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## Notes and Communications - Examining a Nephite/Latter-day Apostolic Parallel

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## NOTES AND COMMUNICATIONS

### Examining a Nephite/Latter-day Apostolic Parallel

Christian M. Ziebarth

It has long been recognized that the beginning chapters of 3 Nephi provide a type for the events that will precede the millennial era and that 4 Nephi describes the same type of society that will exist during the thousand years of peace.<sup>1</sup> It is my belief that these portions of the Book of Mormon should be read with the purpose of coming to an understanding of its larger allegorical application to the last days.

In studying how the conditions before the coming of the Savior to the Nephites so closely parallel prophecies of the latter times, we see powerful evidence that the inspired writers of the Book of Mormon truly saw our day. Indeed, because of the great significance of the second coming of the Savior, the Lord prepared, preserved, and provided this record of a people who had previously experienced the coming of the risen Christ.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> See Joseph Fielding McConkie, Robert L. Millet, and Brent L. Top, *Doctrinal Commentary on the Book of Mormon*, vol. 4, *3 Nephi through Moroni* (Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1992), 27, 205–6.

<sup>2</sup> E. Dale LeBaron, “The Book of Mormon: Pattern in Preparing a People to Meet the Savior,” in *Doctrines of the Book of Mormon, 1991 Sperry Symposium*, ed. Bruce A. Van Orden and Brent L. Top (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1992), 70–79.

Even as far back as 1840, the First Presidency issued a statement:

Connected with the building up of the Kingdom is the printing and circulation of the Book of Mormon, . . . [which throws] a light on the proceedings of Jehovah which have already been accomplished, and mark[s] out the future in all its dreadful and glorious realities.<sup>3</sup>

But have we collectively realized the extent to which this is the case? What is true of the large picture may also be true of its component parts. One possible parallel between certain events from the Nephite era and in the time before the second coming of the Savior is examined here.

In the Book of Mormon we read of the chaos that was taking place immediately before the death of Christ in the Holy Land and his subsequent visit to the Nephites in the New World. The situation was much the same then as it is in our day: political assassinations (3 Nephi 6:30), rejection of the prophets (3 Nephi 6:23; 7:14), widespread pride and class distinctions (3 Nephi 6:10–12), and those who were saying that Christ was delaying his coming, or, even yet, that there was no Christ. There were many prophets sent to testify to the people of their wickedness and of the need for repentance. One of these prophets was Timothy. The Book of Mormon text declares that Timothy's brother, Nephi, had the power to speak so that his listeners could not disbelieve his words (3 Nephi 7:18). Since this is the type of influence that comes from preaching by the spirit, and we know that Timothy was of the spiritual stature to be chosen as one of the Nephite Twelve, we can surmise that Timothy also had the power to speak so that the people could not disbelieve his words. Since the guilty take the truth to be hard (1 Nephi 16:2), they sought to shut the mouth of the prophet and in this case did so by stoning him until he suffered death (3 Nephi 7:19). "Those who had so given themselves up to the spirit of the adversary feasted upon anger and hatred and lost their appetite for the spirit of peace, joy, and

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<sup>3</sup> DHC 4:187.

love which accompany the gospel and the obedient spirit.”<sup>4</sup> Apparently, this provided a type of false relief to those who slew him who felt they were then spared from the jarring and disconcerting words of one who made them aware of their guilt and impending destruction. This false sense of comfort lasted only until Nephi, the brother of Timothy, exercised his priesthood power to raise him from the dead (3 Nephi 7:19; 19:4), which sent the wicked into a blind rage because they were then left without excuse (see 3 Nephi 7:18–20). Both Nephi and Timothy later became apostles when the Lord came and visited and taught those who survived the destruction that occurred in America at the time of his death (see 3 Nephi 11:18–22; 19:4).

Similar events are prophesied to occur in the latter days. John the Revelator told of “two prophets that are to be raised up to the Jewish nation in the last days” (D&C 77:15; see Revelation 11:3–12), likely “members of the Council of the Twelve or of the First Presidency of the Church,”<sup>5</sup> to testify of their wickedness. Their words too would torment carnal minds until the only resort for those who will not heed their counsel to repent is to kill the prophets. In this case as well, the wicked people will feel they are free from the hard truth, even so much as to send gifts to each other commemorating the slayings (Revelation 11:10). Once again they will be wrong, though, as “after three days and an half the Spirit of life from God [enters] into them” possibly by one holding the keys of resurrection exercising that power, “and they [the two prophets] stood upon their feet; and great fear fell upon them [the wicked people who had slain them or consented to their death] which saw them” (Revelation 11:11). “What happens when the murdered do not stay dead? The ultimate power of the unrighteous fails, and with it all other forms of coercion and intimidation.”<sup>6</sup>

While there may not be a logical or causative link between the events in the book of Revelation and in 3 Nephi, we can note these similar elements:

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<sup>4</sup> McConkie, Millet, and Top, *Doctrinal Commentary*, 4:33.

<sup>5</sup> Bruce R. McConkie, *Doctrinal New Testament Commentary* (Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1973), 3:509.

<sup>6</sup> Richard D. Draper, *Opening the Seven Seals: The Visions of John the Revelator* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1991), 123.

1. A witness or witnesses testify of Christ and the need for repentance.
2. Those who hear the witnesses and are wicked take the truth to be hard and become angry.
3. The witnesses are killed.
4. The wicked see the slain witnesses restored to mortality or resurrected to immortality.
5. The wicked become even more angry or fearful.

By noting instances such as these we come to a greater appreciation of the superior wisdom and foresight of God, who is, in the final and true sense, the author of the Book of Mormon.