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When Jesus Visited Some "Other Sheep"

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Abstract: The "American Gospel" (3 Nephi), as recorded in the Book of Mormon, clarifies, and supports the teachings of the Bible and testifies of its authenticity. When Jesus Christ visited the American continent he blessed his people, organized his Church, and taught the gospel.

When Jesus Visited Some "Other Sheep"

by Richard O. Cowan*

Many believers in Christ wish they could have more of the Master's words than those which are recorded in the New Testament. As Latter-day Saints, we enjoy such a blessing. For centuries Nephite prophets had foretold the future visit of the Lord to His people in the Americas (see *2 Nephi* 26:1-9, and *Alma* 16:20). During His ministry in the Eastern Hemisphere, Christ spoke of "other sheep" whom He also must visit and teach. (*John* 10:16.) These "sheep" could not have been the Gentiles, because Christ was sent only to ". . . the lost sheep of the house of Israel." (*Matthew* 15:24.) Following His resurrection, when Christ first appeared to the Nephites, who were Israelites descended from Joseph (*1 Nephi* 5:14), He told them that they were the "other sheep" of whom He had spoken. (*3 Nephi* 15:21.)

Latter-day Saints sometimes refer to the book of *Third Nephi* as the "American Gospel," because it includes the record of the Saviour's ministry among the ancient inhabitants of the American continent. This Book of Mormon account complements the Gospels in the New Testament and bears witness of their authenticity. When the Spanish conquistadores reached America 15 centuries after the Saviour's visit, they found Indian traditions and practices which pointed back to the visit of Jesus Christ among their forefathers.

The Nephite scripture testifies to the authenticity of the Bible. During His ministry in America, the Saviour quoted large portions of both Old and New Testament writings (*Isaiah* 54 in *3 Nephi* 22; *Malachi* 3 and 4 in *3 Nephi* 24 and 25; *Matthew* 5-7 in *3 Nephi* 12-14). Christ gave divine sanction to these passages by citing them as being God's word.

In the case of the Beatitudes, particularly, the Book of Mormon account gives clarification, as seen in the following examples: "Yea, blessed are the poor in spirit *who come unto me*, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven." (*3 Nephi* 12:3; see *Matthew* 5:3.) "And blessed are all they who do hunger and thirst after righteousness, for they shall be filled *with the Holy Ghost*." (*3 Nephi* 12:6; see *Matthew* 5:6.) Furthermore, as the Nephite record

makes clear, the truly blessed are those who humble themselves, repent of their sins, and are baptized. (*3 Nephi* 12:1, 2.)

One feature of the sermon has long puzzled students of Christ's teachings. Consider His command to ". . . Take no thought for your life, what ye shall eat, or what ye shall drink; nor yet for your body, what ye shall put on. . ." (*Matthew* 6:25.) This has seemed inconsistent with our obligation to work by the sweat of our face (*Genesis* 3:19) to support ourselves and our families. The Book of Mormon record clears up the problem. The Nephite account points out explicitly that this injunction was directed only to the twelve disciples, who were to spend their full time in the ministry, and not to believers in general. (*3 Nephi* 13:25.)

Questions which have divided the Christian world for centuries are decisively answered by the "American Gospel." Ever since the Middle Ages there has been disagreement among the churches of the world over the proper mode of baptism. Consider the clear instructions on baptism which Christ gave to the Nephites, as recorded in *3 Nephi* 11:23-26.

Some churches today bear the names of their prominent founders, while the names of others reflect the group's particular form of government or doctrinal emphasis. In contrast to such confusion, consider again the Lord's words to the Nephites:

And how be it my church save it be called in my name? For if a church be called in Moses' name then it be Moses' church; or if it be called in the name of a man then it be the church of a man; but if it be called in my name then it is my church, if it so be that they are built upon my gospel. (3 Nephi 27:8.)

Mormon explained that his abridgment did not include "even a hundredth part" of Christ's words to the Nephites. (*3 Nephi* 26:6.) He added that if we ". . . shall believe these things then shall the greater things be made manifest. . ." (*3 Nephi* 26:9.)

Let us be faithful in keeping those commandments which have already been revealed, that we may be worthy to receive the "great and important things" the Lord has promised he will yet reveal to us.

(For Course 9, lesson of December 3, "Christ among the Nephites"; and of general interest.)

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HE BLESSED HIS PEOPLE . . .

He healed the sick and commanded that the little children be brought to Him, and He blessed them. (3 Nephi 17: 6-13, 21.)

He miraculously provided sacramental bread and wine. (3 Nephi 20:3-9.)

Christ prayed for people who then received marvelous spiritual manifestations. (3 Nephi 17:15-22; 19:28-36.)

HE ORGANIZED HIS CHURCH . . .

The Church was to bear the name of Jesus Christ. (3 Nephi 27:3-8.)

He called twelve disciples. (3 Nephi 11:18, 22; 12:1; 19:4.)

He gave the 12 disciples authority to baptize, together with exact instructions concerning the ordinance. (3 Nephi 11:21-26.)

He also gave the 12 disciples authority to bestow the gift of the Holy Ghost. (3 Nephi 18:36-39.)

He explained the meaning of the sacrament. (3 Nephi 18:1-11, 28-32; 20:8, 9.)

HE TAUGHT THE GOSPEL AS THE WAY OF LIFE . . .

Jesus defined the Gospel; and repentance, baptism, and endurance to the end were commanded. (3 Nephi 27:13-22.)

He told the people that gentiles could become covenant people through repentance and baptism. (3 Nephi 21:22.)

"And whatsoever ye shall ask the Father in my name, which is right, believing that ye shall receive, behold it shall be given unto you." (3 Nephi 18:20.)

"Pray in your families unto the Father, always in my name, that your wives and your children may be blessed." (3 Nephi 18:21.)

Faith of the people is necessary for Christ's miracles to be called forth. (3 Nephi 19:35, 36.)

Jesus commanded the people to search the scriptures. (3 Nephi 23:1-5.)

"And they taught, and did minister one to another; and they had all things common among them, every man dealing justly, one with another." (3 Nephi 26:19.)

"Therefore I would that ye should be perfect even as I, or your Father who is in heaven is perfect." (3 Nephi 12:48.)

