

SETTING THE STAGE FOR FREEDOM

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Great are the promises concerning this land of America. We are told unequivocally that it “is a choice land, and whatsoever nation shall possess it shall be free from bondage, and from captivity, and from all other nations under heaven, if they will but serve the God of the land, who is Jesus Christ” (Ether 2:12). This is the crux of the entire matter—obedience to the commandments of God.¹

—Gordon B. Hinckley

Babylon was an ancient kingdom of the Tigris and Euphrates river valley and a symbol of pride and spiritual wickedness in the scriptures. The Book of Mormon begins with the kingdom of Babylon administering the deserved consequences to the kingdom of Judah for the spiritual Babylon that prevailed in Jerusalem. The Book of Mormon begins with a family that is led away by the “hand of the Lord” from the destructive promises of a spiritual and physical Babylon. Their journey of deliverance was only to end a thousand years later by the fulfillment of the same promise of destruction, because the culture ultimately embraced the same spiritual delicacies of Babylon from which they fled. The Book of Mormon explains why religion and freedom are so interconnected and intertwined one with another. The “real” reasons that freedom is lost and nations fall is a discussion that has been plaguing historians for centuries, which has resulted in countless numbers of books that accomplish little. Freedom is the goal of every people, and the chapters that follow will set the stage for the need for *faith* to ensure divine protection and the promise of prosperity.

The City of Babylon

Babylon was the great city and city state of the ancient Near East, and became the “city of cities.” For a time she ruled from Mesopotamia to Egypt, and all the nations of the Fertile Crescent. According to Herodotus, the Greek historian, Babylon was built ‘square’ with a circumference of 56 miles, while the walls were 365 feet tall, and over 85 feet thick. One of the wonders of the world—the hanging gardens of Babylon—were known and talked about throughout the ancient world.² The great river Euphrates ran through the city, giving life to an otherwise desert wasteland.

Tradition ties the city of Babylon to the Tower of Babel, the first great city after the flood. Babel was founded by Nimrod, a grandson of Ham who was the son of Noah. The scriptures tell us that

¹ Gordon B. Hinckley, “The Times in Which We Live,” *Conference Report*, October 2001.

² Herodotus, *The Histories*, A.D. Godley, Ed., 1:178. Text can be read online at <http://www.perseus.tufts.edu/hopper/text?doc=Perseus:text:1999.01.0126:book=1:chapter=178>

Ham married into a line that could not have the “rights to” and “rites of” the priesthood (Abraham 1:21–27). Tradition and scripture teach that Ham “saw the nakedness of his father” (Genesis 9:20–23), stealing Noah’s priesthood garment. Ham gave the “garment of the priesthood” to his son, because they were of “that lineage by which he could not have the right of Priesthood” (Abraham 1:27).³ Believing that the garment held the rights of the priesthood, the garment passed through the descendants of Ham until Nimrod, who obtained the garment and knew of the ordinances of exaltation (the endowment), which are the “blessings of the fathers.”

Mocking the true priesthood of God and the “government of Ham, which was patriarchal” (Abraham 1:25–26), Nimrod used these ordinances of the endowment, along with the “garment of the priesthood” to proclaim himself god and king of this earth. Nimrod, like Pharaoh, used these ordinances of exaltation as a coronation ceremony, taking upon himself the title of “Son of God,” thinking to replace him whose right it is to reign on earth and in heaven. With these ordinances and feigned authority, he claimed himself to be the “prophet, priest and king” over the people. Building the Tower of Babel, Nimrod reconstructs, and ascends, the sacred “primordial mound,” where only the God of Creation may stand, “saying in his heart, I will ascend into heaven, I will exalt my throne above the stars of God: I will sit also upon the mount of the congregation, in the sides of the north: I will ascend above the heights of the clouds: I will be like the most High” as does Satan (Isaiah 14:13–14).

Nimrod is the epitome of Satan. With usurped authority, he misused and adjusted the “endowment of power” and the ordinances of the “firstborn” that symbolically and ritually exalt man into the presence of God. Nimrod turned these sacred ordinances into a temporal and imposing ceremony that would glorify him in the eyes of mankind, making himself the “Son of God” on earth, and a king and ruler (that was not a patriarch) over the known world. The self-proclaimed honor and pride of Nimrod is reflected in all evil and spiritual wickedness (D&C 133:14), and is patterned after and under the direction of Lucifer, the son of the morning. The city of Nimrod was the glory of the nations, the pride of the world, and represented the worldliness of the “great and spacious building” that Lehi saw in his vision of the tree of life (1 Nephi 8:26–27, 35–36). After the flood of Noah, this “mystery Babylon” (Revelation 17:5), or “Babylon the great,” was the first seat and center of the false powers and priesthoods of Satan and Nimrod. It was the city where mortal man—in cooperation and in conjunction with Satan himself—thought to overthrow the Father and the Son of God. This city of antiquity became the earthly embodiment and scriptural symbol of the “pride of man,” and the source and center of evil. Just as Jerusalem personifies the “Holy City, Mount Zion” and “*har el*, the Mountain of God,” Babylon the “great city,” on the other hand represents “the mother of harlots,” the “mother of abominations,” the “whore of all the earth,” the “great and spacious building,” and the pride of the world (Revelation 17, 18).

The history of the world, from beginning to the end, is a record of the war that rages between the righteous and wicked, between love and enmity, between the sons of God, the sons of men, and the sons of perdition. This war is a conflict that is fought collectively and individually: a conflict between humility and pride, the worldly war between the spiritual and economic philosophies of Zion and Babylon.

The Philosophies of Babylon and Zion

³ Hugh Nibley, *Mormonism and Early Christianity*, edited by Todd M. Compton and Stephen D. Ricks [Salt Lake City and Provo: Deseret Book Co., Foundation for Ancient Research and Mormon Studies, 1987], 366. See also Hugh Nibley, *Ancient Documents and the Pearl of Great Price*, edited by Robert Smith and Robert Smythe, Lecture 23, 13.

A simple chart is presented to help understand some of the basic philosophies of Babylon and Zion that are found in scripture, especially the Book of Mormon.

	God and Zion	Satan and Babylon
Motive	Consecration	Personal Gain
Justification	Love	Competition
Method	Upheavals of Nature	Violence
Virtue	Repentance	Denial of Guilt
Power	Conversion by Choice	Compulsion
Truth	Seeking for Continual Light and Truth	Deception and Control of Knowledge

Connected to the philosophies of Zion are the laws and covenants that make them effective in one's life. The covenants, commandments, and laws of Zion help "put off the natural man," changing character and becoming a saint. The laws of Zion must become internal and intrinsic character traits for Zion to exist in the heart of the individual before it can then move into the community.⁴ The laws of the Celestial kingdom are committed also by oath and covenant, that through continued diligence, a change of character takes place, creating a self-existing nature that will love God and love one's fellow man. The laws of Zion include covenants made in the Latter-day temples, and each of these laws and covenants are in direct opposition to the laws and philosophies of Babylon.

But behold, they have not learned to be obedient to the things which I required at their hands, but are full of all manner of evil, and do not impart of their substance, as becometh saints, to the poor and afflicted among them;

And are not united according to the union required by the law of the celestial kingdom;

And Zion cannot be built up unless it is by the principles of the law of the celestial kingdom; otherwise I cannot receive her unto myself. (D&C 105:3–5)

If Zion is to exist it cannot be by constraint, compulsion, or commandment (D&C 121:34–37); it must be internal—a nature and character achieved by true conversion. If a people are forced by commandment or economic situation to live the Law of Consecration, it is a failure. Charity, the pure love of Christ, is the love that makes God, God. Obedience is duty; however, charity is not a commandment, but a character trait rather than a tax rate. When the love of God and our fellow man becomes our nature, an exalting change begins to take place. Programs are for the unconverted. The person whose nature and character is synonymous with the "pure love of Christ" is endowed by choice with the love that makes God, God. Charity requires no thought, no program, no schedule, no purpose, and expects no return.

⁴ *Journal of Discourses* 1:245. President Brigham Young said to "begin and make Zion in our own hearts, and then extend it to our neighborhoods, and so continue until the Lord shall reign upon the earth." See also Monte S. Nyman and Charles D. Tate, Jr., eds., *Fourth Nephi through Moroni: From Zion to Destruction* [Provo:BYU Religious Studies Center, 1995], 216.

Spiritual Babylon

In 2 Nephi 28, Nephi taught of the philosophies of Babylon within the world of religion. The corruption of religion lies in the building up of churches for gain and popularity (v. 3–20). Nephi stated in this chapter that “others” Satan will pacify and lull them into carnal security to say “all is well in Zion; yea Zion prospereth, all is well” (v. 21). Nephi taught that a sign of apostasy is the feeling that “all is well in Zion.” This entire chapter should be read to better understand the relationships of religions to the truth, so that one can take caution to not to be lulled into the “security” and belief that this chapter is only about the members of “other churches.” Who can proclaim the call that “all is well in Zion,” but Zion itself? Nephi also addresses the churches of the last days:

For the time speedily shall come that all churches which are built up *to get gain*, and all those who are built up *to get power over the flesh*, and those who are built up to become *popular in the eyes of the world*, and those who seek the *lusts of the flesh and the things of the world*, and to do all manner of iniquity; yea, in fine, all those who belong to the kingdom of the devil are they who need fear, and tremble, and quake; they are those who must be brought low in the dust; they are those who must be consumed as stubble; and this is according to the words of the prophet. (1 Nephi 22:23)

Pride is the sin of the Book of Mormon. The manifestation of that pride is always the inequality of man. The Doctrine and Covenants teaches that the sin of the world is related to this inequality: “But it is not given that one man should possess that which is above another, *wherefore the world lieth in sin.*” (D&C 49:20). One great message of the Book of Mormon is that of a fallen people and the chosen lifestyle and religious thought which led to their downfall and destruction. As he views this history through prophetic eyes and the scriptural record, Mormon, the editor of the Nephite record, revealed the cause of the fall of the Nephite nation. Because of the enticements and doctrines of Babylon, the Nephite culture fell, as did the kingdom of Israel and the kingdom of Judah as revealed in the Bible. Mormon’s editorial outline of the cultural characteristics that produced the individual attitudes which led to their condemnation is seen in these few verses:

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;

For there were *many merchants in the land, and also many lawyers*, and many officers.

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.

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.

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.

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. (3 Nephi 6:10–15)

Using these few verses, the cultural description is listed below. Following these ten characteristics are the four individual attitudes that led to the great and final destruction the Nephite nation, a people who had, knew, and understood the gospel. The just quoted verses explain that “when” the collective culture was founded on Babylon, it had these 10 basic traits found in individual attitudes:

- Disputations among the people
- Lifted up unto pride
- Many merchants and lawyers
- Boastings because of their exceedingly great riches
- Because of these riches there were “great persecutions”
- People began to be “distinguished by ranks”
- All according to their riches
- And according to their chances for learning
- Returning railing for railing
- There became a great inequality in all the land.

Mormon explained in few words (v. 15) that which was responsible for the fall of the great Nephite culture and civilization: it was the individual attitudes toward socioeconomic values and morals in their relationship with God and their fellow man. These particular attitudes are condensed into four key issues by the prophet Mormon. These four elements are found in the hearts and minds of the individuals, which will create the collective and cultural character mentioned in the previous verses. Mormon lists the same sins in the last days upon this promised land, as does Nephi the son of Lehi. These four character traits lie at the heart of the individual Babylon, which then inspires the cultural Babylon. They are

- Being puffed up with pride.
- Being tempted to seek for power and authority.
- Being tempted to seek for riches.
- Being tempted to seek the vain things of the world.

The scriptures explain clearly the differences between Babylon and Zion. The philosophies of each are in opposition—one centered on the satisfaction of the individual will (called pride), and the other is centered on the submission of one’s individual will to the will of God (called humility). True humility is submitting to His ‘perfect will’ rather than his ‘permissive will.’ Righteousness is when the individual will becomes the same as the will of God.

Prophetic visions are most often about the peoples of the earth, and the responsibilities that a prophet might have regarding them (Moses 1:8; 7:45); yet, many prophets have the privilege of seeing the Lord’s work from the beginning to the end as recorded in scripture (Ether 3:25–26). Included often in this type of vision is the power and influence that Satan will have upon the children of men (D&C 76:28–29; Moses 7; Revelation 12, 13) and how wickedness will spread upon the face of the earth. Because of this “history of scripture,” one key to understanding the

visions of prophets—ancient and modern—is an understanding of the fight between Zion and Babylon.

The hope that should exist in the heart, and the light at the end of the tunnel, is that wickedness will be destroyed (JS–Matthew 24:4). The goal of every dispensation, and the prophets of each and every dispensation, has been to establish Zion—a people who are “pure in heart” and who are of “one heart and one mind,” and “dwell in righteousness; with no poor among them” (Moses 7:18). Every dispensation has failed in the goal of Zion (that is the reason there are dispensations) except for Enoch and Melchizedek (JST Genesis 14:34–36). However, the people on the earth at the time of Enoch were so wicked that “Zion fled” and was taken from the wicked world before the mass destructions that put an end to the wickedness that existed before and during the days of Noah. Every dispensation has failed because of the “secret oaths and combinations,” the pride of mankind that lies at the heart of Babylon, and the church of the devil. Notwithstanding it has been prophesied that the “dispensation of the fulness of times” will usher in the millennial reign of peace and fulfill the quest to establish Zion. The Doctrine and Covenants issues the call to everyone: “Go ye out from Babylon...the midst of wickedness, which is spiritual Babylon” (D&C 133:5, 14).

Many people try to assign the term “Babylon,” or the “church of the devil,” or the “great and abominable church” to one particular organization or institution. The scriptures clearly teach that the “church of the devil” is not an individual entity, organization, or religion, but an *attitude of pride* that exists in the hearts and minds of the natural man or “those who will work wickedness and abomination before” God (1 Nephi 14:4). Nephi is told that “...Behold there are save two churches only; the one is the church of the Lamb of God, and the other is the church of the devil; wherefore, whoso belongeth not to the church of the Lamb of God belongeth to that great church, which is the mother of abominations; and she is the whore of all the earth” (1 Nephi 14:10) and this is “...the great persecutor of the church, the apostate, the whore, even Babylon, that maketh all nations to drink of her cup, in whose hearts the enemy, even Satan, sitteth to reign...” (D&C 86:3). Jacob, the brother of Nephi, explained that everyone has the potential to be part of Babylon: “Wherefore, he that fighteth against Zion, both Jew and Gentile, both bond and free, both male and female, shall perish; for *they are they who are the whore of all the earth; for they who are not for me are against me*, saith our God” (2 Nephi 10:16). Everyone belongs to one church or the other, for there are only two masters: God or mammon. There are “save two churches only” as the Lord explained: two philosophies, two attitudes, and two types of characters. All entities—collective and individual—belong to one church or the other: the church of the Lamb of God, where you love and serve “God with all your heart, and love your fellow man as yourself,” or the church of the devil, where you serve yourself. This verse in 1 Nephi incorporates statements that should make all worry, because all of mankind are in one or the other. There is no middle ground. If *both* feet are not solidly in Zion, your home lies in Babylon.

This life becomes a life of choice—a war of ‘wills’—that of submitting your will to the will of God, or clinging to Babylon seeking your own will in a conscience effort to satisfy your own desires, appetites, and passions, and in return serving yourself as a god. A definition for the word “god” is best explained as the “motivating force in one’s life.” The word “god” could then be defined by anything that might motivate an individual into action. It could be anything that occupies our thoughts and our time. Explaining the motivating forces of those engrossed in pride, the Doctrine and Covenants explained the character traits that make one a citizen of Babylon:

They seek not the Lord to establish his righteousness, but every man walketh in his own way, and after the image of his own god, whose image is in the likeness of the

world, and whose substance is that of an idol, which waxeth old and shall perish in Babylon, even Babylon the great, which shall fall. (D&C 1:16)

For those in Babylon, their god might be wealth, position, or possessions that would be encompassed in the term “pride.” Zion is the opposite. The focus of Zion is not internal, but external. Zion is “charity” which, unlike Babylon, “...suffereth long, and is kind, and envieth not, and is not puffed up, seeketh not her own, is not easily provoked, thinketh no evil, and rejoiceth not in iniquity but rejoiceth in the truth...” (Moroni 7:45). Zion seeks the temporal and spiritual welfare of mankind as our love of God and our fellow man becomes the motivating force of one’s purpose for existence.

Because of the “great and abominable church,” i.e., the wickedness and pride of man, truths have been taken from the original scriptures:

...because of the many plain and precious things which have been taken out of the book, which were plain unto the understanding of the children of men, according to the plainness which is in the Lamb of God—*because of these things which are taken away out of the gospel of the Lamb, an exceedingly great many do stumble, yea, insomuch that Satan hath great power over them.* (1 Nephi 13:29)

The best way to control the masses is the control of information and truth. The calculated withholding of truth can only be for power, authority, and the control of the unsuspecting individual. The control of truth by the pride of wicked men may even place “honorable men of the earth, who were blinded by the craftiness of men” (D&C 76:75) into the “church of the devil” by the lack of truth without any involvement in a specific organization or particular institution. To study the concept and nature of the temporal and spiritual Babylon, 1 Nephi 13 and 14 should be read, along with Revelation 17 and 18, Isaiah 13 and 14, and Jeremiah 50 and 51. The fall of Babylon and the destruction of evil is a topic addressed in scripture with an energy that is often overlooked as just history or simply trials and tribulations of earlier saints. These stories are contained in holy writ that the righteous might learn of the evil designs of conspiring men and how to withstand the fiery darts of the adversary.

From Genesis to Revelation, from 1 Nephi to Moroni, the conflict between Zion and Babylon lies at the heart and purpose of all scripture. All belong to one of the two churches, life is to gain one and lose the other. The blessings and attitudes of Zion may result in the exaltation of mankind, and this cannot be done without the Atonement, the power of God and the exalting ordinances of the holy priesthood. The establishment of Zion must be accomplished in the midst of a wicked world; as the pure in heart are prepared and protected from the powers of a ‘spiritual Babylon.’

It should be remembered when reading scripture that scripture is founded upon the concepts and ordinances of salvation and exaltation, and the goal is to establish Zion in the heart of the individual and collectively among the Lord’s people on the earth. The scriptures detail those attitudes, character traits, and covenants required for this exaltation, along with the plans and designs of Satan, who will relentlessly try to thwart man’s eternal progression. The scriptures contain the details of Zion and its opposite, Babylon. All scripture revolves around and is founded upon these two concepts. History or protology exists in scripture to teach man that there is a way to receive and realize the blessings of the covenants of the fathers that have been promised to the righteous. The historicity of scripture is required to comprehend the future potential of the offspring of God—presenting the relationships, the works, and the covenants of God with the fathers and patriarchs of antiquity. The scriptures provide modern man with a spiritual plan, purpose, and the prospect of exaltation for the future.

Nephi taught that the pride of those associated with this church of the devil is manifested by those who seek to satisfy their desires, appetites, and passions based on the worldly pleasures, which are the “desires of this great and abominable church” (1 Nephi 13:8). This pride is the same as the great and spacious building that Lehi saw in his dream (1 Nephi 8:26–27) and was described as the same as the church of the devil and Babylon:

And the multitude of the earth was gathered together; and I beheld that they were in a large and spacious building, like unto the building which my father saw. And the angel of the Lord spake unto me again, saying: Behold *the world and the wisdom thereof*; yea, behold the house of Israel hath gathered together to fight against the twelve apostles of the Lamb.

And it came to pass that I saw and bear record, that the great and spacious building was *the pride of the world*; and it fell, and the fall thereof was exceedingly great. And the angel of the Lord spake unto me again, saying: Thus shall be the destruction of all nations, kindreds, tongues, and people, that shall *fight against the twelve apostles of the Lamb*. (1 Nephi 11:35–36)

“Babylon” represents the pride and enmity of the world, the great and abominable church of the devil. The desires and pride of spiritual Babylon can be found in the high-towers of governmental, financial, and other institutions, as well as the homes of suburbia and the hearts of men and women alike. In most cases, it is not the institutions that are inherently evil but instead the hearts and choices of those who control the organization. The concept of spiritual Babylon extends into the hearts and homes of members and non-members alike.

The sin of Babylon is that of individual wickedness and pride that creates the character and nature of the individual that eventually will not exalt but damn. This wickedness of Babylon, or church of the devil, is founded upon individual ‘agency’ and not ‘conspiracy.’ The individual wickedness of Babylon continues to exist on the earth. However, it has been checked and controlled by natural disasters, wars, and bloodshed. The destructions that will come upon the inhabitants of the earth and those active in the church of the devil will, it is prophesied, bring about a humility that will leave Babylon a desolate wasteland (see Revelation 17, 18; 2 Nephi 30). The pure hearts and minds that are devoid of pride and enmity, empty of the desires for a personal profit in all things and at all costs, will not support the principles upon which Babylon is founded. Therefore, Babylon will eventually fail and fall.

Zion

Zion—as Enoch established it—is an organization, a state of mind and heart, comprised of individuals who are pure in heart, existing in an organized environment and home where love abounds where there is one heart, one mind, and no poor. Zion is a place where the pure love of Christ exists in the heart of every individual as they love God with all their heart, might, mind, and strength, and are loving and serving their fellowmen as themselves. Zion can be in an individual, a family, or it may exist in a congregation, and eventually may comprise a city. The requirement for all to become Zion is that each person is full of the charity as described by Moroni which ‘suffers long, is kind, and never envies, is not puffed up, nor seeks her own, is not easily provoked, and thinks no evil against any, finds no pleasure in iniquity but is continually seeking for further light and truth, willing to bear all things’ (Moroni 7:45). These are not commandments but character traits. Charity, the pure love of Christ that the pure in heart have, is attained by taking the oaths and covenants of the Temple seriously, and by faithful obedience to the laws and covenants made at the altars of God. This mighty change of heart and character that evolves as we ‘engrave His image upon our countenances’ (Alma 5:14, 19) can only be

accomplished outside of the Temple, in our everyday life and activities. The righteous will live and internalize the laws of sacrifice, the gospel, chastity, and consecration, and turn these covenants and commandments into character traits. The salvation and exaltation of the pure in heart will come by righteous obedience to the covenants entered into, coupled with the ordinances of exaltation. If this love and charity does not exist in the heart of the individual, or find a home in *every* person within a righteous city, the city of Zion cannot exist.

Our spiritual environment is created individually first in our hearts and minds. Then this personal “spiritual environment” in which we choose to live will create our character and personality. By our disposition and choice we will find and purchase a comfortable home either in the city of Zion or in the skyscrapers of Babylon. We cannot be so foolish to believe that we are safe in our salvation while we still have any attachment to Babylon. As Elder Neal A. Maxwell said, “Let us once and for all establish our residence in Zion and give up the summer cottage in Babylon.”⁵ Thus, heaven and hell are created by the choices made in the individual hearts and minds of mankind. “A good man out of the good treasure of the heart bringeth forth good things: and an evil man out of the evil treasure bringeth forth evil things” (Matthew 12:35).

A War of Wills

The philosophies of Babylon and Zion are found throughout the Standard Works. They are seen in the historical narrative within the scriptural text, and are taught in the doctrines of salvation and exaltation. These philosophies, though conflicting in their outcome, are often masked and not easily seen and recognized because of the world in which we live. Rationalizations and excuses often plague and cloud one’s view like the mists of darkness in Lehi’s dream which caused many to lose their way and wander in strange paths (1 Nephi 8:23). The grasp of Babylon can cause many to high dive off the “iron rod” into the “river of filthy water” as they pursue a path to the posh lifestyle of the great and spacious building. The philosophies of Babylon and Zion are simple and all encompassing. These philosophies are a “war of wills” between satisfying the personal will of the natural man (Babylon) versus submitting one’s personal will to the will of God (Zion).

This war is fought in the battlefields of the hearts and minds of mankind, and the flag or standard for which we fight is predicated upon “whom we list to obey” (D&C 29:45). The lines are drawn and individual choice will designate the enemy and ally. As Isaiah said, “He [that] departeth from evil maketh himself a prey” (Isaiah 59:15). The individual “cannot serve God and mammon” at the same time and live in this world having one foot in Zion and the other in Babylon. Life eternal requires a choice: between good and evil, between the principles of the pure in heart or the perilous pride of the world.

This war between righteousness and wickedness is a battle between ignorance and truth and of the flesh against the spirit. Seeking to satisfy personal desires, appetites, and passions (Babylon) besieges the spiritual desire to submit the personal will to the will of God (Zion). Paul, speaking about baptized members of the Church, taught that those

... which are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit. That the righteousness of the law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit. For they that are after the flesh do mind the things of the flesh; but they that are after the Spirit the things of the Spirit. For to be carnally minded *is* death; but to be spiritually minded *is* life and peace. Because the carnal mind *is* enmity against God: for

⁵ Neal A. Maxwell, *A Wonderful Flood of Light*, [Salt Lake City:Bookcraft, 1990], 47.

it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be. So then they that are in the flesh cannot please God. But ye are not in the flesh, but in the Spirit, if it so be that the Spirit of God dwell in you...And if Christ *be* in you, the body *is* dead because of sin; but the Spirit *is* life because of righteousness. Therefore, brethren, we are debtors, not to the flesh, to live after the flesh. For if ye live after the flesh, ye shall die: but if ye through the Spirit do mortify the deeds of the body, ye shall live. For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God. (Romans 8:1, 4–10, 12–14)

This battle is fought in a probationary state as choice, desire, and action work together to develop a character that will transcend mortality, as our own character and spirit become our “own judges” (Alma 41:7), choosing which we shall become: a “son of God,” a “son of man,” or a “son of perdition.” Again, Paul explained that choice and action are required in the battle between the Babylon and Zion of the flesh:

This I say then, Walk in the Spirit, and ye shall not fulfil the lust of the flesh.

For the flesh lusteth against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh: and these are contrary the one to the other: so that ye cannot do the things that ye would. (Galatians 5:16–17)

Character development in this probationary state is mandatory and lies at the center of the gospel of repentance:

...for that same spirit [*character*] which doth possess your bodies at the time that ye go out of this life, that same spirit [*character*] will have power to possess your body in that eternal world. (Alma 34:34)

This worldly war between the destructive force of pride and the exalting power of humility is a war fought individually and collectively in the effort to establish Zion. This is the message of a ‘fallen people’ that was recorded in the Book of Mormon for the latter-day reader. The necessary character traits, attitudes, and the God of the land that must be worshiped to ensure peace, protection, and security in the land of promise are explained throughout the scriptural text from the very beginning to the end of the Nephite era. This promise is found in the editorial comments of Nephi in the Small Plates, as also in those edited by the prophet Mormon. The promise that concerned the prophets are these:

Behold, do ye not remember the words which he spake unto Lehi, saying that: Inasmuch as ye shall keep my commandments, ye shall prosper in the land? And again it is said that: Inasmuch as ye will not keep my commandments ye shall be cut off from the presence of the Lord. (Alma 9:13; see also 1 Nephi 2:20–21)

The prophets following Nephi the son of Lehi understood that these words were written for *every* generation, *every* dispensation, and *every* people who occupied the land. The question that one must ask: “Is the same promise in effect today for those who inhabit that land?” For this purpose, the Book of Mormon contains a “fulness of the Gospel of Jesus Christ” and is a “record of a fallen people.” This history and scripture becomes a *Title of Liberty* to the serious student of the sacred text who reviews the history of the promised land and ‘reads with real intent’ the prophecies and promises of the gospel and land of promise.

The history of the world, daily news, current events, and wars of the world are nothing more than the details of the battle that rages between Babylon and Zion. From the very beginning of humanity, from the first sons of Adam to hear the gospel, the war of wills began and it continues today. There has been and ever will be only one world war—the Great Worldly War that is fought on all fronts—the war between Babylon and Zion.

The Will of God

When it comes to the will of God, it must be remembered there is a “*perfect* will of God” and also a “*permissive* will of God.” An example of the perfect will of God can be seen with the loss of the 116 pages of the Book of Mormon. The Lord’s “perfect will” was that Martin Harris not take the manuscript; however, the continued request resulted in the “permissive will” and the loss of the 116 pages.⁶ Another example is the Law of Consecration as it was given the Church, but through disobedience and “feigned words” (D&C 104:4) it was taken from the church and placed into the Temple for those who are worthy, “willing and obedient” to live up to higher laws (D&C 64:34). Only one “will” has the power to exalt—and that is the “*perfect* will” of God. “For if you will that I give unto you a place in the celestial world, you must prepare yourselves by doing the things which I have commanded you and required of you” (D&C 78:7).

As seen with Adam, he is “obedient unto the commands” he received from the Lord (Moses 5:5). Seeking for additional light and knowledge, with his obedience tested, the angel of the Lord appears to teach him (Moses 5:6). We learn that obedience precedes knowledge (Moses 5:5–6) and then knowledge demands obedience to receive more light and truth. “Therefore, prepare thy heart to receive and obey the instructions which I am about to give unto you; for all those who have this law revealed unto them must obey the same” (D&C 132:3). The perfect will of God is a celestial will, and the permissive will is a lesser will—a lesser law—and will result in a lesser glory, for “...Zion cannot be built up unless it is by the principles of the law of the celestial kingdom; otherwise I cannot receive her unto myself” (D&C 105:5).

Christ, being asked which commandment is the greatest of all, responded that all the law and prophets hang upon only two commandments (Matthew 22:34–40). This would mean that if one could be obedient to these two commandments, we would be obedient to all the others. If upon these two commandments hang all the law, then subsequently, by these two commandments will man be judged. A simple thought process will render one able to recognize that all commandments found in scripture can fall into these two categories: (1) our relationship with God, and (2) our relationship with our fellow man. Cain became the progenitor of perdition as he “harkened not unto God” and questioned, “Am I my brother’s keeper?” John in the New Testament taught: “If a man say, I love God, and hateth his brother, he is a liar: for he that loveth not his brother whom he hath seen, how can he love God whom he hath not seen?” (1 John 4:20). The last commandment the Savior gave before His crucifixion changed that of Matthew 22 from “loving your neighbor as yourself” to one of total commitment of life:

A new commandment I give unto you, That ye love one another; as I have loved you, that ye also love one another.

By this shall all *men* know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another.
(John 13:34–35)

⁶ B. H. Roberts, *History of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 1932–1951*, 1:20–21. (Hereafter cited as *History of the Church*). The account from Joseph Smith reads: “Some time after Mr. Harris had begun to write for me, he began to importune me to give him liberty to carry the writings home and show them; and desired of me that I would inquire of the Lord, through the Urim and Thummim, if he might not do so. I did inquire, and the answer was that he must not. However, he was not satisfied with this answer, and desired that I should inquire again. I did so, and the answer was as before. Still he could not be contented, but insisted that I should inquire once more. After much solicitation I again inquired of the Lord, and permission was granted him to have the writings on certain conditions; which were, that he show them only to his brother, Preserved Harris, his own wife, his father and his mother, and a Mrs. Cobb, a sister to his wife. In accordance with this last answer, I required of him that he should bind himself in a covenant to me in a most solemn manner that he would not do otherwise than had been directed. He did so. He bound himself as I required of him, took the writings, and went his way. Notwithstanding, however, the great restrictions which he had been laid under, and the solemnity of the covenant which he had made with me, he did show them to others, and by stratagem they got them away from him, and they never have been recovered unto this day.” See also D&C 3 and D&C 10.

The individual wickedness of spiritual Babylon will become so great that it will turn upon itself, just as the Nephite history chronicles. This personal iniquity is one of the two evils that led to the downfall of freedom and the Nephite nation. However, the Book of Mormon does speak of organizations with another form of evil that is separate than the concept of a personal wickedness. This is a conspiratorial evil that the prophets of the Book of Mormon commanded latter-day readers to recognize for the essential preservation of freedom, as Jaredite history explained (Ether 8:16–25).

Freedoms and the promises connected to the land can be lost because of individual wickedness, or in other words they are lost by “agency.” Another reason freedoms are lost is by “apathy.”