

## **Introduction to 3 Nephi 4**

### Elements of Gadianton Conspiracy

1 Once again we clearly see the fundamental elements of secret combinations and why they succeed or fail. Note the desperate circumstances in which the robbers are placed when there is nothing left to rob. Hugh Nibley has divided his analysis of the Gadiantons (and like societies) into four parts, as follows:

#### “Objectives

“1) ‘Power and gain,’ the two being interactive: power wins gain and gain wins power for whoever has either. 2) Control or overthrow of the government; using political office ‘to rule and do according to their will, that they might get gain and glory...’ (Helaman 7:5.)

#### “Methods

“1) Secret agreements between individuals and groups. The Gadiantons are essentially an underground movement. 2) Assassination. These two things, ‘secret combinations’ and ‘that men should shed blood’ have been forbidden by God ‘in all things... from the beginning of man.’ (Ether 8:19.) 3) ‘Payola’: Akish did offer them money...’ (Ether 9:11); ‘... letting the guilty... go unpunished because of their money...’ (Helaman 7:5.) 4) Skillful propaganda and public relations: ‘... flattering words...’ 5) The hate campaign: a steady output of charges, accusations, and rumors, in the manner of Amalickiah: accuse—always accuse. ‘Eagerness to accuse is from the devil.’ (Brigham Young.) 6) Intimidation: ‘breathing out many threatenings...’ operating ‘by the hand of secrecy,’ wearing fearsome disguises. (3 Nephi 4:7.) 7) Showmanship, e.g., the picturesque uniform and romantic appeal to the young. (3 Nephi 1:29.) 8) Tight control of members—death penalty for betrayal. (Ether 8:14, Helaman 1:11.)

#### “Attitude

‘1) The Gadiantons were totally partisan, the laws and interests of the combination taking priority over all other laws and interests. 2) All were ambitious, hence the labor for power and gain: Cain is the type and model. 3) The combinations were highly competitive, feuding fiercely among themselves. 4) They sought to project a noble image, with much talk of rights and wrongs, high courage and upright character. (The letter to Lachoneus.) 5) They professed piety and religion, swearing their forbidden oaths not by the demons but ‘by the God of heaven...’ (Ether 8:14), ‘...by their everlasting Maker...’ (Helaman 1:11.) 6) They were paranoid, always attributing their troubles to the wickedness of others; never the aggressors, they are constantly seeking to avenge their wrongs. Vengeance is their watchword.

#### “Ecology

‘1) They flourish best in an affluent business society, and wither in times of poverty. 2) They crystallize around ambitious individuals. 3) They readily coalesce with kingmen, would-be nobility, great families, ambitious local officials, and rapacious Lamanite overlords, i.e., with all who are opposed to popular government among the Nephites. 4) They have destroyed every

civilization in the New World in which they have been able to thrive. 5) They cannot thrive or even survive without the acceptance and encouragement of the society in general. Being predatory and non-productive, i.e. parasites, they must have a complacent society to host and support them. Such a society is one which accepts as desirable the Gadianton goals of power and gain.”

Hugh Nibley, *Since Cumorah: The Book of Mormon in the Modern World*, pp. 407-8.

### **3 Nephi 4: 4**

#### *Food Storage*

2 For years we have been counseled to have on hand a year’s supply of food. Yet there are some today who will not start stoning until the Church comes out with a detailed monthly home storage program. Now, suppose that never happens. We still cannot say we have not been warned. Should the Lord decide at this time to cleanse the Church—and the need for that cleansing seems to be increasing—a famine in this land of one year’s duration could wipe out a large percentage of slothful members, including some ward and stake officers. Yet we cannot say we have not been warned. You do not need to go into debt to obtain a year’s supply. Plan to build up your food supply just as you would a savings account. Save a little for storage each paycheck.... We urge you to do this prayerfully and do it now. I speak with a feeling of great urgency.... The revelation to produce and store food may be as essential to our temporal welfare today as boarding the ark was to the people in the days of Noah.

*Teachings of Ezra Taft Benson*, pp. 265-266.

3 Perhaps if we think not in terms of a year’s supply of what we ordinarily would use, and think more in terms of what it would take to keep us alive in case we didn’t have anything else to eat... We wouldn’t get fat on it, but we would live; and if you think in terms of that kind of annual storage rather than a whole year’s supply of everything that you are accustomed to eat which, in most cases, is utterly impossible for the average family, I think we will come nearer to what President Clark advised us way back in 1937.

Harold B. Lee, welfare conference address, 1 Oct. 1966; as quoted in Ezra Taft Benson, in Conference Report, Oct. 1973 [Salt Lake City: The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 1973], 91.

4 There is wisdom in having on hand a year’s supply of food, clothing, fuel (if possible), and in being prepared to defend our families and our possessions and to take care of ourselves. I believe a man should prepare for the worst while working for the best...

We must do more to get our people prepared for the difficult days we face in the future.... When the economies of nations fail, when famine and other disasters prevent people from buying food stores, the Saints must be prepared to handle these emergencies.

*The Teachings of Ezra Taft Benson* [Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1988], 263-264.

5 Life is fragile, peace is fragile, civilization itself is fragile. The economy is particularly vulnerable. We have been counseled again and again concerning self-reliance, concerning debt, concerning thrift. So many of our people are heavily in debt for things that are not entirely

necessary. When I was a young man, my father counseled me to build a modest home. Sufficient for the needs of my family, and make it beautiful and attractive and pleasant and secure. He counseled me to pay off the mortgage as quickly as I could so that, come what may, there would be a roof over the heads of my wife and children. I was reared on that kind of doctrine. I urge you as member of this Church to get free of debt where possible and to have a little laid aside against a rainy day...

As we have been continuously counseled for more than 60 years, let us have some food set aside that would sustain us for a time in case of need. But let us not panic nor go to extremes. Gordon B. Hinckley, *Ensign*, Nov. 2001 [Salt Lake City: The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 2001], 73.

6 I remember when the sisters used to say, “Well, but we could buy it at the store a lot cheaper than we can put it up.” But that isn’t quite the answer... Because there will come a time when there isn’t a store. I remember long years ago that I asked a very prominent grocer who had a chain of grocery stores, “How long would your supply of groceries last if you did not have trucks to bring in new supplies?” And he said, “Maybe we could stretch it out two weeks from our storehouses and from our supplies.” People could get awfully hungry after two weeks were over. Spencer W. Kimball, in Conference Report, Apr. 1974 [Salt Lake City: The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 1974], 184-185.

### **3 Nephi 4:10**

7 *Fear or Faith?*

Preparing ourselves and our families for the challenges of the coming years will require us to replace fear with faith. We must be able to overcome the fear of enemies who oppose and threaten us. The Lord has said, “Fear not, little flock; do good; let earth and hell combine against you, for if ye are built upon my rock, they cannot prevail.” \*D&C 6:34). M. Russell Ballard, Conference Report, Oct. 1989, 43; or *Ensign*, Nov. 1989, 34.

8 This is your world. Whether you like it or not, you are engaged in the race of your life. At stake is eternal life—yours. What shall be the outcome? Will you be a leader of men and a servant of God? Or will you be a servant of sin and a follower of Satan? Decisions determine destiny. In the quiet of your study, surrounded by books written by the finest minds of men, listen for and hearken to the Master’s invitation: “...learn of me; for I am meek, and lowly of heart; and ye shall find rest unto your souls.” (Matthew 11:20-30.) Such learning transcends the classroom, it endures beyond graduation, it meets the test of experience. Thomas S. Monson, *Pathways to perfection*, [Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1973], 253.

### **3 Nephi 4: 27-29**

9 “*A Proper Hanging*”

This ritual is similar in underlying thought so Egyptian oaths called execration texts. In such texts, the Egyptians of the Middle Kingdom ritually cursed their enemies by writing their names on bowls or figures of clay and then smashing them. As they broke the bowls or figures they believed they were destroying the power of those whose names were inscribed thereon. The

following is an example of a text written on such a bowl: “All men, all people, all folk, all males, all eunuchs, all women, and all officials, who may rebel, who may plot, who may fight, who may talk of fighting, or who may talk of rebelling, and every rebel who talks of rebelling—in this entire land.”

John A. Wilson, “Egyptian Rituals and Incaantations,” in *Ancient Near Eastern Texts relating to the Old Testament*, ed. James B. Pritchard, 3<sup>rd</sup> ed. (Princeton University Press, 1969), 329.

10 Note that there is a subtle difference in the two rituals—the Egyptians directly cursed the enemy, while in the Book of Mormon the people asked that they might be strengthened through their righteousness in order that they may destroy the enemy.

Terrence I. Szink, *Studies in scripture*, ed. by Kent Jackson [Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1988], 132-133, 138.

### **3 Nephi 4: 33**

11 We hear the words of the Lord most often by a feeling. If we are humble and sensitive, the Lord will prompt us through our feelings. That is why spiritual promptings move us on occasion to great joy, sometimes to tears. Many times my emotions have been made tender and my feelings very sensitive when touched by the Spirit.

Ezra Taft Benson, *Teachings*, 77.

12 This passage contains the principle Lachoneus was trying to teach his people and the message Mormon wanted to convey to us when he wrote this section of the Book of Mormon. The only way to combat the kind of wickedness the Gadianton robbers represented is with the strength obtained through personal and collective righteousness. To overcome the evil power of secret oaths we must make sacred covenants with God and abide by them. For example, above I mentioned my belief that traffickers in illegal drugs represent a modern-day example of the Gadianton robbers. The demand for these drugs must be cut off just as the Nephites cut off the food supply of the army of the robbers. This can be done through obedience to the word of God. Kent P. Jackson, ed., *Studies in Scripture*, Vol. 8: *Alma 30 to Moroni* [Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Co., 1988], 133.