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## The First Coming of the Lord to the Jews: A Book of Mormon Perspective

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THE FIRST COMING OF THE LORD  
TO THE JEWS: A BOOK  
OF MORMON PERSPECTIVE

*Richard D. Draper*

Speaking prophetically, Alma told the Saints at Gideon that “there be many things to come; and behold, there is one thing which is of more importance than they all—for behold, the time is not far distant that the Redeemer liveth and cometh among his people” (Alma 7:7). Alma was not the only Book of Mormon prophet who knew of things to come. But he knew, as he reminded his hearers, that there was one future event more important than any other: the coming of the Savior to the earth.

Their prophecies included some very specific items, some stated more clearly than most found in the Bible. For instance, the Nephite prophets knew from the time God called Lehi to His work that the Savior would come six hundred years in the future; they knew that His mother would be named Mary and that she would dwell in Nazareth; and they also knew that He would not appear unto them as a mortal man. There were additional details that God revealed to them concerning the Lord’s first coming—details that He wanted them to understand. Their understanding of the mortal Messiah and His mission came solely from God. As a result, the Book of Mormon emphasizes what the Father

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felt was important about Jesus' first coming. By bringing all these prophetic elements together, we can get a clear picture of the essentials. The purpose of this paper is to bring together those items, that we might better understand what the Father wants to emphasize concerning the Lord's first coming. For the sake of space, this paper will be limited to revealed information about the Savior's ministry among the Jews.

Though this study is about the Lord's first coming, it also has something to say about the foreknowledge of God and how God uses that foreknowledge to further His work. The Book of Mormon shows us that God knows the future down to the smallest details, such as the names by which His mortal children shall be known and where they shall reside. It also shows us that God willingly reveals details of the future to His prophets and through them to His other children. He does this that all might be prepared to take full advantage of that which is to come.

The Book of Mormon also shows us that not all respond favorably to the faith that prophecy demands. Many, especially among the Nephite intellectuals, found the doctrine impossible to believe. Sherem took Jacob to task for perverting the way of truth by promoting the "worship of a being which ye say shall come many hundred years hence." He assured Jacob that "this is blasphemy; for no man knoweth of such things; for he cannot tell of things to come" (Jacob 7:7). Korihor preached "unto the people against the prophecies which had been spoken by the prophets, concerning the coming of Christ" (Alma 30:6). He boldly asked, "Why do ye look for a Christ? For no man can know of anything which is to come" (Alma 30:13). The prophetic witness of the first coming of the Lord proves both of these men wrong. In the book's witness of the first coming of the Savior, we see just how much righteous men and women knew about the future.

## THE LITERAL SON OF GOD

One of the strongest messages that comes through the pages of the Book of Mormon is that the Messiah would be the Son of God. Alma testified that "he shall be born of Mary, . . . who shall be overshadowed and conceive by the power of the Holy Ghost, and bring forth a son,



yea, even the Son of God” (Alma 7:10). An angel assured Nephi that Mary was “the mother of the Son of God, after the manner of the flesh” (1 Nephi 11:18). That is a striking statement. The great Jehovah, the Creator of heaven and earth, would enter the world just as any other baby. Though His conception might be miraculous, His birth would not be. Like us, He would in the natural way take upon Himself flesh and blood and go forth among the children of men (see Mosiah 7:26–27). How apropos, if homey, is King Benjamin’s statement that the Redeemer would “dwell in a tabernacle of clay” (Mosiah 3:5).

However, we must be careful not to make the mortal Savior too much like ourselves. The Book of Mormon testifies that He was something special, something unique. Though He might dwell in a tabernacle of clay, He would come “with power” and “go forth amongst men, working mighty miracles” (Mosiah 3:5). He would have the power to do His mighty works as a direct result of being the “Only Begotten of the Father” (2 Nephi 25:12). Never in the history of this testial world would there be another born as Son of Elohim. His conception and birth allowed Him to retain His station as God. Abinadi avowed that “God himself shall come down among the children of men, and take upon him the form of man, and go forth in mighty power” (Mosiah 13:34). It is of note that Abinadi does not say that Jesus will be a man but rather He would have man’s form, through which He would be able to manifest His “mighty power.”

Alma elaborated on this point, saying that the Redeemer would “take upon him the image of man, and it should be the image after which man was created in the beginning; or in other words, he said that man was created after the image of God, and that God should come down among the children of men” (Mosiah 7:27). The point is that Jesus stood apart from all others born of mortal women, even though we look like Him and He lived like us. It was because He was different that He could fulfill His mission, for “he shall suffer temptations, and pain of body, hunger, thirst, and fatigue, even more than *man* can suffer, except it be unto death; for behold, blood cometh from every pore, so great shall be his anguish for the wickedness and the abominations of his people” (Mosiah 3:7; emphasis added). Two important points come



out of this scripture. First, it separates the Savior from the class of beings called “man.” He endured what no “man” could endure in terms of spiritual and physical suffering. Second, His godly abilities allowed His body to withstand the physical anguish the Atonement required.

When teaching the Zoramites, Amulek also stressed that Jesus was something other than man. Explaining the need for a great and last sacrifice, he said that it would “*not [be] a sacrifice of man*, neither of beast, neither of any manner of fowl; for it shall *not be a human sacrifice*; but . . . infinite and eternal” (Alma 34:10; emphasis added). His testimony, like those of Abinadi and Benjamin, seems startling. How could the Savior, born after the manner of the flesh, be considered anything other than human? But Amulek is making an important point. He expands Abinadi’s division of mortals into two categories by distinguishing whether or not they are infinite and eternal. If one is not infinite and eternal, then one is man; if one is infinite and eternal, then one is not man. Jesus was the Son of God and consequently even as a mortal was infinite and eternal. Thus, He carried with Him attributes no other mortal ever carried. Thus, Amulek could affirm that the “great and last sacrifice will be the Son of God, yea, infinite and eternal” (Alma 34:14).

## BOTH THE FATHER AND THE SON

The Savior was unique in two other ways. First, He was the “Only Begotten of God.” No other would ever be born in the flesh as God’s child. Second, as a mortal He was the Eternal Father. Therefore, He was at the same time the Son of God and the Eternal Father. Benjamin testified that He would “be called Jesus Christ, the Son of God, the Father of heaven and earth” (Mosiah 3:8). Nephi quoted Isaiah saying that “unto us a child is born, . . . and his name shall be called, . . . The Mighty God, The Everlasting Father” (2 Nephi 19:6).

Abinadi, in an extremely difficult passage, explained this dual characteristic. He noted that “God himself shall come down among the children of men” (Mosiah 15:1) and that He would come as “the Father and the Son” (Mosiah 15:2). What gave Him the power to be the Father? Abinadi said it was because “he was conceived by the power of God” (Mosiah 15:3). Just what Abinadi meant by that phrase is



puzzling, but it seems clear that the Savior's power as Father came as a direct result of something He inherited from God. What made Him the Son? The act by which God gave Him "the flesh" (Mosiah 15:2–3). Thus, Abinadi observed, He became "the Father and the Son" (Mosiah 15:3). The prophet went on to testify that "they are one God, yea, the very Eternal Father of heaven and earth" (Mosiah 15:4), and that Jesus, even though He came in the dual role of Son and Father, would be that "one God, [who] suffereth temptation, and yieldeth not to temptation, but suffereth himself to be mocked, and scourged, and cast out, and disowned by his people" (Mosiah 15:5). All this stresses the point that the Savior, even as a mortal, was unlike anyone else.

However, we should not get the idea from all this that the Savior could not relate to us. The testimony of the Book of Mormon explicitly states otherwise. Just because He was God and the Son of God, He was not, as Abinadi testified, shielded from temptation or pain or sorrow. Alma knew that the Savior would "go forth, suffering pains and afflictions and temptations of every kind; and this that the word might be fulfilled which saith he will take upon him the pains and the sicknesses of his people" (Alma 7:11). Indeed, He would "take upon him their infirmities" (Alma 7:12). There was a divine reason why: "that his bowels may be filled with mercy, according to the flesh, that he may know according to the flesh how to succor his people" (Alma 7:12). Therefore, as "the Spirit knoweth all things," the flesh also needed to know. Consequently, the mortal Christ would suffer "according to the flesh" (Alma 12:13)—and, remember, He would suffer even more than man can suffer without dying.

Someone once pointed out a myth that many believe. According to the myth, good people know little of temptation because only bad people are ever really touched by it. Nothing could be further from the truth. What does a person know about the seductive force or unrelenting pressure of temptation if he never resists? Only those who hold out against temptation ever really feel its depth and power. Christ never yielded. Therefore, He not only sympathizes with those who must struggle against it; He also empathizes. Thus, He could ascend "into



heaven having the bowels of mercy; being filled with compassion towards the children of men” (Mosiah 15:9).

Before that ascension, He had first to come to earth and fulfill His mission. The Nephite prophets were well aware that the Lord would come six hundred years after Lehi left Jerusalem, but they did not keep their dating system based on this prophecy. Instead, they followed a more traditional method of keeping track of years according to the reign of kings and judges. As a result, we don’t know if the general population knew that the exact year of the Lord’s first coming had been revealed. That uncertainty changed with the preaching of Samuel the Lamanite. He told them the Lord would come in five years and gave the people a very specific sign by which they would know that the Lord had indeed come. There would be “one day and a night and a day, as if it were one day and there were no night” (Helaman 14:4). In addition, “there shall a new star arise, such an one as ye never have beheld” (Helaman 14:5). By this they would know that the Son of God had come “to redeem all those who believe on his name” (Helaman 14:2).

## HIS EARLY MINISTRY

In addition to knowing when He would be born, they also knew it would be some time before He would start His actual ministry. During that period “the Spirit of the Lord shall rest upon him, the spirit of wisdom and understanding, the spirit of counsel and might, the spirit of knowledge and of the fear of the Lord; and shall make him of quick understanding in the fear of the Lord” (2 Nephi 21:2–3). Then, after He had matured, He would go forth.

Before the ministry, He would have to take care of a very important matter: His baptism. The Father, through the amount of detail He revealed about this event, underscored its importance. Nephi taught that John the Baptist would play the principal role in the ordinance. Though John is never mentioned by name, his status is. Lehi called him “a prophet who should come before the Messiah, to prepare the way of the Lord” (1 Nephi 10:7) and knew that he would “baptize in Bethabara, beyond Jordan” (1 Nephi 10:9). Nephi also saw “the prophet who should prepare the way before” the Lord (1 Nephi 11:27).



They knew that he would come out of the wilderness and tell the people to make straight the path of the Lord. He would testify that one stands “among you whom ye know not; and he is mightier than I, whose shoe’s latchet I am not worthy to unloose” (1 Nephi 10:8). The mission of John the Baptist would also include an additional witness. “And after he had baptized the Messiah with water,” Lehi taught, “he should behold and bear record that he had baptized the Lamb of God” (1 Nephi 10:10).

Concerning Jesus Himself, Nephi predicted that “after he was baptized, . . . the Holy Ghost [would] come down and abide upon him in the form of a dove” (1 Nephi 11:27). The dove came as a sign that the Savior had been “obedient unto him [the Father] in keeping his commandments” (2 Nephi 31:7–8). It also showed that the power of the Holy Ghost comes only after one has entered into the water (see 2 Nephi 31:12).

Nephi helps us understand why the Father revealed so much detail about the Savior’s baptism. He shows us two points in particular. The first has to do with the condescension of God. The term denotes the act of voluntarily laying aside privilege, rank, or dignity. In vision, Nephi saw the Savior do this. “The angel said to me again: Look and behold the condescension of God! And I looked and beheld the Redeemer of the world, of whom my father had spoken. . . . And the Lamb of God went forth and was baptized [by a man]” (1 Nephi 11:26–27). He who was holy and the Redeemer of humankind condescended to be baptized by a man who, though one of the greatest born of woman, was not worthy to untie His sandal straps.

The second deals with the Savior’s need to fulfill all righteousness. The Lord had done all that had been required of Him up to the point He was about to start His ministry, which includes living for thirty years in a state of holiness. But He could not stop now. He had to continue until He had done all that the Father required. At this point, the Father required that Jesus show “unto the children of men that, according to the flesh he humbleth himself before the Father, and witnesseth unto the Father that he would be obedient unto him in keeping his commandments” (2 Nephi 31:7). Further, He had to show



“the children of men the straitness of the path, and the narrowness of the gate, by which they should enter, he having set the example before them” (2 Nephi 31:9). Indeed, He did show the way, for if the Savior was holy and still had to fulfill the Father’s will by being baptized, “how much more need have we, being unholy, to be baptized” (2 Nephi 31:5).

#### “MINISTERING UNTO THE PEOPLE”

Once the Savior had met that requirement, He was ready to move on to the next phase of His mission. That phase was to go “forth ministering unto the people, in power and great glory” (1 Nephi 11:28). Abinadi testified He would “go forth in mighty power upon the face of the earth” (Mosiah 13:34). The power would be manifest, among other ways, through miracles. The prophets were well aware of the breadth of those miracles, which would include “healing the sick, raising the dead, causing the lame to walk, the blind to receive their sight, and the deaf to hear, and curing all manner of diseases. And he shall cast out devils, or the evil spirits which dwell in the hearts of the children of men” (Mosiah 3:5–6). As Nephi saw, these miracles were not few and far between. “I beheld multitudes of people who were sick, and who were afflicted with all manner of diseases, and with devils and unclean spirits. . . . And they were healed by the power of the Lamb of God; and the devils and the unclean spirits were cast out” (1 Nephi 11:31).

As a result of these deeds, “multitudes were gathered together to hear him” (1 Nephi 11:28). Among these Nephi saw “many fall down at his feet and worship him” (1 Nephi 11:24). Twelve of these would be called to His service. Nephi knew, by angelic testimony, that their title would be “apostle” (1 Nephi 11:34) and that, someday, they would “judge the twelve tribes of Israel” (1 Nephi 12:9). Before that day, they would assist the Lord in His ministry. One of their main functions would be to “bear record” of the Lamb of God (see 1 Nephi 13:24).

The Book of Mormon prophets knew that the Savior would devote most of His time to teaching the people. His message would carry the pure “word of God” (1 Nephi 11:25). Through it, those who would hear would be brought to “the love of God” (1 Nephi 11:25). Such

love, as Nephi understood, “sheddeth itself abroad in the hearts of the children of men; wherefore, it is the most desirable above all things” (1 Nephi 11:22). Indeed, it is “the most joyous to the soul” (1 Nephi 11:23).

### THE ATONEMENT: POWER TO REDEEM

His teachings and His miracles were the foundations to the Lord’s central work. “A prophet would the Lord God raise up among the Jews,” Lehi testified, “even a Messiah, or, in other words, a Savior of the world” (1 Nephi 10:4). This Messiah, he went on to say, would also be the “Redeemer of the world” (1 Nephi 10:5). The two tasks, redemption and salvation—though closely related—are not identical. Redemption carries the idea of paying the price necessary to bring a person or people out of bondage. Salvation, on the other hand, goes beyond merely freeing them. It carries with it the idea of assuring them further existence in which they can enjoy security and happiness.

The Savior’s power to redeem grew out of the Atonement. It was through the Atonement that He paid the necessary price to save humankind. Jacob assured his people that “redemption cometh in and through the Holy Messiah; for he is full of grace and truth. Behold, he offereth himself a sacrifice for sin, to answer the ends of the law, unto all those who have a broken heart and a contrite spirit” (2 Nephi 2:6–7). He paid the price of Himself. “His blood atoneth for the sins of those who have fallen by the transgression of Adam,” King Benjamin taught. It covered those “who have died not knowing the will of God concerning them, or who have ignorantly sinned” (Mosiah 3:11). This sentence gives us a feel for the breadth of the Savior’s redeeming power. However, its full force would not come upon all people, only those who met the proper criteria. “He shall come into the world to redeem his people,” Amulek taught, “and he shall take upon him the transgressions of those who believe on his name” (Alma 11:40). It is true that there is a universal aspect of the Redemption: “Because of the intercession for all, all men come unto God; wherefore, they stand . . . to be judged of him according to the truth and holiness which is in him” (2 Nephi 2:10). Thus, some aspects of the Savior’s atonement benefit everyone.



However, that is not the whole story. As Nephi, the son of Helaman, testified, Jesus “hath power given unto him . . . to redeem them from their sins because of repentance” (Helaman 5:11). The Nephites understood that the Savior paid the price to redeem us from the Fall; however, it would be up to each individual to accept the Redemption and the freedom it brought. Repentance is the means God has provided by which we may show our acceptance. Seeing repentance in this way allows us to focus on its positive aspects. So often we see it as the burden we pay to have our sins remitted. The truth of the matter is that Christ has given us a gift: redemption. It is freely given, but we must accept it. We do that by repenting. When we accept the Lord’s gift, He forgives our sins. Samuel the Lamanite said, “Repent of all your sins, that thereby ye may have a remission of them through his merits” (Helaman 14:13).

That redemption opens the way for full salvation through which the individual can secure eternal life and joy. Benjamin testified that the Lord “cometh unto his own, that salvation might come unto the children of men even through faith on his name” (Mosiah 3:9). It is of note that God designed the Savior’s mission to the Jews as the means of taking salvation to all His children. The Father sent Jesus specifically to the Jews, but the objective was not Jewish salvation alone. What happened to the Savior while He was with the Jews would open the way for the salvation of all people. In Benjamin’s seemingly simple statement, we see that God made the wicked among the Jews, like He made Assyria or Babylon, instruments in bringing about His will.

The Book of Mormon shows that the Savior designed the teachings, acts, signs, and miracles of His ministry to promote faith in Him so He could save the people. The Book of Mormon prophets knew that “there is no other . . . means whereby man can be saved, only through the atoning blood of Jesus Christ” (Helaman 5:9). But people had to have faith in that blood or they would not do what was required of them to be saved. Amulek explained why it was necessary for sinners to accept the Lord, forsake their sins, and become clean. It was because the Lord “cannot save them in their sins; for I cannot deny his word, and he hath said that no unclean thing can inherit the kingdom of



heaven; therefore, how can ye be saved except ye inherit the kingdom of heaven? Therefore, ye cannot be saved in your sins" (Alma 11:37). The Lord's power operated only to save people from their sins. That meant that they had to forsake their sins through faith and repentance.

### "SLAIN FOR THE SINS OF THE WORLD"

Through His teachings, signs, miracles, and loving kindness, the Lord sought to create that faith by which He could save the people. But "even after all this," taught King Benjamin, "they shall consider him a man, and say that he hath a devil" (Mosiah 3:9). Among the multitudes that came to hear Him, there were many who would turn away and "cast him out from among them" (1 Nephi 11:28). Eventually, the prophets saw, the Jews' fear and hatred would turn murderous. Nephi saw in vision that "the Son of the everlasting God was judged of the world" (1 Nephi 11:32). The irony is amazing. The righteous God and judge of all would be judged by the world. But their judgment would not be righteous. "And the world, because of their iniquity, shall judge him to be a thing of naught; wherefore they scourge him, and he suffereth it; and they smite him, and he suffereth it. Yea, they spit upon him, and he suffereth it, because of His loving kindness and his long-suffering towards the children of men" (1 Nephi 19:9). Benjamin said these people, unyielding to His loving kindness, "shall scourge him, and shall crucify him" (Mosiah 3:9). In this way, "he was lifted up upon the cross and slain for the sins of the world" (1 Nephi 11:33).

He was slain not only for the sins of the world but also because of them. People do not seem to realize that sin is blinding. But sin cannot blind in and of itself. Rather, it is the instrument whereby people blind themselves. Having done so, a Jewish mob moved against their God, and He "yieldeth himself, according to the words of the angel, as a man, into the hands of wicked men, to be lifted up" (1 Nephi 19:10).

The use of the word *wicked* is arresting. It points to much more than simply not measuring up to a spiritual standard. The word describes a conscious and deliberate opposition to and violation of moral law. Though many of the Lord's initial followers may have inadvertently blinded themselves with sin, the Book of Mormon makes it



clear that the Jewish leadership knew what they were doing. Therefore, its prophets could say that the Messiah will “come among the Jews, among those who are the more wicked part of the world; and they shall crucify him—for thus it behooveth our God, and there is none other nation on earth that would crucify their God. For should the mighty miracles be wrought among other nations they would repent, and know that he be their God. But because of priestcrafts and iniquities, they at Jerusalem will stiffen their necks against him, that he be crucified” (2 Nephi 10:3–5).

Due to their murderous hatred, they would do more than just crucify Him. They would first put Him through tremendous humiliation and torture. He saw it coming and said, “I gave my back to the smiter, and my cheeks to them that plucked off the hair. I hid not my face from the shame of spitting” (2 Nephi 7:6). Further, He would not fight them. “He shall be led, yea, even as Isaiah said, as a sheep before the shearer is dumb, so he opened not his mouth” (Mosiah 15:6). So wicked men judged the God of judgment, shamed Him, humiliated Him, and then crucified Him.

The Book of Mormon, however, shows that the situation is not as black as it appears. At least two positive things came out of it. The first was for the Lord Himself, who at the time “when his soul has been made an offering for sin he shall see his seed” (Mosiah 15:10). Just when He would see His seed Abinadi does not make clear. Could it have been during the agony of Gethsemane or on the cross? Or was it after, as He ministered to the spirit world or, later, to people on two continents? The text is not clear. But Abinadi knew who it was the Lord would see. It was those who “looked forward to that day for a remission of their sins, . . . or they [who] are the heirs of the kingdom of God” (Mosiah 15:11). The Savior would see these, and His soul would rejoice.

The second item was that all the suffering and torture worked to God’s end: “Christ shall come among the children of men, to take upon him the transgressions of his people, and that he shall atone for the sins of the world” (Alma 34:8). His mission was twofold. First, He would take upon Him the transgressions of His people. In that way He would pay the debt of sin and redeem them from death and hell. In addition,

He would save them by making an atonement on their behalf. The word *atonement* carries with it the idea of reconciliation. An atonement is needed when two estranged parties must come together for the benefit of either or both. Alma taught that due to sin people suffer both temporal and spiritual death. As a result of this, when they die physically, their souls are “miserable, being cut off from the presence of the Lord” (Alma 42:11). The only way to reclaim them from their fallen state is to reconcile them to God. But justice had claim on them, due to sin, and demanded their separation from God. The Savior gave His blood and thus redeemed them from sin and also freed them from justice, but on a condition that they accept His mercy. However, He would not force anyone to live according to the *law* of mercy.

### JUSTICE AND MERCY

Two points need to be understood. First, the Savior’s death allowed the *law* of mercy to operate within the bounds of the *law* of justice. Second, Jesus did not die to move His people from law to lawlessness. His death made it possible for them to live according to the law of mercy rather than the law of justice. Those who chose mercy still lived according to the law and therefore, the Savior could reconcile them to the Father. The means by which they could choose to come under the law of mercy was repentance. So, Alma explains, “The plan of mercy could not be brought about except an atonement should be made; therefore God himself atoneth for the sins of the world, to bring about the plan of mercy, to appease the demands of justice” (Alma 42:15). In doing so, Jesus made it possible for us to return to the Father. Of all the prophecies dealing with the first coming, the Lord’s mission as Savior and Redeemer is central.

The Book of Mormon prophets told their people that they would know when Jesus made that atonement. Nephi explained that there would be “three days of darkness, which should be a sign given of his death unto those who should inhabit the isles of the sea, more especially given unto those who are of the house of Israel” (1 Nephi 19:10). But the event would be signaled by far more severe conditions than mere darkness. Indeed, “the rocks of the earth must rend; and



because of the groanings of the earth, many of the kings of the isles of the sea shall be wrought upon by the Spirit of God, to exclaim: The God of nature suffers" (1 Nephi 19:12).

## RESURRECTION

His suffering and death would not be the last events defining His first coming to the Jews. He still had to be resurrected and ascend in order to prepare for His second coming. Therefore, "after he is laid in a sepulchre for the space of three days he shall rise from the dead, with healing in his wings" (2 Nephi 25:13; see also 1 Nephi 19:10). It is of note that the Lord's healing ministry would continue even into the Resurrection. It would focus on healing the breach between man and God. Through the power of the Resurrection, the Father "breaketh the bands of death, having gained the victory over death; giving the Son power to make intercession for the children of men" (Mosiah 15:8). "Behold, the resurrection of Christ redeemeth mankind, yea, even all mankind, and bringeth them back into the presence of the Lord. Yea, and it bringeth to pass the condition of repentance, that whosoever repenteth the same is not hewn down and cast into the fire," for "there cometh upon them again a spiritual death, yea, a second death, for they are cut off again as to things pertaining to righteousness" (Helaman 14:17–18).

With the Resurrection and reconciliation made, the Savior's first coming to the Jews met all its objectives, and He departed from these people, never to return until He would come to them again in the last days.

An observation in closing: most of what the Book of Mormon teaches about the Lord's first coming is laid out in the books of Nephi. God had already revealed the essential elements of His Son's mission before Lehi ever left the Old World. Therefore, the righteous Nephites had a clear picture of the Savior's mortal mission from the beginning. Later prophets generally did little more than confirm what was already known. The point is that God saw fit to reveal all the essentials about His Son's mortal ministry early so that the Nephite people, far removed from the place of the first coming of the Lord, could still be prepared for and take advantage of what He offered.