



Type: Magazine Article

The Book of Mormon—Christ in America (Continued)

Editor(s): Mary Connelly Kimball

Source: *Relief Society Magazine*, Vol. 18, No. 2 (February 1931), pp. 113–116

Published by: The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints

Abstract: No abstract available.

Lesson Department

Theology and Testimony

(First Week in April)

BOOK OF MORMON—CHRIST IN AMERICA (*Continued*)

Read the rest of Third Nephi, from chapter 21 on; also the entire book of Fourth Nephi, to the book of Mormon. This closes the abridgement of the Nephite record by that prophet-warrior.

The time is mainly the year 34, but goes to the year 322, After Christ.

Story of the Lesson

In this lesson Jesus continues his ministry among the Nephites. The historian tells us that the Lord "did truly teach the people for the space of three days." Whether or not this was on three consecutive days he does not say. But "after that," we are told, Jesus showed himself "oft" to them and administered the sacrament to them and taught them.

During this period Christ performed a similar miracle to that recorded in the *Gospels* of feeding the five thousand. Only, this was in connection with the Lord's supper. "Now, there had been no bread, neither wine, brought by the disciples, neither by the multitude. But He truly gave unto them bread to eat, and also wine to drink."

Then, too, He answered a question as to what the Church should be called. It was, He said, to be known as the Church of Christ. For how, He asked, "can it be my Church save it be called in my name? If a church be called in Moses' name, then it is Moses' church; or if it be called in the

name of a man, then it is the church of a man; but if it be called in my name, then it is my Church, if it so be that they are built upon my gospel."

Also Jesus gave the twelve disciples their secret wishes. Nine of them elected to "go speedily into God's kingdom" at their death. They were told that they should live to be seventy-two years old, after which they should "find rest" with Christ. But the other three, like John the Beloved, desired to continue their earthly ministry indefinitely. And they were told that they should never "taste of death" or have pain of body, that they should continue to bring souls to Christ, and that at His coming again they should "be changed in the twinkling of an eye from mortality to immortality."

Besides, our Savior performed many miracles during this time. He healed all the sick and lame, opened the eyes of the blind, unstopped the ears of the deaf, and "did all manner of cures" among the people, even raising a man from the dead.

Mainly, though, He taught the people. The historian says He taught them "all things from the beginning." Here are the main points in His teaching:

There is a guiding influence in the affairs of men. Things are not allowed to get out of hand, but are directed toward an end. Especially is this so in the case of the children

of the promise. In Abraham and his seed all nations are to be blessed of God. All the promises "made to the fathers" will be fulfilled in the due time of the Lord. Israel will be gathered; Jerusalem will be rebuilt in Palestine; a New Jerusalem will be established on the American continent; the "remnants" will be remembered. In a series of quotations, with running comments, events of the past and the future are tied together in a very illuminating manner.

After the last visitation of Jesus to the Nephites, the twelve disciples carry on the work begun by the Christ. They preach the gospel and minister to the people, till all become members of the Church through baptism. Great miracles are performed. Peace, prosperity, and happiness prevail everywhere. The Order of Enoch is established, and continues for about two hundred years.

Then the seeds of disunion begin to sprout. Dissenters arise, infidelity spreads, the old lines of cleavage as between Nephites and Lamanites spring up again, till by the year 322, or thereabouts, social and religious chaos comes once more to this hapless nation. It is now a little way to the end. The swiftness with which things happen, however, as we shall see presently, is more in the narrative than in the events depicted.

Notes

1. *The Fifth Gospel*: It is interesting to compare the account of Christ's ministry in the *Book of Mormon* with that in the four *Gospels* in the *New Testament*.

Nephi's is the longest. In Matthew there are approximately twenty-eight thousand words; in Mark, nineteen thousand; in Luke, thirty

thousand; in John, twenty-two thousand; and in Nephi, if we include what is introductory to the account, thirty-four thousand. It is probably true that, if we take into consideration only the words actually uttered by Jesus in the five accounts of His ministry, we shall find more in the Nephite Record than in the four *Gospels* put together, not counting the duplications in the latter.

The conditions are, of course, very different in some respects. Among the Jews in Palestine Jesus is mortal; in America, immortal. This does not cover the times when He appeared to the apostles there. On the eastern continent the people of His time were, on the whole, very unresponsive to His teachings. On the western hemisphere the people almost without exception were extremely responsive. For when the Nephites believed, they believed without any reservations. Always they were either hot or cold, never merely lukewarm, like the Laodiceans of whom John speaks and whom God, on account of their indefinite temperature, threatened to "spue out of His mouth." Jesus himself declares that "so great faith He had never seen among all the Jews." That is why He "could not show unto them so great miracles" as He performed among the Nephites. He is speaking, however, to the twelve disciples, but no doubt the description applies to the whole people as well.

This greater faith on the part of the Nephites gives us a clew to the essential difference between Jesus in Palestine and Jesus in America.

Among the Nephites he performed about the same miracles as He did among the Jews—healing the sick, raising the dead, multiplying the quantity of bread and wine, and so on. But there are some

distinctive spiritual manifestations on this continent. Jesus himself hints at this fact in the phrase "so great miracles."

For one thing, when Nephi baptized the twelve disciples, they "were filled with the Holy Ghost, and with fire." Afterwards they "were encircled about as if by fire from heaven, and the multitude did witness it and did bear record." For another thing, little children, in the presence of the multitude, uttered "marvelous things." These "marvelous things," according to the record, "were greater than Jesus had revealed unto the people." And, for still another thing, Jesus told the Nephites many things which He had been forbidden by the Father to tell the Jews because of their unbelief—about the "other sheep," for instance, and the ten tribes. In a word, as we stated elsewhere, Jesus seems to have been under considerably less restraint here than in Palestine. This shows that people receive of divine things according to their faith.

Furthermore, there are more intimate touches of Jesus in the *Fifth Gospel* than in the other four. In the *New Testament* Jesus is "the Man of sorrows." He is decidedly "acquainted with grief." This is the predominant tone of the *Gospels* by Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John. Whether or not the writers were under the deep spell of Calvary, it is impossible to say. But it is not so in the *Book of Mormon*. Here He appears in a different light. In Nephi He weeps, but it is from joy. He prays, too, evidently in the hearing of the multitude, out of sheer thanksgiving at the great faith He witnesses. Also He smiles. Let us not forget that. And here we see the Master in a new light. Twice He smiles on the twelve disciples, His countenance beaming with light

and happiness. No one can read Nephi's account of Christ in anything like a sympathetic spirit without getting something more, and other, than what he gets from the *New Testament* account of Him.

2. *The Order of Enoch*: As a rule, when, in the history of religion, any considerable number of people accept the gospel and are entering upon the first practice of it, their prime consideration is a reformation of their temporal, or economic, situation. This is a curious fact.

That happened in the days before the Flood, when the prophet Enoch preached. The order then established, probably for the first time, was named for him. "They had all things in common, and there were no poor and no rich among them." It happened, too, in the time of the apostles of Christ after the Ascension. It happened, also, in our own age, in Ohio and Missouri. And it happened in the times immediately following the visitation of Jesus to the Nephites.

There seems to be a conflict between the pursuit of the material and the pursuit of the spiritual. This fact is especially noteworthy of the Nephite peoples, as we have seen in a preceding lesson. But it is true of all peoples. "Ye cannot serve God and Mammon," says Jesus. The lure of wealth is almost unescapable. The love of pleasure and power also. And so, on so many occasions when there has been a strong spiritual uprush, men have set their minds on making such a change in their material affairs as would lessen the conflict between the temporal and the spiritual. And goodness knows it is sorely in need of alterations in our own times, where there is periodical unemployment with much poverty and ignorance.

3. *The Time Element*: Somehow one gets the impression from reading the *Book of Mormon* that the Nephites were swifter to do evil than other peoples of whom we read in religious history. But this is more imaginary than real as the consideration of a few facts will show.

If a historian three hundred years from now should briefly record the happenings of, say, the period between 1900 and 1920, he would have a quicker and greater change to write about than anything to be found in the *Book of Mormon*. For during those years the whole world, not merely a comparatively small nation, went from a period of universal peace through the most devastating of all wars into another period of universal peace. The thing would appear incredible if set down in a sober history, especially in view of our great pretensions to peace and Christianity. Yet it is a solemn and lamentable fact.

That so far as outer events are concerned. Moral upsets as swift have taken place. Consider the period in England just after the brilliant reign of Queen Elizabeth, when morals went to such loose

ends as to shock every right thinking person. And then look at the rise of the Puritans, with their horror of what to us now are innocent amusements—dancing, theater-going, and so on.

Human emotions are queer things. A gust of wind may change us in a moment, as witness the almost sudden change of our attitude in America towards the League of Nations a few years ago. We changed almost in a night. And so there is nothing very remarkable about the alterations in the Nephites, in respect to their swift changes from good to evil and from evil to good, when we consider human emotions.

Questions and Problems

1. What is the United Order? How would it work today? What conditions give rise to such schemes?

2. Has the economic problem anything to do with the size of families today? Explain your view.

3. Are morals any looser today than before the Great War? Give reasons for your views.

4. Account for the last war between the Nephites and the Lamanites.

Work and Business

TEACHERS' TOPIC FOR APRIL

(This topic is to be given at the special teachers' meeting the first week in April.)

OUR RESPONSIBILITY TO SUSTAIN THE LAW

"Law commands that which is right and prohibits that which is wrong."—*Blackstone*.

"We believe in honoring, obeying and sustaining the law."—*Articles of Faith*.

"We stand for the observance of

law, the people who live it and the officers who enforce it."—*M. I. A. Slogan*.

"By strict obedience Jesus won."—*Hymn*.

I. Origin and History

Civil law, rule, and order came with the advent of man. It began with family, patriarchal and tribal organization,