

BM LESSON #48

# "COME UNTO CHRIST"

Moroni 7,8,10  
by Ted L. Gibbons

## QUOTE OF THE WEEK:

What did Oliver Cowdery (one of the three witnesses to the Book of Mormon) say, after he had been away from the Church years and years? He saw and conversed with the angels, who showed him the plates, and he handled them. He left the Church because he lost the love of truth; and after he had traveled alone for years, a gentleman walked into his law office and said to him, "Mr. Cowdery, what do you think of the Book of Mormon now? Do you believe that it is true?" He replied, "No, sir, I do not!" "Well," said the gentleman, "I thought as much; for I concluded that you had seen the folly of your ways and had resolved to renounce what you once declared to be true." "Sir, you mistake me; I do not believe that the Book of Mormon is true; I am past belief on that point, for I know that it is true, as well as I know that you now sit before me." "Do you still testify that you saw an angel?" "Yes, as much as I see you now; and I know the Book of Mormon to be true. Yet he forsook it. Every honest person who has fairly heard it knows that "Mormonism" is true, if they have had the testimony of it; but to practice it in our lives is another thing. 7:55. (*Discourses of Brigham Young*, p.110)

**INTRODUCTION:** In General Conference, April 1986, President Benson made a wonderful promise. He said, "The Book of Mormon will change your life" (see Conf. Rep., p. 56) Now that we have come to the end of another year of

study of this “most correct” of books, we ought to take a sabbatical from the book and look into our own hearts to see if it has happened.

Is there really power in this book to change a life? Has it changed yours? Joseph Smith said you could get nearer to God by applying the precepts of this book than any other book in the world. Have you gotten nearer?

So often we are satisfied with sliding around on the surface of things. “I listened to conference.” “I attended my meetings.” “I read the scriptures.” If we stop here, Lucifer wins a great victory. We must go beyond taking our bodies and eyes into the correct places. We must take our hearts to a higher place than they have ever been before. If Joseph Smith and Ezra Taft Benson were right (and I know that they were), the Book of Mormon has the power to help us do that, if we will allow it in our lives. But it requires, to use Joseph’s word, *abiding*, not just reading. In the quote from President Benson, he indicates that the changes will only come to one “who applies its teachings.” Have you? Will you?

## **1. MORMON EXPLAINS HOW TO JUDGE BETWEEN GOOD AND EVIL.**

(Moroni 7:1-19)

Moroni 7 is a recitation of words spoken by Mormon to the “peaceable followers of Christ” (see Moroni 7:1,3) The word “good” appears about 26 times in this chapter. As Moroni quotes his father on the manner in which we must judge the choices and actions of our lives, he returns to this idea again and again. In simplest terms, he says it like this:

Wherefore, all things which are good cometh of God; and that which is evil cometh of the devil . . . (Moroni 7:12)

And this also:

For I remember the word of God, which saith by their works ye shall know them; for if their works be good, then they are good also. (Moroni 7:5)

And this:

Wherefore, nothing that is good denieth the Christ, but acknowledgeth that he is. (Moroni 10:6)

As I have said so often this year, the clarity, the (to use a word loved by Nephi) *simpleness* of this language makes evaluation an easy matter. We can know the difference between good and evil.

. . . for the devil is an enemy unto God, and fighteth against him continually, and inviteth and enticeth to sin, and to do that which is evil continually. But behold, that which is of God inviteth and enticeth to do good continually; wherefore, every thing which inviteth and enticeth to do good, and to love God, and to serve him, is inspired of God. (Moroni 7:12,13)

This language is much like the language of Jesus Christ:

Ye shall know them by their fruits. Do men gather grapes of thorns, or figs of thistles? (Matthew 7:16, see also 7:20)

But there is more help in learning how to know. Other verses in this section use a word that offers another level of certainty. It is a word that continues the sense of earlier words like *invite* and *entice* (see Moroni 7:12,13). That word is *persuade*. In fact, asking questions involving these three words when we consider any decision involving moral principles----choices between right and wrong----can assist us greatly in making those decisions in a way that will bless us and keep our lives in harmony with the gospel.

And they form an acronym that has been useful to me: **PERSUADE, INVITE, ENTICE**—The first letters form the word **P-I-E**. We would be well served to apply the PIE principle when we select media and music and other kinds of entertainment.

Wherefore, all things which are good cometh of God; and that which is evil cometh of the devil; for the devil is an enemy unto

God, and fighteth against him continually, and inviteth and enticeth to sin, and to do that which is evil continually. But behold, that which is of God inviteth and enticeth to do good continually; wherefore, every thing which inviteth and enticeth to do good, and to love God, and to serve him, is inspired of God (Moroni 7:12,13).

For behold, the Spirit of Christ is given to every man, that he may know good from evil; wherefore, I show unto you the way to judge; for every thing which inviteth to do good, and to persuade to believe in Christ, is sent forth by the power and gift of Christ; wherefore ye may know with a perfect knowledge it is of God. But whatsoever thing persuadeth men to do evil, and believe not in Christ, and deny him, and serve not God, then ye may know with a perfect knowledge it is of the devil; for after this manner doth the devil work, for he persuadeth no man to do good, no, not one; neither do his angels; neither do they who subject themselves unto him. (Moroni 7:16,17)

Use Mormon's formula the next time you evaluate a movie or a TV show. What are the characters *persuading, inviting, or enticing* the audience to believe, to accept, to do? Are their messages in the media condoning activities condemned by the prophets and the scriptures? Do the characters, or does the dialog, imply that things that are sinful really aren't?

And who would be responsible for such messages? We need to ask ourselves if we are willing to spend our time and money to allow people to persuade us that immorality isn't immoral and that violence is an appropriate solution to every disagreement and that dishonesty is in fact sometimes the best policy after all.

This is just one more place where we can apply the concept expressed in the introduction. It is not enough to know what the scriptures say. We must *do* what they say.

If you apply these principles, we are taught, "ye may know with a perfect knowledge" what is of God and what is not (see Moroni 7:16).

Wherefore, I beseech of you, brethren, that ye should search diligently in the light of Christ that ye may know good from evil; and if ye will lay hold upon every good thing, and condemn it not, ye certainly will be a child of Christ. (Moroni 7:19)

And it is not enough to make a show of goodness. Those invited to dwell in Zion and her suburbs will be the pure in heart—not the pure in appearance only.

Zion is the pure in heart--the pure in heart, not merely the pure in appearance. It is not a society or religion of forms and observances, of pious gestures and precious mannerisms: it is strictly a condition of the heart. Above all, Zion is pure, which means "not mixed with any impurities, unalloyed"; it is all Zion and nothing else. (Collected Works of Hugh Nibley, Vol.9, Ch.2, p.26)

Mormon emphasizes this important reality by speaking of *real intent*. If we offer gifts or pray without real intent—if we do these things for show and accolades—we have wasted our time and money, “for God receiveth none such” (see Moroni 7:6-9).

Elder Marion G. Romney gave a wonderful description of what it means to act without real intent:

About a quarter of a century ago Sister Romney and I moved into a ward in which they were just beginning to build a meetinghouse. The size of the contribution the bishop thought I ought to contribute rather staggered me. I thought it was a least twice as much as he should have asked. However, I had just been called to a rather high church position, so I couldn't very well tell him where to go. Therefore I said, “Well, I will pay it, Bishop, but I will have to pay it in installments because I don't have the money.” And so I began to pay. And I paid and paid until I was down to about the last three payments, when, as is my habit, I was reading the Book of Mormon, and came to the scripture which said, “. . . if a man giveth a gift . . . grudgingly; wherefore it is counted unto him the

same as if he had retained the gift; wherefore he is counted evil before God." (Moroni 7:8)

This shocked me because I was out about a thousand dollars. Well. I went on a paid the three installments I had promised to pay, and then I paid several more installments to convince the Lord that I had done it with the right attitude. ("Mother Eve, a Worthy Exemplar," *Relief Society Magazine*, Feb. 1968, pp. 84,85)

### **MORMON EXPLAINS THE IMPORTANCE OF FAITH, HOPE, AND CHARITY** (Moroni 7:20-48)

In his continuing discourse on choosing good, Mormon tells us that "in Christ there should come every good thing." Take a moment (a week? A month?) And ponder the meaning of that promise. Every good thing comes in, by, through, or from Christ. If we desire to have goodness in our lives, where must we go to seek it? We must go to Christ. The bank cannot provide it. The pizza parlor cannot deliver it. Our dearest friends cannot offer it. If it is eternally good, it comes from the Savior of us all.

And behold, there were divers ways that he did manifest things unto the children of men, which were good; *and all things which are good cometh of Christ*; otherwise men were fallen, and there could no good thing come unto them. (Moroni 7:24, *emphasis added*)

Faith comes first. It is the first principle and the first step toward eternal goodness.

Wherefore, by the ministering of angels, and by every word which proceeded forth out of the mouth of God, men began to exercise faith in Christ; and thus *by faith, they did lay hold upon every good thing*; and thus it was until the coming of Christ. (Moroni 7:25, *emphasis added*)

The relationship between faith and goodness is twofold. If we have faith we

will “lay hold upon [seek, pursue] every good thing,” but also, if we have faith, we will “cleave unto every good thing.” (Moroni 7:28) Thus, our faith makes it possible to seek the good things, and our faith gives us the desire to secure them unto ourselves.

It is one thing to believe that there is more to life than this brief breath of mortality— that existence is more than a flash of light and pain and oblivion. It is another thing to *want* more. That longing for something more, something better is what Mormon calls *hope*. When hope is combined with the evidence of our hearts and the Spirit, we begin to have faith that there is something better, and our lives begin to conform to the revealed patterns that give us promise of inheriting such things. I struggled through four years of daytime school and nighttime work because I *hoped* that the effort and income would give me the capacity to one day have something better. I had seen such things happen in the lives of others. I began to believe that it was possible. I began to have faith in the outcomes I longed for.

Here Mormon returns to an earlier concept: our motivations for right. No matter what we do, if we have not charity, we are nothing. If we suffer death in the flames or bestow all our possessions to care for the poor and have not charity, we have wasted our lives and our substance. No spiritual gift or collection of spiritual gifts can be a meaningful substitute for charity (see 1 Cor. 13:1-3)

We ought to take a week and study Moroni 7:45. These qualities of a charitable person speak to my heart. I fear that I am often easily provoked, and that I don’t suffer long sometimes, that my focus is outward more than it is inward (I do seek my own). I feel like there is a real limit to what I am willing to bear. But if I do not have this gift it is my own fault, for Mormon tells me how to obtain it:

Wherefore, my beloved brethren, pray unto the Father with all the energy of heart, that ye may be filled with this love, which he hath bestowed upon all who are true followers of his Son, Jesus Christ . . .  
. (Moroni 7:48)

Should we not make the plea for charity a part of every prayer we offer. No other gift or blessing is more important. And we can have it if we truly follow the Son and if we seek it with all our hearts from the Father. It is so important! "And *above all things*, clothe yourselves with the bond of charity, as with a mantle, which is the bond of perfectness and peace." (D&C 88:125, *emphasis added*)

Elder George F. Richards, who as at the time the President of the Quorum of the Twelve, was taught the importance of this gift in a most remarkable way. (I know I used this story last year. For you with photographic memories, I apologize)

Then a few years ago, at the closing of a conference of the St. Johns Stake, we had had a wonderful conference I thought, and I was very happy on retiring. I was sleeping in the home of the president of the stake, Brother Levi Udall, and that night I had a remarkable dream. I have seldom mentioned this to other people, but I do not know why I should not. It seems to me appropriate in talking along this line. I dreamed that I and a group of my own associates found ourselves in a courtyard where, around the outer edge of it, were German soldiers—and Fuhrer Adolph Hitler was there with his group, and they seemed to be sharpening their swords and cleaning their guns, and making preparations for a slaughter of some kind, or an execution. We knew not what, but, evidently we were the objects. But presently a circle was formed and this Fuhrer and his men were all within the circle, and my group and I were circled on the outside, and he was sitting on the inside of the circle with his back to the outside, and when we walked around and I got directly opposite to him, I stepped inside the circle and walked across to where he was sitting, and spoke to him in a manner something like this:

"I am your brother. You are my brother. In our heavenly home we lived together in love and peace. Why can we not so live here on the earth?"



And it seemed to me that I felt in myself, welling up in my soul, a love for that man, and I could feel that he was having the same experience, and presently he arose, and we embraced each other and kissed each other, a kiss of affection.

Then the scene changed so that our group was within the circle, and he and his group were on the outside, and when he came around to where I was standing, he stepped inside the circle and embraced me again, with a kiss of affection.

I think the Lord gave me that dream. Why should I dream of this man, one of the greatest enemies of mankind, and one of the wickedest, but that the Lord should teach me that I must love my enemies, and I must love the wicked as well as the good?

Now, who is there in this wide world that I could not love under those conditions, if I could only continue to feel as I felt then? I have tried to maintain this feeling and, thank the Lord, I have no enmity toward any person in this world; I can forgive all men, so far as I am concerned, and I am happy in doing so and in the love which I have for my fellow men. (President George F. Richards, C.R., October 1946)

It seems from the scriptures that it is this gift more than any other that will make it possible for us to like the Savior, for if we have it, "when he shall appear, we shall be like him . . ." (Moroni 7:48)

### **3.MORMON TEACHES THAT LITTLE CHILDREN ARE SAVED THROUGH CHRIST'S ATONEMENT.**

(Moroni 8)

In an epistle to his son, Mormon decried the solemn mockery of denying the atonement by the baptism of little children.

Listen to the words of Christ, your Redeemer, your Lord and your God. Behold, I came into the world not to call the righteous but

sinner to repentance; the whole need no physician, but they that are sick; wherefore, little children are whole, for they are not capable of committing sin; wherefore the curse of Adam is taken from them in me . . . (Moroni 8:8)

In the New Testament the Savior said it in these words:

For the Son of Man is come to save that which was lost and to call sinners to repentance; but these little ones have no need of repentance, and I will save them (Matt. 18:11, JST: see also D&C 137:10; Mosiah 3:11,16,18, and Moroni 7:8-13)

This truth, that the atonement saves little children in the kingdom of God, was understood perfectly by Mormon. He knew that Christ would raise them up and exalt them. Brigham Young testified:

It gives me exceedingly great joy to understand, that every child that has been taken from this mortality to the spiritual world, from the day that mother Eve bore her first child to this time, is an heir to the celestial Kingdom and glory of God . . . (JD, Vol. 10, p. 367)

Consider what that means in terms of numbers. How many little children have died without reaching the age of accountability? I asked a doctor friend about numbers. He has practiced in the U.S., in Japan, and in the Ukraine. He was stunned by the reality of these quotations and scriptures. "Why, that would be about 50% of all the people that have ever lived.

President John Taylor used the same number. He said it this way:

Through the atonement [little children] are placed in a state of salvation without any act of their own. These would embrace, according to the opinion of statisticians, more than one-half of the human family who can attribute their salvation only to the mediation and atonement of the Savior. (*Gospel Kingdom*, p. 119)

A sociologist at BYU, Tim Heaton, determined that 47% of males and 44% of

females die before the age of 8. "It follows that 46% of the earth's population are automatically exalted." (*The Daily Universe*, 11-29-84)

Think of the numbers. One half of the human family will be exalted by the atonement of Christ without the tests and trials which we are privileged to experience.

#### **4. THE HOLY GHOST TESTIFIES OF ALL TRUTH. SPIRITUAL GIFTS FOLLOW THOSE WHO COME UNTO CHRIST.**

(Moroni 10)

One of the messages that has made its way into my heart this year in my study of this book is the message that God really wants us to know the truth. He has not designed a program to make it as difficult as possible. I think he wants our quest and success to be meaningful, but he is not interested in seeing if we can be frustrated out of the search. He wants us to know. How many times in the Book of Mormon have we seen people seeking and receiving? Lehi and Nephi and Jacob and Enos and Benjamin and Mosiah and both Almas and Helaman. The list is huge. People who have truly sought him have found him. People who have desired to know the truth with a commitment to live the truth have, in every case, found it.

Moroni's explanation of the manner for gaining a witness of the book fits perfectly into this pattern. *If you will receive these things and ask God in the right way, "He will manifest the truth of it unto you, by the power of the Holy Ghost."* (Moroni 10:4)

I am a witness of these things. In two very different but equally powerful ways the Lord has spoken to my heart by the power of the Spirit and confirmed the truthfulness of this record to me. I have felt the burning power of the Spirit surging through me and erasing every doubt in me. But I have also been privileged to hear the still, small voice asking still, small questions to teach me just how much truth I had learned in my study of this book. I therefore bear my testimony to you: What the Lord promises to do in Moroni 10 he will in fact do.

The requirement that we must pray with “real intent” is critical, however. We must be willing to go in whatever direction our answer and the book may take us when we pray for a witness, or else it may not come. Let me explain.

I had a friend in the army (I’ll call him John) who, with his wife, took the missionary discussions at my home. His wife received a witness the first night and was ready to wear white and enter the font. But he had no such converting experience. She decided to wait for him to come to know as she knew. And so they came to our home each week for another discussion. We prayed and fasted for John. He was a diligent student of the restoration and the scriptures. He read the Book of Mormon. He prayed with purpose and, it seemed, even power after some of the discussions. But he continued to say that no answer would come to him.

We finally learned what the problem was. He learned, and told us just before he and his wife were baptized. He had been praying for a witness of the truth, but with this thought in his mind: *Once I know the work is true, then I will make my mind whether or not I am ready to change my life.* Once he prayed with real intent—with this promise: “Lord, if you want me to be baptized, tell me and I will go do it now,” he knew.

Can you see how a lack of “real intent” would lessen the Lord willingness to give an answer?

Moroni begins this chapter speaking to the Lamanites (see Moroni 10:1) We have correctly applied every word to ourselves, regardless of our cultural heritage. But in 10:24, Moroni begins speaking to everybody—“unto all the ends of the earth . . .”

One day we will meet Moroni. At least he says we will:

And I exhort you to remember these things; for the time speedily cometh that ye shall know that I lie not, for ye shall see me at the bar of God; and the Lord God will say unto you: Did I not declare my words unto you, which were written by this man, like as one crying from the dead, yea, even as one speaking out of the dust?

(Moroni 10:27)

He says it again in the final verse:

And now I bid unto all, farewell. I soon go to rest in the paradise of God, until my spirit and body shall again reunite, and I am brought forth triumphant through the air, to meet you before the pleasing bar of the great Jehovah, the Eternal Judge of both quick and dead. Amen. (Moroni 10:34)

His final message is the great invitation of the Book of Mormon. *Come unto Christ*. Pay whatever must be paid. Give whatever must be given. Make every sacrifice. Embrace every commandment and covenant. Reject every trace of ungodliness.

Yea, come unto Christ, and be perfected in him, and deny yourselves of all ungodliness; and if ye shall deny yourselves of all ungodliness and love God with all your might, mind and strength, then is his grace sufficient for you, that by his grace ye may be perfect in Christ; and if by the grace of God ye are perfect in Christ, ye can in nowise deny the power of God. And again, if ye by the grace of God are perfect in Christ, and deny not his power, then are ye sanctified in Christ by the grace of God, through the shedding of the blood of Christ, which is in the covenant of the Father unto the remission of your sins, that ye become holy, without spot. (Moroni 10:33,34)

**CONCLUSION:** I have some spots still. Hopefully less than last January—hopefully less than last week . . . But I have a sense that I am *becoming*. I *feel* my progress along the path to the tree. There have been times this year while studying this book when I have been under the tree. I have tasted the fruit and felt the love.

Oh how I love this book. My heart soars and sings with the wonder and beauty of its messages. It has shown me the way home by showing me the way along the path to my Savior.

My earthly father is dead. He passed away when I was 17. What a wonder it would be to find an actual letter—a message of love and counsel from him---in the mailbox one day: a divine prescription for eternal happiness. It will not happen.

But I do have such a message from another Father—a message much more miraculous than any epistle from the dead. A Heavenly Father who loves me has written to me, and sent a Brother to show me everything I need to know to make the journey home for the eternal and everlasting holidays. And believe me, there is no place like Home for the holidays.

In the name of Jesus Christ, Amen.

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.