

Book of Lehi

Chapter 5

Journey in the Wilderness

(also, Mormon's prophecy of the Apostasy of the LDS Church)

An Abridgment made by Prophet Mormon

Lehi and Ishmael continue their journey in the wilderness. Lehi continues to have visions and revelations. The Lord prepares a compass to guide them in the wilderness. Their sufferings and trials in the wilderness. Laman and Lemuel continue to rebel. Latter day church apostasy foretold.

And it came to pass that Lehi and Ishmael went into a tent together to pray to the Lord and receive inspiration from the Spirit as to where they should go and how they should govern their families while they were traveling in the wilderness towards the land that the Lord had promised unto them.

2 And the Spirit of the Lord spoke unto Ishmael that Lehi should lead their families down into the wilderness in the borders of the sea, which land was prepared with the many provisions that they would need. And Lehi was appointed as the leader of both his family and the family of Ishmael as they traveled in the wilderness.

3 And Ishmael gathered his family together and commanded them to follow Lehi and keep the commandments that he would receive from the Lord concerning them. And he also spake of the righteousness of Nephi, and that Nephi was also chosen by the Lord to lead this people after the death of Lehi. And Ishmael assured his family that if they kept the commandments of the Lord in all things, they would inherit a land of promise that was set aside for their posterity.

4 And Ishmael did these things because he knew that he would soon die and return to the God who gave him life. And he blessed each of his children and admonished them to be faithful to Lehi and also to Nephi. And it came to pass that the children of Ishmael covenanted with their father that they would keep the commandments of the Lord and follow Lehi and Nephi wherever they would lead them.

5 And Lehi received many dreams and visions. And many of them were great and marvelous. Nevertheless, I, Mormon, do not write in this record all of the dreams and visions of Lehi, for they are many. But of one dream I do write in this abridgment. And I write this dream because of its exquisite beauty and symbolic representation of the goodness and the greatness of the love of God. And also because of its prophetic meaning concerning all of the children of men from the beginning of time to the end thereof.

6 For behold, Lehi saw in vision a large and spacious field that representeth the world and the vastness thereof. And Lehi wandered in a dark and dreary place for what seemed to him as the space of many hours—this representing the beginning of the life of Lehi and his transgression and ignorance as a High Priest appointed by the church at Jerusalem.

7 And Lehi prayed for forgiveness in his vision, even that the Lord would forgive him for his many sins and transgressions. And it came to pass that Lehi was introduced into the large and spacious field.

8 And in the midst of this field Lehi beheld a tree whose beauty and wonder surpassed any that he had ever seen before. And the fruit of the tree was delicious and desirous to make one happy— this signifying the gospel of Jesus Christ and the great joy it giveth to him who partaketh of it. And Lehi describeth the fruit as being sweet and most desirable above any that he had before tasted. And the whiteness, or purity thereof, exceeded anything that he had seen before.

9 And as he partook of the fruit of the tree, it brought him great joy, evensomuch that he called to his family that they might also partake of the delicious and desirable fruit. And his family stood at the head of a great river of water—which representeth the temptations and wickedness of the world. And Lehi was forced to cry aloud to his family that they might hear him above the sound of the mighty river running near unto the tree of which he spoke.

Book of Lehi

Chapter 5

Journey in the Wilderness

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10 And it came to pass that his family came forth and partook of the fruit of the tree and rejoiced with him in the taste thereof. But Laman and Lemuel would not heed his voice, nor could they hear him above the roar of the turbulent water.

11 And it came to pass that Lehi beheld a **rod of iron** that extended the entire length of the river and led to the tree. And along the rod of iron was a straight and narrow path that also led to the tree of which he spake—this signifying the word of God and the straight and narrow path that one must follow in keeping His commandments.

12 And Lehi saw many other people pressing forward towards the path and the rod of iron that led to the tree whose fruit was desirable to make one happy. And many people grabbed hold of the rod of iron and pressed forth towards the tree. But as they pressed forward, mists of darkness arose and caused many to become afraid and lose their way.

13 But others he saw pressing forward steadfastly until they came to the tree and partook of the fruit thereof. Nevertheless, after they had partaken of the fruit of the tree, they cast their eyes across the river and lowered their heads in shame.

14 And Lehi beheld the cause of their shame. For behold, Lehi beheld across the river a large and spacious building that was filled with all manner of people, both young and old, male and female. And these people were dressed in fine clothes and accessories, and were pointing their fingers and mocking any who partook of the fruit of the tree.

15 And those who had partaken of the fruit and lowered their heads in shame did cast the fruit that they were eating away from them and fell into forbidden paths and were lost from sight.

16 And Lehi beheld many people pressing forth to gain entrance into the large and spacious building—which is a representation of the pride, and honor, and glory, and prestige of the world. And many others came forth and started out on the straight and narrow path, but were soon lost from sight because of the darkness caused by the mist that arose from the great river. And many were lost in the depths of the river, and also in a great fountain, that was filled by the river.

17 And there were others who came forth and held fast to the rod of iron and paid no attention to the mocking and ridicule of the many people in the large and spacious building. And they came through the dark mists that rose up from the river and also from the fountain. And they came forth and partook of the fruit of the tree and were happy, nevertheless, their numbers were very few.

18 And now I, Mormon, write the things which I have learned from the vision of Lehi, and also from the Spirit who giveth understanding unto all those who obey the commandments of God and honor Him. And the Lord hath commanded me to write somewhat concerning the end of the world and the condition of the world as it hath been presented to Lehi in this glorious vision.

19 For behold, **I have seen the beginning and the end of the world**, having been shown these things and having understood these things by the gift and power of the Holy Spirit. And there are many things that I am forbidden to write, because the Lord shall try the faith of men and give understanding only to those who keep his commandments and have faith in him.

20 Behold, it is sad to report the situation of the children of men and their continued rebellion against the commandments of God and the gospel of His Son, which commandments are given for the happiness of His children. But because the pride and riches of the world entice many of the children of men to discount the commandments of God and deny the Holy Spirit, the whole world lieth in sin and groaneth under the burden of wickedness and unhappiness.

Book of Lehi

Chapter 5

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21 **Behold, I have seen the great wickedness of the last days in which the Lord will set again a rod of iron and establish the path of righteousness that will lead his children to happiness. I have seen the majority of the children of men pursue the wealth and pride of the world more than they seek the Lord and his righteousness.**

22 And because of the deceptions of Satan and his angels, the children of men know not that they are disobeying the commandments of God and wandering in forbidden paths. The mists of darkness are great and cause most of the children of men to lose their way. And those that come unto the tree of life and partake of the fruit thereof are misled by the precepts and pride of men, even until they discard the fruit that will assure them of their happiness.

23 **Behold, the Savior of the world came to the Jews, and also to my fathers, the Nephites, and gave unto them the rod of iron and this straight and narrow path that they should follow, which is His gospel.** And this gospel will cause all those who eat thereof to rejoice exceedingly. **Nevertheless, the church of God in the last days hath become corrupt; yea, the leaders thereof and the condition thereof are like unto the church at Jerusalem at the time that our father Lehi was commanded to leave that great city and go into the wilderness.**

24 *And like the Jews of old, the members of the church of God put their trust in men and deny the literal gospel of Jesus Christ that he gave unto them in a like manner as he gave it unto the Jews and also unto the Nephites. In fine, the members think they are righteous because they are following the counsel of their leaders and performing the ordinances and commandments of the church.*

25 Oh, my beloved brothers and sisters, do ye not understand that it is because of your wickedness that ye have ordinances and commandments given unto you by the church? Do ye not see the turmoil and strife in your lives because ye follow not the gospel of Jesus Christ? Why do ye dress yourselves in costly apparel and mock and ridicule those who are really the humble followers of Christ? Why do ye think money and the pursuit thereof is more important than the gentle commands that the Savior hath given unto you by way of his gospel?

26 *My soul is burdened at this time because I know your fate. I have seen the frustration and turmoil in your hearts as ye try to live according to the commandments of God that are given unto you, which commandments are not of God, but of your church, or in other words, of the leaders of your church.*

27 **Behold, ye have the record of the Jews, and ye will also have this record, which the Lord hath commanded to be written as a second testament of his gospel. And now that ye have these two testimonies of the words of Christ, why are ye so blind that ye will not see?** Yea, what were the words that the Lord spake to my fathers, the Nephites? Were they not the same words that he spake unto the Jews at Jerusalem?

28 *Oh my beloved brothers and sisters, read his words. Ponder his gospel and pray for understanding. Your church meetings, your ordinances, your genealogies, your tithes, your offerings, your temples, your churches, your rituals, and your prayers are not sanctioned by the Lord or His Spirit, because all of these things cause you to reject and deny the true gospel of Jesus Christ. Read the words of Isaiah that the prophet Zenock spoke unto the Jews at Jerusalem and liken them unto yourselves, for your plight is much worse than theirs.*

29 **And now, I, Mormon, do prophesy unto you in the name of the Lord, even Jesus Christ, that these things that I write to you at this time shall be withheld from you until there be found some who are righteous enough to read and understand them.**

30 *For behold, the Lord hath shown me that these things shall be withheld from the children of men because of wickedness. Nevertheless, much of my abridgment of the plates of Nephi will be translated and given unto the world. But these words of prophecy will be taken because of wickedness, and will not be given unto the children of men until the church of God hath become like unto the large and spacious building of which Lehi hath spoken in his vision.*

Book of Lehi

Chapter 5

Journey in the Wilderness

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31 **And at that time, these things shall come forth as a testament against the church of God and its wickedness. And when these things that have been withheld come forth, the righteous of the church shall have these things and understand them and leave that great and spacious building and grasp to the rod of iron that will lead them to the fruit of the tree of happiness.**

32 *Behold, it hath been shown unto me that there are many in the church of God that shall deny these things and claim that they are not the words of God, but the words of the devil to deceive the people of the church. And this they will say because these things shall not come by way of the church of the last days, but shall come by another way that the Lord shall prepare.*

33 **And when ye receive these things, I would ask you to ponder them carefully and pray for the Spirit to bear witness of their truthfulness.** *Compare these words to the words of Jesus Christ, even those that He gave unto the Jews at Jerusalem and also unto the Nephites, who are my ancestors, and who also have denied them and cast them aside causing their own destruction.*

34 Yea, compare the gospel of Jesus Christ to the gospel of your church. Where are the desires of your hearts placed, my beloved brothers and sisters? Doth not your church cause many to suffer because of your pride and your arrogance? Have ye truly tasted of the fruit of happiness of which Lehi speaketh by following the commandments of the church? I say unto you that ye cannot be happy.

35 Yea, there are many of you who have riches and power and the glory of the world, and there are many more of you who pursue after these things. But are these things providing you the sweetness of the fruit of the gospel of Jesus Christ? And again, I say unto you, that these things are not blessings from God. Behold, the Lord doth not bless one of his children so that this child will be able to set him or herself above another, whether it is in riches, or in power, or in glory. But all are the same in the gospel of Jesus Christ.

36 **The church of Jesus Christ should teach his gospel and only those things that he taught when he was ministering unto the people. Anything other than these things is not of his gospel, but is of the precepts and commandments of men.**

37 And now I, Mormon, will proceed with the account of Lehi and his family in the wilderness. Behold, it is my desire to continue to preach repentance to all of those who receive this record and read my writings. Nevertheless, *I know the Lord hath prepared other means whereby he will prepare the righteous for His coming, yea, even for his arrival in all the power and glory of the Father.* And I have been commanded to abridge the record of the Nephites, and so I continue:

38 And it came to pass that when Lehi awoke in the morning he found a ball of curious workmanship outside the door of his tent. And Lehi took the ball in his hands and wondered on its creation and also on its exquisite beauty and craftsmanship, of such he had never before seen.

39 And the ball had two pointers that pointed in a determined direction according to the design of the compass. Also, there were words that appeared on the ball that gave specific directions to the person who held the ball. And when my father Lehi held the ball in his hands, the pointers began to move until they became stationary. And the Spirit of the Lord came to Lehi and commanded him to follow the course in the wilderness directed by the pointers in the ball.

40 And Laman took interest in the curious ball and took it in his hands to examine its beauty and curious workmanship. And immediately the pointers began to spin and would not come to rest at any given direction. And when Laman gave the ball again to Lehi, the pointers once again pointed steadfastly in the direction that they should go.

Book of Lehi

Chapter 5

Journey in the Wilderness

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41 And it came to pass that Lehi led his company into the wilderness according to the directions of the ball. And they carried seeds of every kind so that they could plant the seeds when they came to the land where the Lord would lead them. Nevertheless, they were not able to stay in one place long enough for them to plant the seeds and partake of their harvest.

42 And the Lord commanded Lehi not to make any fire in the wilderness; for he was warned by the Lord that there was an army of men sent from Jerusalem in search of Zoram and the brass plates, and any fire might lead the army to them. And Lehi and his family and Ishmael and his family ate their meat raw in the wilderness. And the Lord blessed their meat and made it sweet to the taste.

43 And it came to pass that Sariah gave birth to a son. And they called his name Jacob. And Sariah gave birth to another son in the wilderness, and they called his name Joseph. And Sariah bore these two sons to Lehi in the wilderness without the comforts that she was accustomed to at her home in Jerusalem. And the Lord blessed Sariah and her daughters, and also the wife of Ishmael and her daughters with much strength and stamina, even so much that they were strong like unto the men with whom they journeyed, and this because of the raw meat that they did eat.

44 And Nephi and his brothers took the daughters of Ishmael to wife. And Zoram was also married to a daughter of Ishmael. Thus were the families of Lehi and Ishmael divided. Yet, they had everything in common according to the commandments of the Lord. And they also followed the commandments and directions that Lehi received from the Spirit, and also from the ball which directed them into the most fertile parts of the wilderness where they could find an abundance of food.

45 And it came to pass that they traveled many days in the wilderness before they pitched their tents and rested for the space of a few days. Nevertheless, the Lord commanded Lehi to continue to travel until they came to a land bordering the seashore, which they called Bountiful.

46 And there were many times when food was scarce. And during these times Laman and Lemuel and some of the children of Ishmael began to murmur because of the hardness of their travels and their afflictions in the wilderness.

47 And Ishmael grew old and died in the wilderness. And the children of Ishmael began to complain against Lehi because of the loss of their father.

48 And Lehi began to murmur against the Lord also. And when Lehi doubted the Lord, the pointers on the ball stopped working and no steady direction could be found. And the families wandered aimlessly for many days in the wilderness.

49 And it came to pass that they had eaten all of the provisions that they had with them, and also the men were unsuccessful in their attempts to hunt wild game.

50 And their murmurings became exceeding. And the murmurings of Lehi became more frequent before the Lord. But Nephi stayed faithful and full of trust in the Lord. And he stood forth and rebuked his father with the gentleness and respect that he was commanded to give unto his father. And Nephi asked his father to repent of his murmurings and take the ball again in his hand and ask the Lord to point the directors where he must go to hunt for food.

51 And it came to pass that Lehi humbled himself before the Lord and repented of his murmurings. And Lehi took the ball into his hands and the pointers began to work and to point in a steady direction where Nephi was to go in search of food.

Book of Lehi

Chapter 5

Journey in the Wilderness

(also, Mormon's prophecy of the Apostasy of the LDS Church)

An Abridgment made by Prophet Mormon

52 And it came to pass that Nephi was successful in acquiring enough food for everyone. And this brought more faith and joy to the families of Lehi and Ishmael.

53 And the Lord chastised Lehi for his murmurings and commanded him to look to the ball for directions always. And the Lord commanded Lehi to remain faithful always and keep his commandments in all things, and if he would do these things, his family would never again want for anything.

54 And there appeared on the ball writing from time to time. And this writing gave instruction to Lehi in the ways of the Lord. Nevertheless, **the pointers or the written directors would not work without faith and adherence to the commandments of the Lord.**

55 And it came to pass that Laman and Lemuel and their wives and one of the sons of Ishmael did rebel and murmur exceedingly against Lehi and Nephi because of their afflictions in the wilderness. And they were desirous to return to the land of Jerusalem. But Nephi attempted to reason with them to no avail. And Laman and Lemuel began to stir up the hearts of the others to anger against Nephi and their father, evensomuch that they sought once again to take the life of Nephi and also the life of their father Lehi.

56 And the Lord knew of the hardness of the hearts of Laman and Lemuel. And the Lord also knew that without his divine help, Laman and Lemuel would accomplish their design and kill their father and their brother.

57 And the Lord spoke forth from the heaven and caused the earth to shake around where Laman and Lemuel stood. And they fell to the ground, and also many of the others who stood next to them.

58 And the Lord spoke unto them, saying: Laman and Lemuel why have ye cursed your brother and your father and sought to take away their lives? Know ye not that I chose these? And I have chosen them to lead this people to a land of promise which I have kept from the knowledge of the rest of my children that it might be a land of promise unto those who serve me and keep my commandments.

59 Behold, I have sent an angel unto both of you and ye have heard the angel speak unto you. Behold, ye have felt the power of my Spirit that your younger brother doth possess. Yet, ye still doubt my commandments and ye seek to take away his life. Yea, I have chosen him to rule over thee, and this because of his righteousness.

60 And now I say unto you, *if ye put forth your hand to slay my servants, I will smite you even to the earth from whence ye were made, and ye shall be no more.*

61 And now ye have heard my voice, and a commandment I give unto you that ye shall follow the counsel of your father, and also of your younger brother, and ye shall be saved. But if ye continue to deny me and my power, which both of them have in abundance from me, ye shall be destroyed; and if your posterity shall deny me they shall be cursed throughout all generations of time and throughout all eternity. And thus have I commanded it.

62 And it came to pass that when Laman and Lemuel received strength again that they might stand, they repented of the things that they had done and also of the things that were in their hearts. But they continued to deny the Spirit of the Lord and believe that Nephi had an evil power that they could not understand. Yet they feared Nephi and also their father. And their fear was for their own lives and not for the salvation of their souls.

63 **And now I, Mormon, being commanded by the Spirit, give an explanation of the compass that was given unto Lehi and his family to guide them in the wilderness.**

Book of Lehi

Chapter 5

Journey in the Wilderness

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64 *For behold, all of the mysteries of godliness are given unto those who worship him and obey his commandments.* But to others are given signs and symbols and representations that are not easy to understand; and this the Lord hath done because of the hardness of their hearts and their lack of faith in understanding the promptings of the Holy Spirit, which are given to all of his children equally.

65 And because of these signs and symbols and representations, many of his children stumble and fall, and many are led away by the enticings and the promptings of the devil, whose only desire is to confuse and deceive all that shall give heed unto him.

66 **For behold, the compass that was given unto Lehi is like unto the Spirit of God who giveth instruction to those who are faithful and heed his commandments and warnings.** And those that do not heed the commandments of God, whether they are written commandments that can be read, or commandments given unto them by the power of His Spirit, shall not receive directions from the Spirit during the course of their lives.

67 **Therefore, the compass is like unto the Holy Spirit that leadeth the faithful throughout their course in life. And this Spirit is always with them as long as they heed the commandments and warnings that it giveth unto them.**

68 And those who do not heed the promptings of the Holy Spirit will be left unto themselves. And these shall wander throughout their lives as Lehi and his family wandered—aimlessly and helplessly—when they had not the compass of the Lord to guide them.

69 And now, I, Mormon, give unto all those who shall read these things some counsel and warning pertaining to those things that are received through the gift of the Holy Spirit, like unto those things which were written upon the compass that the Lord prepared for Lehi and his family.

70 **Behold, the Lord hath caused his gospel to be written so that there can be no confusion among men as to its meaning.** *Nevertheless, there shall be many, who, being deceived by the devil, shall prophesy and command those things that are not revelations from God, as if they were.*

71 For this reason the Lord hath commanded me and others, who were eyewitnesses to his life and ministry, to only record those things which are most pertinent to his gospel.

72 And this gospel shall be written the same in this record as well as it is written in the record that shall come forth from the Jews.

73 **And with these two records shall all heresy and false doctrine be confounded. Behold, no revelation that cometh forth from the mouth of God by the power of His Spirit shall contradict or add to the words that Jesus spoke both to the Jews at Jerusalem, and also to the Nephites and Lamanites that were spared in the land of Bountiful.**

74 **And again I say unto you, search these words and live by them. For behold, only in them shall be found the true commandments and counsel of God.**