

Gary Kapp, *King Benjamin Preaches to the Nephites*, © Intellectual Reserve, Inc.

King Benjamin elaborated on the Judgment Day, suggesting that he may have seen it in vision.

Mosiah 3 as an Apocalyptic Text

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Mosiah 3 presents readers of the Book of Mormon with an intriguing situation. Beginning in Mosiah 2, King Benjamin has begun to speak to those gathered at the Zarahemla temple. In Mosiah 3, Benjamin relays to his listeners his knowledge regarding the coming of Jesus Christ, the problem of humanity’s “natural” state, and the reality of the Atonement. Toward the end of Mosiah 3, Benjamin elaborates upon a future judgment, where both righteous and wicked will be judged. He states:

And thus saith the Lord: They shall stand as a bright testimony against this people, at the judgment day; whereof they shall be judged, every man according to his works, whether they be good, or whether they be evil.

And if they be evil they are consigned to an awful view of their own guilt and abominations, which doth cause them to shrink from the presence of the Lord into a state of misery and endless torment, from whence they can no more return; therefore they have drunk damnation to their own souls.

Therefore, they have drunk out of the cup of the wrath of God, which justice could no more deny unto them than it could deny that Adam should fall because of his partaking of the forbidden fruit; therefore, mercy could have claim on them no more forever.

And their torment is as a lake of fire and brimstone, whose flames are unquenchable, and whose smoke ascendeth up forever and ever. Thus hath the Lord commanded me. Amen. (Mosiah 3:24–27)

This description of the fate of the wicked shares a remarkable textual connection with the vision of John. In Revelation 14 and 20, John uses language similar to that of Benjamin in describing the fate of the wicked (language shared by both texts has been italicized):

The same shall *drink of the wine of the wrath of God*, which is poured out without mixture *into the cup of his indignation*; and he shall be *tormented with fire and brimstone* in the presence of the holy angels, and in the presence of the Lamb:

And *the smoke of their torment ascendeth up for ever and ever*: and they have no rest day nor night, who worship the beast and his image, and whosoever receiveth the mark of his name. (Revelation 14:10–11)

And the sea gave up the dead which were in it; and death and hell delivered up the dead which were in them: and *they were judged every man according to their works*.

And death and hell were cast into the *lake of fire*. This is the second death. (Revelation 20:13–14)

These textual links between Mosiah 3 and Revelation raise some interesting questions: Do these similarities hint to readers that Benjamin and John are recounting similar visions?¹ Can Mosiah 3 be interpreted as an apocalyptic text? Could reading and analyzing Mosiah 3 as apocalyptic prove illuminating to our understanding not only of the text but of King Benjamin as well? Interpreting Mosiah 3 as an apocalyptic vision would place Benjamin in an elite category of seers, one that includes Nephi, John the Revelator, and Joseph Smith. The purpose of this paper is to examine Mosiah 3 under an apocalyptic lens. A close examination of Mosiah 3 reveals it to be an apocalyptic text, and viewing it as such can open up additional insights into the Book of Mormon.

Due to the enigmatic nature of apocalyptic literature, any discussion is aided greatly by defining the scope of what apocalyptic literature actually is.² The term “apocalyptic”³ derives from the Greek noun *Ἀποκάλυψις*, which literally means “to disclose” or “to unveil.”⁴ Grasping the sense of this term is fundamental to understanding the nature of apocalyptic literature, since what is being “disclosed” or “unveiled” is the gulf between heaven and earth, between God and humanity, between the celestial and the terrestrial. The curtain concealing the world of God and his role and movements within ours is drawn back, and the reader begins to view his or her world through God’s cosmic lens. Simply put, apocalyptic revelation is “the manifestation of deity.”⁵

John J. Collins, an expert in apocalyptic literature, defines it as “a genre of revelatory literature with a narrative framework, in which a revelation is mediated by an otherworldly being to a human recipient, disclosing a transcendent reality which is both temporal, insofar as it envisages eschatological salvation, and spatial insofar as it involves another, supernatural world.”⁶ The specific literary elements that are fundamental to apocalyptic texts include (but are not limited to) “the acute expression of the fulfillment of divine promises; cosmic catastrophe; a relationship between the time of the end and preceding human and cosmic history; angelology and demonology; salvation beyond catastrophe; salvation proceeding from God; a future Savior figure with royal characteristics; a future state characterized by the catchword glory.”⁷

While there is no consensus list of characteristics that defines what makes a vision “apocalyptic,” the following six elements are often present in apocalyptic texts:⁸

1. The presence of an angel who acts as
 - a. Guide
 - b. Interpreter
2. Symbolic images and language, usually interpreted by the angelic guide.
3. A radical dualism, whether
 - a. *spatial* (earth vs. heaven)
 - b. *ethical* (good vs. evil)
 - c. *temporal* (present age vs. future age)
4. The promise of a future state where the righteous will dwell with God and the wicked will be punished.
5. The future state will be initiated by the intervention of a significant, quasi-divine figure.
6. A preoccupation with deterministic eschatology: future events have been set and cannot be altered.

1. Angelic Guide

Several apocalyptic texts begin with the introduction of an angelic figure who guides the seer through a heavenly vision, often engaging him in question-and-answer style dialogue. In Ezekiel 40:3, this divine messenger who leads Ezekiel on a tour of the eschatological temple is described, “And he brought me thither, and, behold, there was a man, whose appearance was like the

appearance of brass, with a line of flax in his hand, and a measuring reed; and he stood in the gate.”

While Ezekiel’s guide does the majority of the talking in Ezekiel 40–48, specifically in regards to the measurements of the temple, Zechariah’s angelic guide is more open to dialogue:

Upon the four and twentieth day of the eleventh month, which is the month Sebat, in the second year of Darius, came the word of the Lord unto Zechariah, the son of Berechiah, the son of Iddo the prophet, saying,

I saw by night, and behold a man riding upon a red horse, and he stood among the myrtle trees that were in the bottom; and behind him were there red horses, speckled, and white.

Then said I, O my lord, what are these? And the angel that talked with me said unto me, I will shew thee what these be. . . .

And I said unto the angel that talked with me, What be these? And he answered me, These are the horns which have scattered Judah, Israel, and Jerusalem. (Zechariah 1:7–9, 19)

A similar encounter occurs in the extracanonical 1 *Enoch*, where Enoch is guided through the heavens by various guides, including Michael and Uriel. While viewing a tree growing upon a mountain, Michael enquires of Enoch, “And he said unto me, Enoch, ‘What is it that you are asking me concerning the fragrance of this tree and you are so inquisitive about?’ At that moment, I answer, saying ‘I am desirous of knowing everything, but specifically about his thing.’ He answered, saying, ‘This tall mountain which you saw whose summit resembles the throne of God is (indeed) his throne, on which the Holy and Great Lord of Glory, the Eternal King, will sit when he descends to visit the earth with goodness.’”⁹

Similar encounters are preserved in the book of Daniel, 4 *Ezra*, 2 *Baruch*, the Revelation of John, the *Shepherd of Hermas*, the *Apocalypse of Peter*, and the *Apocalypse of Paul*.¹⁰

In Mosiah 3, an angel is clearly present; Benjamin tells us as much: “And the things which I shall tell you are made known unto me by an angel from God. And he said unto me: Awake; and I awoke, and behold he stood before me” (Mosiah 3:2).¹¹

The question then becomes, does the angel who “made known” to Benjamin the events he will recount act in a similar fashion to the angelic encounters described above? It doesn’t appear so from Benjamin’s narration. The angel begins speaking in Mosiah 3:2 and continues speaking all the way through the chapter in what amounts to a relaying of information. The angel

mentions that he has been sent to Benjamin by the Lord, who “hath heard thy prayers” (Mosiah 3:4). The angel concludes his message in verse 23: “And now I have spoken the words which the Lord God hath commanded me.” At this point, in verse 24, either Benjamin or the angel¹² adds a sort of addendum, either directly quoting or perhaps paraphrasing a statement made by the Lord: “And thus saith the Lord . . .” What is unclear is how much Benjamin is directly quoting or paraphrasing the words of the angel as he relays the “glad tidings” to the people. It is clear that Benjamin heard the angel, but it is unclear whether he saw the events being described by the angel.

2. Symbolic Images and Language

The visions of John, Zechariah, Enoch, and others are replete with symbolism. As for the reason for such abundant employment of animals, numbers, and colors, D. S. Russell writes, “The apocalyptic literature is marked by a highly dramatic quality whose language and style match the inexpressible scenes which it tries to portray. Such scenes cannot be portrayed in the sober language of common prose; they require for their expression the imaginative language of poetry.”¹³ This poetic language generally finds expression in terms of animals, numbers, or colors. Animals are prominent in such texts as the book of Revelation, where the image of a lamb (chapter 5) or a dragon (chapter 12) are used to describe Jesus and Satan, or the more developed “animal apocalypse” from 1 *Enoch* (verses 83–90), where the principle figures of humanity’s history from Adam to the Messiah are depicted as different types of animals. Numbers such as 3, 4, 7, 10, and 12 (and its multiples) are common, while the four horsemen of the apocalypse mentioned in Revelation 6 are described as being a specific, representative color, whether white (conquest), red (bloodshed), black (famine), or pale (death).¹⁴

The type of symbolism present in texts such as the book of Revelation or 1 *Enoch* is almost wholly absent from Mosiah 3. On the contrary, one of the remarkable aspects about Mosiah 3 is the clarity with which it describes the future events. Benjamin is given a very detailed account of the Savior’s ministry, death, and Resurrection, even being told that “he shall be called Jesus Christ, the Son of God” (3:8). Mosiah 3 is just as clear when expounding upon the implications of the Atonement for humanity: the law of Moses means nothing removed from the context of the Atonement (3:14–15), the blood of Christ atones for little children (3:16), humanity is in a “natural” state and the only means of overcoming this is to “yield” and “submit” (3:19),

and God's judgment is a "just" and "righteous" one (3:10, 18). In fact, the only real symbolism present in Mosiah 3 comes in the description of those who submit to Jesus as becoming "as a child" and the description of the torment of the wicked being "as a lake of fire and brimstone" (3:27), but both of these phrases are a far cry from the level of symbolic language found in much of apocalyptic literature. This does not necessarily rule out the notion that symbols and images were absent from Benjamin's experience. He could simply be relaying to his audience the *interpretation* of the symbols as they were given to him by the angel, rather than risk the distraction or the confusion that may have arisen through mentioning any of the symbols or images he witnessed.¹⁵

3. Radical Dualism

The extensive symbolism present in apocalyptic literature becomes perhaps most fully realized in the radical dualism this genre of literature offers. This dualism most often takes one of three forms:

Spatial dualism. This type of dualism postulates two realms of existence: heaven and earth, the supernatural and the natural, the created and the eternal. The book of Revelation describes how the opening of John's apocalypse occurred when "I looked, and, behold, a door was opened in heaven," at which point John, like Isaiah, finds himself in the throne-room of God (Revelation 4:1–2).¹⁶ This spatial dualism accounts for the necessity of an angelic guide linking heaven to earth, as illustrated in the visions of prophets such as Enoch, Abraham, or John.¹⁷

*Ethical dualism.*¹⁸ The existence of two realms—heaven and earth—lends itself to the development of ethical dualism, namely the idea that humanity can be divided into the righteous or the wicked, a process described in the apocryphal wisdom text of Ecclesiasticus, "And all men are from the ground, and Adam was created of earth: In much knowledge the Lord hath divided them, and made their ways diverse. . . . Good is set against evil, and life against death: so is the godly against the sinner, and the sinner against the godly. So look upon all the works of the most High; and there are two and two, one against another" (33:10–14).

The *Testament of Judah* illustrates a similar dichotomy: "So understand, my children, that two spirits await an opportunity with humanity: the spirit of truth and the spirit of error. In between is the conscience of the mind which

inclines as it will."¹⁹ While the terminology may differ from text to text, the ethical duality is common throughout most apocalyptic texts.²⁰

Significantly, one of the primary ways ethical dualism is developed comes about through a merging with spatial dualism. One of the primary quests of apocalyptic literature is to identify and examine the origin of evil on this world. One way of explaining the presence of evil in the world was to see it as a force brought to earth by heavenly beings. Thus some apocalyptic texts develop a lengthy portrayal of a cosmic battle between the heavenly forces of evil (led by Beliar,²¹ Mastema,²² or Satan²³) against the forces of righteousness (led by Michael²⁴ or the Messiah²⁵) in a competition for the souls of men.

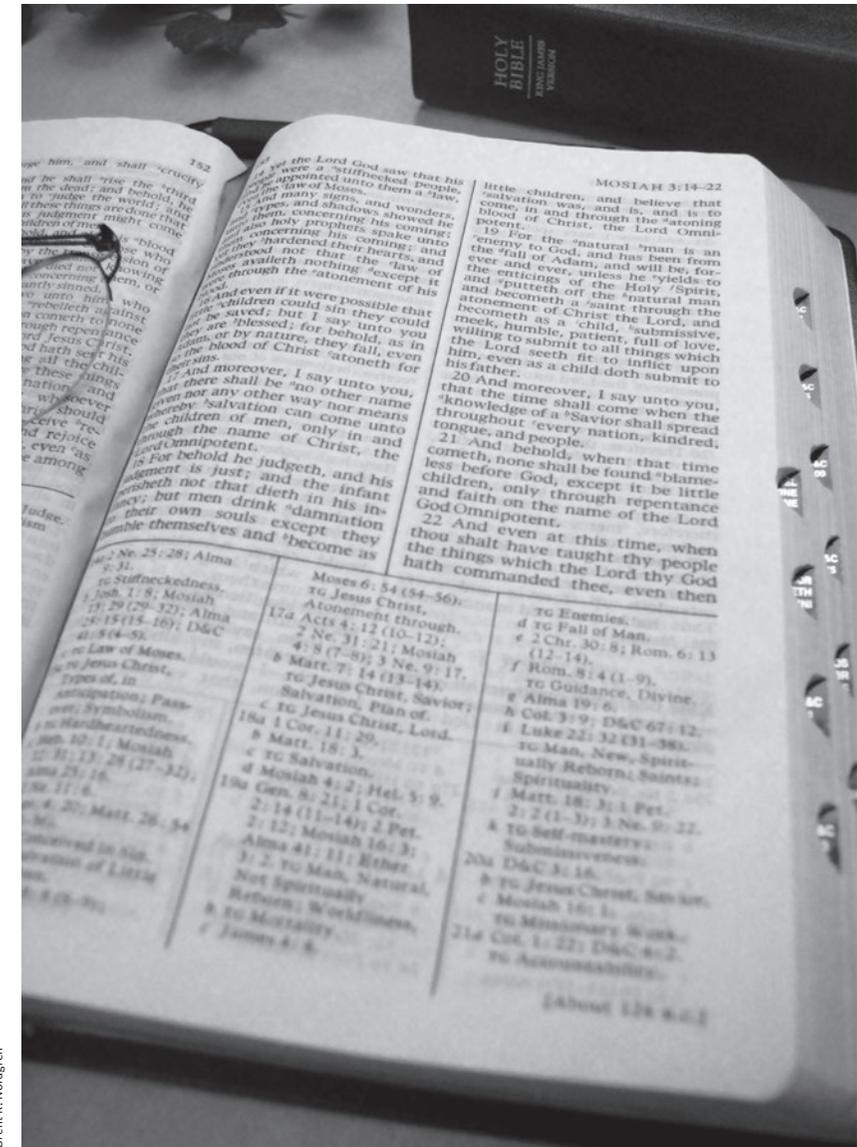
However, a second way of explaining the origin of evil in apocalyptic literature was to place responsibility for sin within man himself. According to D. S. Russell, when it came to defining the origins of evil within apocalyptic texts, "such choice was to be made in the light of two important and related factors: the fact of Adam's 'fall' and the involvement in it of all his descendants, and the fact that in every human being there is a propensity to evil in the form of an 'evil inclination' which is basic to human nature itself."²⁶ Thus the writer of *1 Enoch* can say, "I have sworn unto you, sinners: In the same manner that a mountain has never turned into a servant, nor shall a hill (ever) become a maidservant of a woman; likewise, never has sin been exported into the world. It is the people who have themselves invented it. And those who commit it shall come under a great curse."²⁷ This curse was, of course, due to Adam's Fall: "O Adam, what have you done? For though it was you who sinned, the fall was not yours alone, but ours also who are your descendants."²⁸ As a result (directly or indirectly) of Adam's Fall, humanity contains within themselves a natural proclivity to sin that must be overcome: "For although Adam sinned first and has brought death upon all who were not in his own time, yet each of them who has been born from him has prepared for himself the coming torment. And further, each of them has chosen for himself for the coming glory. For truly, the one who believes will receive reward. . . . Adam is, therefore, not the cause, except only for himself, but each of us has become our own Adam."²⁹

As we turn our attention to Mosiah 3, two verses hint at a spatial dualism of heaven and earth. In verse 5, Benjamin relates, "For behold, the time cometh, and is not far distant, that with power, the Lord Omnipotent who reigneth, who was, and is from all eternity to all eternity, shall come down from heaven among the children of men, and shall dwell in a tabernacle of

clay.” But while this verse relates that Jesus will come down to earth from heaven, it is silent on where Jesus will return to after his Resurrection. Verse 8 reveals that the name of this “Lord Omnipotent” shall be “Jesus Christ, the Son of God, the Father of heaven and earth, the Creator of all things from the beginning; and his mother shall be called Mary.” Again a distinction is made between “heaven” and “earth,” although it is not as strictly demarcated as some of the apocryphal writings such as *1 Enoch* or the *Testament of Levi*.

Much more developed in Mosiah 3, however, is the concept of ethical dualism. For example, Jesus is described as one who shall “cast out devils, or the evil spirits which dwell in the hearts of the children of men” (verse 6). But it is the question of the origin and nature of evil that becomes the crux of Mosiah 3. Benjamin begins his discussion of the Atonement in 3:11 by saying: “For behold, and also his blood atoneth for the sins of those who have fallen by the transgression of Adam, who have died not knowing the will of God concerning them, or who have ignorantly sinned.” The Atonement, according to Benjamin, will cover those who have sinned in ignorance of the will of God, but they require this divine mediation due to their state as “fallen by the transgression of Adam.” Adam’s Fall will be mentioned twice more in chapter 3. First, Benjamin links the Fall to both Adam and “nature”: “And even if it were possible that little children could sin they could not be saved; but I say unto you they are blessed; for behold, as in Adam, or by nature, they fall, even so the blood of Christ atoneth for their sins” (3:16). As Brant Gardner notes, “We expect the association of Adam and the fall, but the concept of ‘by nature’ is unique to Benjamin. Benjamin equates ‘nature’ with the fall. Because it occurs in children who cannot sin, the ‘fall/nature’ is an inheritance of Adam, not a personal defect of the child.”³⁰ All this, of course, leads to the crucial statement in Mosiah 3:19, which reads “For the natural man is an enemy to God, and has been from the fall of Adam, and will be, forever and ever, unless he yields to the enticings of the Holy Spirit, and putteth off the natural man and becometh a saint through the atonement of Christ the Lord, and becometh as a child, submissive, meek, humble, patient, full of love, willing to submit to all things which the Lord seeth fit to inflict upon him, even as a child doth submit to his father.”

With these two bold statements, the Book of Mormon pronounces its judgment on the question of the origin of sin. While there may be devils and demons, sin comes not as a result of the incursion of fallen angels to earth, but rather to a proclivity found within humanity due to the Fall of Adam. As



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quoted in *2 Baruch* earlier, “each of us has become our own Adam” because, when faced with a decision to choose good or evil, all of us inevitably choose evil at least once.

Yet Benjamin's development on humanity's fallen nature does not end with a simple attribution to Adam. Benjamin goes on to outline how all must either remain an enemy to God or else choose to submit to him, "putting off the natural man and becoming a saint through the atonement of Christ the Lord." Humanity can resist its nature and, with divine aid, become sanctified. A similar sentiment emerges in a moving scene from *4 Ezra*. Ezra witnesses the wondrous fate of the righteous and then begins to lament for the wicked who have "miserably failed." In response, his angelic guide states: "This is the meaning of the contest which every man who is born on earth shall wage, that if he is defeated he shall suffer what you have said, but if he is victorious he shall receive what I have said."³¹ Thus Mosiah 3 shares with the apocalyptic tradition a concern for the origin of evil, its negative effect upon humanity, and the personal battle that must be undertaken to overcome our "nature."

4. The Promise of a Future State

A third type of apocalyptic dualism, *temporal dualism*, is closely related to point 4, the promise of a future state where the righteous will dwell with God and the wicked will be punished. For this reason they will be considered together. Temporal dualism assumes a view of history that can be broken down into two stages: the current, contemporary age and the future age, two time periods that stand in fundamental opposition to each other. Whereas this present age is an era of sin and suffering, the future age will be akin to a "Golden Age" when wrongs will be righted and justice will prevail.³² The phrase "the Most High has not made one age, but two"³³ is stated in *4 Ezra*, a text where this type of dualism is particularly strong. In this same text, Ezra the seer is told by his angelic guide:

This present world is not the end; the full glory does not abide in it; therefore those who were strong prayed for the weak. But the day of judgment will be the end of this age and the beginning of the immortal age to come, in which corruption has passed away, sinful indulgence has come to an end, unbelief has been cut off, and righteousness has increased and truth has appeared. Therefore no one will then be able to have mercy on him who has been condemned to judgment, or to harm him who is victorious.³⁴

This "immortal age" is described in 2 Enoch thus:

And then all time will perish, and afterward there will be neither years nor months nor days nor hours. They will be dissipated, and after that they will not be reckoned. But they will constitute a single age. And all the righteous, who escape from the

LORD's judgment, will be collected together into the great age. And the great age will come about for the righteous, and it will be eternal.³⁵

However, the "eternal" age will not be so pleasant for the wicked, who will find only harsh judgment at the hands of the righteous:

Hope not that you shall live, you sinners, you who shall depart and die, for you know for what (reason) you have been ready for the day of the great judgment, for the day of anguish and great shame for your spirits. . . . Do know that you shall be given over into the hands of the righteous ones, and they shall cut off your necks and slay you, and they shall not have compassion upon you.³⁶

This dual demarcation between the ages is crucial: "The age to come is not simply the completion of this present age; it is altogether different from it. The beginning of the one marks the end of the other when time itself will end and eternity begin."³⁷

This unique eschatological framework has implications for our exploration of Mosiah 3 as an apocalyptic text.³⁸ In an interesting twist, the angel in King Benjamin's vision seems to relay that the crucial moment of transition between this world and the next will not occur on some eschatological stage prior to the end of the earth, but rather during the life and ministry of Jesus Christ: "And he shall rise the third day from the dead; and behold, he standeth to judge the world; and behold, all these things are done that a righteous judgment might come upon the children of men. For behold, and also his blood atoneth for the sins of those who have fallen by the transgression of Adam, who have died not knowing the will of God concerning them, or who have ignorantly sinned" (Mosiah 3:10–11). The remainder of the angel's words to Benjamin will serve to explicate how Jesus' action will provide salvation and what will be the fate of those who reject him. For modern readers of the Book of Mormon, this shift in chronology is significant. Instead of looking to the future for final vindication from evil, as many millennial religions do, the words of Benjamin force the mind to turn to the past. Instead of a "future" eschatology, the Book of Mormon pushes strongly for a truly "realized" eschatology. The Judgment, Benjamin tells us, is already under way. Time will pivot not on a future coming, but on a past one. Following the statement that Jesus "standeth to judge the world," the remainder of the chapter simply serves to illustrate how that judgment will occur: little children are exempt (3:16); only repentance in Jesus' name can save those who have sinned (3:17); Jesus' "judgment is just" (3:18); the "natural man" must be overcome (3:19); and everyone will hear about Jesus and have the opportunity to repent

(3:20). Finally, in the climactic verses of Mosiah 3, readers encounter the realization of what has been promised: Jesus, as judge, pronounces his judgment upon the righteous and the wicked:

They shall stand as a bright testimony against this people, at the judgment day; whereof they shall be judged, every man according to his works, whether they be good, or whether they be evil.

And if they be evil they are consigned to an awful view of their own guilt and abominations, which doth cause them to shrink from the presence of the Lord into a state of misery and endless torment, from whence they can no more return; therefore they have drunk damnation to their own souls.

Therefore, they have drunk out of the cup of the wrath of God, which justice could no more deny unto them than it could deny that Adam should fall because of his partaking of the forbidden fruit; therefore, mercy could have claim on them no more forever.

And their torment is as a lake of fire and brimstone, whose flames are unquenchable, and whose smoke ascendeth up forever and ever. (Mosiah 3:24–27)

Thus Mosiah 3 follows the pattern of apocalyptic literature as it views history in terms of two different temporal periods. However, where Mosiah 3 differs is in seeing the climactic moment of transition between the two ages as in the past rather than the future. For Benjamin, history can be demarcated as pre- and post-Resurrection of Jesus.

5. A Divine Intervention

This leads us into a discussion of point 5, namely the idea that this future state will be inaugurated through the intervention of a significant, quasi-divine figure.³⁹ This figure was described in apocalyptic circles in various ways. In the *Testament of Levi*, this figure is described as a “new priest” who will “open the gates of paradise . . . and grant to the saints to eat of the tree of life.”⁴⁰ *Second Baruch* mentions that the return of the “Anointed One” is expected,⁴¹ while in *4 Ezra* he is described by the “Most High” as “my Son.”⁴² In oft-debated passages, both *1 Enoch* 46:3 and Daniel 7:13 make reference to the “Son of Man,” but the textual origins and status of this figure remain unclear. His mission, however, is crucial: “And he (the Son of Man) will open all the hidden storerooms; for the Lord of the Spirits has chosen him, and he is destined to be victorious before the Lord of the Spirits in eternal uprightness. This Son of Man whom you have seen is the One who would remove the kings and the mighty ones from their comfortable seats and the strong ones from their thrones. He shall loosen the reigns of the strong and crush the teeth of the sinners.”⁴³ Significantly, while some apocalyptic texts describe this figure

as simply setting in motion the events that will lead to the establishment of the “Golden age,” other texts, such as *1 Enoch*, specifically discuss this figure in terms of judgment. Here the author of *1 Enoch* describes the time of judgment:

For the Son of Man was concealed from the beginning, and the Most High One preserved him in the presence of his power; then he revealed him to the holy and the elect ones. The congregation of the holy ones shall be planted and all the elect ones shall stand before him. On that day, all the kings, the governors, the high officials, and those who rule the earth shall fall down before him on their faces, and worship and raise their hopes in that Son of Man, they shall beg and pleas for mercy at his feet. . . . So he will deliver them to the angels for punishment in order that vengeance shall be executed on them—oppressors of his children and his elect ones.⁴⁴

The significant connection with Mosiah 3 is twofold. First, it is the condescension of the “Lord Omnipotent” who will intervene between humanity and the “devils, or the evil spirits which dwell in the hearts of the children of men” (Mosiah 3:5, 6). Jesus’ death and Resurrection signify the turning point in history, as humanity now possesses a hope of salvation, for “there shall be no other name given nor any other way nor means whereby salvation can come unto the children of men” (Mosiah 3:17). While the Jews may have been blessed with the law of Moses, they “understood not that the law of Moses availeth nothing except it were through the atonement of his blood” (Mosiah 3:15). Second, terms such as “judge” or “judgment” are used in connection with Jesus six times in Mosiah 3. In fact, this seems to be one of his primary roles, if not the primary role, according to Benjamin:

And he shall rise the third day from the dead; and behold, he standeth to *judge* the world; and behold, all these things are done that a righteous *judgment* might come upon the children of men. (3:10)

For behold he *judgeth*, and his *judgment* is just; and the infant perisheth not that dieth in his infancy; but men drink damnation to their own souls except they humble themselves and become as little children, and believe that salvation was, and is, and is to come, in and through the atoning blood of Christ, the Lord Omnipotent. (3:18)

And thus saith the Lord: They shall stand as a bright testimony against this people, at the *judgment* day; whereof they shall be *judged*, every man according to his works, whether they be good, or whether they be evil. (3:24)

6. A Preoccupation with Deterministic Eschatology

This theme of Jesus as Judge leads us to our final category, “deterministic eschatology,” meaning that future events have been definitively fixed and cannot be

altered. While ethical dualism, the exploration of “good” and “evil,” is a common trait found in apocalyptic texts, there is rarely, if ever, the implication that “evil” has a chance of conquering “good.” Instead, apocalyptic literature consistently maintains that God has carefully charted out the course of history and that certain events, such as the vindication of the righteous and the judgment of the wicked, are unalterable: “Allied to the idea of present evil to be followed by the final triumph of good is the rigid determinism so characteristic of this class of literature. For the apocalypticists it was clear that the course of this world’s history is pre-ordained. They were not unduly perturbed by the power of evil about them, for they held that it was all part of the divine plan.”⁴⁵

Thus readers encounter in texts such as *1 Enoch* and *Jubilees* a careful ordering of time and cosmos. In *Jubilees*, the “angel of the presence” took “the tablets of the division of years from the time of the creation of the law.”⁴⁶ Jacob is allowed, in a scene similar to Moses 1, to read the seven tablets and thus “[know] everything which was written in them, which would happen to him and to his sons during all the ages.”⁴⁷ Likewise, *1 Enoch* presents a lengthy illustration of the ordering of the cosmos (72–80) before Enoch inspects the “tablets of heaven”: “So I looked at the tablet[s] of heaven, read all the writing [on them], and came to understand everything. I read that book and all the deeds of humanity and all the children of the flesh upon the earth for all the generations of the world. At that very moment, I blessed the Great Lord, the King of Glory for ever, for he has created all the phenomena in the world.”⁴⁸

In Mosiah 3 this sense of determinism is readily apparent. On one hand, Benjamin demonstrates a resounding confidence in the reality of the judgment of the wicked: “They shall be judged,” “They are consigned,” “Their torment is as a lake of fire.” Benjamin speaks in a somewhat proleptic fashion, as if this final state of judgment has already been realized. On the other hand there is the usage of the word “omnipotent,” meaning “all-powerful,” in Mosiah 3. “Omnipotent” appears a total of six times in the Book of Mormon, all six in the context of Benjamin’s speech, with four of these usages found in Mosiah 3 (verses 5, 17, 18, and 21) and the other two in Mosiah 5 (verses 2 and 15). This concentrated usage of an absolute term like “omnipotent” suggests Benjamin’s attempt to assure his audience that Jesus can be trusted because he is all-powerful; he is, without a doubt, going to be victorious.

Furthermore, the placement of three of those usages directly around the pivotal verse 19 brings the Atonement into direct focus. The idea that the

Atonement will be the means of rendering one free from the effects of the “natural man” goes to the very heart of the angel’s message—there can be no doubt as to who will prevail in this battle of good and evil. The strong emphasis on Jesus’ absolute power, unusual in the Book of Mormon, is quite at home in the apocalyptic tradition: “You have made everything and with you is the authority for everything. Everything is naked and open before your sight, and you see everything; and there is nothing which can hide itself from you.”⁴⁹ That Benjamin relayed the importance of Jesus’ omnipotence as a means of conquering the “natural man” is clear from the reaction of the Nephite audience to his words in Mosiah 5:2. “Yea, we believe all the words which thou hast spoken unto us; and also, we know of their surety and truth, because of the Spirit of the Lord Omnipotent, which has wrought a mighty change in us, or in our hearts, that we have no more disposition to do evil, but to do good continually.” John J. Collins writes of *Jubilees*, “The inevitability of judgment is the ultimate sanction for the laws of *Jubilees*.”⁵⁰ One could say similarly of Mosiah 3 that “the inevitability of fair judgment is the ultimate sanction for the Atonement.”

In reading through Mosiah 3, Benjamin demonstrates a remarkably detailed perspective of Jesus’ divine status and how his mortal ministry will unfold: He will heal the sick, raise the dead, bleed from every pore, have a mother named Mary, be scourged and crucified, and finally be resurrected. While it is entirely possible that Benjamin is simply reciting what the angel has told him, it seems just as likely that Benjamin is relating what he himself has actually witnessed. In fact, the only other place in the Book of Mormon where such detailed information regarding Jesus’ mortal ministry is given is Nephi’s vision in 1 Nephi 11.⁵¹ When Moses encounters God and learns about the Creation, he is told, “Look, and I will show thee the workmanship of mine hands” (Moses 1:4). Later he “cast his eyes and beheld the earth, yea, even all of it” (Moses 1:27). When Enoch has his vision of Jesus’ condescension, he “saw” it as well (Moses 7:47). For Benjamin to receive such detailed information regarding the premortal, mortal, and postmortal mission of Jesus simply reported to him from an angel without seeing anything himself would make his situation somewhat unique in Mormon scripture.

This discussion raises two additional questions. First, can anything more be determined about the occasion of Benjamin’s vision? Benjamin tells us that he was asleep prior to the angel’s arrival. What Benjamin doesn’t tell us are his actions prior to going to sleep. One possibility is that Benjamin had

prayed for inspiration, aware that his words at the temple would be important for maintaining an uneventful transition in the monarchy. The angel may have been sent as a response to his prayerful inquiries. A second possibility is that Benjamin had been reading in the small plates of Nephi, searching for insights about Jesus Christ, and had encountered or re-read Nephi's vision in 1 Nephi 11–14. In response to his ponderings and prayers about Nephi's vision, Benjamin received a vision of his own, one that bears striking similarities to Nephi's apocalyptic vision.⁵²

A second question: If Benjamin did experience a vision similar to Nephi's, why not give some explicit indication? One possible answer is audience. Visions are sacred experiences, and to relate too many details to a mixed Mulekite/Nephite audience with unclear religious affiliations may have caused Benjamin to omit certain elements, to emphasize the message behind the vision rather than the circumstances of the vision itself.⁵³ Mosiah 2, in a way, seems designed to lessen Benjamin's standing among the people. A claim of receiving a remarkable vision would have spoiled that sentiment.⁵⁴ In a similar fashion, Moroni was commanded to seal up the record of the vision of the brother of Jared, to be preserved for a time when "they shall exercise faith in me . . . that they may become sanctified in me, then will I manifest unto them the things which the brother of Jared saw, even to the unfolding unto them all my revelations, saith Jesus Christ, the Son of God, the Father of the heavens and of the earth, and all things that in them are" (Ether 4:7). A second, related possibility is written medium: Mosiah 3 is preserved on the large plates, while the two primary revelatory accounts preserved in the Book of Mormon are from plates other than the extant large plates. Nephi's vision in 1 Nephi 11–14 was preserved on the small plates and the brother of Jared's on a "sealed" portion of the record. Either Benjamin or Mormon may have felt that to reveal too many details upon the large plates of Benjamin's encounter with the angel would be to mix the sacred with the profane.⁵⁵ A third possibility is simply the practicality of the occasion: there simply wasn't enough time for Benjamin to relate everything that he saw. The primary purpose of Benjamin's speech was to convince his audience of the necessity of covenants. To elaborate upon a visionary experience may have been an unnecessary distraction.

So, to return to the questions posed at the beginning of this paper,

1. *Do these similarities hint to readers that Benjamin and John are recounting similar visions? If so, can Mosiah 3 be read and interpreted as an apocalyptic text?*

The answer to both of these questions, I argue, is yes. With varying degrees of success, Mosiah 3 meets the six criteria laid out at the beginning of the paper. While some elements, such as "symbolism," are absent, others, such as "dualism," an "angelic mediator," a "future state," "eschatological determinism," and a "divine intermediary," are all present. But if necessary, the criteria could be slightly expanded. In his seminal study of apocalyptic literature, John J. Collins compared the extant texts and noted several traits held by nearly every text.⁵⁶ For example, Collins wrote that the literature can be divided into two categories, those containing "otherworldly journeys" and "some, such as Daniel, [that] contain an elaborate review of history, presented in the form of a prophecy and culminating in a time of crisis and eschatological upheaval." Mosiah 3 presents readers with a prophetic preview of history in which the crisis is spiritual, not physical. Collins states, "The revelation of a supernatural world and the activity of supernatural beings are essential to all the apocalypses." Mosiah 3, with the presence of an angel and a God who condescends to mortality, certainly fits that requirement. "In all there are also a final judgment and a destruction of the wicked. The eschatology of the apocalypses differs from that of the earlier prophetic books by clearly envisaging retribution beyond death." Mosiah 3, which culminates in the lengthy judgment scene describing the fate of the wicked, again qualifies. Finally, "all the apocalypses have a hortatory aspect, whether or not it is spelled out in explicit exhortations and admonitions."⁵⁷ Benjamin's stern reminder that salvation comes by "no other name given nor any other way nor means" than casting off the "natural man" and becoming "as a child, submissive, meek, humble, patient, full of love, willing to submit to all things which the Lord seeth fit to inflict upon him, even as a child doth submit to his father" (Mosiah 3:17, 19) fills this paraenetic requirement.

2. *Can reading and analyzing Mosiah 3 as apocalyptic prove illuminating to our understanding not only of Mosiah 3 but to King Benjamin as well?*

Again, I believe the answer to this question is yes. First, and perhaps most importantly, it reinforces for readers of the Book of Mormon the crucial

importance of Benjamin's vision. Viewing Benjamin's experience as an apocalyptic vision means that Mosiah 3 provides readers with a firsthand account of Jesus' godhood, condescension, Atonement, Resurrection, and Judgment. One of the reasons why the visions of Nephi, John, and Joseph Smith resonate with readers is that we are reading the accounts of what they themselves saw and witnessed. If Benjamin didn't actually have a vision and is simply repeating what he was told by the angel, the information is still valuable. But Benjamin becomes a conveyer of information, imparting to the Nephites what he has been told. To understand Mosiah 3 as Benjamin's own vision goes beyond a simple exchange of information and situates Benjamin as a firsthand witness of the divine.

Second, reading Mosiah 3 as an apocalyptic text further highlights the pivotal nature of Jesus' mission. Through a dualistic framing of history—good and evil, God and Satan—Mosiah 3 illustrates for readers *why* it is only in and through the name of Jesus Christ that we can hope to find salvation. It is Jesus who will condescend, Jesus who will sacrifice himself, Jesus who will bestow his grace upon us, and Jesus who will ultimately defeat those who oppose God's plan. Third, it underlines for readers that God's plan will unfold exactly as he determines it, knowledge that may be a comfort for some and a concern for others. Fourth, it boosts readers with the hope that the world we live in is destined for something greater than the current status quo. The realized nature of Book of Mormon eschatology further emphasizes that this process is not something far off in the future, but a process that is already underway. Fifth, it underpins the reality of the Judgment. All are sinners, and all are guilty in the eyes of justice. However, those who covenant to become "sons and daughters" of Jesus Christ will find him intervening on their behalf, while those who don't will feel the pains of a just, "awful" judgment.

Finally, the apocalyptic nature of Mosiah 3 gives readers no place to hide. The conflict between God and Satan involves everyone. The "natural man" affects everyone. Jesus sacrificed himself in the hopes of saving everyone, and, in the end, everyone will be judged. Whether we choose to admit it or not, we are active participants in a cosmic conflict, one that requires our full attention and effort if we wish to succeed.

Additionally, reading Mosiah 3 as an apocalyptic text also impacts our understanding of King Benjamin. Benjamin remains one of the more enigmatic figures in the Book of Mormon. The Words of Mormon hint at his military prowess; his sermon in Mosiah 2–5 clearly identifies him as a man of

deep faith, but so much of his life remains shrouded in mystery.⁵⁸ The Book of Mormon explicitly depicts Benjamin's son Mosiah II as a seer, but less is said of Benjamin's own prophetic competence. Mosiah 3, with its apocalyptic tone and structure, hints at something remarkable in the person of Benjamin. If we search the scriptures for those who have experienced apocalyptic visions, we would have to include Moses (Moses 1–5), Enoch (Moses 6–7), Nephi (1 Nephi 11–14), the brother of Jared (Ether 3), Joseph Smith (D&C 76), and Peter, James, and John (D&C 63:21, Revelation). The common element among all of these individuals is that they founded societies centered upon God's work and will: Moses and the Israelites; Enoch and Zion; Nephi and the Nephites; Jared and the Jaredites; Peter, James, and John and the early Christians; Joseph Smith and the Latter-day Saints. While Benjamin tends not to be included in this group of societal founders, perhaps he should be. Perhaps what Benjamin did in Mosiah 2–5 was not so much a spiritual reformation as a spiritual revolution, one that resulted in a people as distinct as Nephi's Nephites or the earlier Jaredites. Too much remains unclear to speak with any amount of certainty about the state of affairs among the Nephites and Mulekites during his reign, but the possible linking of Benjamin with other founders hints that much has been left unsaid regarding Benjamin and his accomplishments.

Mosiah 3 has long been recognized as one of the more crucial chapters in the Book of Mormon. In this chapter we learn details about the nature and ministry of Jesus, the nature and potential of mankind, and the delicate balance between justice and mercy. To read Mosiah 3 as an apocalyptic text is not to dust off a text that has long been ignored or misunderstood. Quite on the contrary, much has been written about Mosiah 3 and much will continue to be written. What this paper has attempted to do is shine a different light on the text, to tease out nuances and ideas that may not have been readily apparent. Studying Mosiah 3 through an apocalyptic lens is certainly not the only way to read Mosiah 3; it may not even be the best way. But it is, I believe, a viable way, one that adds to the message and meaning of the text, hints at its complexity, and demonstrates the rich rewards of a close study. **RE**

Notes

1. These textual parallels could extend to the opening verses of the book of Revelation as well. In Mosiah 3:5, Jesus is described as a being "who was, and is from all eternity to all eternity." In the opening words of John's apocalyptic vision, Jesus identifies himself as Ἐγὼ εἶμι τὸ ἄλφα καὶ τὸ ὦ, λέγει κύριος ὁ θεός, ὁ ὢν καὶ ὁ ἦν καὶ ὁ ἐρχόμενος, ὁ παντοκράτωρ ("Alpha and

Omega, the beginning and the ending, saith the Lord, which is, and which was, and which is to come, the Almighty"; Revelation 1:8).

2. Much ink has been spilt over the origins and purpose of the apocalyptic genre. Various scholars have identified it as emerging from such various sources as the Israelite prophetic and wisdom tradition, the result of oppression during the exile, the product of Hellenization interacting with Judaism, or even a Christian appropriation of Jewish texts. Even a definition of the genre itself, and what texts ought to be considered as apocalyptic, remain topics of heated debate. For a good discussion of the issues, see Paul D. Hanson, *The Dawn of Apocalyptic: The Historical and Sociological Roots of Jewish Apocalyptic Eschatology* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1989), 5–6, and John J. Collins, "From Prophecy to Apocalypticism: The Expectation of the End," in *The Encyclopedia of Apocalypticism*, ed. John J. Collins (Lexington: The Continuum Publishing Company, 1998), 1:145–47, 157–59.

3. "Apocalyptic" must be differentiated from "apocalypticism." The former refers to a genre of literature, the second to a world-view "which is extrapolated from the apocalypses." See *Anchor Bible Dictionary* 1:283, s.v. "Apocalypses and Apocalypticism."

4. Gerhard Kittel, ed., *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, 3:564, s.v. Ἀποκαλύψις.

5. Kittel, *Theological Dictionary*, 3:564.

6. John J. Collins, "Introduction: Towards the Morphology of a Genre," in *Apocalypse: The Morphology of a Genre*, ed. John J. Collins; Semeia 14 (1979): 3.

7. Klaus Koch, *The Rediscovery of Apocalyptic* (Naperville, IL: Alec R. Allenson, 1970), 28.

8. One characteristic often mentioned when discussing apocalyptic literature is pseudonymous authorship, which had at least two advantages for authors of apocalyptic texts. First, through connecting his work with that of an ancient figure, such as Enoch, Abraham, Moses, or Ezra, the author gained validity for his own text: "the apocalyptic writer would win much greater prestige and authority for his book than he otherwise would have done had he written simply in his own name." D. S. Russell, *Divine Disclosure: An Introduction to Jewish Apocalyptic* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1992), 65. Second, the writer was able to describe events that had occurred for him in the past or present as being "future" events and thus his work represented a "fulfillment" of prophecy. The advantage of this type of prophecy, ex eventu, reinforced the crucial tenet that God had a firm hand on history, allowing it to occur exactly as he had determined. This would in turn instill a confidence in the reader that actual future events, such as a divine intervention or a judgment of the wicked, would occur just as the author described, seeing as how he had been accurate on his other predictions. In the Book of Mormon, Benjamin claims to have received information regarding the future birth and ministry of Jesus and the eventual state of the wicked and the righteous. Thus pseudonymity is not an issue to be considered, as Benjamin himself reports the content of the vision.

9. 1 *Enoch* 25:1–4; OTP 1:26.

10. Nephi's vision preserved in 1 Nephi 11–14 involves a similar situation. Nephi is taken by "the spirit of the Lord" onto a mountain, where Nephi engages in a dialogue with the angel while witnessing significant events, such as the birth of Jesus and the rise of a "great and abominable church."

11. There is a fair amount of irony in the setting of this speech. First, it takes place at a temple, the place where heaven and earth symbolically meet. Second, due to the large number of listeners, Benjamin constructs a tower in order to be able to speak more effectively.

As he speaks the words of the angel from the tower, Benjamin effectively takes on the role of a second mediator. Whereas the angel had served as a cosmic guide for Benjamin, now Benjamin, hoisted high in his tower, leads his people on the journey which he himself has just experienced. He has symbolically, if not physically, assumed the role of mediator for the Nephite audience.

12. The second is more likely, based upon the language of Mosiah 4:1.

13. Russell, *Divine Disclosure*, 122.

14. Again, one can see a parallel with Nephi, who recognized the presence of symbolism in his own vision and desired from the angel "to know the interpretation thereof" (1 Nephi 11:11).

15. Perhaps a parallel to Benjamin's experience can be seen in Nephi's discussion with his brothers in 1 Nephi 15. Nephi is able to answer Laman and Lemuel's inquiries about Lehi's vision because he himself has just seen many of the same images described by Lehi and received an interpretation from his angelic guide in 1 Nephi 11–14. However, when Nephi uses this visionary experience to help his brothers understand Lehi's vision, he does not explicitly speak to them about the images he himself saw; rather he gives them the interpretation of the images in a clear, practical manner, similar to Benjamin's recounting of his own experience in Mosiah 3. It is fair to ask whether or not the discussion in 1 Nephi 15 would have been possible if Nephi hadn't experienced his own apocalyptic vision. He can speak so plainly with his brother because he now understands the issues and possesses the interpretation of the symbols Lehi described. In a similar fashion, the clarity with which Benjamin described the ministry and mission of Jesus Christ as well as the fate of the righteous and the wicked may have been informed by an experience similar to that of Nephi. Understood from this perspective, Mosiah 3 functions in a similar fashion as 1 Nephi 15. However, the issue is complicated by the exclusion of Benjamin's vision from Mormon's edited large plates, a complication avoided in 1 Nephi due to Nephi's inclusion of his vision upon the small plates.

16. See 4 *Ezra* 4:21; *Jubilees* 5:13–19; 30:22; 36:10; *Testament of Judah* 2:12–4.

17. "The two worlds of earth and heaven were indeed realms apart, but by means such as these they were joined in one" (Russell, *Divine Disclosure*, 106).

18. John G. Gammie writes: "Ethical dualism is a leading concept in Jewish apocalyptic as well as Jewish sapiential literature." "Spatial and Ethical Dualism in Jewish Wisdom and Apocalyptic Literature," *Journal of Biblical Literature* 93, no. 3 (1974): 356–85.

19. *Testament of Judah*, 20:1–3; OTP 1:800

20. See *Testament of Asher* 3:1; 4:1; *Jubilees* 23:24; 24:29; 1 *Enoch* 1:1.

21. *Testament of Levi* 3:3.

22. *Jubilees* 10:8.

23. Revelation 12:9.

24. Revelation 12:7.

25. *Testament of Levi* 18:12.

26. Russell, *Divine Disclosure*, 112.

27. 1 *Enoch* 98:4; OTP 1:78.

28. 4 *Ezra* 7:118; OTP 1:541.

29. 2 *Baruch* 54:15–16, 19; OTP 1:640.

30. Brant Gardner, *Second Witness: An Analytical and Contextual Commentary on the Book of Mormon* (Draper, UT: Greg Kofford Books, 2007–11), 3:157.

31. 4 *Ezra* 7:127–29; OTP 1:541. Paul appears to share a similar sentiment in Romans 7:23, “But I see another law in my members, warring against the law of my mind, and bringing me into captivity to the law of sin which is in my members.”

32. John J. Collins describes the motivation behind the temporal dualism present in texts such as 1 *Enoch*: “In short, Enoch appeals to the authority of heaven to show that the righteous who are oppressed in this world can hope for salvation outside it and that the present world order will eventually be reversed. An apocalyptic view of the world provides consolation and the basis for perseverance in the seemingly unprofitable ways of righteousness.” Collins, *The Apocalyptic Imagination* (New York: Crossroad, 1984), 53.

33. 4 *Ezra* 7:50; OTP 1:538.

34. 4 *Ezra* 7:112–15; OTP 1:541.

35. 2 *Enoch* 65:7–8; OTP 1:192.

36. 1 *Enoch* 98:10–12; OTP 1:79. Richard Baukham states, “Though most of these apocalypses contain material other than the tour of hell, such as a visit to paradise, a revelation of what happens to a soul at death or a dialogue about the justice and mercy of God in relation to hell, nearly all of them are overwhelmingly concerned with the fate of the dead.” Richard Baukham, “Early Jewish Visions of Hell,” *Journal of Theological Studies* 41 (1990): 356.

37. D. S. Russell, *Method and Message*, 213. There are usually two forms of eschatology present in apocalyptic literature: *prophetic* eschatology, usually focused on the future establishment of a political kingdom, and *apocalyptic* eschatology, concerned more with the future establishment of a spiritual kingdom. Both types of eschatology, though, see the establishment of the kingdom as the climactic moment in history after which there will be no more conflict, only peace. Benjamin’s eschatology tends to lean more toward *apocalyptic* eschatology (although one can see elements of *prophetic* eschatology as well). Russell writes: “Thus apocalyptic eschatology becomes more and more transcendent, with stress from first to last on the supernatural and the supra-mundane. Deliverance will come, not from men, but from God himself who will bring in his kingdom and usher in the age to come.” Russell, *Method and Message*, 269.

38. Book of Mormon eschatology is a fascinating topic to explore. Contemporary Mormonism, relying largely upon the Doctrine and Covenants and American premillennial views popular at the time of Joseph Smith tends to see the great eschatological event as the “Second Coming” of Jesus Christ, where the wicked will be burned, followed by a lengthy millennial period enjoyed by the righteous prior to a final encounter between Satan and Jesus. Although there are references within the text to a future “second coming” of Jesus Christ, such as the Savior’s quotation of Malachi 3 and 4 to the Nephites gathered at Bountiful, Book of Mormon writers rarely place emphasis upon Jesus’ Second Coming. Instead, Book of Mormon writers see the great eschatological event as the coming forth of the Book of Mormon, which will be a sign that the gathering of Israel has commenced (see 3 Nephi 29:1).

39. Obviously, apocalyptic literature is not alone in this belief. Deuteronomy 18:15–18, 2 Samuel 7:12–16, Daniel 7:13, and Malachi 4:5 all promote a similar figure. Additionally, Qumran texts such as the “Rule of the Community” demonstrate that the Essene community maintained a firm belief in this eschatological figure as well. See John J. Collins, *The Scepter and the Star: The Messiahs of the Dead Sea Scrolls and Other Ancient Literature* (New York: Doubleday, 1995), 1–19.

40. *Testament of Levi* 18:2, 10–11; OTP 1:794–795.

41. See 2 *Baruch* 30:1; OTP 1:631.

42. 4 *Ezra* 13:52; 14:9; OTP 1:553.

43. 1 *Enoch* 46:3–4; OTP 1:34.

44. 1 *Enoch* 62:7–11; OTP 1:43.

45. Leon Morris, *Apocalyptic* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1972), 47. D. S. Russell adds, “These prophecies of hope had been made in God’s name; they were verily the word of God and so could not be set at naught. Their fulfilment was inevitable, for the word of God could not lie.” *Message*, 98.

46. *Jubilees* 1:29; OTP 2:54.

47. *Jubilees* 32:21; OTP 2:118.

48. 1 *Enoch* 81:2; OTP 1:59.

49. 1 *Enoch* 9:5.

50. Collins, *The Apocalyptic Imagination*, 66.

51. Brant Gardner writes: “The numerous small differences in detail indicate that Benjamin received a vision of Jesus’ ministry and is reporting his own experience, rather than citing scripture. Even where there is a thematic overlap, Benjamin is giving the information in a fresh way. Certain his prophetic vision would dominate his recollection, despite his familiarity with the scriptures left by earlier prophets who had similar experiences. For example, Nephi had a similar vision, but it came in response to a personal question” (*Second Witness*, 3:147).

52. For a treatment of Nephi’s vision as “apocalyptic,” see Jared M. Halverson, “Lehi’s Dream and Nephi’s Vision as Apocalyptic Literature,” in *The Things Which My Father Saw: Approaches to Lehi’s Dream and Nephi’s Vision*, ed. Daniel L. Belnap, Gaye Strathearn, and Stanley A. Johnson (Provo, UT: Religious Studies Center; Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 2011), 53–69.

53. This setting presents a possible further parallel between apocalyptic literature and Benjamin’s speech. Much has been made of the function of apocalyptic literature as “crisis” literature. There is some hint that Benjamin’s speech was presented in the context of Nephite political crisis, as Benjamin is preparing the people for the reign of his son Mosiah II. How Mosiah I managed to ascend to rule in Zarahemla remains shrouded, and the later schism of the Nephites into “Kingmen” and “Freemen” suggests that the current monarchy may not have been the consensus choice. See John A. Tvedtnes, “Tribal Affiliation and Military Castes,” in *Warfare in the Book of Mormon*, ed. Stephen D. Ricks and William J. Hamblin (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book; Provo: FARMS), 298–99.

54. For a possible Mesoamerican answer to this question, see Gardner, *Second Witness*, 3:145–46.

55. It would be useful in this discussion to know how much, if any, of Lehi’s visions recorded in 1 Nephi 1 and 8 and Nephi’s vision in 1 Nephi 11–14 were recorded on the large plates.

56. Collins, *Apocalyptic Imagination*, 6.

57. Collins, *Apocalyptic Imagination*, 5.

58. If Royal Skousen is correct, and the 116 pages lost by Martin Harris extended into Mosiah, then the seeming lack of attention paid by Mormon to Benjamin would be due more to the material about Benjamin being lost than to Mormon’s editorial decision to omit information about him. See Royal Skousen, “Critical Methodology and the Text of the Book of Mormon,” *Review of Books on the Book of Mormon* 6, no. 1 (1994): 121–44. Skousen believes two chapters from Mosiah may have been lost.