

Book of Mormon 36
On the Morrow Come I into the World
(3 Nephi 1-7)
By Lenet Hadley Read

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

I. We should be extremely grateful that events of Christ's first coming to the American continents were recorded. Those events carry patterns for our days.

A. The faithful watched for signs of those highly significant events.

1. **Do we have the faith today to believe that Christ will return? Do we believe enough to be watching for the signs?**

B. It is extremely important to not be distracted by less important things. **It is better to be prepared and not have him come yet, than to have Him come, and not be prepared.**

C. However, it is also important we go forward with our lives, serving the Lord with all our might, and not stopping to wait and watch.

D. We also learn that the faithful who watch for the signs may be mocked by the unbelieving.

1. "And they began to rejoice over their brethren saying: Behold the time is past, and the words of Samuel are not fulfilled; therefore, your joy and your faith concerning this thing hath been vain" (3 Nephi 1:6).

II. In preparing for Christ's Second Coming, would it not be valuable to keep our own records?

A. I am grateful not only for the apostles and prophets who recorded very sacred events of the past, but also for the common members who recorded the impact of those events upon their everyday lives, such as the hardships they experienced.

B. President Spencer W. Kimball spoke often of the importance of keeping journals. I personally feel it is even more important today.

1. As events pertaining to the Second Coming of Christ grow ever closer, would it not be advisable for faithful Latter-day Saints to record their experiences of these very great events? Among all the sacred works of Jesus Christ, surely His Second Coming will be the greatest. While official records will undoubtedly be made, there will be a very great value in seeing that event from the perspectives of multiple individuals who are blessed to live through it.

We should begin recording before the event and make it habitual, that all might see what transpires in the lives of the people both "before" and "after" this Eternally consequential event.

III. Nephi's prayer for the people suffering for their faith is very moving.

A. We know that the Spirit guided him to make this prayer.

B. "... he went out and bowed himself down upon the earth, and cried mightily to his God in behalf of his people, yea, those who were about to be destroyed because of their faith in the tradition of their fathers. And it came to pass that he cried mightily unto the Lord all that day..." (3 Nephi 1:11-12).

C. The answer the Lord gives to Nephi, found in 3 Nephi 1:13, is very exciting.

D. During one of the times I was reading the Book of Mormon, I happened to be reading this same passage on the very night many believe Jesus was born. It was especially moving to place myself into that night and to feel how Nephi must have felt to hear those words: "Be of good

cheer. The time is at hand. On the morrow come I into the World." Even today I remember how thrilling it was to feel more personally in tune with what Nephi actually experienced.

E. The Lord was coming! And he was coming "to fulfill all things which I have made known unto the children of men from the foundation of the world" (3 Nephi 1:14). I also thought of how all the prophets who had foretold in some way the future coming of Jesus Christ must have rejoiced at seeing their prophecies finally being fulfilled.

III. When the sign finally came and no night appeared, many suddenly became believers.

A. "And they began to know that the Son of God must shortly appear; yea, in fine, all the people upon the face of the whole earth from the west to the east, both in the land north and in the land south, were so exceedingly astonished that they fell to the earth" (3 Nephi 1:1).

B. **Note that from the time of this sign of the birth of Christ, the Nephites began to calculate their time anew, as did the Christians in the Old World (3 Nephi 2:8).**

IV. Yet, after the signs ended, how shocking it is that many quickly returned to their doubting ways.

A. Lying and deceiving began again among the people (3 Nephi 1: 22).

B. In a very short time, men began again to fall away (3 Nephi 1:27-30).

C. We see that too many are capable of stifling the spiritual witnesses they receive, no matter how miraculous they are.

V. Note that **within ten years** the wickedness was so great that the Gadianton leader was in a position to demand the surrender of the Nephites (3 Nephi 3:3-8).

A. The Nephites cried to God for strength (3 Nephi 3:12).

B. The Nephites left their homes and cities and gathered into one central area for united protection (3 Nephi 3:21).

C. The Nephites refused to attack first, seeking only to defend themselves (3 Nephi 3:3:21).

D. **After gathering into a central, highly protected place,*** the Nephites repented of all their sins and sent up prayers to God "that he would deliver them" (3 Nephi 3:25).

E. **Removing to a fortified central place and taking numerous provisions for themselves, leaving the robbers nothing to feed their hunger, the Nephites could deal with the robbers from a position of strength (3 Nephi 4:1-4).**

1. Brigham Young used a similar tactic when Johnson's Army approached the Salt Lake Valley. They burned the wooden buildings at Fort Bridger which stalled the army for a winter. They moved thirty thousand people south from Salt Lake City, taking twenty thousand bushels of grain, along with machinery, equipment, etc. They left men with instructions to set fire to homes if the army tried to occupy them. They buried the temple foundations so that it looked like only a plowed field. It is believed their actions helped prevent a war. (James B. Allen and Glen M. Leonard, *The Story of the Latter-day Saints*, p. 308).

F. The Nephites are given the strength to defend themselves when actual battle comes (3 Nephi 4:11-14).

G. When finally victorious, they acknowledge it was only with God's help that they did overcome (3 Nephi 4:29-33).

VI. The faithful Nephites never doubted the words of the prophets.

A. They knew Christ would come due to the sign given (3 Nephi 5:1-2).

B. In time, they returned to their own lands in peace (3 Nephi 6:1-2).

VII. Unfortunately, in time, new divisions arose to the point the people divided into tribes.

A. People began again to desire riches and/or power above goodness (3 Nephi 6:10-18).

B. The government collapsed due to murder of the chief judge, and regulations of government were destroyed (3 Ne. 7:1-2).

C. The prophets were again stoned and cast out (3 Nephi 7:14).

D. In spite of chaos, Nephi continued to preach repentance and faith in Christ (3 Nephi 7:16).

E. Due to his diligence he was ministered to by angels, raised his brother from the dead, and blessed many with truth (3 Nephi 7:18-26).

VIII. What can we learn from these events which will most help us in our times?

A. Some misunderstand and think seeking for signs is wrong. But **we should actually know and watch for the signs.**

1. It is said, "Signs flow from faith and, indeed, are a product of it. They strengthen the faithful but produce faith only in the spiritually responsive. **Their chief purpose therefore is not to produce faith but to reward it.**" (Book of Mormon Student Manual, p. 113). (Emphasis added).

B. Avoid personal pride; feel and express pride only in the works of God and Christ.

C. Cry to God for strength.

D. Do not attack, but only defend.

"We will not go against them, but we will wait till they shall come against us" (3:21); This agrees with the law of God, "they should not go out unto battle against any nation, kindred, tongue, or people, save I, the Lord, commanded them" (D&C 98:33).

E. Set up your defenses in the center --- that is through a central reliance upon Jesus Christ.

F. Do not doubt the prophets and do not stone the prophets.

G. We can all be like Mormon and keep records, by which all truth may eventually be revealed (3 Nephi 6:8-26).

H. Through those records and in other ways, we too can boldly testify of Christ.

I. Be of Good Cheer. Remember the words of Christ, "I Come!" He truly will come again.

* There are evidences in North America to support an age-old "Central Place of Defense."

Archaeologists say the greatest concentration of Moundbuilder sites are found in an area which is spread across the middle Midwestern states (particularly southern Ohio). **The largest number of defensive sites are also in this same area.** Places of defense established by the Moundbuilders included ways to store large quantities of water. In some cases their defensive sites held so many people they left the ground compacted to the point that even today it will not grow crops. One alone has been declared as able to hold 60,000 persons. There are few artifacts found in these sites, indicating a temporary dwelling only.

Among all these defensive ruins is an area which matches a "Central place of defense" where there are remains of great stone fortifications. The southern tip of Illinois is surrounded on all three sides by rivers, thus giving it protection from swift waters on three sides. Across the land itself there are the remains of 41 hilltop fortifications, side by side, and reaching from sea to sea. On the north side of these forts there are sheer cliff walls, reaching to considerable heights, giving it protection from the north.

While it is not proven that this site definitely was the Nephites' "central place of defense," it does show that such places as described in the Book of Mormon are realities and did exist.