

# Is This Real

By Marlin Guin

And if ye shall ask with a sincere heart, with real intent, having faith in Christ, he will manifest the truth of it unto you, by the power of the Holy Ghost; and by the power of the Holy Ghost, ye may know the truth of all things. (Moroni 10:5 RLDS) [Moroni 10:4-5 LDS] (Italics added)

ABC News recently published an article entitled, Fast-Thinking Mom Saves Child From Drowning. It is a true story similar to those often heard concerning the quick response of a mother to the imminent danger of a child. In this particular case, a five-year-old boy was trapped in a car driven off a dock by his father. It was sinking rapidly. A mother, standing close by, witnessed the event and reacted decisively, thus saving the child's life.

As I pondered the actions of this mother, a single word from the scriptures caused me to remember how knowledge inspires us to action. The word is "real" or "reality." She, from personal experience and knowledge, knew the reality of this situation and the sure outcome that would result from inaction. Therefore, she chose to quickly respond and engage.

Alma, a high priest in The Book of Mormon, also speaks of reality and its relationship with our response to the word of the Lord. Only a few verses will be quoted from the sixteenth chapter, but you are encouraged to study the entire parable of the seed in verses 152-174 (RLDS) [Alma 32:28-43 LDS]. Alma says:

Now we will compare the word unto a seed. Now if ye give place, that a seed may be planted in your heart, behold, if it be a true seed, or a good seed, if ye do not cast it out by your unbelief, that ye will resist the Spirit of the Lord, behold, it will begin to swell within your breasts; And when you feel those swelling motions, ye will begin to say within yourselves, It must needs be that this is a good seed, or that the word is good, for it beginneth to enlarge my soul; yea, it beginneth to enlighten my understanding; yea, and it beginneth to be delicious to me...And this because you know; for ye know that the word hath swelled your souls, and ye also know that it hath sprouted up, that your understanding doth begin to be enlightened, and your mind doth begin to expand. *O then, is not this real? I say unto you, Yea; because it is light; and whatsoever is light, is good, because it is discernible; therefore ye must know that it is good.*

(Alma 16:152-154, 161-162 RLDS) [Alma 32:28, 34-35 LDS] (Italics added)

Observe how Alma teaches us the word of God is real because it produces good fruit that is discernible. Discern means to recognize and come to know. We know it is good because God reveals truth by the power of the Holy Ghost. This is such an important principle to understand, so let's explore the meaning of this relationship between reality and discernment.

Most people have probably participated in a game called “connect the dots.” It is a mental and physical exercise where a line is drawn from one dot to another until a recognizable image appears. It is a popular activity for children and adults and is often found in newspapers, magazines and books. We enjoy it because of the challenge, excitement and satisfaction experienced in taking random dots and then connecting the dots together so a real and familiar image appears.

So what is the need to understand this basic principle in the context of our spiritual lives? The answer is found in evaluating our response to the word of the Lord. Let’s call it the measuring of our good fruits. Jesus said in 3 Nephi 12:22 (RLDS) [3 Nephi 27:10 LDS]: “And if it so be that the church is built upon my gospel, then will the Father shew forth his own works in it.” The honest and sober conclusion from this observation is the gospel has become abstract in our personal lives and, thus, we are not prepared to participate effectively in the miraculous events ahead.

Abstract means to be insufficiently factual or perceived as without facts. Therefore, an abstract gospel is one that seems unreal because we can’t seem to find and relate factual truths to it. Consequently, belief in an abstract gospel promotes a lack of urgent response from those professing it. We can describe it as a “business as usual” or “status quo” approach to life. This is a real stumbling block to many saints today as this great and marvelous work has slowly, from generation to generation, transitioned into progressively greater degrees of abstraction since the early days of the restoration.

There is good news concerning ways we can bring this reality into our lives. One way, but certainly not the only way, is by connecting the dots between scriptural prophecies and events. These events can be historical or current events. The scriptures describe this important process as discerning the signs of the times. We are commanded to know the signs of the times and make the connection to prophetic scripture. This helps remove our abstract belief in the word of the Lord. Some scriptures supporting this expectation are:

The Pharisees also, with the Sadducees, came, and tempting Jesus, desired him that he would show them a sign from heaven. And he answered and said unto them, When it is evening ye say, The weather is fair, for the sky is red; and in the morning ye say, The weather is foul today; for the sky is red and lowering. O hypocrites! ye can discern the face of the sky; but ye cannot *tell the signs of the times*. (Matthew 16:1-3 IV) (Italics added)

And it shall come to pass that he that feareth me shall be looking forth for the great day of the Lord to come, even for *the signs* of the coming of the Son of man; (D&C 45:6a) (italics added)

and unto you it shall be given to know *the signs of the times*, and *the signs* of the coming of the Son of man; and of as many as the Father shall bear record, to you shall be given power to seal them up unto eternal life. Amen (D&C 68:1h) (italics added)

John McTernan and Bill Koenig, authors of the book, Israel: The Blessing or the Curse, state the following:

“Through the years, I have spoken to many people about God and the Bible. On a number of occasions, the question was posed ... What proof is there of God? A similar question asked is, How do you know the Bible is the Word of God? There are many ways to answer this question, but I have taken the approach that the authority of the Bible being God’s Word can be seen through the Jew and the nation of Israel . . . The reality of God and the Bible then can be “proved” through the fulfillment of what the Bible states about the nation of Israel. What an awe-inspiring concept this is — Bible prophecy is alive before our very eyes.”

Their premise is based on the awesome spiritual power found in the ability to relate real life to scriptural fulfillment. They believe this causes us to know the Bible is the word of God. The need for prophecy becoming “alive before our very eyes” is important. It brings a positive and empowered testimony to the world through those whose faith has become knowledge because they have experienced and witnessed it for themselves.

What about The Book of Mormon? Would this also be true for it as well? Does Book of Mormon prophecy come alive before our eyes? Those who present The Book of Mormon as the word of God must also be able to support this claim by giving real and meaningful examples of prophetic fulfillment contained within its pages. We all know time is the test of the prophet and what they say must come to pass for it to be valid. Let’s look at some of the prophecies to support this truth. Perhaps we can describe it as prophetically connecting the dots using The Book of Mormon. For this article, and in no particular order, I will discuss some specific signs from three major areas.

### **The House of Israel Coming Among the Gentiles**

There is a unique prophecy in The Book of Mormon that is easily discernible. It is the movement of the House of Israel among the Gentiles to prepare for latter day events. A partial quoting of one of these scriptures is:

And my people who are a remnant of Jacob, shall be among the Gentiles, yea, in the midst of them... (3 Nephi 9:99 RLDS) [3 Nephi 21:12]

In a general sense, this has already occurred as the House of Israel was scattered among all the Gentile nations. This took place historically in the centuries before and just after Christ. More specifically, since The Book of Mormon is the record of Joseph’s land, we should also see this being fulfilled within this mighty nation called America. The Book of Mormon states it will be a latter day event. We can then connect the dots between the scriptures and current events.

Our focus here will be on the movement of the seed of Lehi among the Gentiles. Most Book of Mormon scholars agree the seed of Lehi must be found in a subset of the Hispanic and Native American cultures. Therefore, we should be able to observe and discern their movement among us as a fulfillment of Book of Mormon prophecy.

In January 2006, well-known author Patrick Buchanan, in his article entitled, Demographic Crisis of the GOP, states that Hispanics are: “. . . the nation’s fastest growing minority . . . who now number 40 million and 13 percent of the U.S. population.” They became the largest minority in the United States according to the U.S. census in 2000. This represents those who have legally immigrated to the United States. The picture of this prophecy is not clear until we look at some other facts. Carrie Kahn, in an article entitled, Study Details Lives of Illegal Immigrants in U.S., states: “More than 10 million illegal immigrants are thought to live in the United States. The overwhelming majority are Hispanic; most are from Mexico.” Even further, we must consider that 1 to 3 million illegal immigrants, depending on the source, are crossing our southern border each year. This prophetic fulfillment has significantly hastened in the last 20 years and continues to do so. We should not be surprised since the Lord said he would hasten the work in the latter days.

The news media has just released information that the total population of the United States just exceeded the benchmark number of 300 million people. If we do the calculation and total the number of Hispanics currently in the country, we realize that one out of every six people are from this culture. My personal sense is these numbers are lower than the actual count. There seems to be no end in sight, especially with the idea of a better life in America being encouraged by political discussions concerning “guest worker” and “amnesty” programs for those who are illegally residing here at the present. The protection, or lack thereof, of our southern border has become a key political issue and stands ready to have significant influence on the next congressional and presidential elections.

The common sense test of these statements is found in our daily lives as we witness the increasing presence of the Hispanic culture among us. It is easily observable. Hopefully, all of these statistics help paint us a picture of this prophecy being fulfilled before our very eye. Somewhere in the midst of those coming among us resides some of the descendants of Lehi, who are of the House of Israel. Only The Book of Mormon makes the claim that we would see this occur in the latter days in Joseph’s land. It provides evidence of the reality of the word of the Lord and the authenticity of The Book of Mormon. We should be excited the Lord is bringing them to us since we have not sufficiently taken the gospel to them as commanded. It’s interesting how the Lord works His will regardless of the circumstances.

Another consideration of this prophecy is the Native American culture. The House of Israel, as found in the seed of Lehi, should also be among them. Certainly not all of them are of this lineage. However, some must be since the Lord, by revelation given in October 1830 (D&C 31), sent missionaries to the Lamanites. It was given only six months after The Book of Mormon was published and the church organized. This strongly suggests the Lord was leading the church to move quickly toward this mission. We know they are already among us and were here long before the Europeans came to the Americas. Much more is yet to be seen and heard from this people, so stay tuned. All these signs should now be real in our understanding of the scriptures.

### **The Ripening in Iniquity of the Gentiles**

Another sign of the times, that is observable, is the ripening in iniquity of the Gentiles, especially in this democratic nation called the United States of America. Alma says it well, in Alma 8:28 (RLDS) [Alma 10:19 LDS], when he describes it as follows:

Yea, well did he say, that if the time should come that the voice of this people should choose iniquity; that is, if the time should come that this people should fall into transgression, they would be ripe for destruction.

One of the best places in The Book of Mormon to find the detailed descriptions of this sign is in the prophecies of Jesus Christ. He saw the latter days and gave us a list of specific signs to observe. In 3 Nephi 7:34 (RLDS) [3 Nephi 16:10 LDS] we read:

And thus commandeth the Father that I should say unto you, At that day when the Gentiles shall sin against my gospel, and shall reject the fullness of my gospel, and shall be lifted up in the pride of their hearts above all nations, and above all the people of the whole earth, and shall be filled with all manner of lyings, and of deceits, and of mischiefs, and all manner of hypocrisy, and murders, and priestcrafts, and whoredoms, and of secret abominations;

I want to specifically look at two of them that are profound in their nature. These signs measure, perhaps more than any other at this point in history, the fulfillment of this prophecy concerning a ripening in iniquity among us. They are described as “all manner of murders” and all manner of “whoredoms” and represent unique prophecies from The Book of Mormon for our day.

### **All Manner of Murders**

The Associated Press reported in January 2005: “There were 16,137 murders in the United States in 2004, the last full year for which statistics are available.” This is the type of murder that we often think about when we watch the evening news.

However, there is another manner of murder that is unique and profound for the time in which we live. It is abortion. There are about 1 to 2 million abortions in the United States each year, depending on the source. An article, published in January 2006 by BP News, states: “In what can only be described as tragic, the United States likely experienced its 47 millionth legal abortion at some point in 2005, more than three decades after the Supreme Court issued its infamous 1973 Roe vs. Wade decision legalizing the killing of the unborn.” On a wider scale, a website called About.com reports on their Women’s Issues page that there are currently about 46 million abortions in the world each year. These numbers are staggering.

### **All Manner of Whoredoms**

Prostitution is the manner of whoredom we probably associate with this sign. The Prostitutes Network posts the following statistics based on research conducted through the 1980s: “over one million people in the US have worked as prostitutes in the United States, or about 1% of American women.” Males also participate in this type of whoredom.

However, there are other types of whoredoms that can be observed. U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement tell us: “Each year, millions of children fall prey to sexual predators. Experts estimate that one in five girls and one in ten boys in the United States are sexually exploited before they reach adulthood.” The Center for Disease Control (CDC) also reported in July 2000, based on a five-school-based survey: “...50 percent of teenagers... had sex in 1999.” Take notice, that’s half of our kids in junior and senior high school!

The manner of whoredom that should really catch our attention, as a sign of the times, is homosexuality. Not because it has never existed before today, but because for the first time, it has become such an extremely powerful political, cultural and spiritual force in all levels of our society. It is becoming increasingly accepted as normal behavior. A good example is a CNN article posted January 31, 2006 concerning the entertainment industry. In reference to a recent movie called “Brokeback Mountain,” the article says this: “the story of two romantically involved male ranch hands — which already has won best picture honors from the Golden Globes (drama), Broadcast Film Critics Association and New York Film Critics Circle — crowned its status as Oscar front-runner by leading all films with eight nominations for the 78th annual Academy Awards.” The only conclusion that makes sense concerning the power of its influence among us, even though representing a small percentage of the population, is the movement must be empowered by Satan.

What is extremely interesting to me, concerning all these signs of the ripening in iniquity of the Gentiles, is they are occurring by our willful choice within this nation, which was founded on Christian principles. Jennifer Wheary, in an article written for Common Dreams News Center entitled, Who Owns America’s Moral Values?, states the following: “Seventy-seven percent of the country is Christian.” This statement is in agreement with my research where every poll found places the number of professing Christians in the United States somewhere between 60-80% of the population. What a paradox this presents in light of our national choices, and yet it was still prophesied to occur by our Savior. All these signs should now be real in our understanding of the scriptures.

### **The Judgments of God upon the Gentiles**

Signs that often make people uncomfortable are those where the Lord says enough is enough and then responds with judgment. Even though discussing them is not popular among some, we can’t ignore the existence of these signs and the reality they bring in support of the scriptures. I want to use 3 Nephi 9:101-104 (RLDS) [3 Nephi 21:14-18 LDS] as the base scripture for our consideration. It reads:

Yea, wo be unto the Gentiles, except they repent, for it shall come to pass in that day, saith the Father, that I will cut off thy horses out of the midst of thee, and I will destroy thy chariots, and I will cut off the cities of thy land and throw down all thy strongholds; And I will cut off witchcrafts out of thy hand, and thou shalt have no more soothsayers: Thy graven images I will also cut off, and thy standing images out of the midst of thee; and thou shalt no more worship the works of thy hands; And I will pluck up thy groves out of the midst of thee; so will I destroy thy cities.

From our recent national experience, the devastation of hurricane Katrina relates to many of the signs in the above scripture. I will look specifically at three of them and allow you to do your own research on the others. You will come to your own conclusions as you study and consider them. Let’s begin with the words of Jesus in 3 Nephi 10:11 (RLDS) [3 Nephi 22:3 LDS] where, concerning the House of Israel, he said:

For thou shalt break forth on the right hand and on the left; and thy seed shall inherit the Gentiles, and make the desolate cities to be inhabited.

In October 2005, an article in the St. Petersburg Times entitled, Hurricane Katrina: Who's Rebuilding New Orleans?, states: "Immigrant workers — some in the country illegally — have been pouring into New Orleans since Hurricane Katrina devastated the city." They seem to be inheriting the desolate city of New Orleans because many of the original residents do not want to return. This sign is also connected to the events previously discussed concerning the House of Israel coming among the Gentiles.

Jesus said God would cut off the cities of our land if we did not repent. In August 2005, CNN reported the following news release describing the situation in New Orleans after Katrina: "Major routes into the city were cut off as well." It is very common for the exact wording used in the reporting of current events to also match the related wording in the scripture reference. In this case, both described it as cities being cut off. This is no coincidence.

Jesus said God would destroy the cities of the Gentiles if we did not repent. In September 2005, the Deputy Police Chief of New Orleans, Warren Riley, told CNN that New Orleans was "completely destroyed." New Orleans Mayor Ray Nagin followed up in January 2006 with a similar comment where he said: "Surely God is mad at America. He sent us hurricane after hurricane after hurricane, and it's destroyed and put stress on this country." Again, the wording between scripture and the news event is almost identical. All these signs should now be real in our understanding of the scriptures.

We have only scratched the surface, but we should have enough evidence to nurture an appreciation for the reality of God's word. The Lord keeps every promise whether we consider them to be positive or negative. We are told to discern all the signs and not just the ones that make us feel comfortable.

Now, as these signs have been brought to our reality, it becomes essential for us to understand the reasons for which they were given. First, it is so we will not be troubled and afraid but rather have faith and hope in things to come. This occurs because we see God is a keeper of His word. Also, they help us prepare and be ready for active participation in future prophetic events. This preparation certainly includes, among other things, our repentance.

The question we now need to answer is for what future events should we prepare? Jesus answered this question in 3 Nephi 7:35-37 (RLDS) [3 Nephi 16:10-12 LDS], where he said what events would follow the sign of the ripening in iniquity of the Gentiles:

And if they shall do all these things, and shall reject the fullness of my gospel, behold, saith the Father, I will bring the fullness of my gospel from among them; And then will I remember my covenant which I have made unto my people, O house of Israel, and I will bring my gospel unto them; And I will shew unto thee, O house of Israel, that the Gentiles shall not have power over you, but I will remember my covenant unto you, O house of Israel, and ye shall come unto the knowledge of the fullness of my gospel.

This speaks of a shift in the focus of God's work in the latter days. It is the result of the prophetic trigger previously discussed concerning the Gentiles' rejection of Jesus Christ and the fullness of the gospel. In response to this rejection, God will bring the fullness of His gospel from among the Gentiles and bring it back to the House of Israel as promised.

Who then, in the latter days, will the Lord use to restore the House of Israel for the last time? In other words, who will bring them to the knowledge of Jesus Christ, the true Messiah and the fullness of the gospel? It will begin with a collective people who remember the Book of Mormon and former commandments, not only to say but also to do. This commandment was given to the whole church in 1832 (D&C 83:8a-c), because it was the whole church that received the condemnation for rejecting God's word. Therefore, it is the whole church who must repent and not just the priesthood or a few people.

The signs point to this being the day when the Lord will empower the work to accomplish this purpose. In fact, the Lord said it clearly in D&C 2:6c, "for this very purpose are these plates preserved" and further in D&C 83:1b:

yea, the word of the Lord concerning his church, established in the last days for the restoration of his people, as he has spoken by the mouth of his prophets, and for the gathering of his Saints to stand upon Mount Zion, which shall be the city New Jerusalem;

Time will tell as to who will step forward to be an instrument in the hands of God for this prophetic calling. It is a call with pressing urgency. My greatest hope is to hear the voice of the people shout with one accord and say that this is the single desire of our hearts, and we pledge all our spiritual and physical resources for the accomplishment of this common vision. For me, there can be no other common vision that makes any sense in light of the reality of God's word for our time. Therefore, my prayer is that this will become real as it is carried into our hearts by the power of the Holy Ghost.

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