspiring men would endeavor to encourage and suggest to the people that they should use tobacco and alcohol. On the use of these two poisons, the American people spent approximately \$16,000,000,000. I mention that to you because we have only spent \$14,350,000,000 for education. We have been spending less for education than we have for the use of tobacco and alcohol.

On a religious basis and for welfare purposes in the United States, we have spent \$3,356,000,000—approximately