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### The Savior Comes to America

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## **The Savior Comes to America**

In the Old Testament portion of this book, we drew particular attention to the concluding events of the Feast of Tabernacles temple drama, whose purpose was an unmistakable foreshadowing of the final events of the Savior's life and coronation, and the establishment of Zion. But because the people in Jerusalem rejected their King, the final ceremonies of his coronation did not happen there. Rather, they happened after his resurrection and in America among the Nephites, where the sequence of events of the Savior's coming to America followed the same pattern as Moses's coronation on Mount Sinai. When Mormon began his narrative again, he tells us simply:

1 And now it came to pass that there were a great multitude gathered together, of the people of Nephi, round about the temple which was in the land Bountiful; and they were marveling and wondering one with another, and were showing one to another the great and marvelous change which had taken place.  
2 And they were also conversing about this Jesus Christ, of whom the sign had been given concerning his death (3 Nephi 11:1-2).

In this place, Mormon gives us no details whatever about who these people were or why they had gathered to the Temple. Perhaps he thought he did not need to. In one sense he would have been correct, because there is a good deal we can know about them without his telling us. Moroni filled in some of the details when he wrote:

7 For it was by faith that Christ showed himself unto our fathers, after he had risen from the dead; and he showed not himself unto them until after they had faith in him (Ether 12:7).

In the Doctrine and Covenants, section 93 lists the prerequisites necessary to see the Savior, and then follows that with a statement which sounds very much like the way the Savior introduced himself in America:

1 Verily, thus saith the Lord: It shall come to pass that every soul who forsaketh his sins and cometh unto me, and calleth on my name, and obeyeth my voice, and keepeth my commandments, shall see my face and know that I am;

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2 And that I am the true light that lighteth every man that cometh into the world;  
3 And that I am in the Father, and the Father in me, and the Father and I are one—  
4 The Father because he gave me of his fulness, and the Son because I was in the world and made flesh my tabernacle, and dwelt among the sons of men.  
5 I was in the world and received of my Father, and the works of him were plainly manifest (D&C 93:1-5).

Additional prerequisites to seeing the Savior are emphasized in other scriptures. They include: One must be “pure in heart”; “follow peace with all men, and holiness”; and have the authority and the ordinances of the Melchizedek priesthood. And to have seen Christ, one must also have been “quickenened by the Spirit of God.” One’s mind must be single to the glory of God, and “the days will come that you shall see him; for he will unveil his face unto you, and it shall be in his own time, and in his own way, and according to his own will.”<sup>854</sup>

Therefore, the people who gathered at the temple that day were not those who just happened to be there. Each individual, in his or her own right, must have been worthy to see the Savior. That fact strongly suggests that those who were present were there by invitation, that they had been spiritually prepared for the experience, and that no one who was not prepared had been invited. The next day, others would be invited to come also, but that does not suggest a diminution of the preparedness or qualifications of the people in either group. Those same qualifications have always been requisite. As Enoch wrote:

For from the beginning the Son of Man was hidden,  
And the Most High preserved him in the presence of His might,  
And revealed him to the elect.  
And the congregation of the elect and holy shall be sown.  
And all the elect shall stand before him on that day.<sup>855</sup>

Mormon reported:

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<sup>854</sup> 3 Nephi 12:8; D&C 97:16; Hebrews 12:14; D&C 84:19-22 & Psalms 17:15; D&C 67:11; D&C 88:66-68.

<sup>855</sup> Book of Enoch, 62:7-8, Charles, *Apocrypha and Pseudepigrapha*, 2:228.

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1 And now it came to pass that there were a great multitude gathered together, of the people of Nephi, round about the temple which was in the land Bountiful,<sup>856</sup> and they were marveling and wondering one with another, and were showing one to another the great and marvelous change which had taken place.

2 And they were also conversing about this Jesus Christ, of whom the sign had been given concerning his death.

3 And it came to pass that while they were thus conversing one with another, they heard a voice as if it came out of heaven; and they cast their eyes round about, for they understood not the voice which they heard; and it was not a harsh voice, neither was it a loud voice; nevertheless, and notwithstanding it being a small voice it did pierce them that did hear to the center, insomuch that there was no part of their frame that it did not cause to quake; yea, it did pierce them to the very soul, and did cause their hearts to burn.

4 And it came to pass that again they heard the voice, and they understood it not.

5 And again the third time they did hear the voice, and did open their ears to hear it; and their eyes were towards the sound thereof; and they did look steadfastly towards heaven, from whence the sound came.

6 And behold, the third time they did understand the voice which they heard; and it said unto them:

7 Behold my Beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased, in whom I have glorified my name--hear ye him (3 Nephi 11:1-7).

This introduction is the same as that spoken many times by Heavenly Father.<sup>857</sup> It is also the same as Jehovah spoke in the second psalm, sung at the coronation services of the festival drama, when he declared that the king is a son of God.<sup>858</sup> Here, in 3 Nephi, the royal name-title “Son” is used in precisely the same way—as part of the coronation service in which Christ is enthroned as Eternal King. Consequently, the words spoken by the Father, “this is my Beloved Son,” would have been understood by the people to be an

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<sup>856</sup> For a discussion of the importance of the temple in the Book of Mormon see Welch, *Sermon at the Temple*, 16-19.

<sup>857</sup> Matthew 17:5; Mark 1:11, 9:7; Luke 3:22, 9:35, 20:13; 1 Corinthians 4:17; 2 Timothy 1:2; 2 Peter 1:17; 2 Nephi 31:11; D&C 93:15; Moses 4:2; Joseph Smith—History 1:17.

<sup>858</sup> See the chapters beginning, “Act 2, Scene 9: The Coronation Ceremony in Isaiah 61,” 457-516.

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announcement that Christ is God, but it also would also have been understood as the ceremonial announcement that he is Jehovah, the King of kings. A whole series of psalms had predicted his coming, as Mowinckel has outlined:

Yahweh's enthronement day is that day when he 'comes' (Psalm 96. 13; 98. 9) and 'Makes himself known' 98.2), reveals himself and his 'salvation' and his will (93.5; 99. 7), when he repeats the theophany of Mount Sinai (97.3ff.; 99.7f), and renews the election (47.5) of Israel, and the covenant with his people (95.6ff.; 99. 6ff.). The mighty 'deed of salvation' upon which his kingdom is founded is the Creation, which is alluded to in a rather mythic guise (93.3f.).<sup>859</sup>

Thus the people in America heard the voice of the Father declaring that Jesus is his rightful Heir—Eternal Priest and King—“my Beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased, in whom I have glorified my name.”

8 And it came to pass, as they understood they cast their eyes up again towards heaven; and behold, they saw a Man descending out of heaven; and he was clothed in a white robe; and he came down and stood in the midst of them; and the eyes of the whole multitude were turned upon him, and they durst not open their mouths, even one to another, and wist not what it meant, for they thought it was an angel that had appeared unto them.

9 And it came to pass that he stretched forth his hand and spake unto the people, saying:

10 Behold, I am Jesus Christ, whom the prophets testified shall come into the world.

11 And behold, I am the light and the life of the world (3 Nephi 11:8-11a).

The resurrected Jesus introduced himself with the same words he had used at the

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<sup>859</sup> Mowinckel, *Psalms in Israel's Worship*, 1:118. He defines “election,” as he uses it here, as “of the deliverance from Egypt, of the miracle at the Reed Lake and of the Covenant of Kadesh-Sinai and the victory over the natives after the settlement, in short *the election*.” *Psalms in Israel's Worship*, 1:140. Each of the citations in this quote refers to the psalms.

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beginning of the three days of darkness: “Behold, I am the Savior Anointed...<sup>860</sup> I am the light and the life of the world.” Then he told them what he had accomplished during those three days while they waited in the dark:

and I have drunk out of that bitter cup which the Father hath given me, and have glorified the Father in taking upon me the sins of the world, in the which I have suffered the will of the Father in all things from the beginning (3 Nephi 11:11b).

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## **The Savior’s Coronation in America**

When he joined the people who were gathered at the temple, it seems likely that he would have embraced some, then would have moved into the temple itself.

The people responded, perhaps automatically, in a way reminiscent of the way an ancient Lamanite king “did bow down before the Lord, upon his knees; yea, even he did prostrate himself upon the earth” (Alma 22:17).

12 And it came to pass that when Jesus had spoken these words the whole multitude fell to the earth; for they remembered that it had been prophesied among them that Christ should show himself unto them after his ascension into heaven (3 Nephi 11:12).

The scene that followed might most easily be visualized as it would have occurred at the conclusion of the drama’s coronation ceremony: as follows during the festival ceremony, the great doors of the temple were swung open, the veil before the Holy of Holies was pulled back, and the king was brought into the sacred chamber. The king—the adopted son and legal heir of Jehovah—sat upon the golden throne with his feet

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<sup>860</sup> The name “Jesus Christ” is an English translation of the Greek version of his name, so those words, “Jesus Christ,” are not what he would have said to the Nephites. “Jesus” is the Greek form of the name Joshua, which means “Jehovah saves” or “Savior.” “Christ” is the Greek form of the Hebrew “Messiah,” which means the “Anointed One.” So when Jesus introduced himself to the Nephites, what they heard was: “Behold, I am the Savior Anointed whom the prophets testified shall come into the world.” See LDS Bible Dictionary.