

Book of Mormon 39
Behold, My Joy Is Full
(3 Nephi 17-19)
By Lenet Hadley Read

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

I. While the Nephites knew joy at the coming of Jesus the Christ, He taught them how to magnify that joy.

A. Jesus told them how to understand His teachings to experience greater joy in His Word (3 Nephi 17: 2)

1. **Ponder the teachings in your hearts. The spirit will then help you understand (v. 3).**

B. He also taught: Ask the Father in my name for help, and prepare your hearts prior to hearing the word. This will help open your minds to receive my word in clarity (v.4).

1. When Christ returns, those who will be able to understand His word will be those who have searched them in the scriptures now. **And it all begins with a sincere desire to understand.**

2 Search them for what they teach about each other. The spirit then is able to bear stronger witness that all the scriptures truly are “one” in their messages.

II. We learn from 3 Nephi the greater depth of true Joy.

A. The Nephites found greater depth in worshipping Him, in being healed by Him, and in hearing the prayers He uttered to His Father in their behalf.

1. "the things which he prayed cannot be written... **The eye hath never seen, neither hath the ear heard... so great and marvelous things as we saw and heard Jesus speak unto the Father;** And no tongue can speak, neither can there be written by any man, neither can the hearts of men conceive so great and marvelous things as we both saw and heard Jesus speak; and no one can conceive of the joy which filled our souls at the time we heard him pray for us unto the Father" (3 Ne. 17:16-17).

B. In fact, **so great was the joy of the multitude they were physically overcome** (v. 18).

1. What could cause such a deep reaction? As said, we in our mortal state cannot fully comprehend it. But surely it began with hearing Jesus speak so personally to God the Father, and with such love for Him and for them. While they had now seen the risen Christ, God the Father was still beyond the veil. **But hearing the Savior speak to Him so earnestly must have created in them the overwhelming truth that He is also Real. And that He was their Father too. Now they knew with surety He existed. For Christ prayed to Him with absolute knowledge.**

2. There also must have been choice new knowledge imparted, beyond their imagination.

III. **Jesus also experienced great joy.** His joy came from at last finding deep faith among His people. "Blessed are ye because of your faith. And now behold, my joy is full" (3 Nephi 17:20).

A. Most missionaries have experienced the joy of seeing someone repent and come into the waters of baptism, receiving the Holy Ghost and setting their feet on a path toward Eternal Life.

B As explained, no one can really express or explain this joy. We can only testify it is among the greatest joys we have ever known. But it helps us partially understand what great Joy the

Savior must have had to see all those faithful who had now come unto Him and who were now ready to receive the fullness of His blessings.

C. Of course, His joy was greater, because they could be redeemed now because of His Sacrifice and His Atonement. He had been totally involved in their salvation.

IV. Previously we pointed out a modern parallel to the destructions shown in the Book of Mormon. But there was a **similar repentance, bringing joy, after those destructions.**

A. In the winter of 1811/1812, in that general area Joseph Smith called "the plains of the Nephites," significant earthquakes occurred. Of course, Christ did not appear. But the **earthquakes brought repentance to many of those living in those lands.**

B. In the early 1800's, before the Restoration of Christ's true church, a young minister in Jackson, Missouri, had desired to bring to Christ those blind to His beautiful truths.

Most people very unresponsive. The Sabbath Day to them was a time for gambling, drinking, and unholy practices. His attempts to invite them to church brought obscenities and even threats.

The minister became very discouraged. On Sunday, December 8, 1811, he read for his sermon from the 18th Psalm. David's prayer reflected his own heart. For David cried: "The sorrows of death compassed me, and the floods of ungodly men made me afraid. ... In my distress I called upon the Lord..... my cry came before him... Then the earth shook and trembled; the foundations also of the hills moved and were shaken, because he was wroth" (See also II Samuel 27).

What happened next was amazing, which the minister recorded in his autobiography.

"The next Sunday night... notable earthquakes ...produced ... eruptions on the Mississippi River... and ... rent the earth with deep chasms in many parts of southern Missouri. Even where I lived, large trees were broken down, fences and brick buildings were prostrated... A frightening darkness lasted for three days, intermixed with more hard earthquake aftershocks. Many felt the world was being destroyed as prophesied in the scriptures."

The minister felt this earthquake was an act of God. And indeed, the following Sunday he saw "crowds of strangers from different settlements." They were "thronging every trace and path. Solemnity, deep as death, was depicted on most of the countenances, **while joy and comfort sat with a heavenly smile and serene peace on the lips and brows of the saints.**" So great were the multitudes who suddenly felt the need to come and learn God's word, that the minister was forced to hold his meeting outside the building, even though it was winter.

Within a year's time the minister **baptized four to five hundred persons.** These terrible earthquakes, like those in The Book of Mormon, had caused people to realize that death is real, and that he who is wise will seek the Lord. (Dr. David Steward and Dr. Ray Knox, *The Earthquake America Forgot*, Gutenberg-Richter Publications, 1995, pp. 245-247).

C. There will be more important parallels in our future: it will be those which accompany **Christ's Return.** It too will bring **destruction by earthquake, repentance, and then Joy.**

V. The ministering to the children brought especially great joy (3 Ne. 17:21-25).

A. Children are precious and beloved. And to see them ministered to, lovingly, by angels, could only have caused deep swelling of the heart (19:11-13). I sense this scene could have been even more moving **if the angels were deceased ancestors,** who would have already felt special love and affection for the children, which they could now demonstrate in a physical way [As in *The Cokeville Miracle*].

VI. Baptism was the next vital step, which led to more joy, as the baptizees felt cleansed.

A. The joy of baptism also has a parallel in the earthquakes of 1811/12, which included a black slave who desired to join those being baptized. His experience gives insight on its blessing.

B. Unfortunately, his master was an avowed atheist and would not allow him to be baptized. He was also a judge and threatened legal action if the minister baptized his slave. "I forbid you to lay hands on my property and put it in the water. You will be liable under the law if you do."

But the slave was so desirous to be baptized he appeared at a Sunday worship service with an extra set of clothes in hand and begged, in front of the entire congregation, for baptism.

When asked if his master had agreed, He replied 'No.' When asked how he dared disobey his master, he said: "Got two masters, sir. One is greater than the other. My great Master says to me 'be baptized.' But my other master says, 'you shall not be baptized.' And I wish to obey my greatest Master and also to obey Master Green in all things when his commands do not forbid the commands of my greater Master."

Though reminded he was likely to be whipped for being baptized, Dick replied he feared only "him that can destroy both soul and body in hell."

The minister baptized the slave. Everyone feared what would happen next.

Some time passed with nothing occurring. One evening the judge began to praise this slave at the dinner table. His wife and daughters knew of the baptism. One of his daughters took courage and dared to say, "Father, we can tell you what has made Dick so much better of late."

She told him it was because he had been baptized, and *precisely* because he had been baptized, and that "Dick seemed so happy when they all gave him their hand and called him brother."

"Well, said the judge, "I wish to God he would baptize all my Negroes if it would make them all as good as Dick."

Thus the faith of one meek, child-like slave touched the hearts and lives of many through his great desire to be baptized. In humility he found the way to serve both of his masters. (Dr. David Stewart and Dr. Ray Knox, *The Earthquake America Forgot*, pp. 249).

B. This story is very touching and shows that baptism is worth every sacrifice.

C. It should also make us realize **the even greater joys we should feel at being baptized through true priesthood authority into God's true Kingdom, since come.**

VII. We can find greater joys in this life when we understand the ordinances we participate in:

A. Jesus taught **the joy that comes from truly understanding the sacredness of the sacrament** (Ch. 18) Jesus oversaw the ministration of the sacrament and taught about its sacredness in relation to His body and His blood.

B. He also showed the joy that can come through the Holy Ghost (Ch. 19). He set in motion the processes by which the Holy Ghost was received, great joys coming in its manifestation. "And his countenance did smile upon them, and the light of his countenance did shine upon them, **and behold they were as white as the countenance and also the garments of Jesus;** and behold the whiteness thereof did exceed all the whiteness..." (3 Ne. 19:25). (Emphasis added)

VIII. While it was Jesus' presence among the Nephites that brought Him and them the greatest joy, He has left us with ways we can continue to find greater essence of joy in this life: through truly comprehending His word, through more earnest prayer, **and through participating worthily and with greater understanding in His sacred ordinances. In doing so we will receive the presence of the Holy Ghost which will make our joy as full as mortally possible.**