

Book of Mormon Lesson #10
“HE INVITETH ALL TO COME UNTO HIM”
2 NEPHI 25:10-2 NEPHI 30
by Ted L. Gibbons

QUOTE OF THE WEEK: ““The Book of Mormon is the most remarkable book in the world from a doctrinal, historical, or philosophical point of view. Its integrity has been assailed with senseless fury for over 170 years, yet its position and influence today are more impregnable than ever.

“The Book of Mormon did not come forth as a curiosity. It was written with a definite purpose—a purpose to be felt by every reader. From the title page we read that it was written ‘to the convincing of the Jew and Gentile that JESUS is the CHRIST, the ETERNAL GOD, manifesting himself unto all nations.’ The message it contains is a witness for Christ and teaches the love of God for all mankind. Its purpose is to bring people to accept Jesus as the Christ. The book tells of the actual visit of Christ to ancient America and records the teachings and instructions He gave in clarity and great power to the people. The Book of Mormon substantiates the Bible in its teachings of the Savior, speaks of Christ more than any other subject, and teaches that our Savior is the Redeemer and Atoner of mankind, constantly emphasizing that He is the central figure in God’s plan of salvation. This divine record makes converts to its message and to His Church, which teaches it” (Elder David B. Haight: “Joseph Smith, the Prophet,” *Ensign*, Dec. 2001, 28).”

INTRODUCTION: Maximizing learning is a function of effective teaching. A teacher at A.S.U. several decades ago explained the process this way” Tell them what you are going to tell them. Then tell them. Then tell them what you told them.” Nephi does exactly this. 2 Nephi 11 is an introduction to the messages, with a brief statement of the overall message and the reason for using Isaiah to teach it. 2 Nephi 12-24 contains the message. 2 Nephi 25-29 is Nephi’s explanation of what he has told us. These final chapters are more or less divided as follows: 1) MESSAGE TO THE JEWS: 2 Nephi 25:10-20; 2) MESSAGE TO THE LAMANITES: 2 Nephi 25:21-26:11; 3) MESSAGE TO THE GENTILES: 2 Nephi 26:12-29:14.

The following commentary on Nephi’s commentary is a brazen attempt to make magnificent and powerful literature more useful than Nephi made it.

The temerity to undertake such an effort defies all rationality. But since this is my assignment, I'll give it a shot.

1. NEPHI PROPHECIES OF THE SAVIOR'S MINISTRY AMONG THE JEWS AND NEPHITES

The following is an edited version of 2 Nephi 25:10-20. Following each quotation, I will give the verse in parentheses. Consider just how much Nephi knew about the future and fate of those who lived where he was born.

The Jews were told about "destruction which should come upon them, immediately after my father left Jerusalem . . ." and "they have been destroyed, save it be those which are carried away captive into Babylon." (10) "They shall return again and possess the land of Jerusalem" (11) "they shall have wars, and rumors of wars . . ." One day, "the Only Begotten of the Father, yea, even the Father of heaven and of earth, shall manifest himself unto them in the flesh." But this will not be a glorious event, because "they will reject him." (12) "They will crucify him; and after he is laid in a sepulchre for the space of three days he shall rise from the dead." (13) "After the Messiah hath risen from the dead, and hath manifested himself unto his people . . . behold, Jerusalem shall be destroyed again. (14)

"The Jews shall be scattered among all nations . . ." (15) "And after they have been scattered, and the Lord God hath scourged them by other nations for the space of many generations . . . they shall be persuaded to believe in Christ, the Son of God, and the atonement, which is infinite for all mankind . . .the day will come that it must needs be expedient that they should believe these things. (16) "And the Lord will set his hand again the second time to restore his people from their lost and fallen state. Wherefore, he will proceed to do a marvelous work and a wonder among the children of men." (17) "Wherefore, he shall bring forth his words unto them . . ." (18) "The Messiah cometh

in six hundred years from the time that my father left Jerusalem; and according to the words of the prophets, and also the word of the angel of God, his name shall be Jesus Christ, the Son of God.” (19) “I have spoken plainly that ye cannot err.” (20)

I have managed recently to get on a most interesting mailing list. The sponsoring organization is “Jews for Jesus.” This group of Jews believes whole-heartedly that Jesus is the Messiah, their Savior. 2 Nephi 30:7 speaks of a remarkable time when “the Jews which are scattered also shall *begin to believe in Christ*, and they shall begin to gather in upon the face of the land; and as many as shall believe in Christ shall also become a *delightful people*” (*emphasis added*). Those who belong to this group are passionate Christians, who have begun to believe in Christ. It is all exciting and most interesting.

Nephi knew that these words of his would reach others besides the Jews:

[The] Lord God [hath] promised unto me that these things which I write shall be kept and preserved, and handed down unto my seed . . .

The following verses are a earnest and personal epistle from Nephi to his descendants who would be mingled among the Lamanites. He spoke of a time in the latter days when “my seed and the seed of my brethren shall have dwindled in unbelief . . .” (2 Nephi 26:15).

For we labor diligently to write, *to persuade our children, and also our brethren*, to believe in Christ, and to be reconciled to God; for we know that it is by grace that we are saved, after all we can do. (2 Nephi 25:23, *emphasis added*)

2 Nephi 25:24-28 offers what I think is the best description of the relationship between the Law of Moses and the Gospel of Christ found anywhere in the standard works.

In 2 Nephi 26, Nephi makes a great promise to his descendants: “And after Christ shall have risen from the dead he shall show himself unto you, my children, and my beloved brethren. . .” (2 Nephi 26:1) Of course it will not be wonderful for everyone.

. . .great and terrible shall that day be unto the wicked, for they shall perish; and they perish because they cast out the prophets, and the saints, and stone them, and slay them; wherefore the cry of the blood of the saints shall ascend up to God from the ground against them. (2 Nephi 26:3)

It seems interesting that this *First Coming* to the Nephites is described as a *burning* (2 Nephi 26:4) The account in 3 Nephi of the destructions includes a record of some burning, but this passages seems to combine all the devastations under that heading. Subsequent verses itemize the actual events of the desolation:

“ . . .the earth shall swallow them up . . . mountains shall cover them, and whirlwinds shall carry them away, and buildings shall fall upon them and crush them to pieces and grind them to powder. And they shall be visited with thunderings, and lightnings, and earthquakes, and all manner of destructions...

In fact, we find here a clue to the nature of the burning referred to in 2 Nephi 26:4 and perhaps in many of the scriptures relating to the Second Coming

for the fire of the anger of the Lord shall be kindled against them, and they shall be as stubble, and the day that cometh shall consume them, saith the Lord of Hosts. (2 Nephi 26:5,6)

If in fact this account it meant to give us a pattern of preparation for the second coming (and I believe it is!), then a great lesson awaits us:

But behold, the righteous that hearken unto the words of the prophets, and destroy them not, but look forward unto Christ

with steadfastness for the signs which are given,
notwithstanding all persecution--behold, they are they which
shall not perish. (2 Nephi 26:8)

I remember trying out for the tennis team and the football team in High School. I could not make the cut. I was not good enough. But this cut I must be good enough to make. Those who survived the destructions then, and those who survive the cataclysms to come will have this experience:

. . .the Son of righteousness shall appear unto them; and he shall heal them, and they shall have peace with him. (2 Nephi 26:9)

Among the Nephites and Lamanites, that peace would last for most of four generations (26:9), but

. . . when these things have passed away a speedy destruction cometh unto my people; for, notwithstanding the pains of my soul, I have seen it; wherefore, I know that it shall come to pass; and they sell themselves for naught; for, for the reward of their pride and their foolishness they shall reap destruction; for because they yield unto the devil and choose works of darkness rather than light, therefore they must go down to hell. (2 Nephi 26:10)

2. NEPHI TESTIFIES OF THE COMING FORTH OF THE BOOK OF MORMON AND THE GOSPEL AMONG THE GENTILES (2 Nephi 26:12-27:35)

Nephi mentioned earlier that the Jews needed to be convinced—to believe—that Jesus was the Christ. The Book of Mormon is a major part of that *convincing* and converting.

And as I spake concerning the convincing of the Jews, that Jesus is the very Christ, it must needs be that the Gentiles be convinced also that Jesus is the Christ, the Eternal God. (2 Nephi 26:12)

Nephi knew that most of the American gentiles would believe that Jesus was the Son of God, but he knew that they would need to be convinced that he was also the Eternal God. Elder McConkie wrote:

Christ-Messiah is God!

Such is the plain and pure pronouncement of all the prophets of all the ages. In our desire to avoid the false and absurd conclusions contained in the creeds of Christendom, we are wont to shy away from this pure and unadorned verity; we go to great lengths to use language that shows there is both a Father and a Son, that they are separate Persons and are not somehow mystically intertwined as an essence or spirit that is everywhere present. Such an approach is perhaps essential in reasoning with the Gentiles of sectarianism; it helps to overthrow the fallacies formulated in their creeds.

But having so done, if we are to envision our Lord's true status and glory, we must come back to the pronouncement of pronouncements, the doctrine of doctrines, the message of messages, which is that Christ is God. And if it were not so, he could not save us. Let all men, both in heaven and on earth, hear the proclamation and rejoice in its eternal verity: "The Lord is God, and beside him there is no Savior." (D&C 76:1.) (Bruce R. McConkie, *The Promised Messiah*, p.98)

Nephi explains what he is going to do in this part of his record:

But behold, I prophesy unto you concerning the last days;

concerning the days when the Lord God shall bring these things forth unto the children of men. (2 Nephi 26:14)

Nephi now rushes through a great stretch of history.

After my seed and the seed of my brethren shall have dwindled in unbelief, and shall have been smitten by the Gentiles; yea, after the Lord God shall have camped against them round about, and shall have laid siege against them with a mount, and raised forts against them; and after they shall have been brought down low in the dust, even that they are not, yet the words of the righteous shall be written, and the prayers of the faithful shall be heard, and all those who have dwindled in unbelief shall not be forgotten. (2 Nephi 26:15)

Those words of the righteous will come forth, to those who have dwindled, “out of the ground,” as the voice of “one that hath a familiar spirit.” (26:16)

And after they are smitten by the Gentiles, the Gentiles will dwindle also:

And the Gentiles are lifted up in the pride of their eyes, and have stumbled, because of the greatness of their stumbling block, that they have built up many churches; nevertheless, they put down the power and miracles of God, and preach up unto themselves their own wisdom and their own learning, that they may get gain and grind upon the face of the poor. And there are many churches built up which cause envyings, and strifes, and malice. (2 Nephi 26:20,21)

Nephi here speaks of another problem among the Gentiles, often mentioned in the Book of Mormon: *secret combinations*. Satan’s success among the Gentiles is typified by the manner in which he controls them in the midst of their many iniquities:

. . . he leadeth them by the neck with a flaxen cord, until he bindeth them with his strong cords forever. (2 Nephi 26:22)

I tried to buy some flax thread one day here in Orem. The lady at the counter told me it was nearly hopeless. She said something like this: “Flaxen thread is so fragile that it is almost useless, unless one is willing to work very carefully by hand. A sewing machine will not function with so fragile a thread.”

And yet Satan leads the Gentiles about with a “flaxen cord.” He is ever so careful and so subtle. We may know when the first loops of flax encircle our necks, but we feel no fear. It is only flax, and we can break it any time we want to. And so the number of strands of flax increases, imperceptibly and slowly. We hardly notice that the movies and TV shows we see this year are more degraded than those we watched last year. We become less and less shocked by obscenity or vulgarity; common standards of modesty and decency seem less critical than they did to our ancestors. The Lord gave a warning:

Behold, *the world is ripening in iniquity*; and it must needs be that the children of men are stirred up unto repentance, both the Gentiles and also the house of Israel. (D&C 18:6, *emphasis added*)

The *flaxen cords* remind me of other phrases in the Book of Mormon: “he leadeth them away carefully down to hell” (2 Nephi 28:21); one of his servants did “administer poison by degrees . . .” (Alma 47:18)

But in the midst of this terrible, subtle danger, and these rampant iniquities among the Gentiles, the Lord’s invitations are constant:

1. “Behold, doth he cry unto any, saying: Depart from me?” (2 Nephi 26:25)
2. “Hath he commanded any that they should depart out of . . . houses of

worship?” (26:26)

3. “Hath he commanded any that they should not partake of his salvation? (26:27)
4. “Behold, hath the Lord commanded any that they should not partake of his goodness?” (2 Nephi 26:28)

The truth is that “all men are privileged the one like unto the other, and none are forbidden.” (2 Nephi 26:28) That is to say, “ he inviteth them all to come unto him and partake of his goodness; and he denieth none that come unto him, black and white, bond and free, male and female; and he remembereth the heathen; and all are alike unto God, both Jew and Gentile.” (2 Nephi 26:33)

Another iniquity Nephi notes among the Gentiles is priestcraft

He commandeth that there shall be no priestcrafts; for, behold, priestcrafts are that men preach and set themselves up for a light unto the world, that they may get gain and praise of the world; but they seek not the welfare of Zion. (2 Nephi 26:29)

To put it another way, *priesthood* benefits others; *priestcraft* benefits the preacher. And there is a bit of priestcraft about us. Do you remember the scandals from the late 1980's? The cover of the August 3, 1987 *Time* magazine had a picture of the cross intertwined with a dollar sign. On the left were these words: “GOD \$ MONEY,” and on the right, “Greed, Secrecy and Scandal: an inside look at Jim and Tammy Bakker’s bankrupt empire.” The title of the article from that issue, beginning on page 50, was, “Enterprising Evangelism.” On page 54, another article has this sub-title: “How Jim Bakker, flush with donated cash, became a born-again disaster.”

Behold, the Lord hath forbidden this thing; wherefore, the Lord God hath given a commandment that all men should have charity, which charity is love. And except they should have charity they were nothing. Wherefore, if they should have charity

they would not suffer the laborer in Zion to perish. (2 Nephi 26:30)

There is no place in Zion for anything but Zion:

But the laborer in Zion shall labor for Zion; for if they labor for money they shall perish. (2 Nephi 26:31)

The summary statement of the conditions at the time of the restoration is in 2 Nephi 27:1:

But, behold, in the last days, or in the days of the Gentiles--yea, behold all the nations of the Gentiles and also the Jews, both those who shall come upon this land and those who shall be upon other lands, yea, even upon all the lands of the earth, behold, they will be drunken with iniquity and all manner of abominations—

But in the midst of this iniquity, “the Lord God shall bring forth unto you the words of a book . . .” (2 Nephi 27:6)

Nephi tells us quite clearly that part of the book will be sealed. And he tells us what is in that sealed portion.

. . . in the book shall be a revelation from God, from the beginning of the world to the ending thereof. (2 Nephi 27:7)

Verse 10 is even clearer:

But the words which are sealed he shall not deliver, neither shall he deliver the book. For the book shall be sealed by the power of God, and the revelation which was sealed shall be kept in the

book until the own due time of the Lord, that they may come forth; for behold, they reveal all things from the foundation of the world unto the end thereof.

Again in verse 22, Nephi reports something the Lord will say to Joseph Smith:

Wherefore, when thou hast read the words which I have commanded thee, and obtained the witnesses which I have promised unto thee, then shalt thou seal up the book again, and hide it up unto me, that I may preserve the words which thou hast not read, until I shall see fit in mine own wisdom to reveal all things unto the children of men.

The sealed portion contains a revelation of “all things from the foundation of the world unto the end thereof.” But where did it come from? The Book of Mormon tells us that as well. A careful reading of Ether 3:35-4:7 will show that the brother of Jared saw “all that would be . . . even unto the ends of the earth.” (Ether 3:25) Those same verses will show that Moroni wrote “upon these plates the very things which the brother of Jared saw. . .” (Ether 4:4) After they were written, Moroni tells us that “the Lord commanded me that I should seal them up.”

How and when will we get these things?

1. “. . . the things which are sealed shall not be delivered in the day of the wickedness and abominations of the people.” (2 Nephi 27:8)
2. “And the day cometh that the words of the book which were sealed shall be read upon the house tops; and they shall be read by the power of Christ . . .” (2 Nephi 27:11)
3. “. . . then shalt thou seal up the book again, and hide it up unto me, that I may preserve the words which thou hast not read, until I shall see fit in mine own wisdom to reveal all things unto the children of men. (2 Nephi 27:22)

4. And in that day that they shall exercise faith in me, saith the Lord, even as the brother of Jared did, that they may become sanctified in me, then will I manifest unto them the things which the brother of Jared saw, even to the unfolding unto them all my revelations . . . (Ether 4:7)

3. NEPHI TESTIFIES THAT SATAN WILL SPREAD FALSE DOCTRINES IN THE LAST DAYS (2 Nephi 28)

And the things which shall be written out of the book shall be of great worth unto the children of men, and especially unto our seed, which is a remnant of the house of Israel. (2 Nephi 28:2)

One of the reasons for the “great worth” of the contents of the Book of Mormon is the proliferation of churches among the Gentiles. The chapter heading of chapter 28 speaks of “many false churches,” and those churches are mentioned in 2 Nephi 26:20, 21; and 2 Nephi 28:3. The 1982 Christian Encyclopedia lists 20,800 Christian denominations.

In addition, the book will be of worth because it will come forth in a day when people “deny the Holy Ghost” (28:4), and “deny the power of God” (28:5) and deny the miracles of God, saying that “he is not a God of miracles; he hath done his work.” (28:6)

2 Nephi 28:7-9 implies that people will also deny the judgements of God, and be unwilling to believe that he would actually punish people for their sins. “Eat, drink, and be merry,” they will cry.

Nephi wrote of the people of the last days: “Yea, and there shall be many which shall say: Eat, drink, and be merry, for tomorrow we die; and it shall be well with us. And there shall also be many which shall say: Eat, drink, and be merry; nevertheless, fear God—he will justify in committing a little sin; yea, lie a little, take the advantage of one because of his words, dig a pit for thy

neighbor; there is no harm in this; and do all these things, for tomorrow we die; and if it so be that we are guilty, God will beat us with a few stripes, and at last we shall be saved in the kingdom of God."—2 Nephi 28:7-8.

Do not think that this was said of the world, or even the "stranger within our gates." It is said of members of the Church. (Joseph Fielding Smith Jr., *The Way to Perfection*, p.203)

There is another great danger in this age: it is the danger of pride (2 Nephi 28:12-15)

They wear stiff necks and high heads; yea, and because of pride, and wickedness, and abominations, and whoredoms, they have all gone astray save it be a few, who are the humble followers of Christ; nevertheless, they are led, that in many instances they do err because they are taught by the precepts of men. (2 Nephi 28:14)

This is a solemn warning! Even the humble followers of Christ "do err because they are taught by the precepts of men." Take a look at your life and your family. In what ways have you been taught by the precepts of men. Has worldly teaching influenced your choices of media? Your business practices? Your relationship with family members? Your sense of right and wrong? Your sense of outrage?

President George Q. Cannon suggested a way to evaluate our status:

"If the breach is daily widening between ourselves and the world . . . we may be assured that our progress is certain, however slow. On the opposite hand, if our feeling and affections, our appetites and desires, are in unison with the world around us and we freely fraternize with them . . . we should do well to examine ourselves." (Millennial Star 23 [5 October]: 645-46.

Cited by Ezra Taft Benson, C.R., Oct. 1969, p. 15)

Remember in 2 Nephi 1 when Lehi implored his less-righteous sons to awake? That same warning now comes to the Gentiles (and to us) from Nephi. Nephi notes that among some in the last days Satan will "rage in the hearts of the children of men, and stir them up to anger against that which is good." (2 Nephi 28:20). But among others, the approach will be different.

And others will he pacify, and lull them away into carnal security, that they will say: All is well in Zion; yea, Zion prospereth, all is well--and thus the devil cheateth their souls, and leadeth them away carefully down to hell. And behold, others he flattereth away, and telleth them there is no hell; and he saith unto them: I am no devil, for there is none--and thus he whispereth in their ears, until he grasps them with his awful chains, from whence there is no deliverance. (2 Nephi 28:21,22)

Do you see the relationship between "pacify" and "lull" and "all is well" and the concept of sleep? When my babies were fussy at night, we gave them a *pacifier* and sang a *lullaby*, thereby assuring them that they had no need to fear or fuss: *all was well!*

Therefore, wo be unto him that is at ease in Zion! (2 Nephi 28:24)

In fact the phrase "at ease" is a logical extension of the words above it in the text: lull, pacify, security, all is well, cheateth, carefully, flattereth, whispereth in their ears. These are all conditions designed to keep us from discovering that all *is not* well, until we are "grasped with death, and hell." (28:23)

In conclusion to this part of the message, Nephi declares, "wo be unto him that hearkeneth unto the precepts of men." (28:27)

4.NEPHI TEACHES ABOUT THE IMPORTANCE OF THE BOOK OF MORMON (2 Nephi 29,30)

The first two verses of 2 Nephi 29 suggest 5 great reasons for the marvelous work of the last days. Each begins with the word ***that***.

BUT behold, there shall be many--at that day when I shall proceed to do a marvelous work among them, ***that*** I may remember my covenants which I have made unto the children of men, ***that*** I may set my hand again the second time to recover my people, which are of the house of Israel; And also, ***that*** I may remember the promises which I have made unto thee, Nephi, and also unto thy father, ***that*** I would remember your seed; and ***that*** the words of your seed should proceed forth out of my mouth unto your seed . . .

A 6th reason is this:

my words shall hiss forth unto the ends of the earth, for a standard unto my people, which are of the house of Israel . . . (2 Nephi 29:3)

Later in chapter 29 we find four reasons for the Book of Mormon:

1. Know ye not that there are more nations than one? Know ye not that I, the Lord your God, have created all men, and that I remember those who are upon the isles of the sea; and that I rule in the heavens above and in the earth beneath; and I bring forth my word unto the children of men, yea, even upon all the nations of the earth? (29:7)
2. Know ye not that the testimony of two nations is a witness unto you that I am God, that I remember one nation like unto another? Wherefore, I speak the same words unto one nation like unto another. And when the two nations shall run together the testimony of the two nations shall run together also. (29:8)

3. And I do this that I may prove unto many that I am the same yesterday, today, and forever . . . (29:9)
4. For I command all men, both in the east and in the west, and in the north, and in the south, and in the islands of the sea, that they shall write the words which I speak unto them; for out of the books which shall be written I will judge the world, every man according to their works, according to that which is written. (29:11)

CONCLUSION:

Did you notice that much more of Nephi's commentary was for the Gentiles (and we are cultural Gentiles even though our lineage is of Israel) than for the Jews or the Lamanites? Nephi knew that we would be the recipients of his work, and he sent us a message—an appeal to repent and return to the Lord, to forsake evil and iniquity of every kind and to embrace the sweetness of the Gospel of peace.

He has extended to us the shelter of the covenant.

For behold, I say unto you that as many of the Gentiles as will repent are the covenant people of the Lord; and as many of the Jews as will not repent shall be cast off; for the Lord covenanteth with none save it be with them that repent and believe in his Son, who is the Holy One of Israel. (2 Nephi 30:2)

May we turn away from the world, may we reject the precepts of men, may we awake to our jeopardy, and rejoice in this marvelous work that the Lord has done among us.

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