

Book of Mormon 34
How Could You Have Forgotten Your God?
(Helaman 6-12)
By Lenet Hadley Read

(Here is inspirational background **and physical evidence supporting the Book of Mormon**)

I. It is easy to understand why Nephi felt great sorrow at his people's return to wickedness so soon after a time of great peace and blessing (Helaman 7:6-20).

A. Indeed it is hard to comprehend why men let go their grasp of *all God has promised us and all He has done to bring us to Him!*

B. From the beginning and through centuries, the coming of Jesus Christ and all the blessings He would bring was continually prophesied.

1. "almost all of our fathers, even down to this time, ... have testified of the coming of Christ, and have looked forward, **and have rejoiced in his day which is to come**" (Helaman 8:22).

C. Because the Nephites have been so recently delivered and blessed but had quickly returned to evil Nephi mourns, "O, **how could you have forgotten your God in the very day that he has delivered you?**" (Helaman 7:20).

D. Nephi struggles to see how any clear minded people would reject all the enormous blessings of a good and loving God for the dire consequences of following an evil destroyer.

1. "Yea, how could you have given way to the enticing of him who is seeking **to hurl away your souls down to everlasting misery and endless wo?**" (Helaman 7:16).

II. One truth the Book of Mormon makes clear is that this love of the Lord extends **to all men**.

A. Those who are at first "chosen," **are "chosen" to take the Gospel to all others**, as Nephi has been doing.

B. And often those who are humbled because of initial circumstances, [the Lamanites in these chapters] being a minority or of lesser financial means, are the most receptive to the truth.

C. On the other hand, those who have initially received the Gospel blessings [such as the Nephites] come to think too much of themselves, failing to acknowledge their indebtedness to God for all they have. **Their pride causes them to lose all those things that are the most precious.**

B. Paul warned the Gentiles of this in Romans 11:20-21: "Be not highminded, but fear; for if God spared not the natural branches [the Israelites], take heed lest he also spare not thee."

III. Here the Lamanites become the more righteous, which may have a parallel in our days.

A. I and my fellow missionaries in Ireland [2003-2005] soon learned that it was always those of African descent who would open their doors to anyone representing Jesus Christ, while those naturally born in that land had no interest in religion, seldom attending their own church.

B. One of those Africans who listened was nevertheless troubled when the Book of Mormon described dark skin as a curse (2 Nephi 5:21). Obviously, he was offended.

I suggested he **read the whole Book of Mormon**. I told him he would find that there was a great change in the righteousness of the various groups, that those with darker skins actually became the most righteous **and the most blessed** at times (See Helaman 6:1-6).

This satisfied him. He and his family were baptized and brought others into the church.

C. Jeff Chatman, a black man, was recruited to play basketball at BYU. At first he was hesitant because much of what he had heard about the Mormons was negative. But after visiting the campus he had a strong positive feeling, and did play for BYU in the mid 1980's. He also

met the missionaries. He came to know the Church was true but hesitated to join because he did not want to disappoint his parents. When he finally joined he could not bear to tell them because he knew they would feel he had betrayed them. However, in time, their opposition faded.

Chatman hoped people would learn from his conversion of the “universal power of the gospel of Jesus Christ.” “The gospel is not for one particular race, color or nationality. It doesn’t matter if you are rich or poor.... The gospel is for everybody.”

D. Today the church is growing fastest in Africa. And its retention of converts is highest in the Church.

IV. Nephi’s grief that his people had forgotten their God was genuine and deep (Hel. 7:7-29).

A. He prayed for them in heartrending sorrow **upon his tower**.

B. Surely the hand of the Lord was involved when many heard him and gathered others so that a multitude overheard this sincere grief concerning their sins (Hel 7:11-29).

[While Book of Mormon readers may imagine a tower of wood, there is another likelihood.

Throughout the Eastern half of the United States there still remains many ancient singular towers built of earth. Most were once 70 feet in height. They support the Book of Mormon].

(1). My family and I experimented and learned that **you can hear perfectly from a significant distance when someone is speaking from the tower, even if they are not raising their voices.**



Drawn by Henry Howe in 1846.

THE MOUND AT MARIETTA.

(2). They likely also doubled as watchtowers. When Squier and Davis surveyed them in the late 1800’s, they felt that some of them served as towers for warning.

(3). Note that both King Noah and Limhi saw Lamanite armies approaching while they were upon their Nephite “towers” (Mosiah 19:5-7; Mosiah 20:8).

C. It seems likely that Nephi went up on one of these towers, like going to the top of a mountain to be closer to His God, to pour out his heart in agony for his people.

V. Nephi had been shocked to see how quickly many who had been righteous turned back to sin.

A. “Now this great iniquity had come upon the Nephites, in the space of not many years” (Helaman 7:5)

B. He recognizes the basic source of the change in righteousness was due to pride.

1. “Man is false, unsteady of heart” (12:1); he is “quick to be lifted up in pride; yea, how quick to boast, and do all manner of that which is iniquity” (Helaman 12:5).

VI. Great blessings await those who remain humble and serve the Lord with “unwearyingness.”

A. Nephi was among such: “Blessed art thou, Nephi, for those things which thou has done; for I have beheld how thou hast with unwearyingness declared the word, which I have given unto thee... and thou hast not feared them, and hast not sought thine own life, but hast sought my will, and to keep my commandments” (Helaman 10:4).

B. God reveals to Nephi those marvelous blessings promised with sureness to the righteous:

“Because thou has done this with such unwearyingness, behold, **I will bless thee forever**; and **I will make thee mighty in word and in deed**, in faith and in works; yea, even that **all things shall be done unto thee according to thy word**, for thou shalt not ask that which is contrary to my will.

C. Nephi was especially blessed when the Lord gave the sealing powers (Helaman 10:6-10).

1. **We should recognize that He was bestowing upon Nephi His own Godly powers!**

2. And we should note the irony that those who rejected God and had become caught up in wickedness did so out of their **lust for power! Here Nephi received that very thing, Power, in far greater portions, and for all Eternity, by humbly seeking the will of God and by being obedient!**

D. But we should know we do not have to be called to prestigious leadership position to follow a similar path of serving the Lord with unwearyingness, and being blessed accordingly.

VII. These chapters contain powerful witness of the greatness and goodness of God as opposed to the **nothingness and instability of mankind**.

A. Man is very foolish. Just at the very time when “[God] doth prosper his people;... sparing their lives;..... yea, and in fine, doing all things for the welfare and happiness of his people; yea, then is the time that they do harden their hearts, and do forget the Lord their God, and **do trample under their feet the Holy One**” (Helaman 12:2).

B. Nephi goes to great lengths to testify that all other of God’s creations move immediately at the command of God.

1. * the dust of the earth (v. 7-8); * the hills and the mountains (v. 9); * the whole earth itself (vs. 11-15); * the waters of the great deep (v. 16).

C. But while **all other of God’s creations move immediately at His command --- Man is slow to obey**.

1. “And thus we see that except the Lord doth chasten his people with many afflictions, yea, except he doth visit them with death and with terror, and with famine and with all manner of pestilence, they will not remember him” (Helaman 12:3).

VIII. We also now live in a time of great turmoil. There are many dangers, pestilence and worries. Surely they too have the same purposes --- **to stir us up into remembrance of our God**. Let us pray they will have that effect.