

1r-BoM-12  
Seek Ye First the Kingdom of God  
(Jacob 1-4)  
By Lenet Hadley Read

(Jacob also spoke with the tongue of angels in guiding his people)

I. The Nephites used a procedure in the naming of their leaders similar to that used by Israel. That is, that future kings took upon themselves the name of a particularly great and beloved king.

A. Among the Jews, for example, it became the tradition that later rulers bear in some way the name of David, their great beloved ancient king.

B. The Nephites did the same.

“Wherefore, the people were desirous to retain in remembrance his [Nephi’s] name. And whoso should reign in his stead were called by the people second Nephi, third Nephi, and so forth, according to the reigns of the kings: and thus they were called by the people, let them be of whatever name they would” (Jacob 1:11).

C. It was not likely that Joseph Smith would have known this is a kingly pattern among the Israelites. In fact most people do not know this today.

II. Jacob showed true understanding **by knowing the path to wickedness often begins with too great a pursuit of the things of the world** (2:12).

A. For them it began by seeking the metals hidden in the earth ---like silver and gold.

B. It had resulted in the wearing of costly apparel and looking down upon others (2:13).

C. The antidote was to “seek first the kingdom of God” (2:18).

D. The antidote (after coming to Christ) is to use any riches with the intent to do good: to clothe the naked, feed the hungry, liberate the captive,” etc. (2:19).

III. Doing good to others must be done in the right way.

A. All such works must emanate from a pure heart. We must not do these things out of condescension. As Jacob taught, we must *truly “think of your brethren like unto yourselves*, and be free with your substance that they may be rich like unto you” (2:17).

B. Above all, we must never “afflict our neighbor and persecute him because of our pride” (Jacob 2:20).

C. The Lord reminds us that in His eyes every being “is as precious in His sight” as the other. For all had the same beginning: (all flesh is initially of the dust), and all have the same potential: (capable of obtaining Eternal Glory) (Jacob 2:21).

IV. **Latter-day Saints are greatly blessed to have safe and regular means to serve the needy through programs provided through The Church, on many levels.** We can do this personally through visiting teaching and home teaching as well as through quietly responding to others needs on our own. Through easily accessible donation slips we can help the needy through fast offerings. Through humanitarian donations **we can reach out to needy outside the Church and even outside our own culture --- to the poorest in other nations.**

A. The donations which members give through the Church go much further than regular charities due to little or no overhead costs and volunteer labor. We can feel confident, as well, that funds are not siphoned off through corruption.

I have been personally heartened by stories told by friends who have served Humanitarian missions in such places as China, Russia and Africa. Tom and Linda Brighton, who served in China, told of the dramatic changes in the lives of others because of wheel chairs the Church has distributed due to member donations. One crippled man, who had nothing, was able to become a shoe cobbler and support himself due to a wheel chair. A woman, who carried her ever growing daughter on her back to school, now could be relieved of that burden. And the daughter, while in school, could sit up properly and use workbooks in such a way as to make her time there far more valuable.

B. The March 11, 2012 *Church News* shares one of many, many lives touched by donations through the Church Perpetual Education Fund. Through Employment Services, a returned missionary in Uruguay was notified of and assisted in sending a resume for an internship in a New Zealand Farming System. There he learned management and important new technological techniques.

On his return to Uruguay, because of the Perpetual Education Fund, he attended school and graduated with a bachelor's degree in Farming and Dairy production. Due to his internship and his degree he was made a manager. The result was that he made four times more than he had previously made. He wrote, "The gospel has been a great help in my life. I used the Perpetual Education Fund for my education, and that is a great blessing. *It is certain that it is a plan from heaven.*" (Luis Alberto Fuques Munoz.) (emphasis added).

V. The sensitivity with which Jacob approaches the tragic consequences of infidelity is a testimony of the genuineness of these scriptures.

A. He felt heavily burdened about having to speak on a subject which he knew would wound those whom he sought to heal --- the victims of infidelity.

B. While he was "weighed down with anxiety for the welfare of their souls," and even "grieved" for his brethren due to the "wickedness of their hearts" --- he was even more grieved that he "must use so much boldness... before wives and children, many of whose feelings are exceedingly tender and chaste and delicate before God" (1 Jacob 2:6-7).

C. Nevertheless, he spoke by commandment of God.

VI. Perhaps there are no more heartrending scriptures than those in which Jacob grieves for those who suffer because of immorality.

A. "Ye have broken the hearts of your tender wives, and lost the confidence of your children, because of your bad examples before them; and the sobbings of their hearts ascend to God against you. And because of the strictness of the word of God, which cometh down against you, many hearts died, pierced with deep wounds" (Jacob 2:35). (Whoever wrote that had to have seen firsthand such emotional trauma, something which the young Joseph Smith had probably not seen).

B. In our day, the temptations and traps of immorality are greater than at any other time, even quietly seeping into our sacred homes through many different technological devices: T.V., gaming devices, cell phones, and computers. Thus we must all be eternally watchful and on guard.

While the traps of Satan have become ever more prevalent and sinister, and can quickly ensnare the young and unsuspecting into dark thoughts and acts, there is also growing knowledge and ability to help redeem those who have been so ensnared. While the processes are unfortunately very difficult, extremely time consuming, and painful, terrible addictions can be overcome with professional help and reliance upon the Atonement of Jesus Christ.

VII. Jacob taught the importance of making and reading sacred records (Ch. 4).

A. It is now well known that vast numbers of people lived in the western hemisphere at the same time as great civilizations in the eastern hemisphere.

B. Why is it so difficult to believe they made records of their history?

1. Jacob shows the Nephites understood the need for such records, and made them.

“...we labor diligently to engraven these words upon plates, hoping that our beloved brethren and our children **will receive them with thankful hearts**, and look upon them that they may learn with joy and not with sorrow, neither with contempt, concerning their first parents (Jacob 4:3).”

C. **The truth is, many records were left by the people on these continents, but modern men have mostly rejected them.**

a. In areas of Latin America, ancient records were burned by early Europeans, largely because they contained knowledge of things both Israelite and Christian, and thus must be frauds or even inspired by Satan.

b. In the United States, **over ten thousand** stone or copper plates containing records were found by multiple early settlers, buried in over thirty counties, mostly in Michigan. **All carried a symbol, written in Hebrew, which stood for the name of their God --- still used today: Yod He Vah [Jehovah].** Because they do not fit with the iron clad prejudices of modern scientists, these over ten thousand records are all termed “frauds.” Unfortunately, some Latter-day Saints accept this label, even though the full facts show it impossible for thousands of plates, found by many different people, in many different places, could have all been frauds. Elder Milton R. Hunter believed them to be genuine. **A major reason why they are called frauds is because they show knowledge of such things as the Creation, of the Flood, and even of Jesus Christ.**

VIII. Jacob’s sensitivity to truth surpasses understanding of almost all Christians today.

A. In Ch. 4:5, Jacob explains that the role playing sacrifice asked of Abraham of his son Isaac, was “a similitude of God and his Only Begotten Son.”

1. Its critics slam the Book of Mormon for every kind of imagined fault. And yet here, nestled in this verse, is a precious jewel --- an understanding of why a great and good God would ask one of his prophets to go through the motions of sacrificing his most precious son.

And we learn the marvelous truth: it was to bear witness of the terrible sacrifice He Himself, Jehovah, would make. He, God’s Only Begotten Son, would offer Himself as sacrifice, in order that all of God’s children could be saved from the disastrous powers of death and hell.

IX. On July 24, 1829, the “Wayne Sentinel” said the following:

“ABORIGINES: In relation to the civilized people who once inhabited this country, relics of whom have been found all over our country, and whose fate remains involved in mystery and obscurity, probably nothing definite will ever be known. There appears to be a gap in the history of the world, so far as relates to them, which can never be filled up.”

Willard Bean, an early researcher in Palmyra concerning the Northeastern Native Americans, noted that “One month and one day, after the above article appeared in the Wayne Sentinel, a contract was signed with E.B. Grandin... to print the first edition of the Book of Mormon” the history of these people. The Lord knew them, and He guided them to write a record of their history. We need only to accept it and to believe.