
THE

WITNESS

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Book of Mormon Foundation

And it came to pass that he cried mightily unto the Lord, all that day;
and behold, the voice of the Lord came unto him, saying,

LIFT UP YOUR HEAD AND BE OF GOOD CHEER

for behold, the time is at hand, and on this night shall the sign be given,

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*Cover Photo Courtesy of Dale Godfrey
(3 Nephi 1:12 RLDS/LDS)*

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From the Board

For unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given:
and the government shall be upon his shoulder:
and his name shall be called Wonderful, Counselor,
The Mighty God, The Everlasting Father, The Prince
of Peace. (2 Nephi 9:66 RLDS) [2 Nephi 19:6 LDS]

How beautiful are the words of the prophets that unite our thoughts on the birth of Jesus Christ our Savior! The story of His miraculous birth continues to cause us to marvel at the glory of God. Though the coming of the Messiah had long been anticipated by many, it was recognized by few. The wonder and glory of the event was lost to all but the ones whose hearts were prepared to receive Him. Today, as long ago, those ready to receive Him look up with wondrous amazement and again receive the precious opportunity to bow down in humble adoration.

In this joyous season, we find the light of Christ expressed in so many ways. Our hearts are renewed with hope as we witness frequent examples of inspired worship, unselfish giving, placing others' needs before our own, visiting the lonely, comforting those that mourn, caring for the sick and sharing the loving fellowship of family and friends. During these times, it's easy to remember that Jesus Christ is the only hope of the world and the true cause of good within the lives of people.

We trust this past year has brought you the richest of blessings that only come from He who came as a babe in a manger. May you be filled with the peace and joy of knowing Him. We also pray your new year will overflow with many blessings as you always remember, with praise and thanksgiving, the source from whence they come.

Jesus Christ extends to all the promise of things the eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, nor has entered into the hearts of men. This is God's gift of salvation to the world through His son. We celebrate the birth of this greatest gift with you.

Merry Christmas and Happy New Year!



Signs and Wonders of His Birth

by Shirley R. Heater

One of the greatest events recorded in the Scriptures is the birth of our Savior heralded by many signs and wonders, including what has come to be known as the Star of Bethlehem. Numerous theories have been suggested to explain the phenomenon, such as a comet, nova, supernova, great meteor, the planet Venus, planetary conjunctions and even a UFO. Some readers may be asking, was the star a natural occurrence orchestrated by God or a miraculous, supernatural event? I definitely believe that God can use naturalistic means that may appear to be miraculous, but there are also miraculous events that defy even a “natural” explanation.

After reading various (scientific) sources, I still had unanswered questions. I noticed that little consideration has been given other signs which might contribute to understanding the overall picture. Rather than seek for understanding from external sources, I turned to the best primary sources of all—the Bible and The Book of Mormon. I found three distinct events: the shepherds, Book of Mormon signs, and the wise men and the star. We will consider each of the three events, reconstruct the timelines and compare details to see if we can discern a clearer understanding.

The Shepherds

The first event is found in the book of Luke. Joseph and Mary must journey to Bethlehem to be taxed, but found no room in the inn (Luke 2:1-7). Where they stayed is not specifically identified, but some suggestions include a stable, a cave, a barn, or even the tower of the flock (Micah 4:8); others suggest there was no tax or census and He was actually born in Nazareth.

An angel appeared to shepherds while watching their flock by night, “and the glory of the Lord shone round about them” (Luke 2:8-9). They were told a Savior “is born this day in the city

of David” (Bethlehem) (v. 11). There, as a sign, they would “find the babe wrapped in swaddling clothes, lying in a manger” (v. 12). Biblical scholarship reveals that these shepherds were priests in Shepherd’s Fields just outside Bethlehem. They tended thousands of lambs used for daily sacrifices in the Temple in Jerusalem, by families and for other rituals. These lambs had to be without spot or blemish, and newborn lambs were wrapped in swaddling clothes and laid in a manger (a depression carved into limestone rock in the Shepherd’s Tower, or Tower of the Flock) until examined. Thus, the shepherds understood the significance of the sign described by the angel and went “with haste” to see the Child, and found Him wrapped in swaddling clothes and lying in a manger as prophesied (vv. 8-16).

The visit by the shepherds apparently took place very close in time to the birth, because it was after their visit that Jesus was circumcised at eight days old. Following the days of Mary’s purification, forty days total according to the Law, Mary and Joseph took Jesus to Jerusalem to present Him to the Lord. There Simeon blessed and prophesied over Him (vv. 21-34), then they returned to Bethlehem.

Jesus is the Lamb without spot or blemish—slain from the foundation of the world

Book of Mormon

The second event in the signs of His birth consists of signs and wonders in the New World, recorded in The Book of Mormon. As in the Old Testament, there were numerous prophecies of this event, one in particular by Samuel the Lamanite five years earlier (Helaman 5:56-60 RLDS) [Helaman 14:1-6 LDS]. As the time of fulfillment

drew near, unbelievers were preparing, should the sign not appear, to put to death those who believed. In answer to Nephi's mighty cry the Lord spoke to him, saying: "on this night shall the sign be given, and on the morrow come I into the world" (3 Nephi 1:12-13 RLDS) [3 Nephi 1:12-13 LDS]. The sign was given that very night—a night with no darkness from the going down of the sun to its rising in the morning (vv. 15-22 [14-19]). After the account of the night that was "as light as though it was midday" (v. 21 [19]), "the sun did rise in the morning ... and they knew that it was the day that the Lord should be born" (v. 22 [19]). It is then stated that "it came to pass also that a *new* star did appear" (v. 24 [21] emphasis added). Samuel the Lamanite had prophesied, "And behold, there shall be a new star arise, such as one as ye never have beheld" (Helaman 5:59 [14:4]). The events are summed up in verse 25 [22] as "signs and wonders" (see also v. 38 [2:1]). These signs were so powerful as to cause all the people to fall to the earth as if they were dead (vv. 18-19 [17]) and they began to fear (v. 20 [18]).

Following the events in Luke and Third Nephi, both which occurred the night of the birth, let's turn to the chronology and characteristics of the account of the wise men in the book of Matthew.

"I Am the Light of the world"— Jesus

Wise Men

The third event in the signs of His birth is the wise men following the star to Bethlehem. Wise men arrived first in Jerusalem, having followed "His" star in the east, seeking where to find the newborn king of the Jews. King Herod inquired of his chief priests and scribes who answered "in Bethlehem" (Matthew 2:1-6 [3:1-6 IV]; Micah 5:2).

When the wise men resumed their journey, they again followed the star, now leading them south to Bethlehem. It stopped and stood over the house where the young child was (Matthew 2:9 [3:9 IV]). He was no longer in the manger, the shepherds were gone, Jesus had already been circumcised at eight days, and taken to the Temple in Jerusalem following the completion of Mary's forty days of purification. After the wise men departed, Joseph was warned by an angel in a dream to flee to Egypt and when he arose they departed by night into Egypt. "Herod was exceeding wroth ... and slew all the children in Bethlehem and all coasts thereof, from two years old and under, according to the time which he had diligently enquired of the wise men" (Matthew 2:7, 13-16 [3:7, 13-16 IV]). Following Herod's death, the angel informed them it was safe to return to Israel, where they then made their residence in Nazareth (2:19-23 [3:19-23 IV]).

Consideration of the Signs

My first consideration of the signs is timing. It is nighttime when the angel appeared to the shepherds and said "*this day*" a Savior has been born. The Hebrew day began at sunset—and since they went with haste, they could have arrived sometime during the daytime, the same day of His birth, being nearby Bethlehem. Note that this timing corresponds to the events in the New World when the people were told "this night shall the sign be given" which began at sunset and "on the morrow come I into the world." Samuel had prophesied that the sign "shall be the night before He is born" (Helaman 5:58). It is easy to see that these two events occurred the same night, keeping in mind Israel is eight hours ahead of the area we equate with Book of Mormon lands.



It should also be noted that contrary to customary manger scenes, no star was over the manger, nor were the wise men present when the shepherds visited Him. The arrival of the wise men in Jerusalem, following His star in the east, was some time after the birth. It is unknown when they first saw the star or how they knew it was leading

and they left immediately for Egypt—time had already passed since the circumcision and journey to the Temple in Jerusalem, at least a minimum of forty days, but less than two years, the age of the children Herod had killed.

A second aspect in the consideration of timing is the year of the birth. Dates range from 2 BC to as early as 8 BC (based on the current Gregorian system²). A key reference is Josephus in *Antiquities of the Jews* which ties Herod's death after an eclipse to the equivalent of 4 BC; however, Josephus manuscripts before 1544 infer 1 BC! A sign at the crucifixion actually helps confirm the later date by projecting backwards. Peter in Acts 2:20 quotes the prophet Joel: "The sun will be turned to darkness and the moon to blood" as fulfilled (v. 22). A moon which appears as blood (red) refers to the red-shift when the earth comes between the moon and the sun. Only one such eclipse occurred at Passover visible from Jerusalem during Pilate's rule—April 3, 33 AD, at 3 pm!

My second consideration of the signs is the commonality of the characteristics. The first indication comes from Luke 2:9: "and the glory of the Lord shone round about them" (the shepherds). Throughout the Old Testament, the glory of the Lord is, by definition, the visible manifestation of the presence of God, from the Hebrew

word *Shechinah*. Manifestations took the forms of light, fire, or cloud, or a combination. The Old Testament word conveys in its various forms both the appearance, as well as the meaning "to dwell" or "to tabernacle."

The New Testament Greek word *Doxa* "means 'brightness,' 'brilliance,' or 'splendor,' and it depicts how the *Shechinah* Glory appears....The Greek

them to the King of the Jews.¹ They turned south from Jerusalem, following the star until the star stopped and stood over the house in Bethlehem—they had reached their destination. This is further indication that by the time the wise men arrived in Bethlehem, Jesus was not a newborn and He and His parents were then living in a house. After the wise men departed, Joseph was warned to flee

¹ Verneil Simmons suggests that the wise men were from the New World, possibly Nephi, his brother Lehi and Samuel, the Lamanite prophet (1986:198-199). One clue is found in Helaman 5:125-126 [16:13-14], two years preceding the signs of the birth: "there were great signs given unto the people, and wonders; ... And angels did appear unto men—wise men— and did declare unto them glad tidings of great joy." Both Samuel the Lamanite and Nephi disappear and are never heard from again (Helaman 5:119-120 [16:7-8]; 3 Nephi 1:2-3 [1:2-3]).

² Correlations problems with calendar systems are not addressed here.



word *skeinei*, which is similar in sound as the Hebrew *Shechinah* (Greek has no 'sh' sound), means 'to tabernacle'" (Fruchtenbaum 2004:591 emphasis in original). The first appearance in the New Testament is the glory surrounding the shepherds. Coming in the form of a light or radiance, this event was "the reappearance of the *Shechinah* Glory. It announced the birth of the Messiah to Jewish shepherds" (p. 607).

The appearance of the star is also the visible manifestation of God's glory, "announcing the birth of the Messiah to Gentiles" (p. 608). Its characteristics are not-so-ordinary: (1) The star was visible to the wise men, but not visible to others, or Herod could have had his servants follow the star. (2) They called it His star. (3) The star disappeared at times. (4) The star led them east-to-west to Jerusalem, disappeared, then changed direction and led them north-to-south to Bethlehem (south of Jerusalem). (5) The star stopped over the house where Mary, Joseph and Jesus were then living. A quote from an article in *Biblical Astronomer* reads:

[It] could not have been a natural apparition, nor an astrological or spiritual sign alone, or even an angel. The unique geometry of its movement in the sky and its ability to stand over and mark a single

... point, such as the house where the Christ child dwelt, indicates that it was a literal visible supernatural sign given from on High and one that modern science or any other extra-biblical discipline will never be able to explain. (Unruh 2002:130)

The appearance in the New World of the night without darkness, as light as though midday, coupled with the appearance of a new star and other signs and wonders, also fit the description of the definition of visible manifestations of the glory of God. We are not given any definite information concerning the new star in the New World but it is mentioned after the sign of no darkness announcing the birth—it could have appeared following that night, or even later. The Book of Mormon signs, the glory of God which shown round about the shepherds, as well as the new star in New Testament which guided the wise men—all lead to the conclusion that each of these three distinct events are visible manifestations of the *Shechinah* glory of God!

My third consideration of the signs is the greater contribution to our understanding of God and His glory. Light appeared the first day of Creation. "It is possible that the first appearance of the *Shechinah* Glory was the light of the first day of creation in Genesis 1:3-5 [6-8 IV], since this light was distinct from the sun, which was created on the fourth day" (Genesis 1:14-19 [18-21 IV]) (Fruchtenbaum 2004:592; Unruh 2002:131). The visible manifestation of God appeared to the Israelites in the form of the pillar of cloud by day and the pillar of fire by night (Exodus 13:21-22). Moses experienced it personally as a flame of fire and a burning bush (Exodus 3:1-5), and the glory shone in his face which he covered with a veil (Exodus 34:29-35). The glory also dwelt in the Tabernacle Holy of Holies (Exodus 29:42-46), and subsequently in the First Temple, built by Solomon (I Kings 8:1-13). Ezekiel related that the glory departed before the Babylonian captivity and the destruction of the temple (Ezekiel 9:3; 10:4, 1-19; 11:22-23). When the Second Temple was built after the return of Judah to Israel, the glory was not present (Haggai 2:3, 9) and did not reappear until the event with the shepherds in the New Testament (Luke 2:8-9).

Concurrent with the departure of the glory of God from the First Temple, Lehi experienced a pillar of fire that dwelt upon a rock (1 Nephi 1:5 [1:6]). He also saw in a vision One descending described with luster above that of the sun at noonday (v. 8-9 [9-10]). The face of Abinadi shone “with exceeding luster, even as Moses’ did” (Mosiah 7:106 [13:5]). While Nephi and Lehi were in prison, they were encircled as if by fire on two occasions, overshadowed by a cloud, and their faces shone “even as the face of angels” (Helaman 2:85-114 [5:23-49]). Jesus’ visit in Third Nephi after His resurrection and ascension was filled with experiences that exemplify the glory of God’s presence—a few include: little children were encircled with fire (3 Nephi 8:25-26 [17:24]), His twelve disciples were overshadowed by a cloud when He touched them (3 Nephi 8:73 [18:38]), the twelve were encircled with fire when baptized (3 Nephi 9:14-15 [19:13-14]); and the three Nephites who tarried were transfigured (3 Nephi 13:24-27).

My conclusion from this brief review is that after the departure from the First Temple, the

glory of God accompanied Lehi to the New World. The first reappearance to the shepherds in the Old World parallels with the simultaneous sign in New World of the birth of the Savior in a tabernacle of clay (*Shechinah* = to dwell, to tabernacle): “The Word was made flesh and dwelt [tabernacled] among us” (John 1:14) and “the Lord Omnipotent ... shall come down from heaven ... and shall dwell in a tabernacle of clay” (Mosiah 1:97 [3:5]) bear witness to the same message! “The *Shechinah* Glory reappeared in a completely new form . . . in the person of Jesus ... the Messiah” (Fruchtenbaum 2004:608-610), the Light of the world (John 8:12; 9:5; 3 Nephi 4:48 [9:18]; 5:12 [11:11])!

This study brings us full circle from the unanswered questions concerning the signs and wonders of His birth to a marvelous understanding—the events which heralded the birth of our Savior were supernatural, divine, miraculous—the *Shechinah* glory of God!

“The heavens declare the glory of God!”—David

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Keeping Christ in Xmas

by Shirley R. Heater

Xmas in place of Christmas is seen as keeping Christ out of Christmas¹ by substituting an “X” for Christ. But maybe there is more to it than meets the eye!

During the 2014 holiday season, I was reading the Scriptures with a musical channel on TV softly playing Christmas music in the background. As I paused to think about what I was reading, I casually looked up at the TV screen just in time to see a note that said something like this: “The X in Xmas is the Greek letter

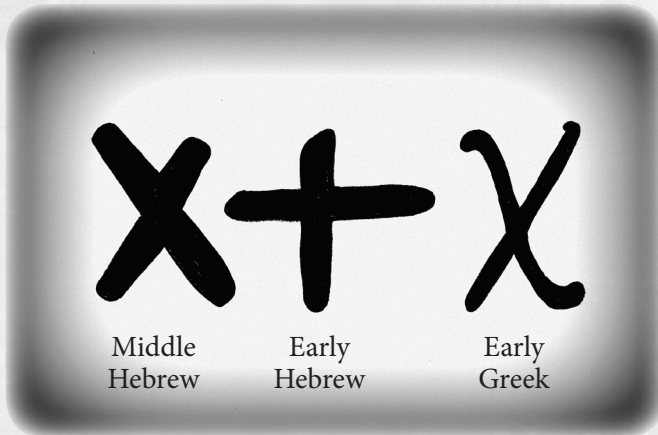


FIGURE 1

chi which means “Christ” or “cross.” (*Chi* is the first letter of the Greek word for Christ and is sometimes used alone.) I was riveted by this, being aware of *chi* in *chiasmus*, a style of writing a statement and repeating it in reverse order, which may be diagrammed in the form an X. This writing pattern has been identified in both the New and Old Testaments and, more recently, in The Book of Mormon. The letter for X (or cross) in the Hebrew is *tau*, also rendered as *taw* or *tav* (depicted as “X”, “†” and also “T”) all of which mean cross! (See figure 1.)

Tau is the last letter of the Hebrew alphabet. The earliest form (c. 1700 BC in early Semitic/Akkadian) appeared as a vertical cross, and later as an X. (Figure 2 illustrates various forms in Israel.) The letter also means “mark” as well as cross. Aaron is anointed with the “mark of God” on his forehead, as a

type of the “anointed one”—the Messiah (Exodus 28:36-38 and Leviticus 8:9, 12). It is also considered as the mark over the doorposts in Egypt so the destroyer would pass them by (Exodus 12:23).

Jacob in The Book of Mormon reveals some additional insight. He indicates that the Jews were a stiff-necked people who rejected the Stone (the Messiah) and were given “many things they could not understand” because they looked beyond the “mark” (the cross). (Jacob 3:22-27 RLDS) [Jacob 4:14-16 LDS]

The letters “T” and “X” are widely used in numerous alphabets even today. The symbols are perhaps the oldest in the world, some scratched on ancient stones.² They are found

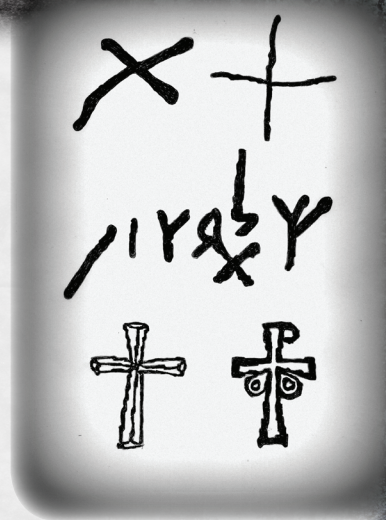


FIGURE 2 - Early Crosses from Israel



FIGURE 3 - Palenque House "C" with Maya T-shape

worldwide in various forms in ancient civilizations such as Egyptian, Babylonian, Phoenician, American Indian and the Maya. In Maya the *tau* symbol is represented in hieroglyphs, structures

and iconography. The glyph **IK** (figure 3) is the day sign which carries a meaning of “wind” and is associated with Spiritual Breath, Inspiration, Purifier of the Body, symbolizing cleanliness and purity. A wall of “House C” at Palenque shows the T-shaped opening representing the wind (figure 4).³ Quetzalcoatl, the Feathered or Plumed Serpent, rules this day sign associating his depiction as the God of the Wind with the IK glyph on his pectoral (breast), while other Maya figures are shown holding a T-shaped-cross, a symbol of the breath of life itself.⁴ It is also associated with the Tree of Life.

What began for me with the curiosity of *chi* as the X in Xmas, led me on an interesting journey of discovery and a better understanding of how God has revealed Himself, even in the *chi* and *tau* characters or symbols. So as we consider the birth of our Savior, our understanding is enriched to realize He cannot be hidden by any attempt to diminish His presence—even in the letter X in Xmas!

¹ This discussion does not consider the time of Christ's birth—whether spring, fall or December. Remember also that “holiday” actually means “holy day.”

² http://wordsforcourageousliving.com/cross/tau_cross.htm

³ <http://www.delange.org/PalenquePalace/PalenquePalace.htm>. Figures 3 & 4 used with permission.

⁴ http://www.mayanmajix.com/1mma_2_21_13.html



FIGURE 4 - Tau symbol in IK glyph

Yet Still He Chose

Andrea Alaniz

Mary, look upon your little child,
 who in just a little while will save the world.
 Your little baby whose heart is so pure, came to be born in a humble stable.

The king of all kings dressed in swaddling clothes,
 yet still he chose, to leave heaven's abode,

For all who were and are to be,
 He came for you and He came for me.
 Knowing full well what it would cost,
 The Son of God came,
 That we might not be lost.

Joseph, look upon your little son
 Who was there when earth begun,
 He'll save mankind.
 Your little baby whose heart is so pure,
 came to be born in a humble stable.
 The King of all kings dressed in swaddling clothes,
 yet still he chose, to leave heaven's abode,

For all who were and are to be,
 He came for you and He came for me.
 Knowing full well what it would cost,
 The Son of God came,
 That we might not be lost.



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2 Nephi 14:12

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2016

We enjoyed another good year of sharing testimonies and witnessing of Jesus Christ! Through the witnessing of our volunteers and the music ministry, many seeds were planted in the hearts and minds of those visiting the booth or passing by on the street. Several people expressed their appreciation for the cold bottles of water and the cheerful, polite smiles of the volunteers! It reminded us of the words of Jesus:

And whosoever shall give you a cup of water to drink, in my name, because ye belong to Christ, verily I say unto you, He shall not lose his reward.

(Matthew 10:38, Mark 9:38)



Gave Away

- 23 Copies of the Book of Mormon
- 200 Jesus cards with Helaman 2:74-75 scripture verses
- 20 Book of Mormon Overviews
- Over 600 bottles of water

Booth volunteers - BMF team; BMF interns; Young Adult Ministries team; Saints Haven Restoration Branch; South Chrysler Older Youth team; Outreach Restoration Branch; Colbern Road Restoration Branch; Odessa Restoration Branch.

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PROPHECY WATCH

Sometimes, prophetic fulfillment manifests itself in unexpected ways. Such is the case in the most recent United States presidential election. The brutal campaigns and post-election responses have brought clearer meaning to a prophecy given through Joseph Smith Jr., almost two centuries ago.

and the rebellious shall be pierced with much sorrow, **for their iniquities shall be spoken upon the housetops, and their secret acts shall be revealed;**(D&C 1:1c RLDS) [D&C 1:3 LDS] (emphasis added)

Regardless of your political preference, we saw some examples of this prophecy being fulfilled in the election process. Confidential emails were hacked and secret agreements contained in them were made public. Also, confidential recordings were acquired and secret conversations widely broadcast. All of them representing iniquities and secret acts that individuals wanted to remain outside the light of scrutiny. It reminds us again of the active existence of secret combinations today!

Conversely, we are also seeing the escalation of secret combinations on a wider scale. That is, among organizations, governments, nations and even churches. As one example, on November 17, 2016, an international press conference was held in Berlin, Germany. Leaders of the nations represented shared their individual perspectives about the state of the world. Constantly mentioned, were the relationships of nations, alliances, agreements, economic treaties, financial markets, military treaties, common interests, transitions and transformations. The philosophy of globalism was presented as the best solution to all the world's problems.

As a Book of Mormon believer, it was easy to discern the potential for this philosophy to create a climate nurturing the formation of secret combinations. That is, secret agreements that could be formed to achieve the higher aspirations of the ruling elite and wealthy.

Thankfully, it seems many people today are being awakened to the presence of secret combinations among us. It feels like the constant pursuit of power and gain among the few are being pressed heavily upon all the peoples of the world. We are

seeing these secret influences everywhere, as they are brought to light. Ironically, this power and gain is often cleverly disguised as being done for the benefit of all people. In reality, it only benefits individuals, organizations, churches, governments or nations bound together in a common and secret purpose. A secret purpose often found in direct conflict with the word of God.

Secret combinations are not new and have existed from the beginning. However, the ability to expose them publicly has never been more available than it is today. The ability to identify them makes this prophecy even more relevant for our day, as secret combinations are exposed and brought out of darkness into public view.

Secret combinations are founded upon pride. An article entitled, *The Modern Secret Combination*, describes how clearly the Book of Mormon warns of secret combinations and their influences on society. It especially warns of the emergence of a single secret combination that comes into existence, after the Book of Mormon comes forth in the latter days.

Closely associated with the corruption of the Nephites' laws of government came a widespread penetration of the Gadianton robbers (a secret combination) into their society. One of the underlying themes of the Book of Mormon seems to be its warning to us about secret combinations. Truly, we are surrounded by many forms of organized crime and subversion: drug rings, terrorists, the various Mafias, and disease profiteers--to name a few. However, referring to our day, Moroni spoke of a "secret combination"--singular--"which shall be among you...." (Ether 3:98 RLDS) [Ether 8:24 LDS] This suggests that he saw a combination of such magnificent proportions as to dwarf all others because of its broad penetration and its effectiveness in advancing evil.

The motivation of this destructive and murderous combination, he said, would

be "to get power and gain." (Ether 3:96-97 RLDS) [Ether 8:23 LDS] Their aim would be "to overthrow the freedom of all lands, nations, and countries. ..." (Ether 3:99-101 RLDS) [Ether 8:25 LDS]

Anciently the Gadianton robbers eventually "overspread all the land of the Nephites." (Helaman 2:165 RLDS) [Helaman 6:38 LDS] They too were driven by the desire to "get gain and glory of the world." (Helaman 3:3 RLDS) [Helaman 7:4 LDS] To accomplish their aim they "usurped the power and authority of the land" by "filling the judgment seats" the positions of governmental leadership. In the same context of nearly every discussion of secret combinations in the Book of Mormon can be found mentioned some principle of government. Government is obviously where the most power and gain can be achieved.

Modern times are no exception. Means for gaining power exist that ancient tyrants could only dream of. Today, conquest of the whole world is a very real possibility for those cunning enough to pull it off. Communication networks for propaganda purposes are in place, advanced military equipment for enforcement are plentiful, computer capabilities for monitoring are more than ample, and apathy of people who are in a position to thwart such plans has been sufficient. ...¹

The scriptures, especially the Book of Mormon, describe how we can identify secret combinations today. God knew we would need a way to identify them, so we could respond accordingly. An article entitled *30 Characteristics of Secret Combinations* describes some of these characteristics. Some excerpts are:

1. Cain founded the first secret combination ... and the oaths and covenants were passed down to subsequent leaders of the secret combination. (Helaman 2:156 RLDS) [Helaman 6:30 LDS]
2. Secret combinations are "most abominable and wicked above all" in the sight of God. (Ether 3:92 RLDS) [Ether 8:18 LDS]
3. Secret combinations are Satanic in nature, receiving revelation from, and being founded and held up by, the devil. (2 Nephi 11:93-94; Helaman 2:150-151; 3 Nephi 3:33; Ether 3:90; 99-101 RLDS) [2 Nephi 26:22; Helaman 6:26; 3 Nephi 6:28; Ether 8:16, 25 LDS]
4. Secret combinations administer secret ancient oaths handed down from Cain. (Ether 3:88-90 RLDS) [Ether 8:15-16 LDS]
5. The manner of their oaths and combinations are had among all people. (Ether 3:94 RLDS) [Ether 8:20 LDS]
6. Secret combinations have secret signs and words (Helaman 2:146 RLDS) [Helaman 6:22 LDS], protect one another (Helaman 2:145, 147 RLDS) [Helaman 6:21, 23 LDS], and mingle into society in a manner whereby they cannot be found. (Helaman 1:11-12 RLDS) [Helaman 1:12 LDS]
7. Members of secret combinations are punished by the combination if they reveal the wickedness of their co-conspirators. (Helaman 2:148; Ether 3:87-88 RLDS) [Helaman 6:24; Ether 8:14 LDS]
8. One of the purposes of secret combinations is to murder (Helaman 1:44 RLDS) [Helaman 2:8 LDS]; they also seek to murder the prophets of God. (Alma 17:63-64 RLDS) [Alma 37:30 LDS] These combinations cause slaughter (3 Nephi 1:33-34; 1:48 RLDS) [3 Nephi 1:27, 2:11 LDS], war and millions of deaths; the Jaredites and Nephites being destroyed because of them. (Helaman 1:51-52; Ether 4:26 RLDS) [Helaman 2:13-14; Ether 8:21 LDS]
9. Secret combinations are established to rob and get gain. (Helaman 1:44 RLDS) [Helaman 2:8 LDS] They store up gold and silver in abundance and traffic in all manner of traffic. (4 Nephi 1:54-55 RLDS) [4 Nephi 1:46 LDS] The Book of Mormon refers to them as "robbers" over fifty times, which suggest that theft was their chief activity or the activity for which they were most notorious.
10. Gadianton Robbers prefer to plunder rather than working for themselves. (3 Nephi 2:39-46 RLDS) [3 Nephi 4:1-5 LDS]

11. Members of secret combinations regard each other as brethren and appear to have a communal attitude toward property. (3 Nephi 3:7-8 RLDS) [3 Nephi 3:6-7 LDS]
12. The teachings and practices of the robbers are tempting and corrupt the hearts of the people as they spread, eventually even seducing most of the righteous into believing in their works, partaking of their spoils, and even becoming involved in their secret murders and combinations. (Helaman 2:165 RLDS) [Helaman 6:38; Ether 9:6 LDS]
13. Pride, the desire for money, and seeking the praise of man make people susceptible to uniting with secret combinations; such go on to murder, plunder, and bear false witness against their neighbor. (Helaman 3:22-23, 28-29 RLDS) [Helaman 7:21, 25-26 LDS]
14. Secret combinations help those who seek for power to gain power as well as to murder, plunder, lie and commit wickedness and whoredoms. (Ether 3:90 RLDS) [Ether 8:16 LDS]
15. Secret combinations keep the people in darkness (Ether 3:90 RLDS) [Ether 8:16 LDS] and use fair promises to lead people away. (Ether 3:91 RLDS) [Ether 8:17 LDS]
16. Secret combinations flourished first in the more settled parts of the land (Helaman 2:21 RLDS) [Helaman 3:23 LDS] and among the wicked. (Helaman 2:165; 4 Nephi 1:50 RLDS) [Helaman 6:38; 4 Nephi 1:42 LDS]
17. One of the purposes of secret combinations is to gain power (Helaman 1:44; Ether 3:96-97; 4:107 RLDS) [Helaman 2:8; Ether 8:23, 11:15 LDS] by usurping power and authority over the people. (Helaman 3:3 RLDS) [Helaman 7:4 LDS] They seek to gain sole power over the government and, in the Book of Mormon, were successful in doing so. (Helaman 2:166 RLDS) [Helaman 6:39 LDS]
18. Secret combinations retain power so that they and their supporters may get gain and glory, and so that they may more easily steal, commit adultery, kill and do according to their own will. (Helaman 3:3-4 RLDS) [Helaman 7:5 LDS]
19. Secret combinations break the laws of God and the laws of their country. (Helaman 2:147 RLDS) [Helaman 6:23 LDS]
20. Secret combinations stir up rebellion (Ether 4:107 RLDS) [Ether 11:15 LDS] and dissent, and use lies and flattery to lead people to join with them (3 Nephi 1:35-36 RLDS) [3 Nephi 1:28-29 LDS], targeting the rising generation. (3 Nephi 1:36-37 RLDS) [3 Nephi 1:29-30 LDS]
21. The members of secret combinations believe their secret works and society to be good. (3 Nephi 2:11 RLDS) [3 Nephi 3:9 LDS]
22. Secret combinations pretend to act on behalf of their people in reclaiming their rights (3 Nephi 2:12 RLDS) [3 Nephi 3:10 LDS], believing they have been wronged and hating the righteous. (3 Nephi 2:5 RLDS) [3 Nephi 3:4 LDS]
23. Secret combinations seek to overthrow government (3 Nephi 3:41 RLDS) [3 Nephi 7:6 LDS], establish kings – or oligarchies (Mosiah 13:29 RLDS) [Mosiah 29:21-22 LDS] – and destroy the liberty of a republic. (3 Nephi 3:35, 3:44-45 RLDS) [3 Nephi 6:30, 7:10 LDS]
24. Secret combinations, once in government, lay aside the commandments of God, corrupt righteous laws, and administer no justice to the people (Mosiah 13:29; Helaman 3:3 RLDS) [Mosiah 29:22; Helaman 7:4 LDS], condemning the righteous for their righteousness, allowing the guilty to go free because of their money. (Helaman 3:3-4 RLDS) [Helaman 7:5 LDS]
25. Secret combinations shed the blood of the saints and oppress them (Helaman 2:166; 3 Nephi 3:34; Ether 3:95 RLDS) [Helaman 6:39; 3 Nephi 6:29; Ether 8:22 LDS], threatening not only the rights and liberty of the people but also the Church. (3 Nephi 1:49-50 RLDS) [3 Nephi 2:12 LDS]
26. When any society has suffered such combinations to spread over them they will be destroyed. (Ether 3:95 RLDS) [Ether 8:22 LDS]
27. One of the purposes of the Book of Mormon is to show us the work of ancient secret combination so that we may repent and suffer not that these same murderous combinations should get above us (Ether

3:96-97 RLDS) [Ether 8:23 LDS], and that we should awake to a sense of our awful situation when we see these things among us. (Ether 3:98 RLDS) [Ether 8:24 LDS]

28. Speaking of a secret combination built up by the devil, the master of lies, in our day, the Book of Mormon tells us that those who build it up do so to overthrow the freedom of all lands, nations and countries. (Ether 3:99-101 RLDS) [Ether 8:25 LDS]

29. In the last days the gentiles shall build up secret combinations which shall spill the blood of the saints and seek to destroy the people. (2 Nephi 11:93-94; Ether 3:99-101; Mormon 4:35 RLDS) [2 Nephi 26:22; Ether 8:25; Mormon 8:27 LDS]

30. Preaching the word of God destroys secret combinations. (Helaman 2:164 RLDS) [Helaman 6:37 LDS]²

Do any of these characteristics match what we have seen in the recent election? Do any of these characteristics match what we see in the world today? We should remember, the death of Christ was conspired by secret combinations of that day. The scribes and chief priests met in secret and sought ways to destroy him.

And the scribes and chief priests heard him, and sought how they might destroy him; for they feared him because all the people were astonished at his doctrine. (Mark 11:20 IV) [Mark 11:18 KJV]

Therefore, the larger goal of secret combinations, like any tool of the devil, is always to kill the name of Jesus among the people. Knowing this helps us see a bigger picture of the war in which we fight. This bigger picture is described well in an article

by Jason Anderson, entitled *Gadianton Robbers Today?*:

Ultimately, the only real deliverance we have from terrorism or any enemy is repentance and humility. We are not in a fight between western society and Al Qaeda or Islam and Christianity, but between Satan and our Savior Jesus Christ. When we are repentant, humble, and obedient, we are promised victory. When we are not, we have no promise.³

We are engaged in a great war between good and evil! Secret combinations are only one aspect of that great war. To be victorious, we are called to repent, humble ourselves, be valiant in our testimony of Jesus and preach the word of God! The signs of the times are among us! Watch, therefore, and pray always!

The purpose of Prophecy Watch is to assist in looking for and knowing the signs of the times and the signs of the coming of the Son of Man. The perspectives it contains are not presented as the “only, best or final answer” to their meaning but rather “to the intent that ye might believe on his name” and more fully participate in their fulfillment. We hope Prophecy Watch will provide a brief glimpse into specific prophetic subjects that will encourage each person to diligently pray, study, fast and seek the will of God concerning them.

References Cited

¹ http://www.greaterthings.com/Books/Vision/Temporal/Ch_7_Future_again2nd/Modern_Secret_Combination.htm

² <http://www.ldsfreedomportal.net/combinations.html>

³ Gadianton Robbers Today by Jason Anderson. The Witness Number 116 Fall 2005 <http://www.bomf.org/the-witness-issues-59-119.html>