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INSIGHTS

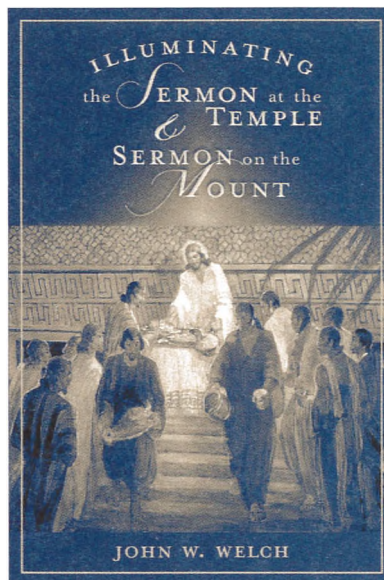
A WINDOW ON THE ANCIENT WORLD

January 1999

"by study and also by faith" (D&C 88:118)

Revised Book Extends LDS Scholar's Analysis of Jesus' Immortal Sermon

John W. Welch has revised and updated his 1990 book *The Sermon at the Temple and the Sermon on the Mount*, which presented a thorough Latter-day Saint interpretation of Jesus' masterful sermon delivered to his disciples in New Testament Galilee and in New World Bountiful. The new FARMS paperback edition, titled *Illuminating the Sermon at the Temple and Sermon on the Mount: An Approach to 3 Nephi 11–18 and Matthew 5–7*, features a new chapter and several new sections that offer interesting support for viewing the Sermon as a ritual text.



In connection with this release, FARMS will sponsor a symposium on the Sermon on 6 February at BYU (see the notice on page 6).

In exploring the Sermon's history, language, and temple context, Welch relies on key information found only in the Book of Mormon. He shows that, unlike the Sermon on the Mount, the Sermon at the Temple recorded in 3 Nephi is an extensive report with a clear contextual setting that invites deeper understanding of this vital text. Relying also on the methods of

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Article Explains How New Testament Books Were Chosen

Within a century of the death of Jesus Christ, Christians had produced a body of religious writings that preserved and complemented their presumably rich oral tradition. This small but diverse library included various accounts of Christ's birth, collections of his sayings, reports of his wondrous deeds and the missionary activities of his apostles, Paul's letters, homilies, and more. A few centuries later, some of these writings became canonized as accepted scriptures to the exclusion of others. Who made those crucial decisions? How, when, and under what circumstances was our present New Testament canon determined?

Although the surviving evidence does not reveal the complete story, it does document some interesting developments in the emergence of the New Testament canon. In an article titled "How the Books of the New Testament Were Chosen," biblical scholar Roy W. Hoover explores the long process by which twenty-seven religious writings eventually attained canonical status in the Western church. Hoover's article appeared in *Bible Review* in April 1993 and is available as a reprint through FARMS (see the order form).

Hoover offers many helpful insights for students of the New Testament. For example, in the

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The Foundation for
Ancient Research
and Mormon Studies

FARMS UPDATE

A Report on Research in Progress

Number 122

Tents in the Book of Mormon

References to New World tents in the Book of Mormon¹ raise legitimate questions about whether tents are known from scholarly sources on Mesoamerica. The earliest evidence comes from historical documents written around the time of the Spanish conquest in 1521, or more than one thousand years after the demise of the Nephite civilization. These records indicate that different kinds of tents and tentlike structures were in regular use by Aztec armies and that, when the Spaniards saw them, they immediately labeled them *tiendas*, "tents."

Diego Durán's *Historia de las Indias de Nueva España e Islas de la Tierra Firme*, a key account of Aztec war customs, describes tents in detail. Durán mentions at least five kinds of field military shelters, some of which were labeled *tiendas* by the Spaniards:

- *casas pajizas*, houses of straw;
- *chozas*, huts of unspecified material but suitable for leaders to occupy;
- *jacales* (from Nahuátl *xahcalli*), huts; some were collapsible and movable; it is unclear how these differed from *chozas*; perhaps the latter were made from materials such as brush scrounged in the field, while the *jacales* may have been formed from mats;
- *tiendas*, tents; perhaps of cloth,

given the normal Spanish sense of *tiendas*; some were good enough to house leaders;

- *casas de petates*, houses of mats; the cheap, light, portable mats could be combined with, say, spears, to make a simple "tent" for soldiers;
- *cuarteles*, quarters, barracks; perhaps commandeered housing, or possibly collapsible multiperson shelters.

The variety of military housing should not surprise us, for as long as there are armies, there must be the equivalents of tents. The form of tents varies in specific cultures, as do the materials and names used for them.

Although widespread evidence for the military use of tents in Mesoamerica postdates Book of Mormon times, still it indicates a much earlier cultural pattern of tent use in that area. Shelters like those of the Aztec soldiers were also used in many parts of Mesoamerica well before the time of the conquest. In the Motul dictionary, a sixteenth-century work that sheds vital light on pre-Spanish Yucatec Maya language and culture, the definition for the word *pazel* is translated as "hut or tent for use in the field, or small straw booth." Mesoamerican farmers have long and widely used a similar type of hut. For example, the Zoques of Santa Maria

Chimalapa in the Isthmus of Tehuantepec still construct small chozas of palm fronds and grass in which they sleep during the period when they work in the fields away from home.

If the Aztecs were smart enough to figure out field shelter for their soldiers, one can reasonably suppose that their ancient Mesoamerican predecessors had solved the same problem in a similar way over millennia of warfare. Moreover, it is entirely possible that the Aztecs, great cultural copycats who fought or had military garrisons in many parts of Mesoamerica, adopted the idea of war tents from local cultures going back hundreds of years.

Of course, the use of tents, especially temporary, makeshift shelters of brush or grass used two thousand years ago, would be completely undetectable archaeologically. Until archaeologists solve this dilemma, it seems sensible to accept the Book of Mormon as documentary evidence of tents in the first century B.C. on a par with the testimony of Durán and others for the sixteenth century A.D.

NOTE

1. See, for example, 2 Nephi 5:7; Enos 1:20; Mosiah 2:5-6; 18:34; Alma 2:20; 46:31.

Contributed by John L. Sorenson

Scripture insight

Background on the Gospels

The term *gospel* means “good news” and has specific reference to the news of the atoning sacrifice of Jesus Christ. The word came to be applied to histories of the life and ministry of Christ because Mark began his account with the words “The beginning of the gospel of Jesus Christ, the Son of God . . .” (Mark 1:1).

Many such accounts were circulating in the early centuries of Christianity, as Luke 1:1 attests. Some of these gospels were discovered only in the last century. Some of them do not deal with the mortal life of Jesus but describe his postresurrection visits to the apostles and what he taught them. Of the many gospels, only four—those of Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John—were accepted as part of the New Testament. Latter-day Saints accept an additional canonized gospel: the account of Christ’s ministry among the Nephites as recorded in 3 Nephi in the Book of Mormon.

The Gospels of Matthew, Mark, and Luke are termed “synoptics” (from the Greek word meaning “seeing together”) because they cover basically the same stories. Only two of the four New Testament Gospel writers—the apostles Matthew and John—had actually known Jesus (see Matthew 4:21; 9:9).

The apostle John was apparently the last of the four Gospel writers to write an account of Jesus’ mortal ministry. He included stories not found in the synoptics and seems to have deliberately avoided repeating

most of the stories found in all three synoptics. John’s approach was essentially to testify of the Savior’s divinity and power. Thus he begins his Gospel with reference to the preexistent Christ (see John 1:1–3, 14).

One of the synoptic Gospels was also written by a man named John, whose Latin name was Marcus, generally known as Mark. He is said to have been the son of Mary, the sister of Barnabas (see Acts 12:12; Colossians 4:10), which would explain why he accompanied Barnabas and Paul on their missionary journeys (see Acts 12:25; 15:36–40; 2 Timothy 4:11). Mark later traveled with the apostle Peter, who called the young man “my son” (1 Peter 5:13). In fact, several early Christian writers indicated that Mark’s Gospel comprised a collection of stories about Jesus that Mark had heard from Peter. Barnabas, a native of Cyprus, was an early convert to the church (see Acts 4:36), but there is no clear indication that either he or his nephew Mark had known Jesus (despite the popular attempt to identify Mark with the “young man” of Mark 14:51–52).

Luke (also called Lucas), a physician by trade, was one of Paul’s later missionary companions (see Colossians 4:14; 2 Timothy 4:11; Philemon 1:24). He is the author of both the Gospel that bears his name and the Acts of the Apostles (compare Luke 1:1–4 with Acts 1:1 and note the frequent use of *we* in Acts 16; 20–21; 27–28). Luke was at least a second-generation

Christian and had not known Christ personally. His is the only account of the calling of the Seventy (see Luke 10), which may reflect his concern for missionary work. Quite likely the only Gospel writer who was not Jewish, Luke was presumably unaffected by the enmity between Jews and Samaritans and thus is our only source for information on the good Samaritan, the Samaritan leper cured by Jesus, and the conversion of the first Samaritans (see Luke 10:30–37; 17:12–18; Acts 8:25). Matthew, on the other hand, recorded in Matthew 10:5–6 that Jesus told his disciples at first not to preach to the Samaritans (a mandate that Jesus later reversed; see Matthew 28:19).

Scholars disagree about which of the synoptic Gospels was written first; but because both Matthew and Luke included in their accounts most of the stories told by Mark, many scholars accept that Mark’s Gospel was the first, followed by those of Matthew and Luke. Matthew’s and Luke’s Gospels differ in their treatment, however. Luke’s account typically agrees with Mark’s version, while Matthew’s eyewitness account often differs from Mark’s account.

The Gospels of Matthew and Luke share some information, such as the Sermon on the Mount (or, according to Luke 6:17, “in the plain”). Some scholars believe that the material common to the Gospels of Matthew and Luke but missing

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Background on the Gospels (continued from page 3)

in Mark's Gospel came from a now-lost collection of Jesus' sayings, which modern scholars have called Q, from the German word for "source," *Quelle*. The fact that Matthew placed many of Jesus' teachings in a totally different context than Luke did again suggests that Matthew may have been correcting an earlier account or recollection.

Matthew and Luke must have had other sources as well, for each included some stories that are unique to his Gospel. For example, only Matthew wrote of the visit of the Wise Men, while only Luke told of the shepherds finding the infant Jesus in the manger. Indeed, the nature of some of Luke's account suggests that he may have interviewed members of Jesus' family, for he seems privy to some rather intimate family stories. He alone wrote that the angel Gabriel announced the forthcoming birth of John the Baptist and Jesus Christ, that Mary and Elisabeth were cousins, and that angelic ministrants heralded the Savior's birth (see Luke 1:1–20, 26–38; 2:8–14). Only Luke recounted Jesus' visit to the temple at age twelve (see

Luke 2:41–51) and the attempt to kill him in Nazareth, where he had been raised (see Luke 4:16–30). Another reason to believe that Luke may have interviewed members of Jesus' family is that in his Gospel he makes reference to the thoughts Mary kept to herself (see Luke 2:19, 51).

Some readers of the Gospels are struck by the fact that different versions of the same incidents do not always agree on the facts. While nonbelievers might see these discrepancies as a strike against these New Testament accounts, I consider them to be evidence of the writers' sincerity. Had the Gospel writers been trying to perpetrate a joint fraud, it seems likely they would have conspired to agree with each other on all points. This diversity among the Gospels in no way compromises the overarching, unified testimony and message of Christ's saving mission. Rather, it simply reflects the different perspectives of the early witnesses of Jesus Christ and the different aspects of his mission they chose to emphasize. —*Contributed by John A. Tvedtnes*

Publicly speaking

Lectures Open Windows on Ancient World

In full swing since the beginning of fall semester, FARMS brown bag lectures have kept attendees updated on an array of topics in ancient research.

On 17 September Jared W. Ludlow, a Ph.D. candidate in Near Eastern religions at UC Berkeley and Graduate Theological Union, discussed differing portrayals of Abraham in two Greek versions of the *Testament of Abraham*. He pointed out how such pseudepigraphic accounts may have been invented or refashioned to lend authority to new theological ideas and interpretations.

In their joint presentation on 30 September, Steven W. Booras of the FARMS Center for the Preservation of Ancient Religious Texts and Gene Ware of BYU's School of Technology reported on their ongoing work of producing digitized images of carbonized sixth-century papyrus scrolls found at Petra, Jordan. Initial tests indicate that applying multispectral imaging technology to these fire-blackened scroll fragments will yield highly legible images of the original cursive Greek script.

Archaeologist V. Garth Norman discussed intriguing geometric and dimensional correspondences between Mesoamerican and Middle Eastern art and architecture. His 14 October presentation included slides of Mesoamerican stone figures whose similar dimensions suggest the use of two standard lineal measurements in Mesoamerica that Norman believes match exactly the royal Babylonian and Egyptian cubits.

On 11 November Brian M. Hauglid of BYU's Department of Ancient Scripture shared examples of how Islamic literature such as the Hadith, the Tafsir, and Al-Tha'labi's *Qisaṣ al-Anbiya* preserves much biblical and apocryphal material on the creation, Abraham, and other pre-Islamic traditions of interest to Latter-day Saints.

Richard E. DeMaris, professor of theology at Indiana's Valparaiso University, presented two lectures on 2 December: a public lecture reporting archaeological evidence that the Corinthian Saints

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Lectures Open Windows (continued from page 4)

practiced baptism for the dead and a FARMS brown bag lecture on the ritual context of that practice. DeMaris conjectures that Greek and Roman funerary practices of washing the dead may have given rise to the early Christian practice of vicarious baptism for the dead. While DeMaris's interpretation clearly varies from the LDS view, it is refreshing to find a Protestant scholar attempting to take seriously the New Testament reference to baptism for the dead.

On 9 December BYU anthropologist David J. Johnson reported on his recent excavation work at Mar'ib in central Yemen and other sixth-century-B.C. sites in the Arabian Peninsula. His work thus

far shows that the Sabaeans controlled all of Arabia when Lehi's people would have passed through the area after their flight from Jerusalem.

In addition to the six brown bag seminars mentioned above, FARMS sponsored the first of a new, more formal noon lecture series. On 28 October BYU faculty members Terry B. Ball (Ancient Scripture), S. Kent Brown (Ancient Scripture), Arnold H. Green (History), David J. Johnson (Anthropology), and W. Revell Phillips (Geology) described the aims of a new long-term research project in Oman, a country in southeastern Arabia believed to coincide with the end of Lehi's trail through the Arabian desert.

Analysis of Jesus' Immortal Sermon (continued from page 1)

textual and social-scientific religious studies, Welch achieves in his engaging book what conventional New Testament scholarship has often attempted but failed to do—provide a coherent, unifying explanation of the Sermon on the Mount as a whole while giving clear meaning to its parts.

Part 1, "Setting the Stage," includes an overview of the book and a discussion of the need for a consistent, holistic interpretation of the Sermon on the Mount. Referring to the vast amount of scholarship on that inexhaustible text, Welch writes: "Out of this diversity, little consensus has . . . emerged about the original purpose and organization of the Sermon on the Mount. . . . In the face of this uncertainty, it seems to me that the Sermon at the Temple, with its unifying and coherent understanding of the Sermon on the Mount, provides a welcome new perspective. It offers answers to questions about why the Sermon was given, what was being said, what kind of sermon it was, how all of its parts fit together, and what it all means."

In part 2, "A Sacred Sermon," Welch challenges the notion that the Sermon is merely a moral discourse or eclectic collection of Jesus' sayings. He then proceeds to examine the Sermon in the context of a sacred temple experience. By viewing the instructions, doctrines, and commandments of the Sermon in relation to the ceremonial stages and ordinances of covenant making, Welch establishes a unified meaning and comprehensive significance of

an otherwise segmented text.

Part 3, "Further Studies," compares the two versions of the Sermon and discusses how their unique points suggest different settings and audiences. Welch argues persuasively that the 3 Nephi version of the Sermon on the Mount was not simply spliced together from the Bible text. The new chapter, "The Sermon on the Mount and Ritual Studies," identifies several ritual, ceremonial, and other important related religious functions served by the Sermon on the Mount.

"Any attempt to reconstruct such ritual actions is admittedly conjectural," writes Welch, "for that knowledge became lost with the deaths of those early initiates and remains unknown to us. . . . Far less conjectural, however, are the general patterns and purposes that investigators have discerned in rituals across all cultures. I point to those phenomena as further support for the basic suggestion that the Sermon functions well in a temple or ceremonial context. Just as ritual provides social order to one's way of life, ritual analysis can supply a deeply needed sense of underlying, unifying order in the Sermon itself."

This innovative study makes a valuable contribution to New Testament studies. Available from FARMS (see the enclosed order form), this book offers many insights that help bring the richness of Jesus' monumental sermon dramatically into focus.

Upcoming events

6 February 1999: "The Sermon on the Mount as a Temple Text," a FARMS symposium featuring Professor John W. Welch, who will discuss his newly released book, *Illuminating the Sermon at the Temple and Sermon on the Mount: An Approach to 3 Nephi 11–18 and Matthew 5–7* (see article on page 1). A panel of BYU professors will respond to Welch's presentation and share their own observations about the Sermon on the Mount and its counterpart in 3 Nephi known as the Sermon at the Temple. The panelists include three faculty members from the Department of Ancient Scripture (S. Kent Brown, director of Ancient Studies; Richard D. Draper; Gaye Strathearn) and two faculty members from the Department of English (Don E. Norton; John S. Tanner, department chair). A question-and-answer session will follow. The FARMS-sponsored symposium will be held from 9:00 A.M. to 12:00 noon in room 151 of the Tanner Building on the BYU campus. The public is invited. Admission is free.

How New Testament Books Were Chosen (continued from page 1)

mid-second century, Marcion, the son of a bishop in Asia Minor, proposed to reject the Jewish writings of the Old Testament in favor of a new canon consisting only of his own edited versions of Luke's Gospel and Paul's letters. Hoover comments: "Marcion's radical ideas ignited a controversy that led to his excommunication, but his heretical proposal forced the Church to make a case for the value and status of the Jewish Scriptures that it had adopted as its own, and, more relevant here, it prompted the Church to consider which of its own writings ought to be regarded as canonical—as normative—and why."

The article then focuses on attempts by the dominant Christian church over the next two centuries to define its canon of scriptures. Hoover makes it clear that this selection process was long and arduous. He describes the different lists of books considered authoritative by early Church Fathers such as Irenaeus, Eusebius, and Athanasius and discusses the criteria they used in constructing their lists. For example, Irenaeus insisted that there must be four Gospels because that number corresponded with the four cardinal directions and four principal winds. Hoover then presents an argument that the final decisions on the last books added to the canon in the late fourth century were based not on historical or theological arguments but on political factors.

Noting that the fourth-century Christian canon, though durable, has never been universal, Hoover concludes, "The status of the New Testament canon today resembles what it was in Eusebius' day: a question that attracts both a considerable consensus and continuing differences."

INSIGHTS

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The Purpose of FARMS

The Foundation for Ancient Research and Mormon Studies (FARMS) encourages and supports research about the Book of Mormon: Another Testament of Jesus Christ and other ancient scriptures. It also works to preserve ancient religious documents.

FARMS is a nonprofit educational foundation affiliated with Brigham Young University. Its main research interests include ancient history, language, literature, culture, geography, politics, and law relevant to the scriptures. Although such subjects are of secondary importance when compared with the spiritual and eternal messages of the scriptures, solid research and academic perspectives alone can supply certain kinds of useful information, even if only tentatively, concerning many significant and interesting questions about the scriptures.

The Foundation works to make interim and final reports about this research available widely, promptly, and economically. These publications are peer reviewed to ensure scholarly standards are met. The proceeds from the sale of these publications, including most royalties, are used to support further research and publications on the scriptures. As a service to teachers and students of the scriptures, research results are distributed in both scholarly and popular formats.

It is hoped that this information will help all interested people to "come unto Christ" (Jacob 1:7) and to understand and take more seriously these ancient witnesses of the atonement of Jesus Christ, the Son of God.