

Book of Mormon 15
Eternally Indebted to Your Father in Heaven
(Mosiah 1-3)
By Lenet Hadley Read

(This material helps to understand both the setting and purpose of King Benjamin's speech).

I. The Nephites kept the Law of Moses, (Mosiah 2:3) **and certain Holy Days were a part of the Mosaic Law.**

- A. The Feast of Tabernacles was the end of the harvest festival when new kings were crowned.
- B. Thus Mosiah's proclamation as king most likely occurred on their Feast of Tabernacles.
- C. Israel crowned their earthly kings at this Feast because it pointed to the time when Messiah will be crowned as King in the Millennium.

1. Israel's sacrifice of seventy bullocks at this feast, was a witness of that future event.

a. Alfred Edersheim said, "Indeed, the whole symbolism of the Feast [of Tabernacles] ... pointed to the future. The rabbis themselves admitted this. The strange number of sacrificial bullocks, seventy in all --- they regarded as referring to 'the seventy nations' of heathendom." (*The Life and Times of Jesus the Messiah*, p. 577).

1. That is, the seventy bullocks bore witness that the kings of all nations, and their subjects, will someday bow down and worship the Messiah as King.

b. Zechariah also taught that in the Millennium people will come from all nations to celebrate this feast (Zechariah 14:9, 16-17). **The major purpose of their coming will be to acknowledge Jesus Christ as King over all the earth and to worship Him.** More than that, there are scriptural references to seventy kings who lose their power, signifying that Jesus will **be the King of all Kings** --- ruling over all other kings of earth.

II. During this feast, ancient Israel dwelled under booths covered with tree boughs.

- A. This was to remind them of the shelter the Lord had provided them while in the wilderness.
- B. Note the Nephites also sat in shelters (tents) surrounding their King. They kept them open and pointed towards the temple and King Benjamin (Mosiah 2:6).
- C. The **dwelling in shelters at this feast also pointed to the Millennium.** The shelters witness that in the Millennium **we will dwell in the glorious presence of Christ.** "**Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men, and he will dwell with them**" (Revelation 21:3). Thus the Feast is called "tabernacles."

III. King Benjamin stressed the qualities of a righteous king in his speech, pointing out that the True Righteous King would be Jesus the Christ.

- A. King Benjamin understood that the Mosaic Law pointed to Jesus the Christ.
 - 1. "And many signs, and wonders, and types, and shadows showed he unto [ancient Israel] concerning [Christ's] coming" (3:15).
- B. His statements implied he saw his own kingship as pointing to the Ultimate King.
 - 1. **"I sought to exemplify your far more righteous Heavenly King" (2:19).**
- C. He pointed out the ways he had tried to exemplify this true righteous leadership.
 - "I was chosen to serve you with all my might, mind and strength" (2:11).
 - "I never sought gold or riches" (2:12).
 - "I ruled with righteousness and taught you righteousness" (2:13).
 - "I labored with my own hands; I did not laden you with grievous taxes" (2:14).

“When ye are in service of men, ye are only in service of God” (2:17).

D. And in humility he said, “Though King, I am no better than you” (2:6).

IV. Both Biblical and Book of Mormon kings served as “types” of Jesus Christ -- the future King of Kings.

A. Melchizedek was a type of Him. His very name, “King of Righteousness” is recognized as one of the many title-names of the Savior.

B. Melchizedek also foreshadowed Him in his role. Melchizedek possessed the combination of Kingship and Priesthood united in the Savior. It is said, “... the Melchizedek Priesthood [should] not simply be defined to mean the holy priesthood, but would appear to intrinsically mean, by translation, **the power and authority of the great King of Righteousness**, Jesus Christ.”(Gib Kocherhans, “The Name Melchizedek: Some Thoughts on its Meaning and the Priesthood it Represents,” *The Ensign*, September 1980, p. 16).

1. King Benjamin was not only king, but also a “holy man” (Words of Mormon v. 17).

C. Melchizedek was “King of Salem,” (Gen. 14:18. Salem meaning “Peace”), and thus foreshadowed Jesus the Christ as the “King of *Jerusalem*” (meaning “City of Peace”).

D. David was also a type of Christ --- as the **King who united all of Israel under one ruler**.

1. Elder Bruce R. McConkie wrote, “David... mighty, mighty David the one king above all others to whom ancient Israel for a thousand long years looked as a symbol of Israelite triumph and glory... [was a] similitude for the very Messiah himself” (*Millennial Messiah*, p. 602).

2. Note that Benjamin also brought peace to the people in his time (Words of Mormon v. 17-18) **just as Jesus the Christ will establish peace among all men in the Millennium**.

E. It is obvious that King Benjamin did fulfill his role as another “type” of Jesus Christ.

V. King Benjamin joyfully proclaimed to the people the imminent coming of their True and Righteous Eternal King, using imagery of the Feast of Tabernacles.

A. “For behold, the time cometh, and is not far distant, that with power, the Lord Omnipotent who reigneth, who was, and is from all eternity, shall come down from heaven among the children of men, and shall **dwell in a tabernacle** of clay...” (Mosiah 3:5).

B. While Jesus was rejected and crucified in Judea, when He came to the Americas He came in great glory --- just as He will in the Millennium. He did reign and dwell among them for a period of time, just as He will remain and dwell for a thousand years at His return at the Last Days.

C. As we live now in these last days, should we not often reflect with joy upon the imminent final coming of “the Lord Omnipotent” “who was, and is from all eternity” who has promised to come to us and Reign!

VI. King Benjamin continually sought to point everyone’s minds to the True King: **“If I whom ye call your king ... do merit any thanks from you, O how you ought to thank your heavenly King”** (Mosiah 2:19).

A. Then King Benjamin teaches a marvelous principle.

1. Even if we give that King all our thanks, and serve Him with all our hearts, mind and might, we are then further blessed. **Thus no amount of thanks and no amount of service can make us anything more than still unprofitable servants to God** (Mosiah 2:20-26).

B. King Benjamin taught that due to our great indebtedness to our Lord and King, we should “render unto him all that we have and are” (2:34).

C. An elderly woman whom Elder Enzo Busche met with on a regular basis served as a remarkable example of this part of King Benjamin's teaching. For her life showed she fully understood total indebtedness to the Lord.

She made annual visits to see him, and he always took time for her. The major purpose for her visits was to bring \$1500 each year to donate to missionary work --- specifically to Native American missionaries whom she felt would not have the resources to serve. She had tried to give it to her bishop, but he refused it, feeling she could not afford it. Elder Busche was also hesitant to accept it, but she said if he did not accept it she would just give it to people on the streets. So he did as she asked. He learned that the only way she obtained that sum of money was by going completely without utilities, even in the winter. And she lived in very cold Salt Lake City. Instead of heat, she wore layers of heavy clothing. Nor did she cook her food but always ate it raw. However, she made all these sacrifices and counted them as "nothing," because **of her deep feeling of how indebted she and we all are to Jesus Christ for His atoning sacrifice.** (Enzo Busche, *Yearning for the Living God*, pp. 187-189).

Her amazing sense of this indebtedness, causing her to make such heavy personal sacrifice, is an example of sacrifice at least equal to that of the widow's mite.

VII. King Benjamin and others taught how Jesus Christ's rule will be.

A. The very last words of David are a reflection of how the great King of Kings will rule. "...He that ruleth over men must be just, ruling in the fear of God. And he shall be as the light of the morning, when the sun riseth, even a morning without clouds; **as the tender grass springing out of the earth by clear shining after rain**" (2 Samuel 23:3-4).

1. This teaches that Christ's rule will be one of justice and wisdom, and that **His leadership over men sprang from His own great work of Atonement and Resurrection.**

B. King Benjamin similarly taught how Christ would rule through these principles.

1. He taught how the True King of Righteousness did not come to rule with force, but first would "suffer temptations, and pain of body, hunger, thirst, and fatigue, even more than man can suffer, except it be unto death" (Mosiah 3:7).

2. He taught that Jesus the Christ would win His rulership over men because "his blood atoneth for the sins of those who have fallen by the transgressions of Adam" (v. 11).

3. And that "everyone who should believe that Christ should come, the same might receive remission of their sins, and rejoice with exceedingly great joy" (v. 13).

4. He taught the True King of Righteousness would judge with genuine justice for all, for "his judgment is just; and [even] **the infant perisheth not that dieth in his infancy**" (v. 17).

5. He taught that Jesus set this example so that similarly we might work to "become as a child, submissive, meek, humble, patient, full of love, willing to submit to all things which the Lord seeth fit to inflict upon him, even as a child doth submit to his father" (Mosiah 3:19).

VIII. Understanding the righteous principles of governing should guide us in choosing leaders.

A. During Hitler's rise to power, Dietrich Bonhoeffer, a minister, tried in vain to warn the people that they should seek men who would lead with humility, for he recognized in Hitler a lust for power and an inclination to rule with force. In contrast, Hitler and his group openly mocked the meek as "weak."

The failure to choose wisely brought terrible consequences upon the whole world.