

## September 16–22: 3 Nephi 1–7, “Lift Up Your Head and Be of Good Cheer”

### Review

In last weeks lesson Samuel the Lamanite gave some specific signs of Christ's birth:

- for five years more cometh, and behold, then cometh the Son of God
- the night before he cometh there shall be no darkness
- there shall a new star arise, such an one as ye never have beheld
- there shall be many signs and wonders in heaven.

### The Birth of Christ

The time came when many argued that the time for the fulfillment of the 5-year prophecy had past

3 Nephi 1:4-8

4 And it came to pass that in the commencement of the ninety and second year, behold, the prophecies of the prophets began to be fulfilled more fully; for there began to be greater signs and greater miracles wrought among the people.

5 But there were some who began to say that the time was past for the words to be fulfilled, which were spoken by Samuel, the Lamanite.

6 And they began to rejoice over their brethren, saying: Behold the time is past, and the words of Samuel are not fulfilled; therefore, your joy and your faith concerning this thing hath been vain.

7 And it came to pass that they did make a great uproar throughout the land; and the people who believed began to be very sorrowful, lest by any means those things which had been spoken might not come to pass.

8 But behold, they did watch steadfastly for that day and that night and that day which should be as one day as if there were no night, that they might know that their faith had not been vain.

What very specific sign given by Samuel were looking for as a sure sign?

(as if there were no night)

Why do you think that some “began to say that the time was past”?

(commencement of the ninety and second year)

$86 + 5 = 91$  It should have happened in the 91st year

We don't know when in the 86th year that the prophecy was made and there is some wiggle-room when you say '5 years from now'

How did this affect the faith of the believers?

(people who believed began to be very sorrowful that they might know that their faith had not been vain)

It appears to have been a faith-testing time for many

Ulisses Soares

"Sometimes we seek for a blessing and set a time limit for the Lord to fulfill it. We cannot condition our faithfulness to Him by imposing upon Him a deadline for the answers to our desires. When we do this, we resemble the skeptical Nephites from ancient times, who mocked their brothers and sisters by saying that the time was past for the fulfillment of the words spoken by Samuel the Lamanite, creating confusion among those who believed. We need to trust the Lord enough to be still and know that He is God, that He knows all things, and that He is aware of each of us." (CR, Oct. 2019)

The unbelievers set a date to kill all the believers if the no-night sign isn't seen by that given date

3 Nephi 1:9-14

9 Now it came to pass that there was a day set apart by the unbelievers, that all those who believed in those traditions should be put to death except the sign should come to pass, which had been given by Samuel the prophet.

10 Now it came to pass that when Nephi, the son of Nephi, saw this wickedness of his people, his heart was exceedingly sorrowful.

11 And it came to pass that he went out and bowed himself down upon the earth, and cried mightily to his God in behalf of his people, yea, those who were about to be destroyed because of their faith in the tradition of their fathers.

12 And it came to pass that he cried mightily unto the Lord all that day; and behold, the voice of the Lord came unto him, saying:

13 Lift up your head and be of good cheer; for behold, the time is at hand, and on this night shall the sign be given, and on the morrow come I into the world, to show unto the world that I will fulfil all that which I have caused to be spoken by the mouth of my holy prophets.

14 Behold, I come unto my own, to fulfil all things which I have made known unto the children of men from the foundation of the world, and to do the will, both of the Father and of the Son—of the Father because of me, and of the Son because of my flesh. And behold, the time is at hand, and this night shall the sign be given.

What affect do you think it had and on believers and non-believers that this prophecy was fulfilled just before the set date?

Let's read how the people reacted when the signs were fulfilled

3 Nephi 1:15-21

15 And it came to pass that the words which came unto Nephi were fulfilled, according as they had been spoken; for behold, at the going down of the sun there was no darkness; and the people began to be astonished because there was no darkness when the night came.

16 And there were many, who had not believed the words of the prophets, who fell

to the earth and became as if they were dead, for they knew that the great plan of destruction which they had laid for those who believed in the words of the prophets had been frustrated; for the sign which had been given was already at hand.

17 And they began to know that the Son of God must shortly appear; yea, in fine, all the people upon the face of the whole earth from the west to the east, both in the land north and in the land south, were so exceedingly astonished that they fell to the earth.

18 For they knew that the prophets had testified of these things for many years, and that the sign which had been given was already at hand; and they began to fear because of their iniquity and their unbelief

19 And it came to pass that there was no darkness in all that night, but it was as light as though it was mid-day. And it came to pass that the sun did rise in the morning again, according to its proper order; and they knew that it was the day that the Lord should be born, because of the sign which had been given.

20 And it had come to pass, yea, all things, every whit, according to the words of the prophets.

21 And it came to pass also that a new star did appear, according to the word.

Why do you think that the reaction of the nonbelievers to the sign was “frustration” and “fear”?

(they knew that the great plan of destruction... had been frustrated)

(they began to fear because of their iniquity and their unbelief)

Why not to humility and repentance?

Maybe they were past feeling

1 Nephi 17:45

Ye are swift to do iniquity but slow to remember the Lord your God. Ye have seen an angel, and he spake unto you; yea, ye have heard his voice from time to time; and he hath spoken unto you in a still small voice, but ye were past feeling, that ye could not feel his words; wherefore, he has spoken unto you like unto the voice of thunder, which did cause the earth to shake as if it were to divide asunder.

## The Pride Cycle

3 Nephi 1:22; 2:1-3

22 And it came to pass that from this time forth there began to be lyings sent forth among the people, by Satan, to harden their hearts, to the intent that they might not believe in those signs and wonders which they had seen; but notwithstanding these lyings and deceivings the more part of the people did believe, and were converted unto the Lord.

1 And it came to pass that thus passed away the ninety and fifth year also, and the people began to forget those signs and wonders which they had heard, and began to be less and less astonished at a sign or a wonder from heaven, insomuch that they began to be hard in their hearts, and blind in their minds, and began to disbelieve all

which they had heard and seen—

2 Imagining up some vain thing in their hearts, that it was wrought by men and by the power of the devil, to lead away and deceive the hearts of the people; and thus did Satan get possession of the hearts of the people again, insomuch that he did blind their eyes and lead them away to believe that the doctrine of Christ was a foolish and a vain thing.

3 And it came to pass that the people began to wax strong in wickedness and abominations; and they did not believe that there should be any more signs or wonders given; and Satan did go about, leading away the hearts of the people, tempting them and causing them that they should do great wickedness in the land.

Why do you think the people dismissed the miraculous signs that they had been blessed to witness?

(from this time forth there began to be lyings sent forth among the people  
the people began to forget those signs and wonders  
they began to be hard in their hearts  
Imagining up some vain thing in their hearts)

Dallin H. Oaks

“The viewing of signs or miracles is not a secure foundation for conversion. Scriptural history attests that people converted by signs and wonders soon forget them and again become susceptible to the lies and distortions of Satan and his servants. ‘How long will this people provoke me?’ the Lord said to Moses, ‘and how long will it be ere they believe me, for all the signs that I have shewed among them?’ (Num. 14:11.)

“In contrast to the witness of the Spirit, which can be renewed from time to time as needed by a worthy recipient, the viewing of a sign or the experiencing of a miracle is a one-time event that will fade in the memory of its witness and can dim in its impact upon him or her.” (“Miracles”, Ensign, June 2001)

This pride began to lead the people to destruction

3 Nephi 2:11, 17-18

11 And it came to pass in the thirteenth year there began to be wars and contentions throughout all the land; for the Gadianton robbers had become so numerous, and did slay so many of the people, and did lay waste so many cities, and did spread so much death and carnage throughout the land, that it became expedient that all the people, both the Nephites and the Lamanites, should take up arms against them.

17 And it came to pass in the commencement of the fourteenth year, the war between the robbers and the people of Nephi did continue and did become exceedingly sore; nevertheless, the people of Nephi did gain some advantage of the robbers, insomuch that they did drive them back out of their lands into the mountains and into their secret places.

18 And thus ended the fourteenth year. And in the fifteenth year they did come forth against the people of Nephi; and because of the wickedness of the people of Nephi, and their many contentions and dissensions, the Gadianton robbers did gain many advantages over them.

What did the people do that enabled the Gadianton robbers to cause such great destruction among them?

(because of the wickedness of the people of Nephi, and their many contentions and dissensions)

The people are warned that if they didn't repent, unite, and listen to their leaders then they would be destroyed

3 Nephi 3:12-15,25

12 Now behold, this Lachoneus, the governor, was a just man, and could not be frightened by the demands and the threatenings of a robber; therefore he did not hearken to the epistle of Giddianhi, the governor of the robbers, but he did cause that his people should cry unto the Lord for strength against the time that the robbers should come down against them.

13 Yea, he sent a proclamation among all the people, that they should gather together their women, and their children, their flocks and their herds, and all their substance, save it were their land, unto one place.

14 And he caused that fortifications should be built round about them, and the strength thereof should be exceedingly great. And he caused that armies, both of the Nephites and of the Lamanites, or of all them who were numbered among the Nephites, should be placed as guards round about to watch them, and to guard them from the robbers day and night.

15 Yea, he said unto them: As the Lord liveth, except ye repent of all your iniquities, and cry unto the Lord, ye will in nowise be delivered out of the hands of those Gadianton robbers.

25 And they did fortify themselves against their enemies; and they did dwell in one land, and in one body, and they did fear the words which had been spoken by Lachoneus, insomuch that they did repent of all their sins; and they did put up their prayers unto the Lord their God, that he would deliver them in the time that their enemies should come down against them to battle.

What finally caused the people to humble themselves and repent?

(the robbers should come down against them  
except ye repent... ye will in nowise be delivered  
they did fear the words... insomuch that they did repent of all their sins)

How import do you think it was that the people were united in listen to their leaders?

Lachoneus told the people to cry unto the Lord for strength  
He caused the people to gather themselves together in one place  
He caused that fortifications should be built and placed guards  
they did repent of all their sins  
prayers unto the Lord their God, that he would deliver them

They work together in following Lachoneus' admonitions:  
(people should cry unto the Lord for strength  
they should gather together... unto one place  
caused that fortifications should be built  
they did put up their prayers unto the Lord)

This important lesson of unity is taught by Alma at the Waters of Mormon

Mosiah 18:21

And he commanded them that there should be no contention one with another, but that they should look forward with one eye, having one faith and one baptism, having their hearts knit together in unity and in love one towards another.

In other pride cycle examples we've seen that "destruction" followed "warnings." But this time the people heeded the warnings and united together. The Gadianton robbers could not survive and the people were spared the destruction.

3 Nephi 5:1-3

[1] And now behold, there was not a living soul among all the people of the Nephites who did doubt in the least the words of all the holy prophets who had spoken; for they knew that it must needs be that they must be fulfilled.

[2] And they knew that it must be expedient that Christ had come, because of the many signs which had been given, according to the words of the prophets; and because of the things which had come to pass already they knew that it must needs be that all things should come to pass according to that which had been spoken.

[3] Therefore they did forsake all their sins, and their abominations, and their whoredoms, and did serve God with all diligence day and night.

What do you think had changed among the people so now "there was not a living soul... who did doubt"?

They were humbled and repentant because they heeded the warnings and had been delivered from destruction.

Now they recognized the great signs and wonders for what they were

Based on the Pride Cycle how would you expect the people to act after they had been so blessed by the Lord?

Pride and unrighteousness

Neal A. Maxwell

“Changing circumstances can likewise affect nearly a whole people's faith... Listen to this verse: ‘There was not a living soul among all the people of the Nephites who did doubt in the least the words of all the holy prophets who had spoken; for they knew that it must needs be that they must be fulfilled’ (3Ne 5:1)

“Now, listen to this: ‘There began to be great doubtings and disputations among the people, notwithstanding so many signs had been given’ (3Ne 8:4).

“As I check the years of these two verses, I note that this decline happened in the space of a mere ten years or less! Circumstances changed from one in which ‘not a living soul’ doubted the prophecies to a time in which there were ‘great doubtings.’ It isn't very confidence inspiring, is it?” (We Talk Of Christ, We Rejoice In Christ, pg. 64)

## Unity

As wickedness grew among the people it destroyed the unity in the church

3 Nephi 6:10-15

[10] But it came to pass in the twenty and ninth year there began to be some disputings among the people; and some were lifted up unto pride and boastings because of their exceedingly great riches, yea, even unto great persecutions;

[11] For there were many merchants in the land, and also many lawyers, and many officers.

[12] And the people began to be distinguished by ranks, according to their riches and their chances for learning, yea, some were ignorant because of their poverty, and others did receive great learning because of their riches.

[13] Some were lifted up in pride, and others were exceedingly humble; some did return railing for railing, while others would receive railing and persecution and all manner of afflictions, and would not turn and revile again, but were humble and penitent before God.

[14] And thus there became a great inequality in all the land, insomuch that the church began to be broken up; yea, insomuch that in the thirtieth year the church was broken up in all the land save it were among a few of the Lamanites who were converted unto the true faith; and they would not depart from it, for they were firm, and steadfast, and immovable, willing with all diligence to keep the commandments of the Lord.

[15] Now the cause of this iniquity of the people was this -- Satan had great power, unto the stirring up of the people to do all manner of iniquity, and to the puffing them up with pride, tempting them to seek for power, and authority, and riches, and the vain things of the world.

When “the people began to be distinguished by ranks,” what qualifications did

they use to divide the people up into groups?

(according to their riches and their chances for learning  
ignorant because of their poverty... learning because of their riches  
Some were lifted up in pride, and others were exceedingly humble)

Ezra Taft Benson

"Our degree of pride determines how we treat our God and our brothers and sisters. Christ wants to lift us to where He is. Do we desire to do the same for others?

"Pride fades our feelings of sonship to God and brotherhood to man. It separates and divides us by 'ranks,' according to our 'riches' and our 'chances for learning.' *Unity is impossible for a proud people*, and unless we are one we are not the Lord's." (CR, April 1989)

What effect did this "great inequality" among the people have on the unity of the church?

(the church was broken up in all the land)

What can we do to assure that we are united as church members?

Henry B. Eyring

"We see increased conflict between peoples in the world around us. Those divisions and differences could infect us...

"God has promised [the blessing of unity] to His faithful Saints whatever their differences in background and whatever conflict rages around them. He was praying for us as well as His disciples when He asked His Father that we might be one.

"There are principles we are following as a people which are leading to greater unity. One of those principles is revelation. Revelation is the only way we can know how to follow the will of the Lord together...

"A second principle to guide our progress to become one is to be humble. Pride is the great enemy of unity..."

"That leads to another principle of unity. It is to speak well of each other..."  
(CR, Oct. 2008)

Just a few years earlier Lachoneus was able to unify the people to the extent that they were able to destroy the Gadianton robbers.

Let's read what happens as the people become more and more divided

3 Nephi 7:1-6



[1] Now behold, I will show unto you that they did not establish a king over the land; but in this same year, yea, the thirtieth year, they did destroy upon the judgment seat, yea, did murder the chief judge of the land.

[2] And the people were divided one against another; and they did separate one from another into tribes, every man according to his family and his kindred and friends;\_ and thus they did destroy the government of the land.

[3] And every tribe did appoint a chief or a leader over them; and thus they became tribes and leaders of tribes.

[4] Now behold, there was no man among them save he had much family and many kindreds and friends; therefore their tribes became exceedingly great.

[5] Now all this was done, and there were no wars as yet among them; and all this iniquity had come upon the people because they did yield themselves unto the power of Satan.

[6] And the regulations of the government were destroyed, because of the secret combination of the friends and kindreds of those who murdered the prophets.

To what extent did this “great inequality” cause destruction among the inhabitants of the land?

(they did separate one from another into tribes  
and thus they did destroy the government of the land  
the regulations of the government were destroyed)

Henry B. Eyring

“The Lord’s prophets have always called for unity. He cannot grant it to us as individuals. The joy of unity He wants so much to give us is not solitary. We must seek it and qualify for it with others. It is not surprising then that God urges us to gather so that He can bless us. He wants us to gather into families. He has established classes, wards, and branches and commanded us to meet together often. In those gatherings, which God has designed for us, lies our great opportunity. We can pray and work for the unity that will bring us joy and multiply our power to serve.” (CR, Oct. 2008)