

# CHAPTER 14

## 2 Nephi 31–33

### Introduction

Nephi's final writings encompass what he defined as "the doctrine of Christ" (2 Nephi 31:2, 21; 32:6). Elder Jeffrey R. Holland of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles explained:

"In the Book of Mormon, 'the doctrine of Christ' is simple and direct. It focuses on the first principles of the gospel exclusively, including an expression of encouragement to endure, to persist, to press on. Indeed, it is in the clarity and simplicity of 'the doctrine of Christ' that its impact is found. . . .

". . . The doctrine of Christ is not complicated. It is profoundly, beautifully, single-mindedly clear and complete" (*Christ and the New Covenant* [1997], 49–50, 56).

Strive to focus your life upon the simple but profound aspects of the doctrine of Christ that will bring you the companionship and guidance of the Holy Ghost and eternal happiness and joy.

### Commentary

#### 2 Nephi 31:2. "The Doctrine of Christ"

- Elder Jeffrey R. Holland explained the meaning of "the doctrine of Christ" as used in 2 Nephi 31: "Although a phrase like 'the doctrine of Christ' could appropriately be used to describe any or all of the Master's teachings, nevertheless those magnificently broad and beautiful expressions spread throughout the Book of Mormon, New Testament, and latter-day scriptures might more properly be called 'the *doctrines* of Christ.' Note that the phrase Nephi used is distinctly singular. In Nephi's concluding testimony, and later in the Savior's own declaration to the Nephites at his appearance to them, the emphasis is on a precise, focused, singular sense of Christ's doctrine, specifically that which the Prophet Joseph Smith declared to be 'the first principles and ordinances of the Gospel'" (*Christ and the New Covenant*, 49).

#### 2 Nephi 31:4–10. "He Having Set the Example Before Them"

- While mankind must be baptized for the remission of sins, the Savior, who was holy and without sin, was baptized as an example of humility and obedience.

Elder Robert D. Hales of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles explained that by being baptized, Jesus Christ provided an example for all people to follow in His footsteps:

"Entering into the kingdom of God is so important that Jesus was baptized to show us 'the straitness of the path, and the narrowness of the gate, by which [we] should enter' (2 Nephi 31:9). . . .

"Born of a mortal mother, Jesus was baptized to fulfill His Father's commandment that sons and daughters of God should be baptized.

He set the example for all of us to humble ourselves before our Heavenly Father. We are all welcome to come into the waters of baptism. He was baptized to witness to His Father that He would be obedient in keeping His commandments. He was baptized to show us that we should receive the gift of the Holy Ghost (see 2 Nephi 31:4–9).



"As we follow the example of Jesus, we, too, demonstrate that we will repent and be obedient in keeping the commandments of our Father in Heaven. We humble ourselves with a broken heart and a contrite spirit as we recognize our sins and seek forgiveness of our trespasses (see 3 Nephi 9:20). We covenant that we are willing to take upon ourselves the name of Jesus Christ and always remember Him" (in Conference Report, Oct. 2000, 5; or *Ensign*, Nov. 2000, 7–8).

#### **2 NEPHI 31:6–10**

*What must we do to fulfill the Savior's commandment to follow Him?*

#### 2 Nephi 31:13. "Full Purpose of Heart, Acting No Hypocrisy"

- "Full purpose of heart" suggests a total commitment to Jesus Christ, with pure and sincere motives, rather

than only pretending to follow the Lord. President Marion G. Romney (1897–1988) of the First Presidency observed such hypocrisy: “There are individuals who try to serve the Lord without offending the devil” (“The Price of Peace,” *Ensign*, Oct. 1983, 6).

- Elder Joseph B. Wirthlin (1917–2008) of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles emphasized the importance of sincerely following the Lord:

“Do we, indeed, actually live the gospel, or do we just *manifest* the appearance of righteousness so that those around us *assume* we are faithful when, in reality, our hearts and unseen actions are *not* true to the Lord’s teachings?”

“Do we take on only the ‘form of godliness’ while denying the ‘power thereof’? [Joseph Smith—History 1:19].

“Are we righteous in fact, or do we feign obedience only when we think others are watching?”

“The Lord has made it clear that He will not be fooled by appearances, and He has warned us not to be false to Him or to others. He has cautioned us to be wary of those who project a false front, who put on a bright pretense that hides a darker reality. We know that the Lord ‘looketh on the heart’ and *not* on the ‘outward appearance’ [1 Samuel 16:7]” (in Conference Report, Apr. 1997, 17–18; or *Ensign*, May 1997, 15–16).

## 2 Nephi 31:13–14, 17. “The Baptism of Fire”

- Jesus Christ taught that all people must be baptized of water and also of the Spirit (see John 3:5). Baptism by water must be followed by baptism of the Spirit, which is sometimes referred to as the baptism of fire. President Marion G. Romney taught: “The importance of receiving the gift of the Holy Ghost is beyond expression. It is the baptism of fire referred to by John. (See Luke 3:16.) It is the ‘spirit’ birth of which Jesus spoke to Nicodemus [John 3:5]” (in Conference Report, Apr. 1974, 134; or *Ensign*, May 1974, 92).

- Elder David A. Bednar of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles clarified that being confirmed does not mean that person has received the baptism of the Spirit:



“Following our baptism, each of us had hands placed upon our head by those with priesthood authority and was confirmed a member of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, and the Holy Ghost was conferred upon us (see D&C 49:14). The statement ‘receive the Holy Ghost’ in

our confirmation was a directive to strive for the baptism of the Spirit.

“The Prophet Joseph Smith taught: ‘You might as well baptize a bag of sand as a man, if not done in view of the remission of sins and getting of the Holy Ghost. Baptism by water is but half a baptism, and is good for nothing without the other half—that is, the baptism of the Holy Ghost’ (*History of the Church*, 5:499). We were baptized by immersion in water for the remission of sins. We must also be baptized by and immersed in the Spirit of the Lord, ‘and then cometh a remission of your sins by fire and by the Holy Ghost’ (2 Nephi 31:17)” (in Conference Report, Apr. 2006, 29; or *Ensign*, May 2006, 29).

- Elder Lynn A. Mickelsen of the Seventy explained that through the Atonement of the Savior, the baptism of fire brings a cleansing from sin: “Through the Atonement, the Savior, giving Himself as the ransom for our sins, authorizes the Holy Ghost to cleanse us in a baptism of fire. As the Holy Ghost dwells in us, His purifying presence burns out the filthiness of sin. As soon as the commitment is made, the cleansing process begins” (in Conference Report, Oct. 2003, 11; or *Ensign*, Nov. 2003, 12).

## 2 Nephi 31:15–16. The Voice of the Father

- On one of the rare occasions when the voice of the Father was heard, He testified: “Yea, the words of my Beloved are true and faithful. He that endureth to the end, the same shall be saved” (2 Nephi 31:15). He later said that those who endure to the end “shall have eternal life” (v. 20). These sacred words that Nephi heard from the Father illustrate that one of the most significant

promises of the gospel is that those who endure “to the end will [receive] eternal life” (3 Nephi 15:9).

## 2 Nephi 31:15–16. “Endure to the End”

- The term “endure to the end” is frequently used to suggest the need to patiently suffer hardships throughout our lives. Elder Joseph B. Wirthlin explained that to endure to the end also means to continue in faithfulness to Christ until the end of our lives:

“Enduring to the end is the doctrine of continuing on the path leading to eternal life after one has entered into the path through faith, repentance, baptism, and receiving the Holy Ghost. Enduring to the end requires our whole heart—or, as the Book of Mormon prophet Amaleki taught, we must ‘come unto him, and offer [our] whole souls as an offering unto him, and continue in fasting and praying, and endure to the end; and as the Lord liveth [we] will be saved.’ [Omni 1:26].

“Enduring to the end means that we have planted our lives firmly on gospel soil, staying in the mainstream of the Church, humbly serving our fellowmen, living Christlike lives, and keeping our covenants. Those who endure are balanced, consistent, humble, constantly improving, and without guile. Their testimonies are not based on worldly reasons—they are based on truth, knowledge, experience, and the Spirit” (in Conference Report, Oct. 2004, 107; or *Ensign*, Nov. 2004, 101).

## 2 Nephi 31:17–20. Baptism Is the Gate

- President Boyd K. Packer, President of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, taught that not only is baptism the entrance to the Church, baptism is also the necessary path to obtain eternal life: “When the Lord was upon the earth He made it very clear that there was one way, and one way only, by which man may be saved. ‘I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me.’ (John 14:6.) To proceed on that



way, these two things emerge as being very fixed. First, in His name rests the authority to secure the salvation of mankind. ‘For there is none other name under heaven given . . . whereby we must be saved.’ (Acts 4:12.) And next, there is an essential ordinance—baptism—standing as a gate through which every soul must pass to obtain eternal life” (in Conference Report, Oct. 1975, 145; or *Ensign*, Nov. 1975, 97).

## 2 Nephi 31:19–20. Press Forward

- Elder David A. Bednar taught that coming unto Christ requires a lifetime of pressing forward in consistent obedience: “Coming unto Christ is not a single event with a fixed point of beginning or ending; rather, it is a process that develops and deepens during a lifetime. As an initial step in the process, we certainly must obtain knowledge and *learn about Jesus* and His life, teachings, and ministry. But truly coming unto Him also requires consistent obedience and striving to *become like Jesus* in our thoughts, motives, communications, and actions. As we ‘press forward’ (2 Ne. 31:20) on the pathway of discipleship, we can draw near unto the Savior with the expectation that He will draw near unto us; we can seek Him diligently with the hope that we shall find Him; we can ask with confidence that we shall receive; and we can knock anticipating that the door shall be opened unto us (see D&C 88:63)” (“Because We Have Them before Our Eyes,” *New Era*, Apr. 2006, 2).

## 2 Nephi 31:20; 32:3. 📖 “Feast upon the Words of Christ”

- “Feasting upon the word of Christ” (2 Nephi 31:20) compares our willingness to receive the words of Christ with eating a sumptuous meal. Elder Russell M. Nelson of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles taught that we feast upon Christ’s words when we desire and obey them: “To feast means more than to taste. To feast means to savor. We savor the scriptures by studying them in a spirit of delightful discovery and faithful obedience. When we feast upon the words of Christ, they are embedded ‘in fleshy tables of the heart’ [2 Corinthians 3:3]. They become an integral part of our nature” (in Conference Report, Oct. 2000, 19; or *Ensign*, Nov. 2000, 17).

Where can we find the “word of Christ” to feast upon? President Ezra Taft Benson (1899–1994) clarified: “In Book of Mormon language, we need to ‘believe in Christ and deny him not.’ (2 Nephi 25:28.) . . . We need to ‘come unto Christ, and be perfected in him.’ (Moroni 10:32.) . . . We need to come ‘feasting upon the word of Christ’ (2 Nephi 31:20), as we receive it through His scriptures, His anointed, and His Holy Spirit” (*A Witness and a Warning* [1988], 51).

- Elder Robert D. Hales explained that to feast upon the words of Christ, one must absorb and incorporate His teachings, just as one absorbs and incorporates a meal: “If you and I are to feast upon the words of Christ, we must study the scriptures and absorb His words through pondering them and making them a part of every thought and action” (in Conference Report, Oct. 1998, 16; or *Ensign*, Nov. 1998, 15).

- More recently, Elder Hales spoke of feasting upon the scriptures as the means of hearing the voice of the Lord in our lives:

“If we don’t have the word of God or don’t cling to and heed the word of God, we will wander off in strange paths and be lost as individuals, as families, and as nations.

“As with voices from the dust, the prophets of the Lord cry out to us on earth today: take hold of the scriptures! Cling to them, walk by them, live by them, rejoice in them, feast on them. Don’t nibble. They are ‘the power of God unto salvation’ [D&C 68:4] that lead us back to our Savior Jesus Christ.

“If the Savior were among us in the flesh today, He would teach us from the scriptures as He taught when He walked upon the earth. . . . His words ring out: ‘Search the scriptures; for . . . they are they which testify of me’ [John 5:39]—a testimony borne by the Holy Ghost, for ‘by the power of the Holy Ghost ye may know the truth of all things’ [Moroni 10:5]. . . .



“What a glorious blessing! For when we want to speak to God, we pray. And when we want Him to speak to us, we search the scriptures; for His words are spoken through His prophets. He will then teach us as we listen to the promptings of the Holy Spirit” (in Conference Report, Oct. 2006, 26–27; or *Ensign*, Nov. 2006, 26–27).

### 2 Nephi 32:2–3. 📖 “Speak with the Tongue of Angels”

- After a person has received the Holy Ghost and been baptized by fire, the Holy Ghost inspires them with the ability and the vocabulary to “speak with the tongue of angels” so that they might “shout praises unto the Holy One of Israel” (2 Nephi 31:13). Speaking with the tongue of angels does not necessarily mean that a person would speak in another language.

President Boyd K. Packer explained that we speak with the tongue of angels when we speak by the influence of the Holy Ghost: “Nephi explained that angels speak by the power of the Holy Ghost, and you can speak with the tongue of angels, which simply means that you can speak with the power of the Holy Ghost. It will be quiet. It will be invisible. There will not be a dove. There will not be cloven tongues of fire. But the power will be there” (“The Gift of the Holy Ghost: What Every Member Should Know,” *Ensign*, Aug. 2006, 49–50).

### 2 Nephi 32:5. “All Things What Ye Should Do”

- The Book of Mormon promises that “the words of Christ will tell you all things what ye should do” (2 Nephi 32:5). Elder W. Rolfe Kerr of the Seventy explained that the words of Christ can guide us just as the Liahona guided Lehi’s family through the wilderness: “So we see, brethren and sisters, that the words of Christ can be a personal Liahona for each of us, showing us the way. Let us not be slothful because of the easiness of the way. Let us in faith take the words of Christ into our minds and into our hearts as they are recorded in sacred scripture and as they are uttered by living prophets, seers, and revelators. Let us with faith and diligence feast upon the words of Christ, for the words of Christ will be our spiritual Liahona telling us all things what we should do” (in Conference Report, Apr. 2004, 38; or *Ensign*, May 2004, 37).

- President Henry B. Eyring of the First Presidency confirmed the importance and benefits of the presence of the Holy Ghost through regular daily scripture study: “Another simple thing to do, which allows God to give us strength, is to feast on the word of God: read and ponder the standard works of the Church and the words of living prophets. There is a promise of help from God that comes with that daily practice. Faithful study of scriptures brings the Holy Ghost to us” (in Conference Report, Apr. 2004, 16; or *Ensign*, May 2004, 18).

- Elder Spencer J. Condie of the Seventy noted that the scriptures facilitate the companionship of the Holy Ghost when we are faced with important decisions: “You may be facing decisions about a mission, your future career, and, eventually, marriage. As you read the scriptures and pray for direction, you may not actually see the answer in the form of printed words on a page, but as you read you will receive distinct impressions and promptings, and, as promised, the Holy Ghost ‘will show unto you all things what ye should do’ [2 Nephi 32:5]” (in Conference Report, Apr. 2002, 53; or *Ensign*, May 2002, 45).

## 2 Nephi 32:8–9. 📖 “Ye Must Pray Always”

- President James E. Faust (1920–2007) of the First Presidency counseled that prayer is a lifeline to God: “When God placed man on the earth, prayer became



the lifeline between mankind and God. Thus, in Adam’s generation, men began ‘to call upon the name of the Lord’ [Genesis 4:26]. Through all generations since that time, prayer has filled a very important human need. Each of us has

problems that we cannot solve and weaknesses that we cannot conquer without reaching out through prayer to a higher source of strength. That source is the God of heaven, to whom we pray in the name of Jesus Christ [see 2 Nephi 32:9; 3 Nephi 20:31]. As we pray we should think of our Father in Heaven as possessing all knowledge, understanding, love, and

compassion” (in Conference Report, Apr., 2002, 67; or *Ensign*, May 2002, 59).

## 2 Nephi 33:1–4. Carried into the Heart

- Elder Dallin H. Oaks of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles gave an example of carrying the gospel “unto the hearts of the children of men” (2 Nephi 33:1):

“President Hinckley stated an important corollary to the command to teach by the Spirit when he issued this challenge:

“We must . . . get our teachers to speak out of their hearts rather than out of their books, to communicate their love for the Lord and this precious work, and somehow it will catch fire in the hearts of those they teach’ [*Teachings of Gordon B. Hinckley* (1997), 619–20].

“That is our objective—to have love of God and commitment to the gospel of Jesus Christ ‘catch fire’ in the hearts of those we teach” (in Conference Report, Oct. 1999, 103; or *Ensign*, Nov. 1999, 80).

- Elder David A. Bednar explained that the hearer of the word must also be willing to receive by the Spirit: “Nephi teaches us, ‘when a man speaketh by the power of the Holy Ghost the power of the Holy Ghost carrieth [the message] unto the hearts of the children of men’ (2 Nephi 33:1). Please notice how the power of the Spirit carries the message *unto* but not necessarily *into* the heart. A teacher can explain, demonstrate, persuade, and testify, and do so with great spiritual power and effectiveness. Ultimately, however, the content of a message and the witness of the Holy Ghost penetrate into the heart only if a receiver allows them to enter” (“Seek Learning by Faith” [an evening with Elder David A. Bednar, Feb. 3, 2006], 1, [www.ldsces.org](http://www.ldsces.org); see also D&C 50:14, 17–20).

### 2 NEPHI 33:10–11

*Why are the “words of Christ” so important to us? How can you take greater advantage of having His words available to read and ponder?*

### 2 Nephi 33:11. These Are the Words of Jesus Christ

- President Ezra Taft Benson taught that one of our roles as members of the Church is to declare to others that these are the words of Jesus Christ through His servants: “Our main task is to declare the gospel and do it effectively. We are not obligated to answer every objection. Every man eventually is backed up to the wall of faith, and there he must make his stand. ‘And if they are not the words of Christ, judge ye,’ said Nephi, ‘for Christ will show unto you, with power and great glory, that they are his words, at the last day; and you and I shall stand face to face before his bar; and ye shall know that I have been commanded of him to write these things.’ (2 Ne. 33:11.) Every man must judge for himself, knowing God will hold him accountable” (in Conference Report, Apr. 1975, 95–96; or *Ensign*, May 1975, 65).

### 2 Nephi 33:11. The Judgment Bar

- Nephi said he would meet us at the judgment bar. Interestingly, Jacob and Moroni made very similar comments (see Jacob 6:13; Moroni 10:27).

## Points to Ponder

- Why is pressing forward an important part of enduring to the end?
- Nephi counseled that we must “pray always” (2 Nephi 32:9). Given your circumstances in life, how can this best be done?
- What impresses you most with Nephi’s final testimony? (see 2 Nephi 33:10–14).

## Suggested Assignments

- After reading the commentary in this chapter, evaluate your own habits of personal scripture study and prayer. Do they qualify as feasting upon the words of Christ and as praying always? (see 2 Nephi 32:3, 9). Make the necessary adjustments to your scripture study to bring it more into alignment with Nephi’s teachings.
- Prepare a family home evening lesson from 2 Nephi 31–33 on Nephi’s exposition of the “doctrine of Christ” (2 Nephi 31:2). Help the members of your family understand what Nephi meant when he said, “This is the way; and there is none other way nor name given under heaven whereby man can be saved in the kingdom of God” (2 Nephi 31:21).