

Engaging Gospel Doctrine: 177

BoM Lesson 4: “[The Things Which I Saw While I Was Carried Away in the Spirit](#)”

Link to Online Lesson: “[The Things Which I Saw While I Was Carried Away in the Spirit](#)”

Class Member Reading: 1 Ne. 12-14

1 Ne. 12

Oh boy. This has some intense chapters. I actually used 1 Nephi 13 to plan my graduate program. Not kidding.

1 And it came to pass that 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.

2 And it came to pass that 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.

3 And it came to pass that 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.

4 And it came to pass that I saw a mist of darkness on the face of the land of promise; and I saw lightnings, and I heard thunderings, and earthquakes, and all manner of tumultuous noises; and I saw the earth and the rocks, that they rent; and I saw mountains tumbling into pieces; and I saw the plains of the earth, that they were broken up; and I saw many cities that they were sunk; and I saw many that they were burned with fire; and I saw many that did tumble to the earth, because of the quaking thereof.

5 And it came to pass after I saw these things, I saw the vapor of darkness, that it passed from off the face of the earth; and behold, I saw multitudes who had not fallen because of the great and terrible judgments of the Lord.

6 And I saw the heavens open, and the Lamb of God descending out of heaven; and he came down and showed himself unto them.

7 And I also saw and bear record that the Holy Ghost fell upon twelve others; and they were ordained of God, and chosen.

8 And the angel spake unto me, saying: Behold the twelve disciples of the Lamb, who are chosen to minister unto thy seed. [Events of 3 Nephi](#).

9 And he said unto me: Thou rememberest the twelve apostles of the Lamb? Behold they are they who shall judge the twelve tribes of Israel; wherefore, the twelve ministers of thy seed shall be judged of them; for ye are of the house of Israel. [Seems to suggest some sort of heavenly organization. Structure of judgment?](#)

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10 And these twelve **ministers** whom thou beholdest shall judge thy seed. And, behold, they are righteous forever; for because of their faith in the Lamb of God their garments are made white in his blood.

11 And the angel said unto me: Look! And I looked, and beheld three generations pass away in righteousness; and their garments were white even like unto the Lamb of God. And the angel said unto me: These are made white in the blood of the Lamb, because of their faith in him.

12 And I, Nephi, also saw many of the fourth generation who passed away in righteousness. (4 Nephi)

13 And it came to pass that I saw the multitudes of the earth gathered together.

14 And the angel said unto me: Behold thy seed, and also the seed of thy brethren.

15 And it came to pass that I looked and beheld the people of my seed gathered together in multitudes against the seed of my brethren; and they were gathered together to battle.

16 And the angel spake unto me, saying: Behold the fountain of filthy water which thy father saw; yea, even the river of which he spake; and the depths thereof are the depths of hell. **Hatred and violence are the depths of hell.**

17 And the mists of darkness are the temptations of the devil, which **blindeth the eyes**, and **hardeneth the hearts** of the children of men, and leadeth them away into broad roads, that they perish and are lost.

18 And the large and spacious building, which thy father saw, is **vain imaginations** and the **pride of the children of men**. And a great and a **terrible gulf** divideth them; yea, even the **word of the justice** of the Eternal God, and the Messiah who is the Lamb of God, of whom the Holy Ghost beareth record, from the beginning of the world until this time, and from this time henceforth and forever. **Differences in perspective and approach truly can create a “gulf” in relationships.**

19 And while the angel spake these words, I beheld and saw that the seed of my brethren did contend against my seed, according to the word of the angel; and because of the **pride** of my seed, and the temptations of the devil, I beheld that the seed of my brethren did overpower the people of my seed.

20 And it came to pass that I beheld, and saw the people of the seed of my brethren that they had overcome my seed; and they went forth in multitudes upon the face of the land.

21 And I saw them gathered together in multitudes; and I saw wars and rumors of wars among them; and in wars and rumors of wars I saw many generations pass away.

22 And the angel said unto me: Behold these shall **dwindle in unbelief**. **What a tragic vision.**

23 And it came to pass that I beheld, after they had dwindled in unbelief they became a dark, and loathsome, and a filthy people, full of idleness and all manner of abominations. **Now we get into the messiness of the portrayal of the Lamanites and**

the idea that “dark=bad”. This does not make theological sense and also aligns with stereotypes about Native Americans in Joseph’s day, so I would propose this is an example of Joseph’s views influencing the transmission of the Book of Mormon. Oh! And also the prejudices of Nephi himself! The Book of Mormon makes it pretty clear that the Nephites are prejudiced.

1 Ne. 13

1 And it came to pass that the angel spake unto me, saying: Look! And I looked and beheld many nations and kingdoms.

2 And the angel said unto me: What beholdest thou? And I said: I behold many nations and kingdoms.

3 And he said unto me: These are the nations and kingdoms of the Gentiles.

4 And it came to pass that I saw among the nations of the Gentiles the formation of a **great church**. In chapter 14 this church feels like a more symbolic, “good vs. evil” description, but this account in 13 feels much more historically specific. I used to be obsessed about the Great and Abominable Church and how it impacted the transmission of the Bible. It is what got me into textual criticism and the transmission of the Bible.

5 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. (Nothing in early Christian history matches this description.. yes, the Roman Empire persecuted Christians, and some Christians oppressed other groups, but nothing to this level that we know of).

6 And it came to pass that I beheld this great and abominable church; and I saw the devil that he was the founder of it.

7 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. (This sounds like a caricature of Catholicism; Protestants were intensely prejudiced against Catholicism)

8 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.

9 And also for the praise of the world do they destroy the saints of God, and bring them down into captivity.

10 And it came to pass that I looked and beheld many waters; and they divided the Gentiles from the seed of my brethren.

11 And it came to pass that the angel said unto me: Behold the wrath of God is upon the seed of thy brethren.

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12 And I looked and beheld a man among the Gentiles, who was separated from the seed of my brethren by the many waters; and I beheld the Spirit of God, that it came down and wrought upon the man; and he went forth upon the many waters, even unto the seed of my brethren, who were in the promised land. **A very positive view of Columbus, and one that unfortunately portrays divine approval of terrible, terrible historical events. God does not support colonialism. I think we can believe Columbus and others were inspired, while also holding them fully accountable and condemning them for their atrocities. Separating out human and divine elements. I refuse to believe in a God who condones genocide.**

13 And it came to pass that I beheld the Spirit of God, that it wrought upon other Gentiles; and they went forth out of captivity, upon the many waters.

14 And it came to pass that I beheld many multitudes of the Gentiles upon the land of promise; and I beheld the **wrath of God**, that it was upon the seed of my brethren; and they were scattered before the Gentiles and were smitten.

15 And I beheld the **Spirit of the Lord**, that it was upon the Gentiles, and they did prosper and obtain the land for their inheritance; and I beheld that they were white, and exceedingly fair and beautiful, like unto my people before they were slain. **I feel it is impossible to get around the racism explicit in this verse. Challenge the scriptures. Again, this is not ok.**

16 And it came to pass that I, Nephi, beheld that the Gentiles who had gone forth out of captivity did humble themselves before the Lord; and the power of the Lord was with them.

17 And I beheld that their mother Gentiles were gathered together upon the waters, and upon the land also, to battle against them.

18 And I beheld that the power of God was with them, and also that the wrath of God was upon all those that were gathered together against them to battle. **So now God backs the Americans in the Revolutionary War. I think that is plausible, though I think for the same reasons God would back other groups against America today, since now we oppress? “Whose side is God on and why?” is a vital theological question to ask.**

19 And I, Nephi, beheld that the Gentiles that had gone out of captivity were **delivered by the power of God** out of the hands of all other nations. **I believe this is possible, though the theological implications are different than most people assume. God is not an American. Statements like this seem silly when made explicit, but often lurk behind assumptions.**

20 And it came to pass that I, Nephi, beheld that they did prosper in the land; and I beheld a **book**, and it was carried forth among them. **Bible.**

21 And the angel said unto me: Knowest thou the meaning of the book?

22 And I said unto him: I know not.

23 And he said: Behold it proceedeth out of the mouth of a Jew. And I, Nephi, beheld it; and he said unto me: The book that thou beholdest is a record of the Jews, which

contains the covenants of the Lord, which he hath made unto the house of Israel; and it also containeth many of the prophecies of the holy prophets; and it is a record like unto the engravings which are upon the plates of brass, save there are not so many; nevertheless, **they contain the covenants of the Lord**, which he hath made unto the house of Israel; wherefore, they are of great worth unto the Gentiles.

24 And the angel of the Lord said unto me: Thou hast beheld that the book proceeded forth from the mouth of a Jew; and when it proceeded forth from the mouth of a Jew it contained the fulness of the gospel of the Lord, of whom the twelve apostles bear record; and they bear record according to the truth which is in the Lamb of God.

(again, a very intriguing singular. The Bible did not proceed forth from a single person, so we can't read it as an individual. The Bible did not proceed “out of the mouth” of Jesus either, though it would be very interesting if he were here called a Jew, which of course he was. Verse 25 confirms this “Jews” interpretation)

25 Wherefore, these **things go forth from the Jews in purity** unto the Gentiles, according to the truth which is in God.

26 And after they go forth by the hand of the twelve apostles of the Lamb, from the Jews unto the Gentiles, thou seest the formation of that great and abominable church, which is most abominable above all other churches; for behold, **they have taken away from the gospel of the Lamb many parts which are plain and most precious**; and also **many covenants of the Lord have they taken away**.

27 And all this have they done that they might pervert the right ways of the Lord, that they might blind the eyes and harden the hearts of the children of men.

28 Wherefore, thou seest that after the book hath gone forth through the hands of the great and abominable church, that **there are many plain and precious things taken away from the book, which is the book of the Lamb of God**. This is a key point of Nephi's dream (note the repetitions), as well as the role the Book of Mormon plays in Mormonism—the Book of Mormon provides what is precious and not in the Bible.

29 And after these **plain and precious things were taken away** it goeth forth unto all the nations of the Gentiles; and after it goeth forth unto all the nations of the Gentiles, yea, even across the many waters which thou hast seen with the Gentiles which have gone forth out of captivity, thou seest—because of the many plain and precious things which have been taken out of the book, which were plain unto the understanding of the children of men, according to the plainness which is in the Lamb of God—because of these things which are taken away out of the gospel of the Lamb, an **exceedingly great many do stumble**, yea, insomuch that Satan hath great power over them.

30 Nevertheless, thou beholdest that the Gentiles who have gone forth out of captivity, and have been **lifted up by the power of God above all other nations**, upon the **face of the land which is choice above all other lands**, which is the

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land that the Lord God hath covenanted with thy father that his seed should have for the land of their inheritance; wherefore, thou seest that the Lord God will not suffer that the Gentiles will utterly destroy the **mixture of thy seed**, which are among thy brethren. I don't think this American exceptionalism is acceptable or accurate. Yes, the United States has played a singular role in recent world history, as has Britain before it. But that does not mean that God loves Americans the mostest and that America is the Best Land Ever.

“Mixture of thy seed” acknowledges the fact that the “us” vs. “them” is blurred, since at several points in Book of Mormon history the Nephites and Lamanites intermarry and at other points (4 Nephi for example) the distinctions disappear altogether and then are reformed along lines more ideological than ancestral.

31 Neither will he suffer that the Gentiles shall destroy the seed of thy brethren.

32 Neither will the Lord God suffer that the Gentiles shall forever remain in that awful state of blindness, which thou beholdest they are in, because of the plain and **most precious parts of the gospel of the Lamb which have been kept back by that abominable church**, whose formation thou hast seen.

33 Wherefore saith the Lamb of God: I will be merciful unto the Gentiles, unto the visiting of the remnant of the house of Israel in great judgment.

34 And it came to pass that the angel of the Lord spake unto me, saying: Behold, saith the Lamb of God, after I have visited the remnant of the house of Israel—and this remnant of whom I speak is the seed of thy father—wherefore, after I have visited them in judgment, and smitten them by the hand of the Gentiles, and after the Gentiles do stumble exceedingly, because of the most plain and precious parts of the gospel of the Lamb which have been kept back by that abominable church, which is the mother of harlots, saith the Lamb—I will be merciful unto the Gentiles in that day, insomuch that I will bring forth unto them, in mine own power, much of my gospel, which shall be plain and precious, saith the Lamb. This idea that the “Lamanites” (understood to be the Native Americans) or the Jews deserve the “wrath of God” is deeply problematic and led to many atrocities. We must speak out against it.

35 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.

36 And in them shall be written my gospel, saith the Lamb, and my rock and my salvation. This vision is contextualizing the Book of Mormon as compared to the Bible. It would fall into the category of “legitimizing narrative”.

37 And **blessed are they who shall seek to bring forth my Zion at that day**, for they shall have the gift and the power of the Holy Ghost; and if they endure unto

the end they shall be lifted up at the last day, and shall be saved in the everlasting kingdom of the Lamb; and whoso shall publish **peace**, yea, tidings of great **joy**, how beautiful upon the mountains shall they be. I love this verse. This is the gospel. This is the work of salvation—seek to bring for Zion, increase peace and joy in the world.

38 And it came to pass that I beheld the remnant of the seed of my brethren, and also the book of the Lamb of God, which had proceeded forth from the mouth of the Jew, that it came forth from the Gentiles unto the remnant of the seed of my brethren.

39 And after it had come forth unto them I beheld other books, which came forth by the power of the Lamb, from the Gentiles unto them, unto the convincing of the Gentiles and the remnant of the seed of my brethren, and also the Jews who were scattered upon all the face of the earth, that the records of the prophets and of the twelve apostles of the Lamb are true.

40 And the angel spake unto me, saying: These **last records**, which thou hast seen among the Gentiles, shall **establish the truth of the first**, which are of the twelve apostles of the Lamb, and shall make known the plain and precious things which have been taken away from them; and shall make known to all kindreds, tongues, and people, that the Lamb of God is the Son of the Eternal Father, and the Savior of the world; and that all men must come unto him, or they cannot be saved. *Very important verses about the relationship between the Book of Mormon and Bible.*

41 And they must come according to the words which shall be established by the mouth of the Lamb; and the words of the Lamb shall be made known in the records of thy seed, as well as in the records of the twelve apostles of the Lamb; wherefore **they both shall be established in one**; for **there is one God and one Shepherd over all the earth**. This is a beautiful sentiment, but we should also remember that this oneness is being described from a particular perspective, and that other people will have their own perspectives.

42 And the time cometh that **he shall manifest himself unto all nations**, both unto the Jews and also unto the Gentiles; and after he has manifested himself unto the Jews and also unto the Gentiles, then he shall manifest himself unto the Gentiles and also unto the Jews, and the last shall be first, and the first shall be last. This falls into the category of “Salvation history”—the way God brings salvation to all people. According to this particular narrative, which is also present in the New Testament, the Jews were the covenant people but rejected Jesus, so the gospel went to the Gentiles, but that God will remember Israel and they also will be saved. It is important to remember that this is a Christian perspective, and according to Jews they are already right with God (the Jews don’t earn their standing with God through keeping the Jewish Law, rather they keep the Law out of joyful gratitude that they are chosen by God, already right with him).

1 And it shall come to pass, that if the Gentiles shall hearken unto the Lamb of God in that day that **he shall manifest himself unto them in word, and also in power**, in very deed, unto the **taking away of their stumbling blocks**— It seems that removing stumbling blocks is key to God’s work. Life application: What “stumbling blocks” do we need to have removed?

2 And **harden not their hearts** against the Lamb of God, they shall be numbered among the seed of thy father; yea, they shall be numbered among the house of Israel; and they shall be a blessed people upon the promised land forever; they shall be no more brought down into captivity; and the house of Israel shall no more be confounded. We must keep our hearts soft, vulnerable, open and loving. Brené Brown’s work is vital to this goal.

3 And that great pit, which hath been digged for them by that great and abominable church, which was founded by the devil and his children, that he might lead away the souls of men down to hell—yea, that great pit which hath been digged for the destruction of men **shall be filled by those who digged it**, unto their utter destruction, saith the Lamb of God; not the destruction of the soul, save it be the casting of it into that hell which hath no end. In many instances the wicked are punished by the natural consequences of their actions, and their unhealthy behaviors and choices backfire on them.

4 For behold, this is according to the **captivity of the devil**, and also according to the **justice of God**, upon all those who will work wickedness and abomination before him. “Captivity of the devil”—the devil seeks to limit agency, and God seeks to increase it.

5 And it came to pass that the angel spake unto me, Nephi, saying: Thou hast beheld that **if the Gentiles repent it shall be well with them**; and thou also knowest concerning the covenants of the Lord unto the house of Israel; and thou also hast heard that whoso repenteth not must perish. “If...then” statements are illuminating; the Book of Mormon is full of them.

6 Therefore, wo be unto the Gentiles if it so be that they harden their hearts against the Lamb of God.

7 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, of which I have spoken. This is an important verse about the Plan of Salvation and the Plan of Damnation. One path leads to peace and life, the other to blindness, hardness, trapped helplessness, and destruction.

8 And it came to pass that when the angel had spoken these words, he said unto me: Rememberest thou the covenants of the Father unto the house of Israel? I said unto him, Yea.

9 And it came to pass that he said unto me: Look, and behold that great and abominable church, which is the mother of abominations, whose founder is the devil.

10 And he said unto me: Behold **there are save two churches only**; the one is the **church of the Lamb of God**, and the other is the **church of the devil**; wherefore, whoso belongeth not to the church of the Lamb of God belongeth to that great church, which is the mother of abominations; and she is the whore of all the earth. **This metaphor seems to be working differently here than in the previous chapter. What does it mean to be the “church of the Lamb of God”? What does it mean to be “the church of the devil”? I do not think either of these represent denominations, but rather represent priorities and principles. I would propose that religions and denominations and congregations that nurture life and peace and joy (as described in previous verses)**

11 And it came to pass that I looked and beheld the whore of all the earth, and she sat upon many waters; and she had dominion over all the earth, among all nations, kindreds, tongues, and people.

12 And it came to pass that I beheld the church of the Lamb of God, and its **numbers were few**, because of the wickedness and abominations of the whore who sat upon many waters; nevertheless, I beheld that the church of the Lamb, who were the **saints of God**, were also upon all the face of the earth; and their dominions upon the face of the earth were **small**, because of the wickedness of the great whore whom I saw.

13 And it came to pass that I beheld that the great mother of abominations did gather together multitudes upon the face of all the earth, among all the nations of the Gentiles, to fight against the Lamb of God.

14 And it came to pass that I, Nephi, beheld the **power of the Lamb of God**, that it **descended upon the saints of the church of the Lamb**, and upon the **covenant people of the Lord**, who were **scattered upon all the face of the earth**; and they were armed with **righteousness** and with the **power of God** in great glory. **What if the saints of God are not only among all the face of the earth, but also among most if not all religions and denominations?**

15 And it came to pass that I beheld that the **wrath of God** was poured out upon that great and abominable church, insomuch that there were wars and rumors of wars among all the nations and kindreds of the earth.

16 And as there began to be wars and rumors of wars among all the nations which belonged to the mother of abominations, the angel spake unto me, saying: Behold, the wrath of God is upon the mother of harlots; and behold, thou seest all these things—

17 And when the day cometh that the wrath of God is poured out upon the mother of harlots, which is the great and abominable church of all the earth, whose founder is the devil, then, at that day, the work of the Father shall commence, in **preparing the**

way for the fulfilling of his covenants, which he hath made to his people who are of the house of Israel.

18 And it came to pass that the angel spake unto me, saying: Look!

19 And I looked and beheld a man, and he was dressed in a white robe.

20 And the angel said unto me: Behold one of the twelve apostles of the Lamb.

21 Behold, he shall see and write the remainder of these things; yea, and also many things which have been.

22 And he shall also write concerning the end of the world. [This section attributes the book of Revelation to the apostle John.](#)

23 Wherefore, the things which he shall write are just and true; and behold they are written in the book which thou beheld proceeding out of the mouth of the Jew; and at the time they proceeded out of the mouth of the Jew, or, at the time the book proceeded out of the mouth of the Jew, the **things which were written were plain and pure, and most precious and easy to the understanding of all men.**

24 And behold, the things which this apostle of the Lamb shall write are many things which thou hast seen; and behold, the **remainder shalt thou see.** [Nephi sees all of human history, a vision seen by others such as Moses and Enoch according to the Pearl of Great price as well as the brother of Jared.](#)

25 But **the things which thou shalt see hereafter thou shalt not write;** for the Lord God hath ordained the apostle of the Lamb of God that he should write them. [Not everything we experience needs to be shared.](#)

26 And also **others who have been, to them hath he shown all things,** and they have written them; and they are sealed up to come forth in their purity, according to the truth which is in the Lamb, in the own due time of the Lord, unto the house of Israel. [Sealed portion of the Book of Mormon, which is a really exciting idea.](#)

27 And I, Nephi, heard and bear record, that the name of the apostle of the Lamb was John, according to the word of the angel.

28 And behold, I, Nephi, am forbidden that I should write the remainder of the things which I saw and heard; wherefore the things which I have written sufficeth me; and I have written but a small part of the things which I saw.

29 And **I bear record that I saw the things which my father saw,** and the angel of the Lord did make them known unto me. [As Nephi was commanded to do in 11:7.](#)

30 And now I make an end of speaking concerning the things which I saw while I was **carried away in the Spirit;** and if all the things which I saw are not written, the things which I have written are true. And thus it is. Amen.