

1r-BoM-11
Press Forward with a Steadfastness in Christ
(2 Nephi 31-33)
By Lenet Hadley Read

(The Nephites knew the Path to Eternal Life and left more than one record of this knowledge)

I. Nephi explained the “strait and narrow path” one must follow to obtain Eternal Life (2 Ne. 31:9).

A. He explained it as Repentance (2 Ne. 31:11); Baptism (vs. 5-7); Receiving the Gift of the Holy Ghost (v. 12), Pressing forward with a steadfastness in Christ, and Enduring to the end. “Thus saith the Father Ye shall have eternal life” (v. 20).

B. Nephites also likely left a physical record demonstrating these teachings (See* below).

C. Nephi said this path must be undertaken with a sincere and pure heart.

1. “Follow the Son, with full purpose of heart, acting no hypocrisy and no deception before God” (2 Nephi 31:13).

II. While following this path, if we feast upon the words of Christ, the Holy Ghost will be with us until we can literally speak with the tongue of angels.

A. “Angels speak by the power of the Holy Ghost; wherefore, they speak the words of Christ. ... feast upon the words of Christ; for behold, the words of Christ will tell you all things what ye should do” (2 Ne. 32:3).

B. Those who lack a desire for knowledge, refusing to feast, are left without great blessings.

1. “I, Nephi, cannot say more: the Spirit stoppeth mine utterance, and I am left to mourn because of the unbelief ... and the ignorance ... of men; for they will not search knowledge, nor understand great knowledge, when it is given unto them in plainness” (2 N. 32:7).

C. Not only can we speak with the tongue of angels, but by praying always, in the name of Jesus Christ, our very works will be consecrated by Him.

1. “But behold, I say unto you that ye must pray always, ... [and] ye must not perform any thing unto the Lord save in the first place ye shall pray unto the Father in the name of Christ, that he will consecrate thy performance unto thee, that thy performance may be for the welfare of thy soul” (2 Ne. 32:9).

III. It has been shown that Nephi himself did speak with the tongue of Angels!

A. BYU Professor Allen E. Bergin tells the story of how Nephi’s final testimony in 2 Nephi 33 profoundly affected him as a student at Stanford University.

“In my opinion there is nothing more powerful in these first two books of the Book of Mormon than Nephi’s continuing testimony of Jesus, that he “is the Christ, the Eternal God, manifesting himself unto all nations.” I recall very clearly how some years ago, as a young college student investigator, I read and reread these challenging testimonies. My initial approach had been skeptical, even cynical, and I wrote critical remarks along the margins as I read, commenting upon the weaknesses in logic, grammar, and philosophy. When I came to those last two pages (2 Nephi 33), however, I was stunned by the power of Nephi’s words. They seemed to penetrate my brain and scatter my previously systematic, critical thoughts. I could not avoid the impact of his words. It was almost as physical as if Nephi were using his shock technique on me, pointing his finger and shaking my mind. I read his words again, and they seemed to grip me. Briefly and

involuntarily, a sweet feeling came over me that I later recognized as having been the Spirit of Christ, the witness of his reality and his loving closeness.

“After a healthy dose of repentance, I was baptized; and since baptism I have reread that chapter perhaps a hundred times. There, in a few words, we have the fullness of a true testimony written by an old man who had been in the demanding and involving service of the Lord for fifty-five years. Nevertheless, his witness there is as strong as or stronger than anywhere else. **Here again his pure character permits the Lord to speak through him to our own age If there were ever spiritual power in the written word, it is here. I feel that my own knowledge of Jesus Christ was magnified immeasurably by this message.** It prepared me, during those college days, for spiritual enlargement as I continued to read and pray. The feelings Nephi’s writings brought into my own life, the life of one man, demonstrate why these golden writings were made, preserved, and brought forth.” (Allen E. Bergin, professor of psychology at Brigham Young University, in *It Begins with a Family*). (Emphasis added)

B. Brother Bergin’s testimony should help us look anew at Nephi’s powerful, final testimony. “I Nephi, have written what I have written, and I esteem it as of great worth, and especially unto my people. For I pray continually for them by day, and mine eyes water my pillow by night, because of them; and I cry unto my God in faith, and I know that he will hear my cry.

And I know that the Lord God will consecrate my prayers for the gain of my people. ...

“And now, my beloved brethren ... and all ye ends of the earth, hearken unto these words and believe in Christ; and if ye believe not in these words believe in Christ. And if ye shall believe in Christ ye will believe in these words, for they are the words of Christ, and hath given them unto me; and they teach all men that they should do good.

“And if they are not the words of Christ, judge ye --- for Christ will show unto you, with power and great glory, that they are his words, at the last day; and you and I shall stand face to face before his bar; and ye shall know that I have been commanded of him to write these things, notwithstanding my weakness.

“And I pray the Father in the name of Christ that many of us, if not all, may be saved in his kingdom at that great and last day.

“And now,... all those who are of the house of Israel, and all ye ends of the earth, I speak unto you as the voice of one crying from the dust; Farewell until that great day shall come. And you that will not partake of the goodness of God, and respect the words of the Jews, and also my words, and the words which shall proceed forth out of the mouth of the Lamb of God, behold, I bid you an everlasting farewell, for these words shall condemn you at the last day.

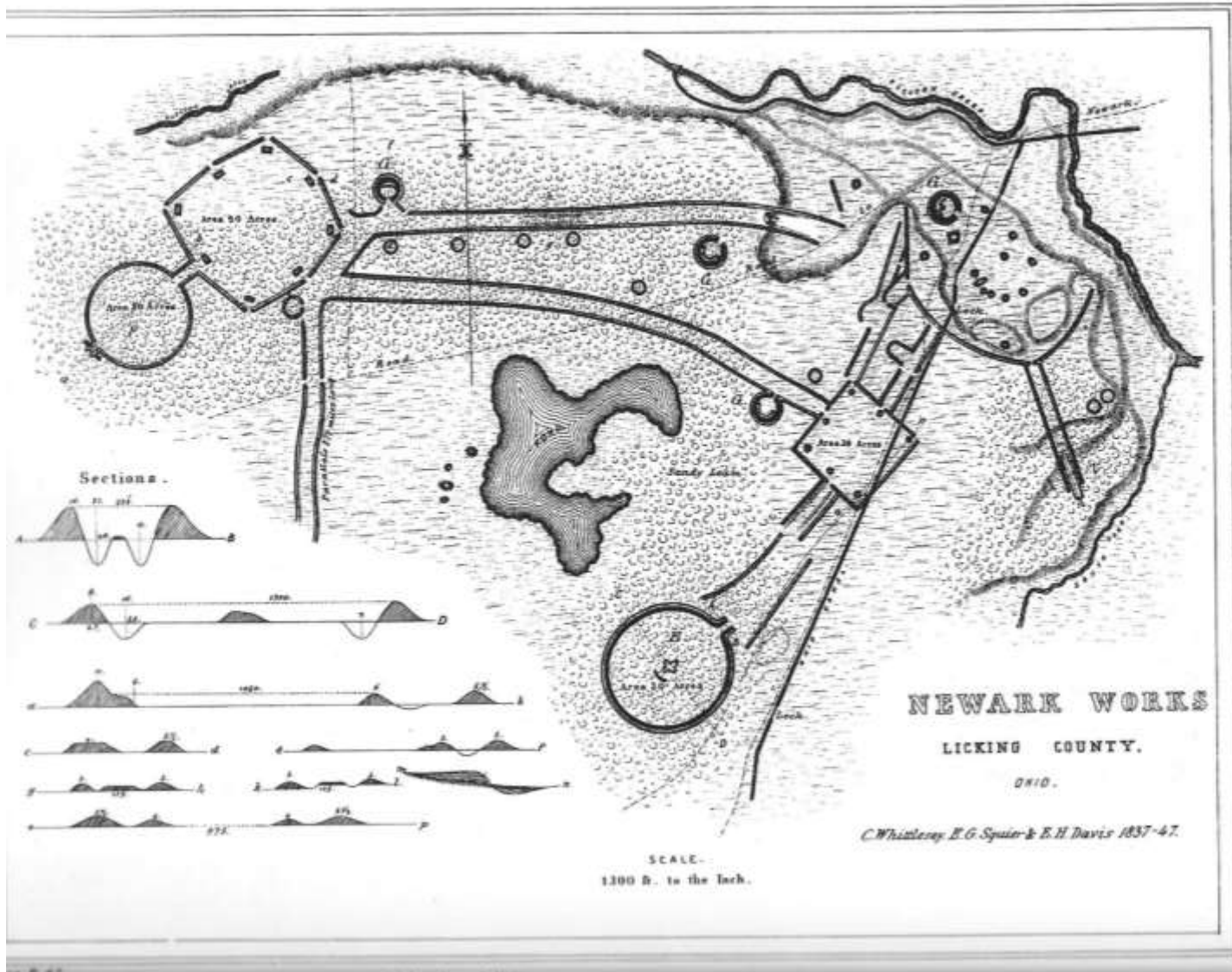
“For what I seal on earth, shall be brought against you at the judgment bar; for thus hath the Lord commanded me, and I must obey” (2 Ne. 33: 3-15).

Nephi truly spoke with the tongue of angels.

*The Nephites were taught the concept of the strait and narrow way beginning with Lehi’s vision of the Tree of Life, with additional stresses given here and later. They also seem to have used physical structures to witness of these truths. Indeed physical representations of truth can be powerful teaching tools, as we see in our own temple structures.

While there is honest disagreement as to where the Book of Mormon events actually took place, **there should be agreement that their teachings influenced ancient Americans in both the North and Latin American continents.**

Among structures left by the Moundbuilders on the North American Continent, whose timeline is similar to the Nephites, are remains of a physical earthwork which seems to display this Path to Eternal Life spoken of by Book of Mormon prophets. The following survey of this earthwork, determined to be a “sacred enclosure” was published by the Smithsonian in 1848.



This was an elaborate structure of sacred earthworks, only parts of which still exist today. Archaeologists now know the circle standing alone at the bottom was originally lined, allowing it to hold water. This may have been the baptismal gateway. Next to that circle is a square. [Squares signify the earth in LDS temple symbolism]. Then the strait and narrow path leads to a Great Octagon and its accompanying Final Circle at the top left. Those who understand Early Christian symbolism know that the **Figure Eight (or Octagon) actually signified the Abrahamic**

Covenant. The Circle, of course, is known more widely to signify Heaven or Eternal Life. There are no exits out of the Circle! The Great Circle and Octagon together signify Eternal Life. [In fact, LDS Temples use these same symbols to teach the same truths].

Note too at the very top there was a path which led away from the Eternal Life complex, and which led to a marsh. There are also evidences of “traps” along the way: of sandy loam and a body of water which had no inlet or outlet, thus likely to become unwholesome in time.

Furthermore, there was also a wide ancient road which led away from the Eternal Life complex. It does not appear on this survey, because at the survey’s making, this road was not recognized. Its edges were too far apart. It has only since been discovered and is called the Great Hopewell Road. Even now they can only find parts of it and are still trying to find where it led. But they are astonished at its width --- far more enormous than needed for any traffic. So it is also likely symbolic. It fits into the symbolic pattern of the whole structure: it likely witnessed of that “wide road which leadeth to destruction,” for it led away from Eternal Life.

Archaeologists who study this complex are astonished at the advanced knowledge its builders possessed. For they had to use very exacting measurement to construct it, particularly the Great Octagon.

(This survey appears in E. G. Squier and E.H. Davis, *Ancient Monuments of the Mississippi Valley*, p. 66, published by The Smithsonian. These two men surveyed thousands of tens of thousands of structures built by the great people called The Moundbuilders, many of which show symbolism similar to that used in LDS Temples today, as well as defensive structures built just like the Book of Mormon described them.)