

CHAPTER 18

Mosiah 1–3

Introduction

With the assistance of the holy prophets who were among his people, King Benjamin labored “with all the might of his body and the faculty of his whole soul” to “establish peace in the land” (Words of Mormon 1:18). Near the end of his life, Benjamin called the people together at the temple. During this assembly, he reported on his reign as king, appointed his son Mosiah to succeed him, taught concerning Christ’s gospel and Atonement, and exhorted the Nephites to take upon themselves the name of Jesus Christ. The portion of Benjamin’s address discussed in this chapter of the manual demonstrates the ideals he espoused—willingness to serve others, gratitude for divine providence, and dependence upon the Savior. We can grow in humility and strengthen our covenant relationship with God by living according to the principles King Benjamin taught.

Commentary

- It may be instructive to compare the length of books in the Book of Mormon and the time periods they covered. Refer to the chart “Book of Mormon Pages and Time Periods” in the appendix (p. 411).

Mosiah 1:1–2. Shift from First Person Accounts to Third Person in the Book of Mosiah

- There is a shift from the first person accounts of the early books in the Book of Mormon to the third person account in the book of Mosiah. The books of 1 Nephi through Omni were translated from the small plates of Nephi and are the works of the original writers; consequently, they were written in the first person. The books of Mosiah through 4 Nephi, however, all come from Mormon’s abridgement of the large plates of Nephi. These books are Mormon’s abridgement of the original authors’ records.

Mosiah 1:3–10. Mysteries of God

- The term “mysteries of God” as used in the Book of Mormon (Mosiah 1:3) includes the saving principles of the gospel of Jesus Christ. They are termed mysteries not because they are mysterious or difficult to understand, but because they are revealed from God based upon

our faith and obedience. They are intended to lead God’s children to eternal life. “A mystery is a truth that cannot be known except through divine revelation—a sacred secret. . . . In our day such great truths as those pertaining to the restoration of the Priesthood, the work for the dead, and the re-establishment of the Church are ‘mysteries,’ because they could not have been discovered except by revelation” (Hyrum M. Smith and Janne M. Sjodahl, *The Doctrine and Covenants Commentary*, rev. ed. [1972], 141).

MOSIAH 1:4–7

According to King Benjamin, what would have happened to the Nephites if they were without a scriptural record?

Mosiah 1:4–6. “The Language of the Egyptians”

- Benjamin, Nephi (see 1 Nephi 1:2), and Moroni (see Mormon 9:32) all referred to the Egyptian language. In Mosiah 1:4–6, King Benjamin makes it clear there was a reason his sons needed to learn “the language of the Egyptians.” It was necessary in order to study the commandments contained on the brass plates and the plates of Nephi (see Mosiah 1:6). From the time of Nephi down to Moroni, the Nephites had a form of the Egyptian language (see commentary for 1 Nephi 1:2 on p. 12 and for Mormon 9:32–34 on p. 359).

Mosiah 1:10. Mosiah to Be the New King

- A close examination of the Book of Mormon reveals numerous traditions and customs that have their origins in ancient Israel. There is a striking similarity between Mosiah’s ascendancy to the Nephite throne in the first chapters of Mosiah and how kings were crowned in the Old Testament (see Stephen D. Ricks, “King, Coronation, and Covenant in Mosiah 1–6,” in John L. Sorenson and Melvin J. Thorne, ed., *Rediscovering the Book of Mormon* [1991], 209).

Some notable similarities between Book of Mormon and Old Testament coronation ceremonies include: (1) a belief that kings were chosen by heaven (see

Mosiah 1:9–10; 6:3, 5; 1 Kings 2:15; 2 Kings 15:5); (2) the sanctuary as the place of the coronation (see Mosiah 1:18; 1 Kings 1:39–45); (3) bestowal of sacred relics, artifacts, or other objects at the time of coronation (see Mosiah 1:15–16; 2 Kings 11:12); (4) anointing (see Mosiah 6:3; 1 Kings 1:33–34) (see Ricks, in *Rediscovering the Book of Mormon*, 210, 213–14).

“In addition, the ideal was that the new king take office before the death of the old one, and this transfer of power was connected with the ceremony where the people make or renew their covenant with God” (Ricks, in *Rediscovering the Book of Mormon*, 216). This took place a little later with King Benjamin’s people when they proclaimed, “we are willing to enter into a covenant with our God to do his will, and to be obedient to his commandments” (Mosiah 5:5).

Mosiah 1:11–12. The Name King Benjamin Wanted to Give His People

- The major purpose for King Benjamin to gather his people together was to give them a name. He wanted to lift them spiritually. He and many other holy prophets had spent years preaching to the people and preparing them to be spiritually ready to take upon them the name of Christ (see Words of Mormon 1:5–18). Throughout his address, King Benjamin spoke of how to worthily accept the name he desired to give them. Then, in Mosiah 5:8–11, he clearly identified the name as being that of Jesus Christ.

MOSIAH 2:9

How could you use King Benjamin’s teachings to improve your personal worship?

Mosiah 2:17. Service

- President Howard W. Hunter (1907–95) taught that righteousness should be at the heart of all service we give: “Continue to seek opportunities for service. Don’t be overly concerned with status. . . . It is important to be appreciated. But our focus should be on



righteousness, not recognition; on service, not status. The faithful visiting teacher, who quietly goes about her work month after month, is just as important to the work of the Lord as those who occupy what some see as more prominent positions

in the Church. Visibility does not equate to value” (“To the Women of the Church,” *Ensign*, Nov. 1992, 96–97).

- Elder Robert J. Whetten of the Seventy explained how the service we render to others can be used to measure the depth of our personal conversion:

“Conversion means consecrating your life to caring for and serving others who need your help and sharing your gifts and blessings. . . .

“Every unselfish act of kindness and service increases your spirituality. God would use you to bless others. Your continued spiritual growth and eternal progress are very much wrapped up in your relationships—in how you treat others. Do you indeed love others and become a blessing in their lives? *Isn’t the measure of the level of your conversion how you treat others?* The person who does only those things in the Church that concern himself alone will never reach the goal of perfection. Service to others is what the gospel and exalted life are all about” (in Conference Report, Apr. 2005, 96; or *Ensign*, May 2005, 91).

- Elder Dallin H. Oaks of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles helped us understand that in addition to what service we do, it is very important why we do it:

“The last motive . . . is, in my opinion, the highest reason of all. In its relationship to service, it is what the scriptures call ‘a more excellent way’ (1 Corinthians 12:31). . . .

“If our service is to be most efficacious, it must be accomplished for the love of God and the love of his children” (in Conference Report, Oct. 1984, 16; or *Ensign*, Nov. 1984, 14).

Mosiah 2:21–24, 34. “Indebted unto Him”

- Elder Joseph B. Wirthlin (1917–2008) of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles taught that we should spend all our days in pursuit of eternal life as a means of showing gratitude for the debt Jesus Christ paid on our behalf:

“How can we ever repay the debt we owe to the Savior? He paid a debt He did not owe to free us from a debt we can never pay. Because of Him we will live forever. Because of His infinite Atonement, our sins can be swept away, allowing us to experience the greatest of all the gifts of God: eternal life [see D&C 14:7].

“Can such a gift have a price? Can we ever make compensation for such a gift? The Book of Mormon prophet King Benjamin taught ‘that if you should render all the thanks and praise which your whole soul has power to possess . . . [and] serve him with all your whole souls yet ye would be unprofitable servants’ [Mosiah 2:20–21]” (in Conference Report, Apr. 2004, 44; or *Ensign*, May 2004, 43).

- One of the best ways for each of us to demonstrate gratitude for what Heavenly Father and Jesus Christ give us is to keep the commandments. President Joseph Fielding Smith (1876–1972) taught:

“We are extremely ungrateful to our Father and to his Beloved Son when in all humility with ‘broken hearts and contrite spirits’ we are unwilling to keep the commandments. The violation of any divine commandment is a most ungrateful act, considering all that has been accomplished for us through the atonement of our Savior.

“We will never be able to pay the debt. The gratitude of our hearts should be filled to overflowing in love and obedience for his great and tender mercy. For what he has done, we should never fail him. He bought us with a price, the price of his great suffering and the spilling of his blood in sacrifice on the cross.

“Now, he has asked us to keep his commandments. He says they are not grievous, and there are so many of us who are not willing to do it. I am speaking now generally of the people of the earth. We are not willing to do it. That certainly is ingratitude. We are ungrateful.

“Every member of this Church who violates the Sabbath day, who is not honest in the paying of his

tithing, who will not keep the Word of Wisdom, who willfully violates any of the other commandments the Lord has given us, is ungrateful to the Son of God, and when ungrateful to the Son of God is ungrateful to the Father who sent him” (*Doctrines of Salvation*, comp. Bruce R. McConkie, 3 vols. [1954–56], 1:131–32).

Mosiah 2:25. Your Body “Belongeth to Him Who Created You”

- Mosiah 2:25 is the Lord’s response to those who claim that “It’s my body and I can do what I want with it.” King Benjamin’s point that our bodies belong to God is consistent with the teachings of Paul when he wrote, “For ye are bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your body, and in your spirit, which are God’s” (1 Corinthians 6:20).

Mosiah 2:34–41. Willfully Rebelling against God

- When a person knows what is right and does not do it, he or she not only violates the actual law, but puts himself or herself in a state of opposition to God—a serious offense in and of itself. President Gordon B. Hinckley (1910–2008) shared the following simple illustration of such rebellion: “I recall a bishop’s telling me of a woman who came to get a recommend. When asked if she observed the Word of Wisdom, she said that she occasionally drank a cup of coffee. She said, ‘Now, bishop, you’re not going to let that keep me from going to the temple, are you?’ To which he replied, ‘Sister, surely *you* will not let a cup of coffee stand between you and the house of the Lord’” (in Conference Report, Apr. 1990, 67; or *Ensign*, May 1990, 51).

Mosiah 3:5, 17–18. What Does the Term *Lord Omnipotent* Mean?

- Of all the prophets recorded in the Book of Mormon, King Benjamin is the only one to use the term *omnipotent*, which Elder Bruce R. McConkie (1915–85) of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles defined this way: “Christ is the *Lord Omnipotent* (Mosiah 3:5, 17–18, 21; 5:2, 15; Rev. 19:6), meaning that as Lord of all he has all power” (*Mormon Doctrine*, 2nd ed. [1966], 452).

Mosiah 3:7. So Great Was His Anguish

- Elder Neal A. Maxwell (1926–2004) of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles referred to the suffering

experienced by Jesus Christ as “the awful arithmetic of the Atonement”:

“Imagine, Jehovah, the Creator of this and other worlds, ‘astonished’! Jesus knew cognitively what He must do, but not experientially. He had never personally known the exquisite and exacting process of an atonement before. Thus, when the agony came in its fulness, it was so much, much worse than even He with his unique intellect had ever imagined! No wonder an angel appeared to strengthen him! (See Luke 22:43.)



“The cumulative weight of all mortal sins—past, present, and future—pressed upon that perfect, sinless, and sensitive Soul! All our infirmities and sicknesses were somehow, too, a part of the awful arithmetic of the Atonement. (See Alma 7:11–12; Isaiah 53:3–5; Matthew 8:17.) The anguished Jesus not only

pled with the Father that the hour and cup might pass from Him, but with this relevant citation. ‘And he said, Abba, Father, all things are possible unto thee; take away this cup from me’ (Mark 14:35–36).

“Had not Jesus, as Jehovah, said to Abraham, ‘Is any thing too hard for the Lord?’ (Genesis 18:14). Had not His angel told a perplexed Mary, ‘For with God nothing shall be impossible?’ (Luke 1:37; see also Matthew 19:28; Mark 10:27; Luke 18:27).

“Jesus’ request was not theater!

“In this extremity, did He, perchance, hope for a rescuing ram in the thicket? I do not know. His suffering—as it were, *enormity* multiplied by *infinity*—evoked His later soul-cry on the cross, and it was a cry of forsakenness. (See Matthew 27:46.)

“Even so, Jesus maintained this sublime submissiveness, as He had in Gethsemane: ‘Nevertheless not as I will, but as thou wilt’ (Matthew 26:39)” (in Conference Report, Apr. 1985, 92; or *Ensign*, May 1985, 72–73).

- One commentator wrote that the Savior’s suffering was the total weight of the consequence of the Fall: “Jesus knew that the awful hour of His deepest humiliation had arrived—that from this moment till the utterance of that great cry with which He expired, nothing remained for Him on earth but the torture of physical pain and the poignancy of mental anguish. All that the human frame can tolerate of suffering was to be heaped upon His shrinking body; every misery that cruel and crushing insult can inflict was to weigh heavy upon His soul; and in this torment of body and agony of soul even the high and radiant serenity of His divine spirit was to suffer a short but terrible eclipse. Pain in its acutest sting, shame in its most overwhelming brutality, all the burden of the sin and mystery of man’s existence in its apostasy and fall—this was what He must now face in all its most inexplicable accumulation” (F. W. Farrar, *The Life of Christ* [London: Cassell and Co., 1874], pp. 622–23; quoted in Bruce R. McConkie, *The Mortal Messiah, Book 4* [1981], 126).

Mosiah 3:17. “No Other Name Given”

- The First Presidency and the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles affirmed that salvation comes through Jesus Christ: “We bear testimony, as His duly ordained Apostles—that Jesus is the Living Christ, the immortal Son of God. He is the great King Immanuel, who stands today on the right hand of His Father. He is the light, the life, and the hope of the world. His way is the path that leads to happiness in this life and eternal life in the world to come” (“The Living Christ: The Testimony of the Apostles,” *Ensign*, Apr. 2000, 3).

Mosiah 3:19. The Natural Man

- The terms *natural* or *by nature*, as commonly used, indicate an inherent part of our identity, something with which we are born. In the scriptures, however, *natural* means fallen or sinful. Though born innocent (see D&C 93:38), all men, through the Fall of Adam, come into a fallen world and into a state of spiritual death (see Alma 42:9), separated from the presence of God. Knowing good and evil (see Moses 4:11; 5:11) and living in this imperfect state, all men sin (see Romans 3:23; 1 John 1:8, 10) and experience a resultant “fall” of their own (see Moses 6:49, 55). In other words, it is through transgression of God’s law that one

becomes a “natural man” (see Alma 42:10, 12; D&C 20:20). Hence, a natural man is an enemy to God (see Mosiah 3:19📖) until he qualifies for the cleansing influence of the Atonement through living the commandments of God (see Mosiah 3:11–12, 19📖).

- King Benjamin taught that to put off the natural man we must yield to the enticings of the Holy Spirit (see Mosiah 3:19📖). In a conference address, Elder Neal A. Maxwell discussed how we might accomplish this task: “*Personal* righteousness, worship, prayer, and scripture study are so crucial in order to ‘[put] off the natural man’ (Mosiah 3:19)” (in Conference Report, Oct. 2000, 46; or *Ensign*, Nov. 2000, 36).

In an earlier address, Elder Maxwell suggested another tool, along with a caution, for putting off the natural man: “Hope is particularly needed in the hand-to-hand combat required to put off the natural man (see Mosiah 3:19). Giving up on God and on oneself constitutes simultaneous surrender to the natural man” (in Conference Report, Oct. 1994, 46; or *Ensign*, Nov. 1994, 36).

Mosiah 3:19.📖 Becoming a Saint

- While discussing what it means to be a Saint, Elder Quentin L. Cook of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles cited this definition and then provided examples of things we must separate ourselves from:

“The word *saint* in Greek denotes ‘set apart, separate, [and] holy’ [in Daniel H. Ludlow, ed., *Encyclopedia of Mormonism*, 5 vols. (1992), 3:1249]. If we are to be Saints in our day, we need to separate ourselves from evil conduct and destructive pursuits that are prevalent in the world.

“We are bombarded with visual images of violence and immorality. Inappropriate music and pornography are increasingly tolerated. The use of drugs and alcohol is rampant. There is less emphasis on honesty and character. Individual rights are demanded, but duties, responsibilities, and obligations are neglected. There has been a coarsening of dialogue and increased exposure to that which is base and vulgar. The adversary has been relentless in his efforts to undermine the plan of happiness. If we separate ourselves from this worldly conduct, we will have

the Spirit in our lives and experience the joy of being worthy Latter-day Saints” (in Conference Report, Oct. 2003, 100–101; or *Ensign*, Nov. 2003, 95).

Mosiah 3:19.📖 “As a Child”

- President Henry B. Eyring of the First Presidency taught how becoming “as a child” (Mosiah 3:19) leads to spiritual safety:

“King Benjamin makes it clear how we can . . . have our natures changed through the Atonement of Jesus Christ. That is the only way we can build on the sure foundation and so stand firm in righteousness during the storms of temptation.

“King Benjamin describes that change with a beautiful comparison, used by prophets for millennia and by the Lord Himself. It is this: that we can, and we must, become as a child—a little child.

“For some that will not be easy to understand or to accept. Most of us want to be strong. We may well see being like a child as being weak. . . .



“But King Benjamin, who understood as well as any mortal what it meant to be a man of strength and courage, makes it clear that to be like a child is not to be childish. It is to be like the Savior, who prayed to His Father for strength to be able to do His will and then did it.

Our natures must be changed to become as a child to gain the strength we must have to be safe in the times of moral peril. . . .

“We are safe on the rock which is the Savior when we have yielded in faith in Him, have responded to the Holy Spirit’s direction to keep the commandments long enough and faithfully enough that the power of the Atonement has changed our hearts. When we have, by that experience, become as a child in our capacity to love and obey, we are on the sure foundation.


“From King Benjamin we learn what we can do to take us to that safe place. But remember: the things

we do are the means, not the end we seek. What we do allows the Atonement of Jesus Christ to change us into what we must be. Our faith in Jesus Christ brings us to repentance and to keeping His commandments. We obey and we resist temptation by following the promptings of the Holy Ghost. In time our natures will change. We will become as a little child, obedient to God and more loving. That change, if we do all we must to keep it, will qualify us to enjoy the gifts which come through the Holy Ghost. Then we will be safe on the only sure rock” (in Conference Report, Apr. 2006, 14–15; or *Ensign*, May 2006, 15–16).

MOSIAH 3:19 

What attributes of little children must we have? How do we obtain those qualities?

Points to Ponder

- In what ways has serving others helped you draw nearer to God?
- How does the Atonement allow you to overcome the natural man? Why is it only through the Atonement of Christ that you can become a Saint? (see Mosiah 3:19 .
- Mosiah 1:5–6 explains that having the scriptures “before [their] eyes” kept the Nephites from dwindling in unbelief. Why is it important for you to have a personal daily habit of scripture study?

Suggested Assignments

- King Benjamin explained that when we are taught the word of God we are “found no more blameless” in His sight (Mosiah 3:22). Write a response to the following argument: If hearing the word of God makes us more accountable, why would it be an advantage to study the gospel and learn more? (see D&C 130:18–19; 131:6). Find and list at least three scriptures that describe the blessings of gospel study.
- From Mosiah 3, create an outline that demonstrates and explains the mission of the Savior through mortality and in the postmortal life.