

Comments on 3 Nephi 5

1 AND now behold, there was not a living soul among all the people of the Nephites who did doubt in the least the words of all the holy prophets who had spoken; for they knew that it must needs be that they must be fulfilled. 2 And they knew that it must be expedient that Christ had come, because of the many signs which had been given, according to the words of the prophets; and because of the things which had come to pass already they knew that it must needs be that all things should come to pass according to that which had been spoken. 3 Therefore they did forsake all their sins, and their abominations, and their whoredoms, and did serve God with all diligence day and night.

v1-3 After being led by the zealously religious Lachoneous and Gidgiddoni to a great victory over the Gadianton Robbers, all of the people are believers. All of them accept what the prophets have spoken regarding what should happen (v. 1) regarding Christ's coming (v. 2). So all of their former sins were left behind them (v. 3).

As the most hardhearted Nephites and the wicked among the rising generation dissented to the Robbers (cf. 1:29-30), this left a group of people who were more religious. That coupled with their afflictions (cf. 1:27, 2:11), Lachoneous' preaching (cf. 3:15), and the great victory (cf. 4:29-32) resulted in the people being zealous for the Lord.

4 And now it came to pass that when they had taken all the robbers prisoners, insomuch that none did escape who were not slain, they did cast their prisoners into prison, and did cause the word of God to be preached unto them; and as many as would repent of their sins and enter into a covenant that they would murder no more were set at liberty. 5 But as many as there were who did not enter into a covenant, and who did still continue to have those secret murders in their hearts, yea, as many as were found breathing out threatenings against their brethren were condemned and punished according to the law. 6 And thus they did put an end to all those wicked, and secret, and abominable combinations, in the which there was so much wickedness, and so many murders committed.

v4-6 Those Robbers who are not killed in the battle are caught and imprisoned. The gospel is preached to them and those who repent are freed with a covenant of peace (v. 4), and those who do not repent are executed according to the law (v. 5). Thus the Gadianton Robbers are ended once and for all (v. 6), or at least for a couple of hundred years (cf. 4 Ne. 1:42).

v4 "were set at liberty", cp. 6:3.

7 And thus had the twenty and second year passed away, and the twenty and third year also, and the twenty and fourth, and the twenty and fifth; and thus had twenty and five years passed away. 8 And there had many things transpired which, in the eyes of some, would be great

and marvelous; nevertheless, they cannot all be written in this book; yea, this book cannot contain even a hundredth part of what was done among so many people in the space of twenty and five years; 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. 10 Therefore I have made my record of these things according to the record of Nephi, which was engraven on the plates which were called the plates of Nephi. 11 And behold, I do make the record on plates which I have made with mine own hands.

v7-11 The years pass (v. 7) and many noteworthy things happen, but it is impossible to write everything down (v. 8). While there are records which do contain all of history and significant events of the people, a shorter account is written by the contemporary Nephi (v. 9). The current record is taken from this abbreviated account, which account was written on the plates of Nephi (v. 10), presumably those large plates of Nephi which have been handed down from generation to generation (cf. 1:2). And, the current record is made on plates which the author physically created himself (v. 11).

v11 Mormon's intent in indicating he made the plates himself is probably to let us know he isn't just making more historical records (v. 9) or more of the large plates of Nephi (v. 10). His record is physically separate and necessarily different (cf. V. 20-26) from those other records.

v12-26 Mormon pauses from his writing to introduce himself and his work (v. 12-19), and to bear his testimony concerning the work he is involved in (v. 20-26).

This is the first and only introduction Mormon gives us in the text. While we hear of Mormon and Moroni in the section of the book entitled Words of Mormon that was inserted well after Mormon had written this history.

Remember when reading these verses that they were written about 400 years after the present historical events being recounting. When Mormon is writing in v. 22-26 the Nephites are about to be annihilated by the Lamanites and the Lamanites are pretty wicked. Hence his comments about the remnants being gathered and learning about Christ at some point in the future.

12 And behold, I am called Mormon, being called after the land of Mormon, the land in which Alma did establish the church among the people, yea, the first church which was established among them after their transgression. 13 Behold, I am a disciple of Jesus Christ, the Son of God. I have been called of him to declare his word among his people, that they might have everlasting life. 14 And it hath become expedient that I, according to the will of God, that the prayers of those who have gone hence, who were the holy ones, should be fulfilled according

to their faith, should make a record of these things which have been done-- 15 Yea, a small record of that which hath taken place from the time that Lehi left Jerusalem, even down until the present time. 16 Therefore I do make my record from the accounts which have been given by those who were before me, until the commencement of my day; 17 And then I do make a record of the things which I have seen with mine own eyes. 18 And I know the record which I make to be a just and a true record; nevertheless there are many things which, according to our language, we are not able to write. 19 And now I make an end of my saying, which is of myself, and proceed to give my account of the things which have been before me.

v12-19 Mormon identifies himself by name and also indicates his namesake (v. 12). He states he was called by Jesus Christ to preach the gospel to his people (v. 13), and part of that calling has become writing this record in fulfilment of all the promises made to the patriarchs (v. 14).

Mormon says he makes his abridged version of events from Lehi to the present time (v. 15) from extant records in his possession (v. 16). Once this is completed, he will append a record of events in his own time (v. 17).

He knows the record he writes is true even though it is not as detailed or verbose as these other records he is abridging from (v. 18). He now ends the introduction of himself and his record keeping and returns to the task at hand (v. 19).

v12 "being called after the land of Mormon", cf. Mosiah 18:4. In the Mosiah passage note the way Mormon extolls the virtues of his namesake. When the Nephites are doing terribly bad, Mormon waxes nostalgic for a time when a genuinely righteous splinter group forms in an idyllic setting.

v19 In this verse Mormon says he is going to proceed with the account of the things which occurred before him. This sounds like he is going return to the historical record, and yet v. 20-26 doesn't pick up the history from v. 7. Instead it talks about the redemption of Israel, and doesn't pick up the current history until the start of the next chapter.

If we look more closely at the quote, we can see what Mormon is talking about when he says "And now I...proceed to give my account of the things which have been before me." In the next few verses he does just that, but he goes way back, not just a few hundred years. He references the ancient covenant history of Lehi, Jacob, and Joseph, which is part of "the things which have been before me".

20 I am Mormon, and a pure descendant of Lehi. I have reason to bless my God and my Savior Jesus Christ, that he brought our fathers out of the land of Jerusalem, (and no one knew it save it were himself and those whom he brought out of that land) and that he hath given me and my people so much knowledge unto the salvation of our souls. 21 Surely he hath blessed the house of Jacob, and hath been merciful unto the seed of Joseph. 22 And insomuch as the children of Lehi have kept his commandments he hath blessed them and prospered them according to his word. 23 Yea, and surely shall he again bring a remnant of the seed of Joseph to the knowledge of the Lord their God. 24 And as surely as the Lord liveth, will he gather in from the four quarters of the earth all the remnant of the seed of Jacob, who are scattered abroad upon all the face of the earth. 25 And as he hath covenanted with all the house of Jacob, even so shall the covenant wherewith he hath covenanted with the house of Jacob be fulfilled in his own due time, unto the restoring all the house of Jacob unto the knowledge of the covenant that he hath covenanted with them. 26 And then shall they know their Redeemer, who is Jesus Christ, the Son of God; and then shall they be gathered in from the four quarters of the earth unto their own lands, from whence they have been dispersed; yea, as the Lord liveth so shall it be. Amen.

v20-26 These verses have Mormon presenting a rather interesting commentary on the covenant relationship with Israel in general and the Lehitites in specific.

For background, we have to note that when Mormon is writing this the Nephites are in their final apostasy, after some 200 years of righteousness, which will result in their annihilation at the hands of the Lamanites. Note where Mormon places these verses in the historical text. Between 5:1-6 where the Lehitites are doing quite well and ch. 6 where the Nephites start their last slide into apostasy before the great cataclysmic destruction of ch. 8. So, there is a strong parallel between Mormon's contemporary history and the history he is presently writing.

This is reflected in what Mormon writes as he indicates the people are very blessed as a result of their lineage (v. 20-21), are blessed whenever they are righteous (v. 22), and will at a later date be gathered and brought to a knowledge of the Lord (v. 23-26).

Mormon's present comments ignore the negative issues of apostasy and wickedness because he is speaking of the covenants made to the fathers, per v. 14, which will bring this record he is writing to a remnant of the Lehitites. But, while there is no explicit mention made in the present comments, it is implicit. Why would there be any gathering if they weren't scattered? Why would they need to be apprised of their covenant relationship with the Lord unless they had lapsed into apostasy?

But, regardless of the implicit negatives, that is not Mormon's primary interest. His view right now is eternal, not temporal. He sees the big picture, the necessity of his writing this monumental spiritual work when everything around him is crumbling in apostasy. He is explaining why he is writing this record. And, how merciful the Lord is in sparing a remnant of Jacob via Joseph via Lehi so that at a later date they will receive this record and be apprised of their covenant relationship with the Lord. Mormon knows a remnant of the Lehites will receive this record he is writing, so he informs them how blessed they are and have been to have such knowledge available to them concerning salvation and their Savior Jesus Christ.

Mormon identifies his lineage as being exclusively Lehite. He gives thanks that he is Lehite because the family of Lehi has been brought out from Jerusalem and blessed greatly with knowledge concerning salvation (v. 20).

Mormon then goes back further in his genealogy to Jacob and Joseph, who have been greatly blessed by the Lord (v. 21). And he brings it up to date by saying the lineage of Lehi has been blessed insofar as they have kept the commandments (v. 23).

Since the current outlook for the Lehites isn't good, the Lord will bring a remnant back to the knowledge of Him in the future (v. 23). In addition to these Josephites, as Lehi is lineage of Joseph via Menasseh, the Lord will gather all of Israel (v. 24) and bring them to a knowledge of Himself as well (v. 25). Then all of Israel will know that He is the Redeemer, the Lord Jesus Christ. And the covenant with Abraham will be fulfilled when natural Israel is restored to the lands promised to his lineage (v. 26).

v20 "a pure descendant of Lehi", Mormon is saying he is not part Judah, via the Mulekites, but is completely descended from Joseph. This ties in with the v. 21 and 23 references to promises given to the lineage of Joseph. Mormon is of the lineage of Joseph and is fulfilling the promises to Joseph concerning his lineage.

When Mormon says he is a pure Lehite, we have to conclude there was no Mulekite lineage mixed with his. But, Mulekites were in the majority by at least twofold when they combined with the Nephites, cf. Mosiah 25:1-3.

Perhaps Mormon is an exception to what one would think would have been typically a heterogeneous mix of Lehite and Mulekite lineage. If Mormon wasn't an exception, then there must have been social conventions where Nephites and Mulekites did not intermarry. Unfortunately, we are not informed by Mormon on these matters.

v26 This verse emphasizes the redemption of Israel is twofold, both spiritual and physical. The Lord's initial promise to Abraham was for both a promised land and for eternal increase. For that to occur his lineage has to be spiritually set in order by accepting Christ, as well as be returned to Abraham's ancestral lands. The first half of v. 26 deals with the spiritual redemption, and the second half of the verse deals with the physical redemption.

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