

Lesson #8

**“OH HOW GREAT THE GOODNESS OF OUR GOD”**

2 NEPHI 6-10

by Ted L. Gibbons

**QUOTE OF THE WEEK:**

**Let this message be sounded in every ear with an angelic trump. Let it roll round the earth in resounding claps of never-ending thunder. Let it be whispered in every heart by the still, small voice. Those who believe the Book of Mormon and accept Joseph Smith as a prophet thereby open the door to salvation; those who reject the book outright or who simply fail to learn its message and believe its teachings never so much as begin to travel that course along the strait and narrow path that leads to eternal life. [Elder Bruce R. McConkie, C.R., Oct. 1983, p. 104]**

**INTRODUCTION:** Notice the language of Jacob, who had been “called of God, and ordained after the manner of [the Lord’s] holy order, . . . having been consecrated by [his] brother Nephi . . .” (2 Nephi 6:2) He addressed the people of Nephi over a period of a couple of days (see 2 Nephi 9:54). 2 Nephi 6-10 is a record of that sermon. But this was not his only sermon. He said, “ye know that I have spoken unto you exceedingly many things.” (2 Nephi 6:2) Notice also that in these verses, Jacob will speak “concerning things which are, and which are to come.” (2 Nephi 6:4) Jacob tells us why he is delivering this message.

Behold, my beloved brethren, I speak unto you these things that ye may rejoice, and lift up your heads forever, because of the blessings which the Lord God shall bestow upon your children. (2 Nephi 9:3)

As you study these chapters and this commentary, ask yourself this important question: if Jacob has spoken “exceedingly many things,” why are *these things* recorded on the small plates? What is there about *this message* that is so important for us? Perhaps a part of the answer can be found in Jacob’s marvelous descriptions of the wonderful things the Savior has done and will do for us.

**1. JACOB TEACHES ABOUT OUR RELATIONSHIP WITH THE SAVIOR  
(2 Nephi 6-8)**

As you read 2 Nephi 6-8, look for words that are related to what the Savior is willing to do for his people. You may wish to mark and reflect on some of the following phrases and words. You may also find others that deserve attention:

- ) (2 Nephi 6:11) “merciful”
- ) (2 Nephi 6:12) “saved”
- ) (2 Nephi 6:14) “manifest himself”
- ) (2 Nephi 6:14) “recover,”
- ) (2 Nephi 6:17) “deliver”
- ) (2 Nephi 7:2) “redeem”
- ) (2 Nephi 7:5-9) “help,”
- ) (2 Nephi 7:5-9) “justify”
- ) (2 Nephi 8:3,12) “comfort”
- ) (2 Nephi 8:4-6) “light,”
- ) (2 Nephi 8:4-6) “salvation,”
- ) (2 Nephi 8:4-6) “judge”
- ) (2 Nephi 8:16) “covered” [protected]
- ) (2 Nephi 8:22) “pleads”

What do these words indicate about the character of the Savior?

Review D&C 19:18,19; Mosiah 3:7; Luke 22:44. What do these verses add to your knowledge of the character and love of the Savior?

What does the Savior ask us to do in response to the things he is willing to do for us?

- ‘ 2 Nephi 8:4–“Hearken unto me, my people; and give ear unto me, O my nation”
- ‘ 2 Nephi 8:7–“Hearken unto me, ye that know righteousness, the people in whose heart I have written my law”
- ‘ 2 Nephi 8:7–“Fear ye not the reproach of men, neither be ye afraid of their reviling”
- ‘ 2 Nephi 8:9–“Awake, awake! Put on strength, O arm of the Lord; awake as in the ancient days”
- ‘ 2 Nephi 8:17–“Awake, awake, stand up . . . “
- ‘ 2 Nephi 8:24–“Awake, awake, put on thy strength, O Zion; put on thy beautiful garments, O Jerusalem”
- ‘ 2 Nephi 8:25–“Shake thyself from the dust; arise, sit down, O Jerusalem;

loose thyself from the bands of thy neck, O captive daughter of Zion”

Jacob has never visited Jerusalem, but he has seen it in vision and has seen that Lehi’s prophecies have been fulfilled. (2 Nephi 6:8) He has seen the ministry and death of the Holy One of Israel, and the suffering of the Jews that would thereafter come upon Israel. (see 2 Nephi 6:9,10)

But he has also seen the gathering and has explained the sequence of that gathering in the same way that it has been and will be explained many times in the Book of Mormon:

Wherefore, after they are driven to and fro, for thus saith the angel, many shall be afflicted in the flesh, and shall not be suffered to perish, because of the prayers of the faithful; they shall be scattered, and smitten, and hated; nevertheless, the Lord will be merciful unto them, that *when they shall come to the knowledge of their Redeemer, they shall be gathered together again to the lands of their inheritance.* (2 Nephi 6:11, *emphasis added*)

The gathering of the House of Israel to the lands of their inheritance comes *after* they believe in Christ. We have seen a preliminary gathering taking place in Israel, but the scriptures teach many times, as they teach here, that the real gathering is first to the Church and the Savior, and then to the promised lands. In fact, the meaning of the concept of gathering is first and foremost *coming to Christ*. 1 Nephi 10:14 teaches this:

And after the house of Israel should be scattered they should be gathered together again; or, in fine, after the Gentiles had received the fulness of the Gospel, the natural branches of the olive-tree, or the remnants of the house of Israel, should be grafted in, or come to the knowledge of the true Messiah, their Lord and their Redeemer.

2 Nephi 10:7 says it this way:

But behold, thus saith the Lord God: When the day cometh that they shall believe in me, that I am Christ, then have I covenanted with their fathers that they shall be restored in the flesh, upon the earth, unto the

lands of their inheritance.

It is after she believes in Christ that Israel will be gathered to her lands of promise. This is exactly what has happened to those who have already been gathered—the members of the Church in our day. If you read carefully Jacob’s description of those who will return—who will be gathered—you will see that these are people filled with the joy of conversion and testimony:

Therefore, the redeemed of the Lord shall return, and come with singing unto Zion; and everlasting joy and holiness shall be upon their heads; and they shall obtain gladness and joy; sorrow and mourning shall flee away. (2 Nephi 8:11)

Speaking of the apostasy of Israel, ancient and modern, and of the distance that sometimes exists between the bridegroom and the bride, Jacob reminds us who has moved.

Yea, for thus saith the Lord: Have I put thee away, or have I cast thee off forever? For thus saith the Lord: Where is the bill of your mother's divorce-ment? To whom have I put thee away, or to which of my creditors have I sold you? Yea, to whom have I sold you? Behold, for your iniquities have ye sold yourselves, and for your transgressions is your mother put away.(2 Nephi 7:1)

Jacob teaches that we need light to make our way through mortality, and he makes it most clear that the Savior is the source of the only light will truly dispel the darkness

Who is among you that feareth the Lord, that obeyeth the voice of his servant, that walketh in darkness and hath no light? (2 Nephi 8:10)

But so many are walking by the uncertain light of tiny sparks from the fires they have tried to kindle for themselves. We have too often been satisfied to walk in the gloom of uncertainty when we have been invited in the brilliance of the light of celestial splendor.

Behold all ye that kindle fire, that compass yourselves about with sparks, walk in the light of your fire and in the sparks which ye have

kindled. This shall ye have of mine hand--ye shall lie down in sorrow.  
(2 Nephi 8:11)

## **2. THE ATONEMENT REDEEMS US AND SAVES US FROM DEATH AND HELL (2 Nephi 9)**

2 Nephi 9:6-10. According to Jacob's explanation, why are we in need of the kind of help mentioned in 2 Nephi 6-8?

Why would Jacob refer to death and hell as an "awful monster"? (2 Nephi 9: 10,19,26) Without the Savior's help or redemption or deliverance, what would happen to us? (2 Nephi 9:7-9)

2 Nephi 9:11-13. What did the Savior do to overcome this monster, death and hell?

We noted above that the Savior asks us to do certain things. Read 2 Nephi 9 find and mark verses or passages that describe our responsibility if we desire to receive the full blessings of the atonement. Review the following list and focus on the meanings and applications of these passages.

- ' 2 Nephi 9:18. Believe in the Holy One of Israel; endure the crosses of the world; despise the shame of the world.
- ' 2 Nephi 9:21. Hearken unto the Savior's voice.
- ' 2 Nephi 9:23. Repent, be baptized, and have faith.
- ' 2 Nephi 9:24. Endure to the end.
- ' 2 Nephi 9:39. Be spiritually minded.
- ' 2 Nephi 9:41. Come unto the Lord; walk the straight and narrow course.
- ' 2 Nephi 9:50,51. Feast on that which will not perish.
- ' 2 Nephi 9:52. Remember the words of God, pray continually, and give thanks.

Notice that in 2 Nephi 9:7, the sacrifice of the Savior is called an *infinite atonement*. (See also 2 Nephi 25:16; Alma 34:12) The Atonement is infinite because it affects all men. It is infinite because it reaches out into the universe to an infinite number of worlds. It is infinite because its effects remain throughout an infinite number of years.

Jacob rejoices in the “wisdom of God, his mercy and grace” (2 Nephi 9:8) in bringing to pass the death and resurrection of all men. Without the resurrection, according to 2 Nephi 9:8,9)

- ' Our spirits would be subject to Satan
- ' Our spirits would become like him
- ' We would become devils
- ' We would become angels to a devil
- ' We would be shut out from the presence of God
- ' We would be consigned to dwell with the father of lies
- ' We would be in misery

Speaking of this, Elder McConkie wrote:

"O the wisdom of God, his mercy and grace!" Jacob exults. Why? Because if there were no atonement, there would be no resurrection; and if there were no resurrection, "our spirits must become subject to that angel who fell from before the presence of Eternal God, and became the devil, to rise no more. And our spirits must have become like unto him, and we become devils, angels to a devil, to be shut out from the presence of our God, and to remain with the Father of lies, in misery, like unto himself." (2 Ne. 9:8-9.) That is to say, if there were no resurrection, which comes by the grace of God, all men would be sons of perdition, the most horrible and awful punishment in all the eternities. (Bruce R. McConkie, *The Promised Messiah*, p.347)

When we stand before the judgement bar of God, Jacob tells us, “we shall have a perfect knowledge of all our guilt, and our uncleanness, and our nakedness; and the righteous shall have a perfect knowledge of their enjoyment, and their righteousness . . .” (2 Nephi 9:14)

Pres. Joseph F. Smith, speaking of that perfect knowledge, said,

May I say to you that in reality a man cannot forget anything? He may have a lapse of memory; he may not be able to recall at the moment a thing that he knows, or words that he has spoken; he may not have the power at his will to call up these events and words; but let God Almighty touch the mainspring of the memory, and awaken recol-

lection, and you will find then that you have not even forgotten a single idle word that you have spoken. I believe the word of God to be true, and therefore, I warn the youth of Zion, as well as those who are advanced in years, to beware of saying wicked things, of speaking evil, and taking in vain the name of sacred things and sacred beings. Guard your words, that you may not offend even man, much less offend God. (*Gospel Doctrine*, p. 311)

### **3. CERTAIN ATTITUDES AND ACTIONS CAN KEEP US FROM THE BLESSINGS OF THE ATONEMENT (2 Nephi 9)**

In 2 Nephi 9:27-44, Jacob discusses a number of attitudes and actions that are dangerous to us in our pursuit of eternal life. As you read this chapter, try to locate and ponder the attitudes and actions that Jacob warns against.

Read and mark the following phrases from 2 Nephi 9:27-38.

- A. Woe to the person that has the gospel and the commandments, but sins thinking “I’ll repent later!” (9:27)
- B. Woe to the wealthy who despise the poor! (9:30)
- C. Woe to those who refuse to listen to the Gospel and the truth! (9:31)
- D. Woe to those who refuse to see the truth and beauty of the Gospel! (9:32)
- E. Woe to the hard-hearted sinner! (9:33)
- F. Woe to those who communicate with an intent to deceive! (9:34)
- G. Woe to those guilty of premeditated murder! (9:35)
- H. Woe to those who are immoral in any way! (9:36)
- I. Woe to those to whom things are more important than God! (9:37)
- J. Woe to any who are guilty of any of these things and die without repenting! (9:38)

Why might these things be a barrier to receiving the full blessings of the atonement?

### **4. IN SPITE OF INIQUITY, GOD REMEMBERS HIS COVENANTS WITH ISRAEL (2 Nephi 10)**

- ' 2 Nephi 10:2. What will happen to many of the seed of the Nephites?
- ' 2 Nephi 10:3. What will the Jews do to the Savior?
- ' 2 Nephi 10:5. What attitudes and problems will cause them to do this terrible thing?
- ' 2 Nephi 19:6. What two things will happen to them because of their iniquities?

In spite of this rebellion and wickedness, Jacob testifies that God will remember his covenants and be merciful (see 2 Nephi 10:2)

- ' 2 Nephi 10:7. When will this restoration begin to take place?
- ' 2 Nephi 10:14. Who will become the king of Israel? What else will the Savior do for them and for us?
- ' In what ways are we like the Jews described in this chapter? How patient has the Lord been with you in your weaknesses? The following quote may be helpful:

*No matter how serious the trial, how deep the distress, how great the affliction, [God] will never desert us. He never has and He never will. He cannot do it. It is not his character [to do so]. He is an unchangeable being; the same yesterday, the same today, and he will be the same throughout the eternal ages to come. We have found that God. We have made Him our friend, by obeying His Gospel; and he will stand by us. We may pass through the fiery furnace; we may pass through deep waters; by we shall not be consumed nor overwhelmed. We shall emerge from all these trails and difficulties the better and purer for them, if we only trust in our God and keep His commandments. (George Q. Cannon, *Collected Discourses*, 5 vols. [1897-92], 2:185; Cited in "Come Unto Me" by Elder Jeffrey R. Holland, Satellite Broadcast, March 2, 1997)*

## CONCLUSION

As you look at Jacob's concluding remarks in 2 Nephi 10:23-25, remember the question we asked at the beginning of this lesson. Why was this sermon included on



the small plates when so many other things were left out?

Therefore, cheer up your hearts, and remember that ye are free to act for yourselves--to choose the way of everlasting death or the way of eternal life. Wherefore, my beloved brethren, reconcile yourselves to the will of God, and not to the will of the devil and the flesh; and remember, after ye are reconciled unto God, that it is only in and through the grace of God that ye are saved. Wherefore, may God raise you from death by the power of the resurrection, and also from everlasting death by the power of the atonement, that ye may be received into the eternal kingdom of God, that ye may praise him through grace divine. Amen. (2 Nephi 10:23-25)

What does Jacob tell us we can do if we will apply all that he has taught us? (“Cheer up your hearts” (2 Nephi 10:23) What admonitions does Jacob give as part of his conclusion? (2 Nephi 10:23,24) What wish does he express for us in his conclusion? (2 Nephi 10:25)

I have a favorite hymn. I feel in the lyrics, apparently written in the middle of the dark ages, the kind of love for the Savior that Jacob must have had to write these chapters we have just studied.

### **JESUS, THE VERY THOUGHT OF THEE**

(text attributed to Bernard de Clairvaux)

Jesus, the very thought of thee,  
With sweetness fills my breast;  
But sweeter far thy face to see  
And in thy presence rest.

Nor voice can sing, nor heart can frame,,  
Nor can the mem'ry find  
A sweeter sound than thy blest name,  
O Savior of mankind!

O hope of every contrite heart,  
O joy of all the meek,

To those who fall how kind thou art!  
How good to those who seek!

Jesus, our only joy be thou,  
As thou our prize will be;  
Jesus be thou our glory now,  
And through eternity.

*(Hymns, 141)*

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