

Book of Mormon Study – Helaman 7 – 3 Nephi 7

Online zoom Sunday School, 13 Sep 2020

(<https://jayball.name/book-of-mormon-study-lessons>)

Helaman 7:12-14

And now, when Nephi arose he beheld the multitudes of people who had gathered together. And it came to pass that he opened his mouth and said unto them: Behold, why have ye gathered yourselves together? That I may tell you of your iniquities? Yea, because I have got upon my tower that I might pour out my soul unto my God, because of the exceeding sorrow of my heart, which is because of your iniquities!

The Lord has given us commandment to pray vocally in public prayer:

And again, I command thee that thou shalt pray vocally as well as in thy heart; yea, before the world as well as in secret, in public as well as in private. (D&C 19:28, see also words to Joseph Knight, D&C 23:6)

One speaker related his feelings about public prayer:

I've given opening prayers in a lot of settings, and I have to tell you, when praying in secret, I don't have to worry about what anyone else thinks about my vocabulary, content, incomplete sentences, dangling participles, or stupid notions. I don't have to worry about any of that. It is between me and God. But when I'm standing on the corner, or at the pulpit, or before people and praying, (you may be better than I am), I have never been able to pray in public in those settings, without at least some concern about the words coming out of my mouth and their effect upon the audience. I have always felt like I was delivering more of a sermon than a prayer to God. That's a weakness I have that you may have, too. Christ deals with that by how He teaches us to pray. Our Lord's example of prayer was so private that His disciples had to come to Him and ask: "Lord teach us how to pray." They witnessed Him praying. I'll give you the examples. When the Lord went to pray, He went out alone, apart.

Did Helaman not have this problem? Was his sincere prayer intended to be public? If not, then why upon his tower and in a voice loud enough for people to overhear it?

Hel 8:4-7

Judges incite crowd, "they did stir up the people to anger against Nephi,"

Not unlike we see happening in crowds and protests today. This tactic is not new.

Therefore they did cry unto the people, saying: Why do you suffer this man to revile against us? For behold he doth condemn all this people, even unto destruction; yea, and also that these our great cities shall be taken from us, that we shall have no place in them. And now we know that this is impossible, for behold, we are powerful, and our cities great, therefore our enemies can have no power over us.

How long has it been since Lamanites had yielded up the lands back to the Nephites (Hel 5:52)? (From 62 Reign of Judges to 69. 7 years) How is it possible for the people to forget such recent history? What difference does it make when the spirit of the Lord begins to withdraw from the people? Do we see evidence of this spirit being withdrawn in our day? How long ago was 911?

Stick of Joseph footnote Hel 8:15

Num. 21:6–9. The Hebrew word for “serpent” is nachash נחש (Strong’s 5175), which has a gematria of 358, the same gematria as Mashiach משיח (Strong’s 4899). See also John 3:14; 8:28; 12:32; Alma 16:32 [33:17-20].

Stick of Joseph footnote Hel 8:16 (or 17?)

As we read in Targum Onkelos: “And he believed in the Word (Memra) of YHWH. And He counted it to him for righteousness” (Targum Onkelos Gen. 15:6).

Stick of Joseph footnote Hel 8:21

Thus fulfilling Ezek. 17:1–24

Without Excuse

Hel 8:24-25

And now, seeing ye know these things and cannot deny them except ye shall lie, therefore in this ye have sinned, for ye have rejected all these things, notwithstanding so many evidences which ye have received; yea, even ye have received all things, both things in heaven, and all things which are in the earth, as a witness that they are true. But behold, ye have rejected the truth, and rebelled against your holy God; and even at this time, instead of laying up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where nothing doth corrupt, and where nothing can come which is unclean, ye are heaping up for yourselves wrath against the day of judgment.

Compare with words from Paul:

For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who hold the truth in unrighteousness; Because that which may be known of God is manifest in them; for God hath shewed it unto them. For the invisible things of him from the creation of the world are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even his eternal power and Godhead; so that they are without excuse: Because that, when they knew God, they glorified him not as God, neither were thankful; but became vain in their imaginations, and their

*foolish heart was darkened. Professing themselves to be wise, they became fools,
(Rom 1:18-22)*

And Samuel the Lamanite:

And the angel said unto me that many shall see greater things than these, to the intent that they might believe that these signs and these wonders should come to pass upon all the face of this land, to the intent that there should be no cause for unbelief among the children of men - (Hel 14:28)

And Mormon's commentary:

Now they did not sin ignorantly, for they knew the will of God concerning them, for it had been taught unto them; therefore they did wilfully rebel against God. (3 Ne 6:18)

The temptation is to use these scriptures to justify judging others, the true intent is to ask how this applies to *myself*.

You'd be better off saying, "I will recognize, I will admit, and I will hold myself to every failing I am prone to make. But as for all the rest of you, I don't see anything wrong with any of you. I cannot detect a flaw in the least, because I'm going to judge you by the standard with which I would like to be measured; which is, I take no offense, I freely forgive."

If these verses that tell us we are without excuse are NOT given for us to justify judging others, then what are they for?

Remember back on our lesson on Korihor. Was he "without excuse"? Even though he was deceived by an angel that had appeared to him, he was still held accountable to the truth:

And then Alma said unto him: Believest thou that there is a God? And he answered, Nay. Now Alma said unto him: Will ye deny again that there is a God, and also deny the Christ? For behold, I say unto you, I know there is a God, and also that Christ shall come. And now what evidence have ye that there is no God, or that Christ cometh not? I say unto you that ye have none, save it be your word only. But, behold, I have all things as a testimony that these things are true; and ye also have all things as a testimony unto you that they are true; and will ye deny them? Believest thou that these things are true? Behold, I know that thou believest, but thou art possessed with a lying spirit, and ye have put off the Spirit of God that it may have no place in you; but the devil has power over you, and he doth carry you about, working devices that he may destroy the children of God. And now Korihor said unto Alma: If thou wilt show me a sign, that I may be convinced that there is a God, yea, show unto me that he hath power, and then will I be convinced of the truth of thy words. (Alma 30:37-43)

Souls of Men

Stick of Joseph footnote Hel 8:28

Gen. 2:7; Yosef ben Yosef [Joseph Smith] said, “God made a tabernacle & put a spirit in it and it became a human soul...” (Ehat, A.F. & Cook, L.W. (Eds.) (1980) *The Words of Joseph Smith*. Salt Lake City, UT: Bookcraft, p. 346; see also pgs. 352,359). See also Ya’akov 2:5 [Jacob 2:16]; Moshiyah 13:2 [Mosiah 29:7]; Alma 16:10 [30:46]; 19:7-8 [40:15-26]; 3 Nefi 9:6 [20:8].

The definition of “soul” — given through Joseph Smith years prior to his translation of the Book of Abraham — was the “spirit and the body” together: And the spirit and the body is the soul of man (D&C 88:15). Christ, as well as the “noble and great,” were all embodied and therefore resurrected beings before this world. They were “souls.” Now the Lord had shewn unto me, Abraham, the intelligences that were organized before the world was, and among all these there were many of the noble and great ones. And God saw these souls, that they were good, and he stood in the midst of them (Abraham 3:22-23). Joseph Smith said, “God made a tabernacle and put a spirit into it, and it became a living soul. How does it read in the Hebrew? It does not say in the Hebrew that God created the spirit of man. It says, ‘God made man out of the earth and put into him Adam’s spirit, and so became a living body.’” [TPJS, 352–353; WJS, 346, 352, 359; WWJ, 2:385.] (Cf. Moses 3:7: And I, the Lord God, formed man from the dust of the ground and breathed into Adam his spirit or the breath of life, and man became a living soul, the first flesh upon the Earth, the first man also.) “In tracing the thing to the foundation and looking at it philosophically, we shall find a very material difference between the body and the spirit. The body is supposed to be organized matter, and the spirit by many is thought to be immaterial, without substance. With this latter statement we should beg leave to differ and state that spirit is a substance, that it is material, but that it is more pure, elastic, and refined matter than the body — that it existed before the body, can exist in the body, and will exist separate from the body, when the body will be moldering in the dust, and will in the resurrection be again united with it. Without attempting to describe this mysterious connection and the laws that govern the body and spirit of man, their relationship to each other, and the design of God in relation to the human body and spirit, I would just remark that the spirits of men are eternal, that they are governed by the same priesthood that Abraham, Melchizedek, and the apostles were: that they are organized according to that priesthood which is everlasting — without beginning of days or end of years [Hebrews 7:3] — that they all move in their respective spheres and are governed by the law of God, that when they appear upon the earth they are in a probationary state and are preparing, if righteous, for a future and a greater glory.” [TPJS, 207–208.]

Stick of Joseph footnote Hel 9:6

The Hebrew word *beGED* בגד (Strong’s 899) means both “garment” or “garb” and “treachery.” This is an obvious Hebrew word play.

Stick of Joseph footnote Hel 9:9-10

The ancient Jewish practice was to bury the body within 24 hours.

Stick of Joseph footnote Hel 9:18

Without at least two witnesses, there were no grounds for a conviction of the five men (Deut. 17:6; 19:15).

Stick of Joseph footnote Hel 9:38

Without at least two witnesses, there were no grounds for a conviction of the five men or of Nefi (Deut. 17:6; 19:15). The confession of Seantum alone would not have been sufficient for his conviction, in the absence of witnesses. As the Talmud says, “No man may call himself a wrongdoer” (b.Sanhedrin 9b), just as no man can testify in his own favor (b.Ketubot 27a). If a man testified to his own guilt, that in itself made him disreputable and an invalid witness (b.Sanhedrin 25a; b.Baba Kamma 72b). There are biblical instances of convictions associated with confessions (Josh. 7:19–20; 2 Sam. 1:10–16; compare Judg. 17:1–4; 1 Sam. 14:43; 2 Sam. 4:8–12). The Talmud points out that these were all confessions made after trial and conviction, made for the sole purpose of expiating the sin before YHWH (b.Sanhedrin 43b) or as special case exceptions to the rule (for example, trials before kings rather than judges). One type of exception was when a confession was “corroborated by an ordeal as well as by the production of the corpus delicti” (Falk, Z. (1964) Hebrew Law in Biblical Times. Jerusalem, Israel: Wahrmann, p. 71). Such was the case of Achan (Josh. 7:19–20), who was exposed by casting of lots and whose confession was corroborated by the discovery of the goods under the floor of his tent. Similarly, Seantum was exposed by Nefi’s revelations and by the discovery of blood on his garment.

Helaman 10

In this chapter we see sealing power given to Nephi. There are three kinds of Melchizedek sealing power. The first is when power is given to a dispensation head, as we see with Lehi and again with Joseph Smith. This kind of sealing power gives rise to the second, which is embodied within authoritative ordinances. This is the kind of sealing power that Henry B Eyring spoke about in April General Conference 2012, Families under Covenant. This second kind of sealing power has a condition upon it and can be broken, as we read in Isaiah 24:5-6. In this chapter in Helaman, however, we are not talking about these first two kinds of sealing power.

There is a third kind of sealing power. And this third kind of sealing power goes beyond either of the first two. It has absolutely unique application and is given only in rare circumstances and for highly specific purposes. That third form involves giving the authority to control the elements. This was authority possessed by Enoch. This was authority possessed by Melchizedek. This was the authority possessed by Christ. This was the authority Christ had to suspend (or not employ) in order to permit those who would kill Him to kill Him. This is the kind of authority which, in the case of every such individual, they must give their lives up willingly. Their lives cannot be taken.

Here in Helaman 10 we see a good example of this kind of sealing power. It gives us insight into why such authority would ever be given to a man. Start at verse 5. This is the Lord speaking to Nephi:

*“Because thou hast done this with such unwearyingness [and this “unwearyingness” has been described in verse 4—that is, Nephi has gone and declared what the Lord has asked him to declare, and he hasn’t feared them, nor has he sought to protect his own life, but he has instead sought to keep the commandments of God—therefore, because he has done this with such unwearyingness], behold, I [God] will bless thee forever; and I will make thee mighty in word and in deed, in faith and in works; yea, even that all things shall be done unto thee according to thy word, for **thou shalt not ask that which is contrary to my will** (emphasis added).”*

That is not a commandment given to Nephi. Instead, this is a description of the character and the nature of Nephi. God was not saying, "I'm giving this to you, but be careful how you use it. Please don't do anything that isn't according to my will." It is not that at all. Instead, it is the Lord saying, "I, God, have faith in you, Nephi. I, God, trust you." God is proclaiming that Nephi is sufficiently trustworthy that he will not do anything other than God's will. You see, the whole thing turns on its head at this point. This is God having faith in a man. What manner of man, then, does God have enough faith in to permit him to employ God's power at his word?

"Behold, thou art Nephi, and I am God. Behold, I declare it unto thee in the presence of mine angels..."

This is because this decree in this circumstance, may require those angels who are watching over this world to obey the word of the man. Therefore the angels, the Powers of Heaven, must give heed. God declared this in the presence of the hosts who are standing before Him.

"...I declare it unto thee in the presence of mine angels, that ye shall have power over this people, and shall smite the earth with famine, and with pestilence, and destruction, according to the wickedness of this people."

That's a rather Aaronic behavior. By that I mean Aaronic sealing power is the kind of power that can seal you up into condemnation, or judgment, as opposed to Melchizedek which purpose is given to bless. In this case with Nephi it is given to accomplish Melchizedek ends.

"Behold, I give unto you power, that whatsoever ye shall seal on earth shall be sealed in heaven; and whatsoever ye shall loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven; and thus shall ye have power among this people." (verse 7. See how Nephi uses this power in 2 Ne 33:13-15)

This is rather Melchizedek, because you can seal up unto eternal life. This is the positive side. This is the thing which those who are given this authority seek earnestly to do. Their lives have as their purpose to save others. They are here to rescue lost, potentially-damned souls. Therefore, they can be trusted, because their hearts are right before God. They, like God, seek the immortality and eternal life of man.

"And thus, if ye shall say unto this temple it shall be rent in twain, it shall be done."

This is because the temple is subordinate to the word of God. The temple is not the place that controls the word of God, the temple is the place which most of all ought be subject to the word of God. It's not a place to innovate the ordinances. It's a place to obey, to follow, to give strict heed to and not vary. But when it offends God and frustrates His purpose, then one with this third form of sealing authority can declare it would be cast down. When such authority makes this declaration, the temple is surely cast down, so that not so much as one stone will be left atop the other.

"And if ye shall say unto this mountain, Be thou cast down and become smooth, it shall be done. And behold, if ye shall say that God shall smite this people, it shall come to pass."

Then because he knows the nature and character of the man involved in giving this authority, God commands him to smite the people using God's word. He must go out and deliver the threatening message, "Except ye repent ye shall be smitten, even unto destruction." He didn't want to do that,

because that's not the character of the person who, with unwearyingness, would go out and declare the word of God. Such holders of this third form of sealing power have in their heart one and only one objective, which is the salvation of the souls of men. But Nephi was told he was required to deliver this troubling message. Yet when he delivered it, he didn't even use the authority he was given. He meekly asks the Lord if the Lord will smite.

Hel 10:14

smitten even unto destruction

I do not imagine Nephi took any delight in declaring this. See Samuel the Lamanite's words after declaring harsh judgments upon the people:

O ye people of the land, that ye would hear my words! And I pray that the anger of the Lord be turned away from you, and that ye would repent and be saved. (Hel 13:39)

Hel 11:26

not many years

Stick of Joseph footnote *Hel 12:13-14*

The "if...and" conditional structure seems stilted in English, which prefers "if...then." However, in Hebrew, this construction is correct. The numerous examples appearing in this paragraph, as well as elsewhere in the text, indicate the Hebraic nature of the underlying original.

Hel 12:25-26

And I would that all men might be saved. But we read that in the great and last day there are some who shall be cast out, yea, who shall be cast off from the presence of the Lord; Yea, who shall be consigned to a state of endless misery, fulfilling the words which say: They that have done good shall have everlasting life; and they that have done evil shall have everlasting damnation. And thus it is. Amen.

The words, "But we read...". Where do we read these words? They look like something that could have come from Book of Revelations. Are these words from someone like Zenock or Zenos that we don't have? Could John the revelator been using or alluding to these same words from the same records that Nephi is quoting from?

Hel 15:1

except you shall repent, your houses shall be left unto you desolate

We know this was prophesied by Isaiah (see 2 Ne 15:8), but is there also a spiritual implication here as well?

Nibley on the Timely and the Timeless, Chapter Treasures in the Heavens - see pg 58-60, Hymn of the Pearl from the Acts of Thomas. This is referred to as a Treasure in heaven but in other places are we not promised houses and mansions? Are these likewise things that we have set aside during our probation here to regain if we endure well here? Can these be lost during this probation? Interesting in this context how Samuel has also been prophesying of slippery "treasures".

In my Father's house are many mansions: if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you. (John 14:2)

Many shelters have been prepared for people, good ones for the good, but bad ones for the bad, many, without number. Happy is he who enters into the blessed houses; for in the bad ones there is no rest, nor returning. (2 Enoch 61:2-3 [OTP-version J])

Hel 16:17-18

And they began to reason and to contend among themselves, saying: That it is not reasonable that such a being as a Christ shall come; if so, and he be the Son of God, the Father of heaven and of earth, as it has been spoken, why will he not show himself unto us as well as unto them who shall be at Jerusalem?

Also "some things they may have guessed right". This is the idea of randomness that atheists use to rationalize a disbelief in God. (book I read recommended by Lauren recently – The Drunkard's Walk by Leonard Mlodinow) Of course you are going to have a miracle happen every once in a while. That's the nature of randomness.

The argument of reasonableness being employed to determine the truth of a thing. How this competes with faith. Even evangelicals use this as a method of determining truth. As one Christian friend shared with me in an email:

"You referred to Romans 1:20, and interpret it to mean 'that reality provides enough evidence to find the correct book of truth. Use reason first to find the book of truth and then use the book of truth to correct reason and build faith.'" (Jay response to Ron, email Aug 22, 2020)

This idea is not just with Ron, but is made by Rod Bond and Bob Bolton. It appears to be a thing among Evangelicals. It's a "rational faith" is one way I remember Bob say it many times. This is basically seeking for a sign (see notes from Alma 32 lesson).

Hel 16:21

they will, by the cunning and the mysterious arts of the evil one, work some great mystery which we cannot understand, which will keep us down to be servants to their words, and also servants unto them, for we depend upon them

This is given as an accusation that the wicked make against the righteous. Consider these words in light of recent events, applied from a different angle:

They [the government, Bill Gates, the elite...] by their cunning, will work some great mystery which we cannot understand [create a virus, manufacture a pandemic, do some conspiracy...] which will keep us down to be servants unto them [by virtue of some antidote, vaccine, etc.] for we depend on them... [thus being able to control us - Take this vaccine or you will not be allowed to work, buy, sell, etc.]

You see how this line of reasoning can go both ways. But it is still rooted in the skeptical and critical corner of the quadrant in my model. To escape this way of thinking we must move to the faith corner of the quadrant.

Stick of Joseph footnote 3 Ne 1:1

Regarding the appearance of Greek names in ancient America, see citation for Timothy in 3 Nephi 9:2 [19:4]

The appearance of the Greek name “Timothy” (Timo - Theos) “honoring God” should come as no surprise. No less a scholar than Dr. Cyrus Gordon suggests the Greek word “Theos” migrated to Ancient America. He writes of the Uto-Aztecan (Nahuatl) word teo - tl: “For example teo - tl ‘god’ could have been introduced from Greek theo - s... Greek influence in Ancient America does not come as a complete surprise. Since Mycenaean times, the Greeks have been a nautical people” (Gordon, C.H. (1971) Before Columbus. New York, ny: Crown. p. 136).

3 Nephi 1:2-3

And Nephi, the son of Helaman, had departed out of the land of Zarahemla... and whither he went, no man knoweth;

Stick of Joseph footnote 3 Ne 1:24-25

See “What does it mean to fulfill the Torah?” footnote to 2 Nephi 11:8 [25:24].

What does it mean to fulfill the Torah? David Bivin and Roy Blizzard wrote: “‘Destroy’ and ‘fulfill’ are technical terms used in rabbinic argumentation. When a rabbi felt that his colleague had misinterpreted a passage of Scripture, he would say, ‘You are destroying the Law!’ Needless to say, in most cases his colleague strongly disagreed. What was ‘destroying the Law’ for one rabbi, was ‘fulfilling the Law’ (correctly interpreting Scripture) for another” (Bivin, D. and Blizzard, R. (1983) Understanding the Difficult Words of Jesus. Arcadia, CA: Makor Publishing, p. 154). Yosef ben Yosef understood “fulfilled the law” to mean that Mashiach “magnified” the Torah and made it “honorable” and not that he destroyed it. He said that Mashiach himself “fulfil[l]ed all righteousness in becoming obedient to the the (sic) Law which himself had given to Moses on the mount and thereby magnified it and made it honorable instead of destroying it” (Cook, L.W. & Ehat, A.F. (Eds.) (1980) The Words of Joseph Smith. Salt Lake City, UT: Bookcraft, pgs. 162-3).”

Stick of Joseph footnote 3 Ne 2:1

~15 CE. The Nefites began to reckon their time from the sign of Mashiach's birth (3 Nefi 1:9). Because there was no "year 0," the sign was given in 1 BCE. Therefore, one year after the sign, began the year 1 CE. "In the sixteenth year" means that 15 years had been completed since the sign, but 16 years had not. Hence, the proper notation is 15 CE.

3 Ne 4:28-29

And their leader, Zemnarihah, was taken and hanged upon a tree, yea, even upon the top thereof until he was dead. And when they had hanged him until he was dead they did fell the tree to the earth, and did cry with a loud voice, saying: May the Lord preserve his people in righteousness and in holiness of heart, that they may cause to be felled to the earth all who shall seek to slay them because of power and secret combinations, even as this man hath been felled to the earth.

Stick of Joseph footnote 3 Ne 4:28

Deut. 21:22, This follows the ancient Jewish custom of felling the tree after hanging. We read in the Torah, "And if a man have committed a sin worthy of death, and he be put to death, and you hang him on a tree: His body shall not remain all night upon the tree, but you shall in any wise bury him that day; (for he that is hanged is accursed of Elohim;) that your land be not defiled, which YHWH your Elohim gives you for an inheritance" (Deut. 21:22–23). The Hebrew says, literally, "burying you shall bury him/it." The repetition of the verb is taken by the Talmud to mean that the tree is felled and also buried (b.Sanhedrin 46b). Maimonides comments, "In order that it should not serve as a sad reminder, people saying: 'This is the tree in which so and so was hanged'" (Maimonides, b.Sanhedrin, XV, 9).

3 Ne 5:9

But behold there are records which do contain all the proceedings of this people; and a shorter but true account was given by Nephi.

This suggests that there are other accounts of the proceedings of the people that are not true. How much of our own history can we trust is "true"? How valuable would it be to have a "true" account written in our day by one like Nephi? Would we finally know who actually killed JFK? What is the truth behind the terrorism of 911? COVID-19 and organized riots?

3 Ne 5:20

I am Mormon, and a pure descendant of Lehi.

Seed was not mixed. His fathers lived true to the commandment not to mix seed. (See lesson on Mosiah 25-28, 24 May 2020)

3 Ne 6:16

And thus Satan did lead away the hearts of the people to do all manner of iniquity; therefore they had enjoyed peace but a few years.

How did Satan do that? He isn't walking around in the flesh talking to people. Does he whisper in our ears? Does he employ demons to entice and deceive us? Are demons real? Can we be possessed and not know it?

See the verse before this one: Now the cause of this iniquity of the people was this—Satan had great power, unto the stirring up of the people to do all manner of iniquity, and to the puffing them up with pride, tempting them to seek for power, and authority, and riches, and the vain things of the world. (verse 15)

Satan has great power. In this realm that we live in, Satan is the god of this world. He operates within some form of law or guidelines or rules of engagement in which he is found "going to and fro in the earth, and from walking up and down in it." (see Job 1:6-12) and we can be subject to his influence.

We have agency - Nephi's words, save we be enticed by one or the other. (Nibley expounds on this somewhere)

Corruption from within the church

3 Ne 6:21-22

Now there were many of the people who were exceedingly angry because of those who testified of these things; and those who were angry were chiefly the chief judges, and they who had been high priests [Kohanim HaGadolim] and lawyers; yea, all those who were lawyers were angry with those who testified of these things. Now there was no lawyer nor judge nor high priest [Kohen HaGadol] that could have power to condemn any one to death save their condemnation was signed by the governor of the land.

The term "high priest" in this verse caught my attention. Is this the first time we see high priests in a wicked role in the Book of Mormon? Their role in this chapter is rather insidious.

Now it came to pass that those judges had many friends and kindreds; and the remainder, yea, even almost all the lawyers and the high priests, did gather themselves together, and unite with the kindreds of those judges who were to be tried according to the law. And they did enter into a covenant one with another, yea, even into that covenant which was given by them of old, which covenant was given and administered by the devil, to combine against all righteousness. (3 Ne 6:27-28)

The first time we see the term "High Priest" (in a righteous role) used in Book of Mormon is with Alma the elder:

And it came to pass that they were brought before the priests, and delivered up unto the priests by the teachers; and the priests brought them before Alma, who was the high priest. (Mosiah 26:7)

This office was later conferred upon his son, Alma:

And it came to pass that Alma was appointed to be the first chief judge, he being also the high priest, his father having conferred the office upon him, and having given him the charge concerning all the affairs of the church. (Mosiah 29:42)

When the church was initially organized by Alma, there was only one high priest, which continued to be the case in the church thereafter:

Now Alma did not grant unto him the office of being high priest over the church, but he retained the office of high priest unto himself; but he delivered the judgment-seat unto Nephihah. (Alma 4:18)

Point of clarification: There is a difference between "order" of high priest and the "office" of high priest that was conferred on Alma the younger that we read about above:

Now, as I said concerning the holy order, or this high priesthood, there were many who were ordained and became high priests of God; and it was on account of their exceeding faith and repentance, and their righteousness before God, they choosing to repent and work righteousness rather than to perish; (Alma 13:10. Study verses 1-9 for more clarity on the distinction of the "order" of high priest.)

The first time we see "High Priests" referred to in the plural is in Alma 46:

Thus they were led away by Amalickiah to dissensions, notwithstanding the preaching of Helaman and his brethren, yea, notwithstanding their exceedingly great care over the church, for they were high priests over the church. (Alma 46:6)

To me it's not clear if these were righteous high priests or dissenting high priests. The "they were high priests over the church" could be referring to those who were "led away by Amalickiah" or they could be those associated with "Helaman and his brethren".

Later in the chapter it alludes that these were likely righteous high priests associated with Helaman:

And Helaman and the high priests did also maintain order in the church; yea, even for the space of four years did they have much peace and rejoicing in the church. (Alma 46:38)

The second time we see high priests in the plural is in Helaman:

And so great was the prosperity of the church, and so many the blessings which were poured out upon the people, that even the high priests and the teachers were themselves astonished beyond measure. (Helaman 3:25)

When did multiple high priests enter into the church? Why at first was there only one high priest who was over the church (see Mosiah 25:15 ff), but then later there are multiple high priests? There is a similar pattern in the office of high priest in the early days of the church which is a topic of study on it's own. *

"Wicked" high priests:

The first time the Book of Mormon mentions a wicked "high priest" is in Ether:

*And it came to pass that his high priest murdered him as he sat upon his throne.
(Ether 14:9)*

First time among the children of Lehi the we see a wicked high priest is with King Noah:

For he put down all the priests that had been consecrated by his father, and consecrated new ones in their stead... And the seats which were set apart for the high priests, which were above all the other seats, he did ornament with pure gold; and he caused a breastwork to be built before them, that they might rest their bodies and their arms upon while they should speak lying and vain words to his people. (Mosiah 11:5,11)

Nehor introduced corruption to how priests ought to function (this was later identified as "priestcraft"):

And he [Nehor] had gone about among the people, preaching to them that which he termed to be the word of God, bearing down against the church; declaring unto the people that every priest and teacher ought to become popular; and they ought not to labor with their hands, but that they ought to be supported by the people. (Alma 1:3, see also verse 12)

Though not "high priests", we see wicked priests among Zoramites:

Now their rulers and their priests and their teachers did not let the people know concerning their desires; therefore they found out privily the minds of all the people. (Alma 35:5)

Nephi prophesying of our day:

And they shall contend one with another; and their priests shall contend one with another, and they shall teach with their learning, and deny the Holy Ghost, which giveth utterance. (2 Ne 28:4. References to Zion along with other details in this chapter tell us these words apply to the modern day LDS church as well as other churches - see notes from Lesson on Mosiah 29-Alma 4)

Examples in our day:

Joseph Smith and Sidney Rigdon fled Kirtland in January 1838. They fled at night. They were chased by people for 200 miles trying to kill Joseph. Among them were those who had been called as leaders of the church, including the high office of apostle.

Joseph Smith's worst critics were Mormons. They abused him led mobs against him, conspired to have him imprisoned and ultimately murdered. Mormons have slandered his memory with false histories. Joseph declared to the Mormons in April 1844 (two months before he was murdered): "You don't know me; you never knew my heart."

As recent as 1994, Jame E. Faust repeated, "stay with the majority of the Twelve Apostles".
[https://www.lds.org/ensign/1994/11/the-keys-that-never-rust#footnote1-94911_000_028, 2nd paragraph]

I would ask, what minority in the quorum of the twelve should we be wary of?

Church is broken up. Government is broken up. Land is broken up

Footnote:

* Then comes the High Priesthood, which is the greatest of all. Wherefore, it must needs be that one be appointed of the High Priesthood to preside over the priesthood, and he shall be called President of the High Priesthood of the Church; Or, in other words, the Presiding High Priest over the High Priesthood of the Church. (D&C 107:64-66)

Elder: An office in the church that Joseph Smith organized on April 6, 1830. This office had the right to preside, preach, teach, exhort, and expound scripture. Originally, Elders were elected to this position by the body of members, but the practice has since changed in the LDS Church to become a “calling” by a presiding authority and a sustaining (vote of approval) by a congregation, preliminary to ordination to the office. Joseph Smith was the First Elder in the church; Oliver Cowdery was the Second Elder. Joseph Smith recorded: “The authority of the Melchizedek priesthood was manifested and conferred, for the first time, upon several of the elders” at the June 1831 conference. [JSP, Documents Vol. 1:320, citing JS History Vol. A1:118.] This clarifies that “elder” is a church office that is not related to the High Priesthood, because these men were already serving in their church office of “elder” before the High Priesthood was restored. The office of “elder,” like other offices (priests, deacons, teachers), were offices in the church. They were not coincidental to having priesthood. They were offices in the Church of Christ (D&C 107:60-64, 85-91, 99-100). These offices were elected, approved by common consent, and then filled by those elected (see D&C 26; 20:65-66). It was some time later, after D&C 3 (1835 Edition), that this church office and priesthood were conflated to mean the same thing. The office of elder belongs to the church, and whether there is priesthood present or not, the right to preach, teach, expound, exhort, baptize, lay on hands for the holy ghost, and bless and pass the sacrament are all things which the Lord commissioned the church to perform. This is also why, at the time Joseph and Oliver received only the Aaronic Priesthood, they began to call one another the First and Second elder of the church (JSH 1:72). The Lord often spoke to “the elders of my church” as one category, in contrast to “priesthood,” which is another category. Mormons conflate the two. An elder is invited to become an actual priesthood holder, but that is dependent upon Heaven alone. It may be conferred on men, but Heaven must ratify (see D&C 121:34-40). Therefore, there are a lot of elders in the church who have no priesthood. Yet they have an authoritative invitation to connect with Heaven and rise up and receive it.