

19. Defining a Fulness of Iniquity (Numbers 11–14, 20–24)

After Israel learned to keep the Law of Moses *as a nation*, inheriting the Promised Land still depended on the indigenous inhabitants' degradation. Didn't God tell Abraham that his descendants could not enter the land he had promised him until the iniquity of the Amorites was full (Genesis 15:16)? Nephi sums it up this way: "The Lord esteems all flesh in one; he that is righteous is favored of God. But behold, this people [the Amorites or Canaanites] had rejected every word of God, and they were ripe in iniquity; and the fulness of the wrath of God was upon them; and the Lord did curse the land against them and did bless it unto our fathers; yea, he did curse it against them unto their destruction, and he did bless it unto our fathers, unto their obtaining power over it" (1 Nephi 17:35). Lest we assume the indigenous peoples had no access to God's word, Balak's rejection of Balaam's prophesy shows that indeed they did (Numbers 22–24).

Under Moses, a series of circumstances occurred that has never repeated itself. As mentioned, although God had bequeathed the Land of Canaan unconditionally to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob after they had proven righteous before him and all men, he didn't grant it unconditionally to their descendants. Rather, the land was a blessing predicated on their descendants' observing the law Moses had received from God. Under the terms of the covenant God made with them at Mount Sinai—to which all Israel consented (Deuteronomy 5:3)—all were obligated to keep the law or they could not be blessed with the land. Covenant blessings, moreover, weren't limited to a land of inheritance but extended also to the people's prosperity, to the increase of offspring, and to divine protection (Deuteronomy 28), blessings similar to those of Israel's ancestors.

Simply being the descendants of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, in other words, never qualified a people to take possession of the land. They themselves had to obtain it, and God's covenant provided the means. Not only that, but according to the terms of the Sinai Covenant—which is a *collective* contract, not an agreement made individually as with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob—Israel could not inherit the land until the people observed the Law of Moses to a man. Because Israel was now a covenant *people*—God's "servant" and "son" (Exodus 4:22; Isaiah 41:8)—all were obliged to keep the covenant's terms. Those who recanted or pursued a different course perished in the wilderness. Recall that it took forty years to get Israel to the point that it could take possession of the land. Only then was a "holy war" justified (if indeed one may call it that), which consisted of a prophet—Moses—appointing a military leader—Joshua—to lead the land's conquest. Following any other course would have put the nation at risk.

Because so much of what is recorded of Israel's ancient history possesses the dual function of serving as a type of the future, the scenario of the Amorites' or Canaanites' iniquity being full repeats itself in God's end-time Day of Judgment. Only this time around, it is the Gentiles who are destroyed from their lands and the natural lineages of the house of Israel—the Jews, Ten Tribes, and Lamanites—who conquer them.

We observe, for example, how ancient Israel's conquest of the Promised Land repeats itself in the end-time reconquest of the land of America: "Behold the decrees of God concerning this land, that it is a land of promise; and whatsoever nation shall possess it shall serve God, or they shall

be swept off when the fulness of his wrath shall come upon them. And the fulness of his wrath cometh upon them when they are ripened in iniquity. For behold, this is a land which is choice above all other lands; wherefore he that doth possess it shall serve God or shall be swept off; for it is the everlasting decree of God. And it is not until the fulness of iniquity among the children of the land, that they are swept off. And this cometh unto you, O ye Gentiles, that ye may know the decrees of God—that ye may repent, and not continue in your iniquities until the fulness come, that ye may not bring down the fulness of the wrath of God upon you as the inhabitants of the land have hitherto done” (Ether 2:9–11).

Jesus adds to Moroni’s warning to the Gentiles and links it to their rejection of the fulness of the gospel sometime after they have received it. At that point, Israel’s natural lineages reinherit their promised lands, including the land of Jerusalem: “They [the Gentiles] shall be a scourge unto the people of this land. Nevertheless, when they shall have received the fulness of my gospel, then if they shall harden their hearts against me I will return their iniquities upon their own heads, saith the Father. And I will remember the covenant which I have made with my people; and I have covenanted with them that I would gather them together in mine own due time, that I would give unto them again the land of their fathers for their inheritance, which is the land of Jerusalem, which is the promised land unto them forever, saith the Father” (3 Nephi 20:28–29).

According to Jesus, those events occur at the time he raises up his end-time servant, who brings forth the words of Jesus that are written on the large plates of Nephi: “The life of my servant shall be in my hand; therefore they shall not hurt him, although he shall be marred because of them. Yet I will heal him, for I will show unto them that my wisdom is greater than the cunning of the devil. Therefore it shall come to pass that whosoever will not believe in my words, who am Jesus Christ, which the Father shall cause him to bring forth unto the Gentiles, and shall give unto him power that he shall bring them forth unto the Gentiles, (it shall be done even as Moses said) they shall be cut off from among my people who are of the covenant. And my people who are a remnant of Jacob shall be among the Gentiles, yea, in the midst of them as a lion among the beasts of the forest, as a young lion among the flocks of sheep, who, if he go through both treadeth down and teareth in pieces, and none can deliver” (3 Nephi 21:10–12). Jesus is quoting Micah in this passage.

“Their hand shall be lifted up upon their adversaries, and all their enemies shall be cut off. 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 land, 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. And it shall come to pass that all lyings, and deceivings, and envyings, and strifes, and priestcrafts, and whoredoms, shall be done away” (3 Nephi 21:13–19).

God’s end-time servant—whom Isaiah depicts as a new Moses—initiates the house of Israel’s gathering in a new exodus from among all nations and their conquest of new promised lands that are vacated by the Gentiles (Isaiah 11:10–16; 41:1–3; 49:8–13, 22–23). These events, therefore,

are precipitated by the Ephraimite Gentiles' rejection of the fulness of the gospel after they have received it, at which point it turns back to Israel's natural lineages, who gather to Zion.