

Introduction to 3 Nephi 7

1 The Book of Mormon is a handbook for safety and refuge in the Lord by means of obedience and sanctification. The Lord's prophets, from the beginning of the world, have warned of the lethal consequences of ongoing, unrepentant sin. Such was the warning of Samuel the Lamanite to the Nephite people as they persisted in their downward spiral into the abyss of prideful worldliness and rebellious self-satisfaction.

Ed J. Pinegar & Richard J. Allen, *Teachings and Commentaries on the Book of Mormon*, p. 422

3 Nephi 7: 2

Tribes

2 Tribes: A social organization or division comprising several local villages, bands, lineages, or other groups and sharing a common ancestry, language, culture, and name.

Webster's New Dictionary

3 It is of interest to note that when the central government was destroyed, the people divided "into tribes, every man according to his family and his kindred and friends" (3 Nephi 7:2)... By the close of the Book of Mormon almost complete anarchy exists. Apparently after AD 400 the people divide into tribes again, for this is the system of government they had when the white man came almost 1,000 years later.

Daniel H. Ludlow, *A Companion to Your Study of the Book of Mormon* [Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1976], 258.

3 Nephi 7: 14

"stone the prophets"

4 If any of you have found fault with the Bishop of your ward, or with the president of your stake, or with the presiding authorities of the Church, go home and repent of your sins, and put your households in order ... I tell you the seed that you sow in the hearts of your children will be hard to uproot. I bear testimony unto you that no man speaking by the Spirit of the Lord will ever criticize the authorities of the Priesthood which God has placed over him, after he has had the privilege of lifting up his hand either to support or not support that man.

John W. Taylor, *Collected Discourses*, 5 April 1895.

3 Nephi 7: 15

Having seen

5 Each of us has spiritual eyes which are the counter-part of our natural eyes. We were first created spiritually and then our bodies were created as the covering of our spirit. We are told that in our first estate we walked by sight. This was through the vision of our spiritual eyes, because we had not yet been given bodies with natural eyes.

All men have spiritual sight, but are not always privileged to use such sight unless quickened by the Spirit of the Lord

The Teachings of Howard W. Hunter, ed. by Clyde J. Williams [Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 2002], 13

3 Nephi 7: 17*Nephi serves with power*

- 6 I would be happier to have my sons effective missionaries than to have them honored in high secular places... For there is no greater work in which to be engaged, and the proselyting work does not end with death, but carries over into the life beyond.

The Teachings of Spencer W. Kimball, ed. by Edward L. Kimball [Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1982], 548.

- 7 As I reflected on the desire of ... priesthood brethren to fulfill their sacred duties, spending the bulk of their time ministering instead of administering, these words of the Savior came into my mind:

“For I was an hungred, and ye gave me meat: I was thirsty, and ye gave me drink: I was a stranger, and ye took me in:

“Naked, and ye clothed me; I was sick, and ye visited me: I was in prison, and ye came unto me” (Matthew 25: 35-36).

Mervyn B. Arnold, *Ensign*, May 2004 [Salt Lake City: The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 2004], 47.**3 Nephi 7: 18**

- 8 “*Angels did minister unto Him*”

It is contrary to the law of God for the heavens to be opened and messengers to come to do anything for man that man can do for himself... You cannot point to anywhere in the scriptures where a messenger has come from the heavens and bestowed upon man something man could do for himself, but angels have come and told men what to do and sent men to do it.

Joseph Fielding Smith, *Doctrines of Salvation* [Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1954], 1:196.

- 9 The Lord is here with us, not in person, but his angels are around us, and he takes [re]cognizance of every act of the children of men, as individuals and as nations. He is here ready by his agents, the angels... to bring most perfect and absolute deliverance unto all who put their trust in him, when they are ready to receive it.... What is the difference between Saints of God and an angel of God? One is clothed upon with mortality, the other has passed through mortality and has received the celestial glory of our Heavenly Father, and is free from the contaminating influences of sin that we have to contend with.... When the Lord commands those invisible beings, shall I say, those who have had their resurrection? Yes, millions and millions more than the inhabitants of this earth, they can fight your battles

Discourses of Brigham Young [Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1954], 41-42.

- 10 If we are to enjoy the protection of ministering angels, we must live worthy of their companionship. You who have been ordained to the Aaronic Priesthood have something magnificent to live up to....

How would you, as one holding the priesthood and as one who is eligible to receive the ministering of angels, indulge in immorality of any kind? Never forget that every girl is a daughter of God. There is something divine within her. She is deserving of respect.

Have fun together, yes. Sing and dance, hike and skate, and enjoy the companionship of wonderful young women who are members of the church and keep its standards. But draw the liner where familiarity comes in...

I want you to be eligible at all times for the guiding, protecting ministering of angels. These angels may be unseen. But that does not diminish their presence or their power. If you are ever tempted to go beyond the limits of propriety, quickly call to mind that you are entitled to the ministering of angels.

Discourses of President Gordon B. Hinckley [Salt Lake City: The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 2005], 2:503-505.

11 The Brethren used to announce at general conference the names of those who had been called on missions. Not only was this the way friends and neighbors learned of the call, but more often than not it was the way the missionary learned of it as well. One such prospect was Eli H. Pierce. A railroad man by trade, he had not been very faithful in the Church, “even had my inclinations led in that direction, which I frankly confess they did not,” he admitted. His mind had been given totally to what he demurely called “temporalities.” He said he had never read more than a few pages of scripture in his life, that he had spoken at only one public gathering (an effort that he says “was no credit” to himself or those who heard him), and he used the vernacular of the railroad and barroom with a finesse born of long practice. He bought cigars wholesale—a thousand at a time—and he regularly lost his paycheck playing pool. Then this classic understatement: “Nature never endowed me with a superabundance of religious sentiment; my spirituality was not high and probably even a little below average.”

Well, the Lord knew what Eli Pierce was and he knew something else. He knew what Eli Pierce could become. When the call came that October 5, 1875, Eli wasn’t even in the Tabernacle. He was out working on one of the railroad lines. A fellow employee, once he had recovered from the shock of it all, ran out to telegraph the startling news. Brother Pierce writes: “At the very moment this intelligence was being flashed over the wires, I was sitting lazily thrown back in an office rocking chair, my feet on the desk, reading a novel and simultaneously sucking on an old Dutch pipe just to vary the monotony of cigar smoking. As soon I had been informed of what had taken place, I threw the novel in the waste basket, the pipe in the corner (and have never touched either to this hour). I sent in my resignation... to take effect at once, in order that I might have time for study and preparation. I then started into town to buy [scriptures].”

Then Eli wrote these stirring words: “Remarkable as it may seem, and has since appeared to me, a thought of disregarding the call, or of refusing to comply with the requirement, never once entered my mind. The only question I asked—and I asked it a thousand times—was: ‘How can I accomplish this mission? How can I, who am so shamefully ignorant and untaught in doctrine, do honor to God and justice to the souls of men, and merit the trust reposed in me by the Priesthood?’”

With such genuine humility fostering resolution rather than defeating it, Eli Pierce fulfilled a remarkable mission. His journal could appropriately close on a completely renovated life with

this one line: “Throughout our entire mission we were greatly blessed.” But I add one experience to make the point.

During the course of his missionary service, Brother Pierce was called in to administer to the infant child of a branch president whom he knew and loved. Unfortunately the wife of the branch president had become embittered and now seriously objected to any religious activity within the home, including a blessing for this dying child. With the mother refusing to leave the bedside and the child too ill to move, the humble branch president with his missionary friend Eli retired to a small upper room in the house to pray for the baby’s life. The mother, suspecting just such an act, sent one of the older children to observe and report back.

There in that secluded chamber the two men knelt and prayed fervently until, in Brother Pierce’s own words, “we felt that the child would live and knew that our prayers had been heard.” Arising from their knees, they turned slowly only to see the young girl standing in the partially open doorway gazing intently into the room. She seemed, however, quite oblivious to the movement of the two men. She stood entranced for some seconds, her eyes immovable. Then she said, “Papa, who was that man in there?” Her father said, “That is Brother Pierce. You know him.” “No,” she said matter-of-factly, “I mean the *other* man,” “There was no other, darling, except Brother Pierce and myself. We were praying for the baby.” “Oh, there was another man,” the child insisted, “for I saw him standing [above] you and Brother Pierce and he was dressed in white.” Now if God in his heaven will do that for a repentant old cigar-smoking, inactive, stern-swearing pool player, don’t you think he’ll do it for you? He will if your resolve is as deep and permanent as Eli Pierce’s.

Jeffrey R. Holland, *However Long and Hard the Road* [Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1985], 7-9.

3 Nephi 7: 21-26

12 *True Conversion*

Each of us has observed how some individuals go through life consistently doing the right thing... When difficult choices are to be made, they seem to invariably make the right ones, even though there were enticing alternatives available to them. We know that they are subject to temptations, but they seem oblivious to it. Likewise, we have observed how others are not so valiant in the decisions they make. In a powerfully spiritual environment, they resolve to do better... Yes they are soon back doing the same things they resolved to abandon...

Sometimes the word *converted* is used to describe when a sincere individual decides to be baptized. However... *conversion* means far more than that... President Marian G. Romney explained conversion: “Converted means to turn from one belief or course of action to another. Conversion is a spiritual and moral change. *Converted* implies not merely mental acceptance of Jesus and his teachings but also a motivating faith in him and his gospel. A faith which works a transformation, an actual change in one’s understanding of life’s meaning and in his allegiance to God in interest, in thought, and in conduct. In one who is really wholly converted, desire for things contrary to the gospel of Jesus Christ has actually died. And substituted therefore is a love of God, with a fixed and controlling determination to keep his commandments’ [in Conference Report, Guatemala Area Conference 1977, 8]....

“Stated simply, true conversion is the fruit of *faith, repentance, and consistent obedience*. *Faith* comes by hearing the word of God [see Romans 10:17] and responding to it. You will receive from the Holy Ghost a confirming witness of things you accept on *faith* by willingly doing them [see Ether 12:6]. You will be led to *repent* of errors resulting from wrong things done or right things not done. As a consequence, your capacity to *consistently obey* will be strengthened. This cycle of *faith, repentance, and consistent obedience* will lead you to greater conversion with its attendant blessings.”

Elder Richard G. Scott, Conference Report, Apr. 2002, 26-28; or *Ensign*, May 2002, 24-25.

3 Nephi 7 – Conclusion

13 Let us now list and briefly describe 14 characteristics which we learn from these references from the book of Helaman and 3 Nephi about secret combinations,

1. Secret oaths: Oaths are sworn in secret.
2. Sworn in God’s name: Ironically, some oaths are sworn in the name of God, the “everlasting Maker” to give them some false “legitimacy”.
3. Goal is to overthrow anyone in authority: One major goal of secret combinations is to overthrow anyone in authority, political or religious.
4. Satan’s program includes murder for gain: The enticement of secret combinations is the same promise Satan made to Cain—you can murder and get gain. Satan’s plan is always the same.
5. Escape punishment: In overthrowing authority figures, secret combinations seek to murder and escape punishment; maybe to demonstrate that Heavenly Father is powerless as a God of power.
6. Disguised as regular, even exemplary, members of society: Secret combinations use the “wolf in sheep’s clothing” principle—they are disguised as regular, even exemplary members of society. For example, just as Satan can appear as an angel of light, these evil groups can appear as harmless and even virtuous on the surface. If the Lord’s people are indistinguishable from the world in appearance and actions, they are in effect helping to camouflage those who are aligned with Satan.
7. Target any who may expose their evil designs: Secret combinations target any group that may expose their evil designs. Thus, prophets are often attacked. Even if it isn’t a physical attack, as President Kimball states, we mentally stone the living prophets by disregarding their counsel (257; see also 1 Nephi 19:7). When we rationalize and argue that the General Authorities are not really in touch with how things really are, we are aligning ourselves with Satan.
8. Strength in numbers: Secret combinations seek strength in numbers. They are the worst pyramid scheme possible! Their sales pitch is the antithesis of “seek ye first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things shall be added unto you” (Matt 6:33). They say: “Take what you can now, through whatever wicked means and establish your kingdom here.”

9. Temporal security through protection and riches: Rather than focusing on the long-term, spiritual consequences of their actions, they promise temporal security—protection and riches. Their slogan might be, “Seek to save your life and get rich, and forget about eternity.”
10. Might makes right: When a majority of the people choose iniquity and align themselves with secret combinations, law and justice are replaced by the law of the jungle—“might makes right”. Right and wrong are not even an issue; all that matters is that you are smart enough or powerful enough to escape punishment. Ironically, the original promises of security last only until factions form within the secret group, and then a person is more vulnerable than before. Thus, not only are eternal blessings sacrificed, but even the temporal; rewards, which had seemed so appealing, are short-lived.
11. Counterfeit sets of tokens and signs: Satan’s covenants are complete with their own set of tokens and signs in imitation of the Lord’s system.
12. Easy acceptance into band: Acceptance into a secret combination is easy compared with acceptance into the Lord’s church. For example, look at the example of teenagers—to be accepted by the drinkers, all they have to do is drink.
13. Darkness: Darkness is a term always associated with the plans of secret combinations; it describes both their means and purposes.
14. As strong as its adherents: Satan’s plan is only as strong as its adherents—‘according as he can get hold upon the hearts of the children of men.’ We possess the power to crush him, while he can only bruise us if we let him.

Victor L. Ludlow, *Secret Covenant Teachings of Men and the Devil*.