

BOOK OF MORMON LESSON #41
**“HE DID EXPOUND ALL THINGS UNTO
THEM”**

3 NEPHI 22-26
by Ted L. Gibbons

QUOTE OF THE WEEK: I proclaim to you, my brethren and sisters, that in the Book of Mormon, more than in any other book written in this world, and I do not except the New Testament--in the Book of Mormon more than in any other book, we have there the necessity of, and the truth of the atonement of the Christ taught to the children of men as nowhere else. I rejoice in these truths; may the Lord seal them upon our hearts and give us grace and strength to live in harmony with them, is my prayer, in the name of Jesus. Amen. (Brigham H. Roberts, Conference Report, April 1911, p.59)

INTRODUCTION: Much has been said and written about the power of the word. From the beginning, the Lord has commanded his people to keep written records of his dealings with them. Thus the family of Adam kept a book of remembrance (Moses 6:5). Abraham wrote his records quite fully and completely. Nephi made a record in his own language. Ancient prophets recorded their experiences and their testimonies. And many of those records have been recorded and handed down to us, preserved by the matchless power of God to bless us in our lives in the last days.

In these chapters, the Lord teaches great lessons about the Old Testament prophets, especially Isaiah, and about our own records--the ones we keep for the blessing of our own families and lives.

**1. THE SAVIOR QUOTES SOME OF ISAIAH’S PROPHECIES ABOUT
THE HOUSE OF ISRAEL**
(3 Nephi 22; 23:1-5)

Someone has suggested that in general numbers there are 20 million Lamanites and 20 million Jews around the world. In addition there are many, many millions of the lost tribes somewhere. Since the first (and most important) part of the gathering is a gathering to Christ, we must assume that one day the Church will increase in wonderful and dramatic ways as the gospel message finds its way into the communities and hearts of these

people.

2 Nephi 22 (Isaiah 54) seems to be a description of these events.. As you read and ponder, ask yourself why Christ chose to quote this chapter, rather than some other one, to the Nephites. Part of his reason has to do with the prophecies at the end of 3 Nephi 21.

AND then shall that which is written come to pass: Sing, O barren, thou that didst not bear; break forth into singing, and cry aloud, thou that didst not travail with child; for more are the children of the desolate than the children of the married wife, saith the Lord. Enlarge the place of thy tent, and let them stretch forth the curtains of thy habitations; spare not, lengthen thy cords and strengthen thy stakes; For thou shalt break forth on the right hand and on the left, and thy seed shall inherit the Gentiles and make the desolate cities to be inhabited. (3 Nephi 22:1-3)

Who is that the barren wife in these verses? What portion of the House of Israel would qualify for that designation?. Who would the married wife be? What events would need to transpire to fulfill the prophecy, “More are the children of the desolate than the children of the married wife, saith the Lord”?

At any rate, the result of all these new children will be a great increase in the size of the Church: “Enlarge the place of thy tent, and let them stretch forth the curtains of thy habitations; spare not, lengthen thy cords and strengthen thy stakes; For thou shalt break forth on the right hand and on the left . . .” (3 Nephi 22:2,3).

All this happens as a result of the fulfillment of the prophecies of the Lord in 3 Nephi 21.

22 But if they [the Gentiles] will repent and hearken unto my words, and harden not their hearts, I will establish my church among them, and they shall come in unto the covenant and be numbered among this the remnant of Jacob, unto whom I have given this land for their inheritance;

23 And they shall assist my people, the remnant of Jacob, and also as many of the house of Israel as shall come, that they may build a city, which shall be called the New Jerusalem.

24 And then shall they assist my people that they may be gathered in, who are scattered upon all the face of the land, in unto the New Jerusalem.

25 And then shall the power of heaven come down among them; and I also will be in the midst.

26 And then shall the work of the Father commence at that day, even when this gospel shall be preached among the remnant of this people. Verily I say unto you, at that day shall the work of the Father commence among all the dispersed of my people, yea, even the tribes which have been lost, which the Father hath led away out of Jerusalem.

27 Yea, the work shall commence among all the dispersed of my people, with the Father to prepare the way whereby they may come unto me, that they may call on the Father in my name.

28 Yea, and then shall the work commence, with the Father among all nations in preparing the way whereby his people may be gathered home to the land of their inheritance.

29 And they shall go out from all nations; and they shall not go out in haste, nor go by flight, for I will go before them, saith the Father, and I will be their rearward.

I am moved, as always, by the descriptions of the long-suffering and love of the Father for his wayward people. 3 Nephi 22:5-17 is a beautiful description of the continuing efforts of the Lord to bring his people home to happiness. Review mark the promise and opportunities presented here:

(22:5) "Thy maker, thy husband, the Lord of Hosts is his name"

(22:6) "For the Lord hath called thee as a woman forsaken"

(22:7) "For a small moment have I forsaken thee"

(22:7) "With great mercies will I gather thee"

(22:8) "With everlasting kindness will I have mercy on thee"
(22:9) "I have sworn that I would not be wroth with thee"
(22:10) "My kindness shall not depart from thee"
(22:10) "Neither shall the covenant of my peace be removed"
(22:11) "I will lay thy stones with fair colors, and lay thy foundations with sapphires . . ."
(22:13) "All thy children shall be taught of the Lord"
(22:13) "Great shall be the peace of thy children"
(22:14) "In righteousness shalt thou be established"
(22:15) "Whosoever shall gather together against thee shall fall for thy sake"
(22:17) "No weapon that is formed against thee shall prosper"

Notice that the tent in verse 2 has become stones and foundations laid with sapphires in verse 11. What does the Lord mean to tell us about the destiny of the Church with that change in terminology?

Certainly these promises of the Lord in the verses above could be applied to wandering Israelites in all ages. The Parable of the Olive Trees in Jacob 5 shows us the Lord working with every generation to bring forth good fruit. His love for those of us and our children who wander is as great as his love for apostate Israel. These are verses abundant with hope.

In chapter 23, the Lord gives us a commandment. It may be one of the most commonly disobeyed commandments in the scriptures:

And now, behold, I say unto you, that ye ought to search these things. Yea, a commandment I give unto you that ye search these things diligently; for great are the words of Isaiah. (3 Nephi 23:1)

Why is it so important to search and study Isaiah? One reason is because ". . . he spake as touching all things concerning my people . . ." (3 Nephi 23:2) Whether we consider ourselves Israelites or Gentiles, he spoke to us and of us.

3 Nephi 23 and 26 offer a number of reasons for searching Isaiah and the rest of the scriptures. Consider the following:

(23:1) It is a commandment.

(23:2) He spoke to the Gentiles.

(23:3) Everything he said has happened or will happen.

(23:5) If we hearken to the words of the Lord, we will be saved.

(23:14) We are commanded to teach these things. How can we teach what we have not learned?

(23:13; 24:1; 26:2) The things which are written there are things which the Lord commanded to be written

(26:9,11) We have been given the portion of the word which we have to test our faith. If we want more, we must absorb and live by what we have.

(26:9) If we believe what we have, we will be given "greater things".

2. THE SAVIOR COMMANDS THE PEOPLE TO ADD TO THEIR RECORDS

(3 Nephi 23:6-14; 24:25)

In 3 Nephi 23:7, the Lord commanded Nephi to bring forth the records he had kept. Nephi was writing for a nation. His records were the official record of the dealings of God with the Nephites. But in principle, this commandment to keep records has been given to every one of us.

We hope you will begin as of this date. If you have not already commenced this important duty in your lives, get a good notebook, a good book that will last through time and into eternity for the angels to look upon. Begin today and write in it your goings and your comings, your deeper thoughts, your achievements, and your failures, your associations and your triumphs, your impressions and your testimonies. We hope you will do this, our brothers and sisters, *for this is what the Lord has commanded*, and those who keep a personal journal are more likely to keep the Lord in remembrance in their daily lives (Pres. Spencer W. Kimball, *The New Era*, p. 27, emphasis added).

Joseph Smith said, (as recalled by Oliver B. Huntington) that [church members]

should "be prompt in keeping daily journals." They fulfill his prediction that their journals would be "sought after as history and scripture." In one classic admonition to the Twelve, he had

said soberly, "The time will come, when, if you will neglect to do this thing, you will fall by the hands of unrighteous men." In lamentation that there were things already lost or never recorded, he said that without such records the "Great and glorious manifestations which have been made to us" could not be presented to the Church and to the world "with the same degree of power and authority" (Teachings, pp. 72-73; cited by Ehat & Cook, *The Words of Joseph Smith*, Foreword by Truman G. Madsen, p.xii).

Can you imagine having an experience like Nephi's? What if the Lord were to ask you to show him the records that you have kept? Could you point with confidence to the written records of your goings and comings and thoughts and achievements and impressions and testimonies?

Or would you expect to have an experience like Nephi's?

And when Nephi had brought forth the records, and laid them before him, he cast his eyes upon them and said: Verily I say unto you, I commanded my servant Samuel, the Lamanite, that he should testify unto this people, that at the day that the Father should glorify his name in me that there were many saints who should arise from the dead, and should appear unto many, and should minister unto them. And he said unto them: Was it not so? And his disciples answered him and said: Yea, Lord, Samuel did prophesy according to thy words, and they were all fulfilled. And Jesus said unto them: How be it that ye have not written this thing, that many saints did arise and appear unto many and did minister unto them? And it came to pass that Nephi remembered that this thing had not been written. And it came to pass that Jesus commanded that it should be written; therefore it was written according as he commanded. (3 Nephi 23:13)

How many of the miraculous blessings of God are missing from our records because we did not record them. And because they are missing from our records, they are almost certainly missing from our memories.. Orson Pratt taught:

How many thousands have been miraculously healed in this Church and yet no one has recorded the circumstances. Is this right? Should the miraculous manifestations of the power of God be forgotten and pass into oblivion? Should the knowledge of these things slumber in the hearts of those who witnessed them, and extend no further than their verbal reports will carry them? . . . We should keep a record because Jesus commanded it. We should keep a record because the same will benefit us and the generations of our children after us. We should keep a journal because it will furnish many important items for the general history of the Church which would otherwise be lost. (*Millennial Star*: 11:153)

Jesus also commanded the Nephites to copy scriptures into their records. (See 3 Nephi 24:1) These were scriptures that they did not have, since Lehi left Jerusalem before the prophecy of Malachi. Therefore the Savior provided them with the text of Malachi 3 and 4. Read over these chapters. Why did the Lord want them in the Nephite records? Was there a message for the Nephites? Is there a message for us? Is it possible that the second witness for the principle of tithing is necessary in our culture and world? What other things did the Lord want us to notice from the teaching of Malachi?

By the way, notice why the Savior commanded these things to be written. He gives his reason in 3 Nephi 26:2)

3. THE SAVIOR EXPOUNDS ALL THINGS FROM THE BEGINNING (3 Nephi 26)

What a joy it must have been to have the Savior expound (explain) all things from the scriptures. He “expounded all the scriptures in one” (23:14). He “did expound all things unto them, both great and small” (26:1). “And he did expound all things, even from the beginning . . .” to the end (26:3). You will notice that Mormon did not include all the teaching of Jesus in his record. He was “about to write them all” (3 Nephi 26:11), but the Lord would not allow it. Why? “I will try the faith of my people” the Lord said.

So here we are at introspection time. *If the Church’s opportunity to read the*

*account of all the ministry of Christ in America depended on what **you** have done with the part we have received, would we qualify for the rest?* Mormon says he did not give us “even a hundredth part of the things which Jesus did truly teach unto the people.” (26:6) I suspect the same conclusions might be reached with regard to the material in the sealed portion of the Book of Mormon. Why would the Lord give us more if we have neglected what we already have.

It is almost time for the deer hunt in Utah. I have on occasion had hunting neighbors bring me venison, and on one occasion an entire deer, to be used to soften the impact of food on our budget. But would such a neighbor bring me more venison in subsequent years if he knew that I had never used what he brought me the first time? If it stayed in the freezer, or if I fed it to the dogs, I suspect he would give the next haunch to someone more willing to use it.

CONCLUSION: I have attended many seminary and institute and other religion classes. Some were taught by spectacular teachers, and I rejoiced in acquired understanding and the whisperings of the Spirit. But I think this experience of the Nephites with the Savior as he taught them “all things” from the scriptures and from the beginning, would have been one of the great teaching moments in the history of the world. What a remarkable thing it would be to live in such a way that we could be taught by the Lord himself. And of course we can:

32 Yea, verily I say unto you, in that day when the Lord shall come, he shall reveal all things--

33 Things which have passed, and hidden things which no man knew, things of the earth, by which it was made, and the purpose and the end thereof--

34 Things most precious, things that are above, and things that are beneath, things that are in the earth, and upon the earth, and in heaven.

35 And all they who suffer persecution for my name, and endure in faith, though they are called to lay down their lives for my sake yet shall they partake of all this glory. (D&C 101: 32-35)

Copyright © 2004 by Ted Gibbons <tedgibbons@yahoo.com>. All rights reserved. No part of this text may be reproduced in any form or by any means for commercial gain without the express written consent of the author. Digital or printed copies may be freely made and distributed for personal and public non-commercial use.