

Ir-BoM-8
O How Great the Goodness of Our God
(2 Nephi 6-10)
By Lenet Hadley Read

(The Lord comforts the Nephites after again leaving all, and fleeing to a new wilderness)

I. Nephi and Jacob use the Brass Plates to comfort the Nephites after fleeing for their lives.

A. The Brass Plates show God has watched over the righteous throughout history, and they promise great blessings to Israel in the future, even though most of the Israelites have just been taken from Jerusalem and scattered, and they themselves have had to flee their first inheritance.

B. What should have comforted the Nephites was that they were included in these precious prophecies. **They were of Israel. And it would be themselves who would leave the standard [the Book of Mormon records] which would be lifted up in the last days to re-gather their people.**

C. And many of their descendants, due to these records, would return to worship their Savior.

II. Jacob also reads Isaiah 51 while in the new wilderness. **This scripture also had a very personal connection to them.**

1. **God promised to make their wilderness like a Garden of Eden** (2 Ne. 8:3).

2. Joseph Smith identified the center of North America as the place of **the original Garden of Eden.**

3. It is still believed by many, that the original land of promise for the Nephites was North America.

a. **Some latter-day Saints believe the area into which Nephi and his people moved was the wilderness in the heartland of America, near the ancient Garden of Eden.** (And they present strong evidences supporting this idea).

b. When Joseph Smith visited the center of North America near Adam-ondi-Ahman, he found an ancient Nephite altar.

c. When was it used by the Nephites? It could have been somewhere near this very time in the Book of Mormon.

4. Isaiah taught God will eventually send forth His law and His judgments from the new Zion. It would have been comforting to the Nephites, if some of them at least, visited this area, with these ancient promises of God in mind (v. 4-5).

III. Jacob reads more prophecies to comfort the Nephites

A. Nephi and followers had just fled from death threats from his brothers.

B. Isaiah's words were comforting in that they reminded the righteous need not fear the reproaches of men (2 Nephi 8:7).

C. Isaiah's words gave comfort as they revealed God's promise to bless Israel in the last days, which blessings would fall upon **Lehi's descendants** (Ch. 8, verses 8-15).

D. Larry Echo Hawk, a member of the church who comes from the Pawnee people, has shared this very important aspect of his life. He said he once heard President Spencer W.

Kimball talk about a dream he had about the Native American people. He said, “I saw you as lawyers. I saw you looking after your people. I saw you as heads of cities and of states and in elected office.” Echo Hawk said it was like a challenge to him from a prophet of God. He carried an excerpt from that talk in his scriptures. He became a lawyer and law professor at Brigham Young University. When he considered running for office, he knew he could and should do it. As a result he was elected Attorney General of the State of Idaho. He then served as the Assistant Secretary for Indian Affairs in the United States Department of the Interior until called to the office of Seventy. He has fulfilled single handedly every part of President Kimball’s dream. But surely he is just a forerunner of many others who will follow. God’s promises are true for *all* of Manasseh’s descendants, whether living in Latin or South America or North America. All the descendants of Lehi have wonderful futures ahead of them if they will truly accept the Gospel and let it work to bless their lives.

III. God’s words that He had “covered thee in the shadow of mine hand” that I may “plant the heavens” were highly comforting and very meaningful!

A. The Nephites at that very time were under God’s *protective shadow*. (They were being guided and protected by God, yet they were in God’s shadow because the Old World did not know they existed).

B. They would leave their record which would come forth through a prophet in the Last Days. In turn this record would lead to the restoration of God’s covenants. This included the reestablishment of Eternal Marriages.

C. It is through Eternal Marriages that God will accomplish a “planting of the heavens.”

IV. Also of high importance: God reveals that Israel will be redeemed specifically because of two sons (2 Nephi 8:17-25).

A. Though unnamed they were **Judah and Joseph**.

1. From Judah would come the Christ Himself, and the Bible.

2. From Joseph would come another witness of Jesus the Christ --- the Book of Mormon (2 Nephi 8:17-20).

B. The scriptures coming from these two sons, together, will help Jesus to redeem Israel.

V. Knowing Jesus will redeem through an “infinite atonement” (2 Ne 9:7) comforts.

A. Tad R. Callister, General SS President, lists eight ways Atonement is “Infinite.”

1. It is infinite due to the divinity of Jesus Christ.

2. It is infinite in its power.

3. It is infinite in time, reaching into the past and into the future.

4. It is infinite in coverage or comprehensiveness.

5. It is infinite in its depth both in “whom it covers and what it covers.”

6. It is infinite in the degree of suffering endured by the Redeemer.

7. It is infinite in love, for Christ’s love is undiminished in every way.

8. It is infinite in the blessings it bestows.

(For further explanation see Tad R. Callister, *The Infinite Atonement*)

VI. Being “good” is not enough. To inherit the greatest blessings, one must be willing to bear, like Christ, the “shame” and “crosses” of the world.

A. “Behold, the righteous, the saints of the Holy One or Israel, they who have believed in the Holy One of Israel, they who have endured the crosses of the world, and despised the shame of it, they shall inherit the kingdom of God, which was prepared for them from the foundations of the world” (2 Ne 9:18).

B. It was surely another “cross” to flee again into a wilderness, leaving their First Inheritance which they had labored hard to build. It had to be another “cross” to be estranged from members of their family whom they loved, and especially because that family had rejected them and *even sought their lives*.

C. But as seen in Vision of the Tree of Life, we must never turn away from the truth because of mockery from the world, regardless of how painful or humiliating.

D. Blessings always come for obedience. **One major blessing the Nephites soon had was a temple in their midst *** (2 Nephi 5:16).

1. While made in the manner of Solomon’s Temple with the Mosaic Law for its functions, the Nephites understood how the Mosaic Law, (and its temple rituals), pointed their minds to the coming of the Savior. (One example is 2 Ne. 11:4).

2. Their usage of the temple was more enlightened and joyous than going to the temple in Jerusalem had been, for they now understood its witnesses of Christ.

3. While finding mortal joy in the blessings of a temple and in “living after the manner of happiness,” the Nephites could take comfort in the promise that **“their joy shall be full forever”** (2 Ne. 9:18).

***An ancient temple found;** Archaeology supports the existence of such a Temple.

Construction of dams in Tennessee in the 1930’s led archaeologists on a mad race to explore as many Native American sites as possible before being flooded. One site amazed them. It was actually three sites, two mounds built on top of a first. The bottom layer, though damaged from the weight of the others, was once **a large rectangular structure with several stone altars. It also had once contained large blocks and columns. Note that Nephi had written they had built the temple as best as they could like Solomon’s Temple, which would have contained large blocks, columns and stone altars.**

So unusual was this find, *The New York Times* photographed these ruins and later printed that photo on **July 1, 1934. The heading over the photo read, “Egyptian Temple.”** Below was printed this description. “The stone ruins of a large stone and wood structure uncovered beneath a [Mound Builders] Mound...” When they excavated the burial mound next to this “temple,” over half of them were buried during the time period associated with the Nephites.

One prominent English scholar, James Rendal Harris, had influenced some to believe that Egyptians had come to the United States because there were Egyptian place names still in use in this Tennessee area.

Thus it was called an “Egyptian Temple.” However, the Book of Mormon constantly tells us that Lehi was familiar with things Egyptian, such as their writing. Dr. Hugh Nibley pointed out that many Book of Mormon names had Egyptian structures: Korihor, Pahoran and Paankhi, are a few examples. So the supposed Egyptian influence was likely the Nephite influence!

Unfortunately, the discovery of this temple site was suppressed and neglected by those who had great power, and was left to be flooded. But a prominent photo and a newspaper article of its existence remain.

There are two other interesting items about it. (1) East Tennessee was one of only two sites in the United States at that time which was known to be rich in copper. Nephi specifically mentioned that they had used copper to decorate their temple (2 Nephi 5:15). (2) Furthermore, archaeologists have pointed out that gold also existed in the mountains of Tennessee, and in fact at one time there was a gold rush to the area. (For the photo of this site and more information you can go online, looking up the *New York Times* article and its picture). Remember that the Nephites lived in this area for around 400 years.