

Lesson Highlights

- *Nephi prophesies of the Savior's ministry among the Nephites.*
- *Nephi testifies of the coming forth of the Book of Mormon.*
- *Nephi testifies that Satan will spread false doctrines in the last days.*
- *Nephi teaches about the importance of the Book of Mormon.*

A study of this lesson will help us understand that through the Restoration of the gospel and the teachings of the Book of Mormon, the Lord will cause truth to triumph over evil.

Next Week:

Lesson 11:

"Press Forward with a Steadfastness in Christ",

2 Nephi 31-33

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Introduction

Elder Gene R. Cook said: *"Last summer on a lonely stretch of desert highway, we saw ahead what appeared to be the road covered with water. My children would have wagered their entire savings on that fact. But within a few minutes we were at the distant spot and saw not one drop of water. What an illusion! "How many things there are in this life that appear to be one way and all of a sudden are the reverse. ...Satan operates that way. He is the master of illusion. He creates illusions in an attempt to detour, dilute, and divert the power and the attention of the Latter-day Saints from the pure truth of God"* (Ensign, May 1982, 25).



An illusion is something that deceives or misleads. Today we will discuss some illusions that Satan uses to lead people astray and how we can discern between these illusions and the truth. The chapters discussed in this lesson contain powerful prophecies concerning the last days. Nephi prophesied about people who would be deceived by Satan and fall away from the truth. However, he also foresaw the Restoration of the gospel and the blessings that would be given to the righteous. This lesson discusses these prophecies and helps us understand how to avoid being deceived by Satan's falsehoods and remain faithful to the truth. Through the Restoration of the gospel and the teachings of the Book of Mormon, the Lord will cause truth to triumph over evil.

Nephi prophesied of the Savior's ministry among the Nephites.

2 Nephi 26:1-2 Nephi foresaw that before the Savior visited the Nephites, there would be "great wars and contentions" for many generations.

2 Nephi 26:3-7 He prophesied that between the time of Christ's death and His ministry among the Nephites, the wicked would be destroyed.

2 Nephi 26:8 Nephi described those who would be preserved at the Savior's coming as the righteous who hearken unto the words of the prophets, look forward to Christ and the signs of His coming, and are willing to endure persecution. These same qualities are important for us today as we await the Second Coming.

2 Nephi 26:9 The righteous Nephites and their posterity were blessed to see the Savior in person, be healed by him, and be at peace with Him.

2 Nephi 26:10 Nephi prophesied that after four generations of peace and righteousness, his people would meet a "speedy destruction".

2 Nephi 26:10-11 This destruction would be caused by pride, foolishness, and yielding to the temptations of the devil. Pride is such a serious sin because it replaces the humility that is needed to have the Spirit as our constant companion. We must remain humble and be guided by the Spirit if we wish to have lives that please our Heavenly Father.

2 Nephi 26:22 Here, Nephi described the way Satan leads people to destruction. A flaxen cord is made of thin, light strands. Satan uses "flaxen cords" before binding people with "strong cords" so that we stray slightly from the good at first and then, as we lose the Spirit's guidance, we are gradually drawn into deeper and more serious sins.

2 Nephi 26:23-27, 2 Nephi 26:33 Here, Nephi described the way the Savior leads people to salvation by offering an invitation in the light and giving salvation to those who desire it and are willing to be of service to God and their fellowmen.

2 Nephi 26:24 We help others "partake of his salvation" by showing love to them.

2 Nephi 26:29; Alma 1:16 Nephi warned against priestcrafts. Priestcrafts are characterized by men setting themselves up as an example and deceiving men for praise and worldly gain.

2 Nephi 26:30-31; 3 Nephi 18:24; Moroni 7:45-47 Examples of priestcraft are evident in the world today as we see prosperous religious leaders who preach popular philosophies of men instead of the teachings of Christ. We counteract these conditions by having charity--the pure love of Christ and sharing it with our brethren.

Deceptive Illusion

3-D Sidewalk Chalk Art - Julian Beever



President Benson: *"It is not just that the Book of Mormon teaches us truth, though it indeed does that. It is not just that the Book of Mormon bears testimony of Christ, though it indeed does that, too. But there is something more. There is a power in the book that will begin to flow into your life the moment you begin a serious study of the book. You will find greater power to resist temptation. You will find the power to avoid deception. You will find the power to stay on the strait and narrow path."* (CR, Oct 1986)

Nephi testified of the coming forth of the Book of Mormon.

Chapter 27 contains further prophecies about the last days. Events described in **2 Nephi 27:6-35** have been fulfilled in this dispensation.

- a. 2 Nephi 27:9, 6, 19-23** An ancient book would be delivered to a man for translation. This book was the Book of Mormon. The reason the Lord gave for choosing a young, unlearned man to translate the Book of Mormon was that the book had been rejected by the learned and the unlearned had exhibited faith and humility.
- b. 2 Nephi 27:15** A portion of the words of the book would be shown to a learned man, who would ask to see the book. **Joseph Smith-History 1:63-65** The event prophesied in these verses was the showing of manuscript to Dr. Anton. According to 2 Nephi 27:16, the learned man wanted to see the book to get gain

and the glory of the world. The Book of Mormon remains "sealed" from those who seek the glory of the world because it was not sent for worldly amusement, but instead as a guide back to our Father's heavenly home.

- c. 2 Nephi 27:12-14** Witnesses would testify of the truthfulness of the Book of Mormon. According to Ether 5:2-4 (see also 2 Corinthians 13:1), it was important for witnesses to see the plates so that the truth would be established in the mouths of multiple witnesses.
- d. 2 Nephi 27:26, 2 Nephi 27:29-30, 2 Nephi 27:35** The power of the Book of Mormon would be manifest in people's lives. Think about the changes you have seen in your life or the lives of others because of the power of the Book of Mormon.

Nephi prophesied that Satan would spread false doctrines in the last days.

2 Nephi 28:3-9; see also 2 Nephi 26:20-21 Nephi prophesied that in the last days people would deny the power of God and teach false, vain, and foolish doctrines.

Joseph Smith-History 1:5-6, 19, 21 This prideful and foolish condition was prevalent in Joseph Smith's time and is prevalent today.

2 Nephi 28:7-9 In these verses, Nephi described the false teaching that people would use to justify sinning. Rationalizations that people use today to excuse sin include their contentions that "everybody does it" and "it's not a big deal, it's just a little white lie," etc.

2 Nephi 28:8 The dangers of not worrying about "committing a little sin" are that we may lose the Spirit and be led into greater sins while still deluding ourselves into thinking that God will forgive our sins freely.

2 Nephi 28:12-15 Nephi also foresaw that people in the last days would be filled with pride.

2 Nephi 26:10-11 The eventual result of the pride of the Nephites was that they made foolish and sinful choices and were destroyed and consigned to hell. Pride is a stumbling block to our spiritual growth. Think about how you can overcome pride.

2 Nephi 28:13 Nephi taught that pride would lead many to "rob the poor". A desire for "fine clothing" or other luxuries could cause us to neglect the poor if we budget for the luxuries instead of contributing a generous fast offering each month. We can help those who are less fortunate, both physically and spiritually through the fast offering program and by teaching the spiritually needy the gospel.

2 Nephi 28:20, 28 According to Nephi, many people would react with anger to the word of the Lord in the last days. The words of God often "stir [many] up to anger against that which is good" because God's word conflicts with their habits and their way of life.

2 Nephi 28:21 Nephi prophesied that Satan would pacify the people and "lull them away into carnal security". Carnal security is to find security in following the appetites of the flesh or trusting in worldly objects or ideas. The contentment of carnal security may keep us from repentance. The phrase "leadeth them away carefully" (2 Nephi 28:21) suggests that Satan's tactics are cunning and gradual.

Elder James E. Faust shared the following analogy: *"Thomas R. Rowan...said: 'Author and commentator Malcolm Muggeridge once told a story about some frogs who were killed without resistance by being boiled alive in [a] cauldron of water. Why didn't they resist? Because when they were put in the cauldron, the water was tepid. Then the temperature was raised ever so slightly, ...then a bit warmer still, and on and on and on. The change was so gradual, almost imperceptible, that the frogs accommodated themselves to their new environment...until it was too late. The point that Mr. Muggeridge was making was not about frogs but about us and how we tend to accept evil as long as it is not a shock that is thrust on us abruptly. We are inclined to accept something morally wrong if it is only a shade more wrong than something we are already accepting'"* (National Press Club Forum). After sharing this analogy, **Elder Faust** said, *"This gradual process was foretold by ancient prophets"* (Ensign, May 1989, 32).

Gospel Doctrine Notebook

Record your thoughts on the teachings of Nephi as discussed in this lesson.

- Consider how the battle between good and evil continues today. What deceptive illusions or weapons is Satan using in this battle?
- How can you shield yourself from those weapons and illusions?

2 Nephi 28:22 Nephi described how Satan would "flatter" some people by telling them that there is no hell and no devil. Satan wants us to believe that there is no devil and no hell because if that is true, there would be no punishment for sin and we could do whatever we please without fear of punishment.

2 Nephi 28:24 Studying the Book of Mormon can help us be spiritually alert and avoid becoming "at ease in Zion".

Nephi taught about the importance of the Book of Mormon.

2 Nephi 29:3; see also 2 Nephi 28:29 Some people in the last days will reject the Book of Mormon by saying that the Bible is all the word of God that they need.

2 Nephi 29:4-14; see also 2 Nephi 28:30 We should study the Book of Mormon in addition to the Bible so that we gain precept on precept and develop a complete knowledge of God's laws and ordinances and the plan of salvation.

Conclusion

Through studying the Book of Mormon and living the gospel, we will gain the power to avoid Satan's deceptive illusions and be guided as we strive to stay on the strait and narrow path. Study the Book of Mormon individually and with your family so that you may receive the blessings the Lord has promised to the righteous.

President Ezra Taft Benson said: "*The Book of Mormon exposes the enemies of Christ. It confounds false doctrines and lays down contention. (See 2 Ne. 3:12. [2 Nephi 3:12] It fortifies the humble followers of Christ against the evil designs, strategies, and doctrines of the devil in our day. The type of apostates in the Book of Mormon are similar to the type we have today. God, with his infinite foreknowledge, so molded the Book of Mormon that we might see the error and know how to combat false educational, political, religious, and philosophical concepts of our time*" (Ensign, May 1975, 64).

Nephi prophesied that the Book of Mormon would be successful in bringing the Gentiles (2 Nephi 30:3), the posterity of Lehi (2 Nephi 30:3-6), and the Jews (2 Nephi 30:7) to a belief in Jesus Christ as the Savior. These prophecies are beginning to be fulfilled in our dispensation through our extensive missionary program.

Deceptive Illusions

Take a very close look at these images.

What do you see?

