

DROWNING IN SAFETY THE WATERS OF SALVATION

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We trace the hand of the Almighty in framing the constitution of our land, and believe that the Lord raised up men purposely for the accomplishment of this object, raised them up and inspired them to frame the constitution of the United States.¹

—Lorenzo Snow

In all creation accounts the “waters” play a primary role—in cosmos, chaos, and order. Latter-day creation accounts and those found in the Bible teach that there are “waters above the firmament, and waters below the firmament” as recorded in Genesis:

And God said, Let there be a firmament in the midst of the waters, and let it divide the waters from the waters.

And God made the firmament, and divided the waters which *were* under the firmament from the waters which *were* above the firmament: and it was so.

And God called the firmament Heaven. And the evening and the morning were the second day. (Genesis 1:6–8)

The “waters below” and the “waters above” are literal and real, but they can also have a symbolic and perhaps even a physical connection to the salvation of mankind from spiritual Babylon. This chapter will discuss the part that the waters play in the history of those who flee from both the physical and the spiritual Babylon. This discussion will begin with the oldest examples and move forward through time concluding with the “me, here, and now” applications. As in many of the great battles throughout history, the water has been an integral part of the winning and the losing of a war. Even so, the waters play an important part in the history of the battle between Babylon and Zion.

Enoch

Following the murder of Abel by his older brother Cain, spiritual Babylon became rampant along with the establishments of the “secret oaths and combinations” by Satan. The “works of darkness began to prevail among all the sons of men” (Moses 5:55) as the world became more and more wicked. The wickedness was so great that “God cursed the earth with a sore curse, and was angry with the wicked, with all the sons of men whom he had made” (Moses 5:56). One reason that this wickedness became so widespread was the rejection of the gospel and a disbelief in Jesus Christ:

¹ *Journal of Discourses* 14:301.

For they would not hearken unto his voice, nor believe on his Only Begotten Son, even him whom he declared should come in the meridian of time, who was prepared from before the foundation of the world. (Moses 5:57)

As the next dispensation is ushered in, the description of spiritual Babylon becomes even more pronounced because

...the children of men were numerous upon all the face of the land. And in those days Satan had great dominion among men, and raged in their hearts; and from thenceforth came wars and bloodshed; and a man's hand was against his own brother, in administering death, because of secret works, seeking for power. (Moses 6:15)

Enoch and others were called to preach repentance to the people. These “preachers of righteousness...spake and prophesied, and called upon all men, everywhere, to repent...” (Moses 6:23). The Lord spoke of the wickedness in the hearts of the people at this time stating:

...their hearts have waxed hard, and their ears are dull of hearing, and their eyes cannot see afar off;

And for these many generations, ever since the day that I created them, have they gone astray, and have denied me, and have sought their own counsels in the dark; and in their own abominations have they devised murder, and have not kept the commandments, which I gave unto their father, Adam.

Wherefore, they have foresworn themselves, and, by their oaths, they have brought upon themselves death; and a hell I have prepared for them, if they repent not; (Moses 6:27–29)

Even in the midst of wickedness the prophet Enoch began to have success in the teaching and conversion of many people. An enclave of righteous began to grow until a city was established called Zion, inhabited only by those who were pure in heart. “And Enoch continued his preaching in righteousness unto the people of God. And it came to pass in his days, that he built a city that was called the City of Holiness, even ZION” (Moses 7:17–19).

The wickedness of spiritual Babylon continued to increase and the world became even too wicked for the righteous to remain on the earth, and “Zion, in process of time, was taken up into heaven” (Moses 7:21, 23). The phrase “taken up into heaven” in the Hebrew would be connected to the “waters above,” implying that the safety of Zion and the righteous were preserved by their being taken into the “waters above”—the *‘sha-miyim’* spoken of at the time of the creation. The city of Enoch was taken from this earth to the waters above (the heavens, where ever that might be) for the safety and security of those who refused to partake of the wickedness of the spiritual Babylon that was rampant around them.

With Enoch and his people gone, the world continued to grow in wickedness, for “...the wickedness of man *was* great in the earth, and *that* every imagination of the thoughts of his heart *was* only evil continually” (Genesis 6:5). Enoch, while viewing the earth and the evil of mankind, realized that it truly was the great day of Satan’s power as he recorded that “he beheld Satan; and he had a great chain in his hand, and it veiled the whole face of the earth with darkness; and he looked up and laughed, and his angels rejoiced” (Moses 7:26). This wickedness leading up to the dispensation of Noah was such that there would be no chance of anyone becoming righteous because of the iniquity that prevailed on the earth. The attitudes and characters of the people are described in scripture, implying that their nature had become such that abortions were rampant as “they are without affection, and they hate their own

blood” (Moses 7:3). This description continued as the Lord declared “...the earth was filled with violence...it was corrupt; for all flesh had corrupted his way upon the earth...for the earth is filled with violence through them...” Enoch recorded the prophecy from the Lord that “...I will destroy them with the earth” (Genesis 6:11–13). Like in the days of Enoch, spiritual Babylon has increased to such an extent that the righteous few that were left had to be saved from the destruction that was about to come upon the inhabitants of the earth. The Lord declared that the “...fire of mine indignation is kindled against them; and in my hot displeasure will I send in the floods upon them, for my fierce anger is kindled against them...and among all the workmanship of mine hands”—in all the creations and works of God—“there has not been so great wickedness as among thy brethren” (Moses 7:34, 36). It is a merciful act to stop the wickedness that prevailed and provide again an opportunity for the spirit children of God to have a chance of salvation with an opportunity to choose good over evil, something that could not be done before the flood.

Noah

The story of Noah and the flood is familiar with all who have attended a Primary or Sunday School class. Important to this discussion is understanding that the waters of the flood not only acted as the destructive force for the wicked, but also became the saving element for the family of Noah. This escape preserved them from destruction and provided a salvation and a new beginning—a new dispensation—where the gospel could be taught and righteousness begin anew. It was the waters of the flood that provided a release from Babylon and the spiritual wickedness that prevailed at the time of Noah. By water Noah and his family are saved both temporally and spiritually:

And Enoch also saw Noah, and his family; that the posterity of all the sons of Noah should be saved with a temporal salvation;

Wherefore Enoch saw that Noah built an ark; and that the Lord smiled upon it, and held it in his own hand; but upon the residue of the wicked the floods came and swallowed them up. (Moses 7:42–43)

There was a cleansing of the earth from the wickedness of spiritual Babylon as the waters covered the earth “...wherein few, that is, eight souls were saved by water” (1 Peter 3:20). According to scripture, “all flesh died that moved upon the earth, both of fowl, and of cattle, and of beast...and every man...and they were destroyed from the earth: and Noah only remained *alive*, and they that *were* with him in the ark” (Genesis 7:21–23). The power and destructive force of the water destroyed spiritual Babylon and at the same time preserved the righteous within the safety of the Ark, which had been constructed and prepared to save a righteous remnant.

There are in scripture three cleansings that take place by basic elements, all of which are familiar. These destructions of wickedness (or Babylon) comes by water, wind, and fire. These elements are discussed in the life of the righteous throughout the Book of Mormon as it spoke of the “baptism of water,” the “baptism of fire,” and the “baptism of the Holy Ghost” or spirit (2 Nephi 31:13, 14, 17; 3 Nephi 12:1, 19:12; Mormon 7:10). The *water* is obvious, but the word for spirit and Holy Ghost in Hebrew and Greek is the word “*wind*, or air.” *Fire* is a cleansing that is prophesied to come in the end time, for the earth “shall be cleansed with fire” (JST Hebrews 6:7; 2 Peter 3:10). Many might think that the baptism by “fire and the Holy Ghost” is the same event; however, this phrase always uses the conjunction “and,” not “or.” In Moses, the personal baptisms and cleansings are discussed as independent events as the scripture stated:

For by the water ye keep the commandment; by the Spirit ye are justified, and by the blood ye are sanctified. (Moses 6:60)

The sanctifying power of the Atonement may become the refiner's fire to the righteous who exercise their faith unto repentance. The first cleansing by water takes place at the time of Noah, as Noah and his three sons and their wives are saved with the animals on the Ark. It is through the flood waters of death these eight souls remain alive to begin a new life of righteousness.

Since the nature of man seems not to change, Babylon rears herself once again from the remnants of the flood even though Noah "...walked with God, as did also his three sons, Shem, Ham, and Japheth" (Moses 8:27). From these three descend all the families of the earth. The Europeans, the Africans, and the Asians—the three genetic "supergroups" of humanity. Shem, the "great high priest" (D&C 138:41) and patriarch, becomes the progenitor of Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, and their wives—establishing a lineage that would continue with priesthood responsibilities into the dispensation of the fulness of times.

Through the posterity of Ham, Babel—the forerunner of the city and kingdom of Babylon—is established.

And the sons of Ham; Cush, and Mizraim, and Phut, and Canaan.

And Cush begat Nimrod: he began to be a mighty one in the earth.

He was a mighty hunter before the LORD: wherefore it is said, Even as Nimrod the mighty hunter before the LORD.

And the beginning of his kingdom was Babel, and Erech, and Accad, and Calneh, in the land of Shinar. (Genesis 10:6, 8, 9–10)

Nimrod, the grandson of Ham and son of Cush, becomes known as the mighty hunter and the founder of the city called Nimrod according to scripture and tradition, and the kingdom of Babel, which was the predecessor of of Babylon. Abraham taught about the family of Ham and the loss of priesthood blessings to this line because of Ham's wife:

Now this king of Egypt was a descendant from the loins of Ham, and was a partaker of the blood of the Canaanites by birth.

From this descent sprang all the Egyptians, and thus the blood of the Canaanites was preserved in the land.

The land of Egypt being first discovered by a woman, who was the daughter of Ham, and the daughter of Egyptus, which in the Chaldean signifies Egypt, which signifies that which is forbidden;

When this woman discovered the land it was under water, who afterward settled her sons in it; and thus, from Ham, sprang that race which preserved the curse in the land. (Abraham 1:21–24)

Because of Ham's wife, Ham's posterity could not have the priesthood, nor participate in the ordinances that would require an ordination to the priesthood. However, the first Pharaoh understood the righteousness of his fathers and then patterned the government and religion of Egypt after the patriarchal ordinances of exaltation and the patriarchal order of government.

Now the first government of Egypt was established by Pharaoh, the eldest son of Egyptus, the daughter of Ham, and it was after the manner of the government of Ham, which was patriarchal.

Pharaoh, being a righteous man, established his kingdom and judged his people wisely and justly all his days, seeking earnestly to imitate that order established by the fathers in the first generations, in the days of the first patriarchal reign, even in the reign of Adam, and also of Noah, his father, who blessed him with the blessings of the earth, and with the blessings of wisdom, but cursed him as pertaining to the Priesthood.

Now, Pharaoh being of that lineage by which he could not have the right of Priesthood, notwithstanding the Pharaohs would fain claim it from Noah, through Ham, therefore my father was led away by their idolatry; (Abraham 1:25–27)

The descendants of Ham settle two key areas of the Ancient Middle East: the Tigris and Euphrates river valley and the Nile river valley. Ham's two grandsons, Nimrod and Pharaoh, are the founding leaders of the respective nations, each "cursed as pertaining to the priesthood"—unable to become a legitimate patriarch, prophet, priest and king to their posterity. Each grandson of Ham would "earnestly" imitate the ordinances of exaltation to legitimize their right to rule, turning a priesthood endowment of power into a coronation or ceremony of kingship. Each of these nations—Babylon and Egypt—become the "cradles of civilization" as their founders break away from the theocracy of the patriarchal order. Their kingdoms were established by a ritual that, when performed with priesthood authority, would make one a son of God—a prophet, priest, and king to his posterity and unto God. Familiar with these sacred ordinances, these two men without priesthood authority took these sacred rituals and performed them, publicly declaring themselves to be the legitimate son of God on earth and therefore the king over all the people. Consequently, these two kingdoms are considered the first civilizations and are, in scripture, the symbols and metaphors of worldliness and wickedness: Egypt and Babylon.

The Jaredites

Righteousness had a chance to begin anew as the flood waters receded and Noah and his sons begin to multiply and fill the earth (Genesis 9:1). "And the whole earth was of one language, and of one speech" (Genesis 11:1). The Lord knew that because of one language and one speech, wickedness would again become rampant. The Lord stated, "...now nothing will be restrained from them, which they have imagined to do. Go to, let us go down, and there confound their language, that they may not understand one another's speech" (Genesis 11:6–7). And so, under the direction of Nimrod, Babel and Babylon begin again. Yet the Lord prepared a way for the salvation of the righteous remnant as He "...scattered them abroad from thence upon the face of all the earth: and they left off to build the city" (Genesis 11:8). Like Noah before, a righteous family is protected and led away as we learn in the Book of Mormon about Jared, his brother, their friends, and their families:

Which Jared came forth with his brother and their families, with some others and their families, from the great tower, at the time the Lord confounded the language of the people, and swore in his wrath that they should be scattered upon all the face of the earth; and according to the word of the Lord the people were scattered. (Ether 1:33)

Led away from the tower of Babel, the Jaredites travel to the great waters "...and dwelt in tents upon the seashore for the space of four years" (Ether 2:13). It is here that the Lord instructed the Jaredites to prepare to be led to a promised land, saying, "...there will I meet thee, and I will go

before thee into *a land which is choice above all the lands of the earth*” (Ether 1:42). This land is described in-depth by the Lord as well as the promises associated with it:

And the Lord would not suffer that they should stop beyond the sea in the wilderness, but he would that they should come forth even unto the land of promise, which was *choice above all other lands, which the Lord God had preserved for a righteous people.* (Ether 2:7)

After years of preparation, the Jaredites finally “got aboard their vessels or barges, and set forth into the sea, commending themselves unto the Lord their God” (Ether 6:4).

And it came to pass that the Lord God caused that there should be a furious wind blow upon the face of the waters, towards the promised land; and thus they were tossed upon the waves of the sea before the wind.

And it came to pass that they were many times buried in the depths of the sea, because of the mountain waves which broke upon them, and also the great and terrible tempests which were caused by the fierceness of the wind.

And it came to pass that the wind did never cease to blow towards the promised land while they were upon the waters; and thus they were driven forth before the wind.

And thus they were driven forth; and no monster of the sea could break them, neither whale that could mar them; and they did have light continually, whether it was above the water or under the water.

And they did land upon the shore of the promised land. And when they had set their feet upon the shores of the promised land they bowed themselves down upon the face of the land, and did humble themselves before the Lord, and did shed tears of joy before the Lord, because of the multitude of his tender mercies over them. (Ether 6:5–6, 8, 10, 12)

Once again the “waters” become the highway of salvation—“in the midst of the deep”—as the Jaredites are saved from the wickedness of spiritual Babylon. Like the waters that saved Noah, the waters again become a highway in the midst of the deep as the Jaredites flee from Babylon, giving them an opportunity to begin a new life and a lifestyle of righteousness on the promised land. Each time one was spared (Noah and the Jaredites), great faith was required. Faith not only to build the ships needed, but also faith to enter the vessels and begin the voyage through the many waters as they put their lives and the lives of their families entirely in the hands of the Lord. Although the Jaredites in their boats were “swallowed up in the depths of the sea” (Ether 2:25), the water became their protection—their promise of salvation—and the great deep became the waters of life, as the great winds cleansed the earth from Babylon.

The righteous few are always the ones who leave the masses, as can be seen in scripture and church history. “And he leadeth away the righteous into precious lands, and the wicked he destroyeth, and curseth the land unto them for their sakes” (1 Nephi 17:38). Examples of these groups—like the Jaredites, Abraham, Lehi, the Rechabites, the Dead Sea community, and Nephi and his followers—separate themselves from the masses and go into the wilderness. The Puritans and Pilgrims, the early saints of the restoration were required to move westward to Kirtland, Far West, Nauvoo, and then Salt Lake. Faith was essential as their journey required they move to swamps and deserts, places where no one else would want to go. Each time, each move was for the sake of preserving their lives, their families, their religion, and their freedom to worship according to the dictates of their own wills without control or compulsion from man or Babylon.

Moses and Egypt

Synonymous with spiritual Babylon in scripture is the worldly symbol of Egypt. Driven into the heart of Egypt by the famine, the children of Israel survive because their brother Joseph, whom they assumed dead, was miraculously alive and in a position with the power to save his family. In Goshen “the children of Israel were fruitful, and increased abundantly, and multiplied, and waxed exceeding mighty; and the land was filled with them” (Exodus 1:7).

Yet in spite of living in the physical land of Egypt, a Pharaoh rose to the throne who “knew not Joseph” (Exodus 1:8). The influence of the Egyptian lifestyle and worship became prevalent among some of the children of Israel as they began to participate in the “spiritual Egypt” in which they lived. The apostasy and spiritual depredation of the Egyptian religion was displayed during Israel’s sojourn in the wilderness in the making of the “golden calf,” reminiscent of the Egyptian idolatry, and in Israel’s constant cry that it would be ‘better to live in Egypt than die in the wilderness’ (Exodus 14:12).

Born (Egyptian “mses” or Hebrew “moses”) from the waters of the Nile, an Israelite child becomes the adopted son of Pharaoh’s daughter who named him Moses. Eighty years later Moses was a prophet of God, and as such was given the responsibility to go “...unto Pharaoh, that thou mayest bring forth my people the children of Israel out of Egypt” (Exodus 3:10). Once again a separation from wickedness is sought as Moses declared the words of God to Pharaoh, stating, “Thus saith the LORD God of Israel, Let my people go, that they may hold a feast unto me in the wilderness” (Exodus 5:1). The story is familiar to all, as the numerous and severe plagues brought upon Egypt by Pharaoh eventually led to the release of the children of Israel to worship the God of their fathers in the way prescribed by God. Traveling through the wilderness, the children of Israel camped on the shores of the Red Sea between two mountain ranges. “But the Egyptians pursued after them...and overtook them encamping by the sea...and when Pharaoh drew nigh, the children of Israel lifted up their eyes, and, behold, the Egyptians marched after them; and they were sore afraid: and the children of Israel cried out unto the LORD” (Exodus 14:9–10).

The ancient author and historian Josephus shares in his *History of the Jews* some details and insights to the concern of Moses and his prayer to the Lord for the salvation of the children of Israel. Moses, coming to the shore of the Red Sea, takes his rod and calls upon God, saying:

Thou art not ignorant, O Lord, that it is beyond human strength and human contrivance to avoid the difficulties we are now under; but it must be thy work altogether to procure deliverance to this army, which has left Egypt at thy appointment. We despair of any other assistance or contrivance, and have recourse only to that hope we have in thee; and if there be any method that can promise us an escape by thy providence, we look up to thee for it. And let it come quickly, and manifest thy power to us; and do thou raise up this people unto good courage and hope of deliverance, who are deeply sunk into a disconsolate state of mind. We are in a helpless place, but still it is a place that thou possessest; still the sea is thine, the mountains also that enclose us are thine; so that these mountains will open themselves if thou commandest them, and the sea also, if thou commandest it, will become dry land. Nay, we might escape by a flight through the air, if thou shouldst determine we should have that way of salvation.²

With nowhere to go, Israel faces death either by the Egyptian forces or by being pushed into the sea.

² Josephus, Complete Works, Translated by William Whiston, [Kregel Publications, Grand Rapids, Michigan, 1974] 63.

And Moses stretched out his hand over the sea; and the LORD caused the sea to go *back* by a strong east wind all that night, and made the sea dry *land*, and the waters were divided.

And the children of Israel went into the midst of the sea upon the dry *ground*: and the waters *were* a wall unto them on their right hand, and on their left.

And the Egyptians pursued, and went in after them to the midst of the sea, *even* all Pharaoh's horses, his chariots, and his horsemen.

And the LORD said unto Moses, Stretch out thine hand over the sea, that the waters may come again upon the Egyptians, upon their chariots, and upon their horsemen.

And Moses stretched forth his hand over the sea, and the sea returned to his strength when the morning appeared; and the Egyptians fled against it; and the LORD overthrew the Egyptians in the midst of the sea.

And the waters returned, and covered the chariots, and the horsemen, *and* all the host of Pharaoh that came into the sea after them; there remained not so much as one of them.

But the children of Israel walked upon dry *land* in the midst of the sea; and the waters *were* a wall unto them on their right hand, and on their left.

Thus the LORD saved Israel that day out of the hand of the Egyptians; and Israel saw the Egyptians dead upon the sea shore. (Exodus 14:21–23, 26–30)

As a highway in the midst of the deep, the waters again become Israel's saving element from Pharaoh and the Egyptian army. Coming out of Egypt and passing through the waters not only saved Israel, but these same waters of life and salvation for one group were turned into the sea of destruction for the forces and symbols of wickedness as Pharaoh's army was drowned in those very waters. Free from the threat of Pharaoh's army, Moses then leads the children of Israel into the wilderness, toward a land promised to Abraham and his posterity.

Forty years after the first Passover, the children of Israel are now ready to pass through the waters again to enter their promised land. Forty years before, the waters parted at the Red Sea and now they part again at the River Jordan as Israel walked through the waters on dry land once more (Joshua 3:14–17), entering into the land of their inheritance—a land of milk and honey, a land of promise.

By faith Abraham, when he was called to go out into a place which he should after receive for an inheritance, obeyed; and he went out, not knowing whither he went. By faith he sojourned in the *land of promise*, as in a strange country, dwelling in tabernacles with Isaac and Jacob, the heirs with him of the same promise. (Hebrews 11:8–9)

Through the waters of the Red Sea, the children of Israel leave the physical and spiritual world of Egypt behind and enter into a wilderness of learning, of trial, and of faith. Forty years later the children who were raised in this wilderness of faith have learned to "...take no thought for their life, what they shall eat, or what they shall drink; nor yet for their body, what they shall put on," learning that "the life" was "more than meat, and the body than raiment?" (Matthew 6:25). Having come out of Egypt (Babylon) they have learned to live according to the word of the Lord, to develop character and faith, and to trust in the Lord to provide and protect them in the wilderness of life. Israel, now ready to enter the promised land of their inheritance, symbolically

enters into a covenant of obedience as they pass through the waters of the Jordan River, as they did through the Red Sea, miraculously on dry ground.

Lehi

Almost seven centuries later, a new power—Babylon—was seen in the Middle East. This nation exerted her power throughout the Fertile Crescent and prepared to come against the small country of Judah. Jerusalem, the capital of this city-state, had become a center of wickedness in this small country. The prophet Ezekiel made clear that the wickedness of Jerusalem was even worse than that of Sodom and Gomorrah (Ezekiel 16:47–49; see whole chapter). By 600 B.C., Judah had fallen into apostasy. Lehi, living at the same time as Jeremiah, began to prophesy in Jerusalem, declaring, “‘Wo, wo, unto Jerusalem, for I have seen thine abominations!’ Yea, and many things did my father read concerning Jerusalem—that it should be destroyed, and the inhabitants thereof; many should perish by the sword, and many should be carried away captive into Babylon” (1 Nephi 1:13). Jeremiah the prophet explained the consequences of the failure of faith (Jeremiah 7), rehearsing the restrictions placed upon the land of promise which was given to Abraham. This wickedness described by Jeremiah fueled the future fires that eventually destroyed Judah and Jerusalem. With the Babylonian occupation imminent, the Lord warned Lehi to take his family and flee into the wilderness for safety (1 Nephi 2:2). Once again, the preservation of a righteous family becomes the spiritual catalyst for the benefit of multitudes, nations, kindreds, and tongues of people who are yet to come. This is the same situation type as with Noah, Jared, Abraham, and Moses.

Lehi and his family travel for eight years (1 Nephi 17:4) until they stop in the land they called Bountiful on the shores of a great sea “called Irreantum, which, being interpreted, is many waters” (1 Nephi 17:5). As Noah built an ark, and the Jaredites built watertight barges, Nephi too received a commandment to build a ship to cross the many waters to a land of promise that had been prepared for them.

After their arrival in the land of promise, father Lehi taught his posterity about the new land that they have been divinely led to.

And he also spake unto them *concerning the land of promise, which they had obtained*—how merciful the Lord had been in warning us that we should flee out of the land of Jerusalem.

For, behold, said he, I have seen a vision, in which I know that Jerusalem is destroyed; and had we remained in Jerusalem we should also have perished.

But, said he, notwithstanding our afflictions, *we have obtained a land of promise, a land which is choice above all other lands; a land which the Lord God hath covenanted with me should be a land for the inheritance of my seed. Yea, the Lord hath covenanted this land unto me, and to my children forever, and also all those who should be led out of other countries by the hand of the Lord.*

Wherefore, I, Lehi, prophesy according to the workings of the Spirit which is in me, that there shall *none come into this land save they shall be brought by the hand of the Lord.* (2 Nephi 1:3–6)

Lehi and his family are saved from both the physical kingdom of Babylon and the spiritual Babylon of Jerusalem. This salvation is again facilitated by escaping through the “many waters” as the family of Lehi is brought by the hand of the Lord to his promised land. The remorse felt by reading this record of a “fallen people” is that eventually the Jaredites—as well as the

descendants of Lehi, who were saved from the spiritual Babylon by listening to the voice of God—were eventually destroyed by that same Babylon by rejecting the words of the true prophets. This is a sobering pattern throughout all ages and dispensations.

Out of Captivity

Nephi sought to understand the dream and vision of his father Lehi and in the process learned from an angel about future events that would take place on the promised land where they have been led. In this vision, Nephi saw a future time when “a great and abominable church” (1 Nephi 13:5) “...which is the mother of abominations; and... the whore of all the earth” (1 Nephi 14:10) would exercise her control and dominion over all the nations of the earth. This great and abominable church is “...the great persecutor of the church, the apostate, the whore, even Babylon...” (D&C 86:3). The power of the wicked one succeeds in taking the plain and precious truths from the Bible (1 Nephi 13:28). Because of the loss of these plain truths “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).

Nephi saw that because of the loss of these precious truths from the gospel of Jesus Christ, spiritual Babylon will continue to grow in power over mankind. The Lord opened the visions of the latter-days to Nephi, explaining how the control of this “great and abominable church” will be overcome. To escape from the clutches of Babylon, a small group of “Gentiles” will be led from the control of religious worship in Europe to the religious freedoms of the promised land.

And it came to pass that I beheld the Spirit of God, that it wrought upon other Gentiles; and they went forth *out of captivity*, upon the many waters.

And it came to pass that I beheld many multitudes of the Gentiles upon the land of promise; and I beheld the wrath of God, that it was upon the seed of my brethren; and they were scattered before the Gentiles and were smitten.

And I beheld the *Spirit of the Lord, that it was upon the Gentiles, and they did prosper and obtain the land for their inheritance*; and I beheld that they were white, and exceedingly fair and beautiful, like unto my people before they were slain.

And it came to pass that I, Nephi, beheld that the Gentiles who had gone forth out of captivity did humble themselves before the Lord; and the power of the Lord was with them.

And I beheld that *their mother Gentiles were gathered together upon the waters, and upon the land also, to battle against them*.

And I beheld that the power of God was with them, and also that the wrath of God was upon all those that were gathered together against them to battle.

And I, Nephi, beheld that *the Gentiles that had gone out of captivity were delivered by the power of God out of the hands of all other nations*. (1 Nephi 13:13–19)

These families and devout groups of “Gentiles” who fled the captivity (1 Nephi 13:13) of religious control sought a place where they could practice their religion, worship as they desired, and read and interpret scriptures according to their wills. Less than a generation before the Puritans left for the new world, people were being condemned to death and burned at the stake for even just possessing an English translation of the scriptures. With the publication and acceptance of the King James Translation of the Bible into English, people began to read and interpret the scriptures for themselves. These groups tried to retain a purity of faith in the

interpretation of the scriptures that was not found in the Latin liturgies (which were forced by the government officials with commitments and sympathies to the vicars, popes, and priests throughout Europe and England). Every nation, country, and kingdom of Europe was controlled by the governments of kings, dictators, and emperors that enforced a state religion, the root or foundation of which was established by the Roman Emperor Constantine in 324 A.D. From the empire once controlled by Rome was born the “Holy Roman Empire.”

The Holy Roman Empire

In 328 A.D., Constantine transferred the capital of the Roman Empire to his new city of Constantinople, shifting the power that had resided in Rome to the East. Over the ensuing years this political vacuum resulted in the Bishop of Rome rising to a position of leadership over the western church and the remnants of an empire once governed from Rome. In 726 A.D. the reigning emperor in Constantinople and Byzantium was Leo III. Leo commanded the breaking of all statues and idols throughout the empire. In Rome, Gregory II, a Roman-born pope, took the chair of Peter after a long succession of Greek popes controlled the church from Constantinople. With the edict of Leo III to destroy all statues, Gregory II, who was the bishop of Rome, excommunicated the Eastern Church, rejecting the emperor and his theologians in 731 A.D., which divided the empire both politically and religiously.

A generation after this division between the East and the West, a papal official by the name of Christophorous created a forgery which transferred the temporal crown from the emperor to the pope of Rome. This forgery (called the *Donation of Constantine*) was centered on Sylvester, a bishop in Rome at the time of Constantine and his conversion. The story—or perhaps the legend—of Constantine’s conversion was that while persecuting Christians, the emperor contracted an incurable case of leprosy. Legend states that Peter and Paul appeared to him in a vision and told him that Sylvester was the only one who could cure the leprosy that plagued him. Sylvester then was summoned and told Constantine that the only way to cure his ailment was to be baptized. Constantine agreed, and the leprosy was immediately taken from him. How much of this tradition is actual forgery or myth is not known; however, Christophorous’s creativity excels as he then ascribes to the church in Rome and the pope control of the empire. He implied in the *Donation of Constantine* that all judges and bishops were subject to the Bishop of Rome and to the Pope and his successors. The *Donation* stated that Constantine gave to the Bishop of Rome the diadem or crown with “the purple mantle also, and the scarlet tunic, and all the imperial trappings.” It was also written that Constantine stated that he bestowed “upon him (the Pope at Rome) also the imperial scepter, with all the standards and banners and similar ornaments.” Christophorous made it clear in this forgery that Constantine conferred the empire and crown to the religious leader in Rome, concluding that he himself would move to Constantinople, being unable to rule jointly with God’s chosen keeper of the keys. The forgery reads, “wherefore, that the pontifical crown may be maintained in dignity, we hand over and relinquish our palaces, the City of Rome, and all the provinces, places, and cities of Italy and the regions of the West to the most blessed pontiff and Universal Pope, Sylvester.” Constantine then left as written that “it was not right that he, a temporal ruler, should share this control with the successor of Peter.”³

This forgery by Christophorous was then taken by Pope Stephen to the Frankish court governed by Pepin, a Germanic ruler of Europe, seeking help to stop the Byzantine reaction to the excommunication of the East. Pepin accepted the forged *Donation of Constantine* then agreed to support Pope Stephen which gave rise to the so called “Papal States,” or the “patrimony of St.

³ Quoted in Thomas Hodgkin, *Italy and Her Invaders*, Vol. VII, London, 1899, 135–137.

Peter.” The papacy now had a financial value to the office and “the Chair of St. Peter became a prize worth fighting for. The Bishop of Rome held not only the keys of heaven in the eyes of some, but also the keys of more than a score of cities, each with its revenues.”⁴

Pepin’s act and protection not only provided a fortune worth of revenue to the Chair of St. Peter, but set a precedent that the Frankish or German Monarch would be the natural protector of the Papacy. Fifty years after Pepin’s acceptance of the *Donation of Constantine*, his son and heir Charlemagne came to Rome at the request of Pope Leo III to put down a rebellion and threat to the papacy. On Christmas Day 800 A.D. Charlemagne was crowned ‘emperor of the West’ by Pope Leo. Pepin’s and Charlemagne’s acceptance of the universal pope and the *Donation of Constantine* set the stage for the European belief that the claim to political leadership—king or emperor—could only be bestowed and legitimized by the high priest of European Christendom, i.e., the Pope himself. By 843 A.D. Charlemagne’s European empire was divided into three great blocs among his grandsons, each accepting the responsibility of protection and reverence, temporally and spiritually, to the Bishop of Rome.

One hundred and fifty years after the coronation of Charlemagne, a Saxon king rose to power who controlled Europe without equal—from England to Spain, from Italy to the land of the Danes. This great leader named Otto sought the same status that Charlemagne received on Christmas Day 800 A.D. On February 2 in 961, Otto received that which he sought from Pope John XII, which then established the “Holy Roman Empire.” This tied the ecclesiastical rule of Rome to all kingdoms of Europe (from Spain to Poland from the Mediterranean Sea to the North Sea) for the next nine hundred years. At the coronation of Otto, he promised through covenant to the church and pope at Rome that:

I shall exalt the Church and thee, its overseer, according to my powers. Never shalt thou be injured in life or limb with my sanction and knowledge. I will never hold a court, or make laws, within thy jurisdiction. Whatsoever of St. Peter’s property comes into my hands I will restore to thee. To whomsoever I shall bequeath the kingdom of Italy, he will swear to be thy helper in defense of the ecclesiastical state.⁵

Based upon the Oath of Otto, all of Europe, including England (until Henry VIII), was under the control of a single religion. The Universal⁶ Church was not only a state religion, but a power under the protection of virtually every political entity.

Because of the forged document called the *Donation of Constantine*, almost every religious endeavor and belief contrary to that of Rome was put to rest by national law and often by military force. Thus, as the Bible was translated into German and then English, biblical puritans were imprisoned and persecuted because of beliefs contrary to the religious traditions and teachings of Rome. This was a result of customs that were so strongly set into the nations that were once part of the Roman Empire under Constantine and then part of the “Holy Roman Empire” governed by the Vicar of Christ. This control was kept not only by Rome, but protected by virtually every nation of Europe until a small group of Biblical purists found it necessary to leave Europe for a religious freedom uncontrolled by the governments, nations, and kingdoms with a sworn allegiance to the religious magistrate in Rome. Until the reformation began, and the

⁴ E.R. Chamberlin, *The Bad Popes*, [Dorset Press, New York, 1969], 17.

⁵ G.H. Pertz, *Monumenta germaniae historica*. [Hanover, 1873] IV, 29.

⁶ “Universal” is the meaning of the word “Catholic,” “Catholic Church” therefore means “Universal Church.”

printing press produced an English translation of the Bible “theology” and religious freedom slipped into the background as “ecclesiology” gained power over all of Europe.

The Puritans

Persecuted for their reading and interpretation of scriptures, the Puritans (and later the Pilgrims) left Europe and crossed the many waters to flee from the captivity of the spiritual Babylon that controlled all of Europe at that time. They were driven from their homes, and separated from their families, many becoming martyrs of their faith because of religious beliefs. With religious freedom annulled and nonexistent, the waters again acted as though a highway were cast upon the great deep.

Irreantum, or the many waters, became the medium of salvation that assisted the righteous few and remnant of Israel who sought to flee religious persecution. Those Puritans set sail unknowingly to a destination and land promised by ancient prophets of God to be a land of freedom, promise, and protection, as the Jaredites and the Lehiters had so many centuries before. The waters became the path to leave the control of Babylon, and this water became a physical separation from the spiritual captivity of Europe. These Puritans and Pilgrims are described in 1 Nephi 13 as the Gentiles “who had gone forth out of captivity” (1 Nephi 13:16) whose “mother” Gentiles fought against them in the war of independence and freedom, called the Revolutionary War. The founding fathers of the United States understood the reasons for which their fathers came to America, and they knew that religious freedom was sacred. These inspired men raised up by the Lord created a government that would protect this religious freedom by constitutional law, while recognizing the inalienable rights of the individual. Therefore, this new government was established to guarantee that the government itself would be unable to control the private worship of its citizens as had been done in England and Europe for centuries before.

“Go Ye out of Babylon”

The call to the saints of this dispensation is “Go ye out of Babylon; gather ye out from among the nations” (D&C 133:7). “Go ye out from among the nations, even from Babylon, from the midst of wickedness, which is spiritual Babylon” (D&C 133:14). The Lord declared that He “...will not spare any that remain in Babylon” (D&C 64:24). The best explanation of the spiritual Babylon that plagues man is

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)

How does an individual come out of Babylon? How do we separate ourselves from the spiritual clutches of a symbolic city of wickedness? As Paul in the New Testament described, this separation from Babylon is accomplished by passing through the waters of baptism.

Know ye not, that so many of us as were baptized into Jesus Christ were baptized into his death?

Therefore we are buried with him by baptism into death: that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life.

For if we have been planted together in the likeness of his death, we shall be also *in the likeness of his* resurrection:

Knowing this, that our old man is crucified with *him*, that the body of sin might be destroyed, that henceforth we should not serve sin.

For he that is dead is freed from sin. (Romans 6:3–7)

We begin this separation through the waters of baptism with a covenant to leave the old life and world behind. Baptism is the death burial of the individual belonging to the world and Babylon, leaving him behind at rest in the watery grave, coming forth as a new person reborn and resurrected from the watery tomb. The new individual is one who has entered into a covenant to be obedient and serve God. By baptism the individual covenants to separate himself from the world and become a “Christian,” taking upon him Christ’s name in a covenant and ordinance of obedience. To begin the travel through the wilderness seeking the chosen land of the Celestial kingdom requires us to first pass through the waters of baptism. This is the “gate” as described by the Lord to Nephi (2 Nephi 31:18) that all must enter to begin the separation from Babylon and begin the journey toward the promised land of Zion.