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Lesson XVI. Book of Mormon Prophecies - The Preservation of the Nephite Records and the Coming Forth of the Book of Mormon

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OUTLINE

Prophecies considered to date.

The six that make up this lesson:

1. Abinadi's prediction concerning Noah and his people.
2. The Nephites to be scourged and destroyed by the Lamanites.
3. The Lamanites not to be destroyed.
4. The corruption of "the great and abominable church."
5. The destruction of the Jaradites.
6. The promise to sincere seekers after truth who read the Book of Mormon.

QUESTIONS AND SUGGESTIONS.

1. Review the prophecies presented in the last four lessons.

2. Discuss the force of the law of compensation as illustrated in the life of Noah.

3. How do you justify the preservation of the Lamanites rather than the Nephites?

4. Have some one present in the class vital facts relative to the teachings and worship of the Catholic church as bearing upon the fourth prophecy of this lesson.

5. Review the story of the Jaredite colony.

6. Have members of the class present cases in illustration of the fulfillment of the prophecy number six.

7. Consider the prophecy contained in Helaman 13:18 and its fulfillment in Mormon 1:18.

LESSON XVI.

BOOK OF MORMON PROPHECIES.

(For Tuesday, March 8, or Sunday, March 20.)

THE PRESERVATION OF THE NEPHITE RECORDS AND THE COMING FORTH OF THE BOOK OF MORMON.

Surely "God moves in a mysterious way His wonders to perform." The manner in which He has preserved His people and His prophets is a remarkable testimony to His overruling providence. One of the most conclusive bits of evidence of such a providence is the remarkable preservation of the Nephite records that they might come forth in these latter days through the Book of Mormon.

From the time they were called to leave Jerusalem, the Nephites were instructed of the Lord that they should carefully safeguard both their own history and the history of their forefathers. You will recall how Nephi labored to obtain the Brass Plates—how he had to take human life to secure them—and how he responded to the obligation imposed upon him by the Lord to make and keep gold plates upon which the achievements of his own people might be inscribed. It is inspiring to note the zeal with

which these plates were preserved and handed down from generation to generation through a period of a thousand years. And then what significance in the thought that they were hidden away under the supervision of the Lord for fourteen hundred years to be brought forth according to His purposes, in these days of the gospel's restoration. To read in prophecy of the preservation of these records and of their being brought forth—and then to read in history the actual fulfillment of those prophecies—is a stirring testimony to the truthfulness of the Book of Mormon.

At least eight distinct groups of prophecies proclaim the preservation and coming forth of the Book of Mormon. As the reader turns through them as they are here briefly set forth he should turn also to a history of the Church or to Evans' "One Hundred Years of Mormonism" for a more complete statement of their fulfillment.

1. In the first place, Nephi was shown a thousand years before the

event occurred that his record should be hidden up and preserved.

"For behold, saith the Lamb, I will manifest myself unto thy seed, that they shall write many things which I shall minister unto them, which shall be plain and precious; and after thy seed shall be destroyed, and dwindle in unbelief, and also the seed of thy brethren; behold, these things shall be hid up, to come forth unto the Gentiles, by the gift and power of the Lamb." I Nephi 13:35.

This declaration is corroborated by such passages as III Nephi 16:4, and Mormon 8:4. It is interesting to note that particular mention was made in these prophetic utterances that the Lamanites should not be entrusted with the keeping of the sacred records.

"For thus saith the Lord God: They shall write the things which shall be done among them, and they shall be written and sealed up in a book, and those who have dwindled in unbelief, shall not have them, for they seek to destroy the things of God." II Nephi 26:17.

"And it came to pass that when we had gathered in all our people in one to the land of Cumorah, behold α , Mormon, began to be old; and knowing it to be the last struggle of my people, and having been commanded of the Lord that I should not suffer that the records which had been handed down by our fathers, which were sacred, to fall into the hands of the Lamanites, (for the Lamanites would destroy them,) therefore I made this record out of the plates of Nephi, and hid up in the hill Cumorah, all the records which had been entrusted to me by the hand of the Lord, save it were these few plates which I gave unto my son Moroni." Mormon 6:6.

That the record of the Nephites was so hidden away and preserved we know, of course, from the delivery of them by the angel Moroni to the Prophet Joseph in 1827. The Book of Mormon itself is our one best evidence of the fact.

II. If prophecy number one makes clear that the records were to be hidden away, prophecy number two

makes equally clear how they were to be hidden away. Because of the fact that the Nephites were to be destroyed and because the Lamanites were not to be given the records, some secure place of preservation must be had—what place more secure than mother earth—that vault in which we shall all be kept, between death and our resurrection.

"And the words which he shall write, shall be the words which are expedient in my wisdom should go forth unto the fruit of thy loins. And it shall be as if the fruit of thy loins had cried unto them from the dust; for I know their faith.

"And they shall cry from the dust; yea, even repentance unto their brethren, even after many generations have gone by them. And it shall come to pass that their cry shall go, even according to the simpleness of their words." II Nephi 3:19-20.

"For those who shall be destroyed shall speak unto them out of the ground, and their speech shall be low out of the dust, and their voice shall be as one that hath a familiar spirit; for the Lord God will give unto him power, that he may whisper concerning them, even as it were out of the ground; and their speech shall whisper out of the dust." II Nephi 26:16.

What a glory these lines add to Cumorah!

III. The third prophecy has to do with the translation of the records and is unique because of its exactness of detail. The Prophet Joseph is both named and proclaimed, having been foreseen as the seer of these latter days even in the days of Joseph who was sold into Egypt. It was foreseen also that the Prophet Joseph should be unlearned but that he should be enabled through the power of the Lord to do the work assigned him. Fully to appreciate this prophecy we should read carefully all of the third chapter of II Nephi together with the twenty-seventh chapter of that same book, but the two following passages are significant:

"And his name shall be called after me: and it shall be after the name of his father. And he shall be like unto me; for the thing which the Lord shall bring forth by his hand, by the power of the Lord shall bring my people unto salvation." II Nephi 3:15.

"Then shall the Lord God say unto him, The learned shall not read them, for they have rejected them, and I am able to do mine own work; wherefore thou shalt read the words which I shall give unto thee." II Nephi 27:20.

This twenty-seventh chapter is rich in significance because of the prophetic detail in which it narrates the actual experience of Martin Harris when he took certain transcriptions from the Nephite records and their translation to Professor Anthon of New York City. Read the account in Church History.

IV. In connection with this fourth prophecy it is interesting to know that among the first injunctions given by the Angel Moroni to the Prophet Joseph was the instruction that he should not consider the plates as having money value and that he should not seek through them to make gain. In fact solemn warning accompanied the injunction. The Prophet was further instructed to safeguard the plates from the gaze of men who in their lust for gold would seek them for their intrinsic worth.

What a fulfillment of prophecy.

"And now because of the glory of the world, and to get gain will they say this and not for the glory of God." II Nephi 27:16.

"And I am the same who hideth up this record unto the Lord; the plates thereof are of no worth, because of the commandment of the Lord. For he truly saith, that no one shall have them to get gain; but the record thereof is of great worth; and whoso shall bring it to light, him will the Lord bless." Mormon 8:14.

You will recall that when the Prophet Joseph had translated a certain portion of Mormon's abridg-

ment of the large plates, he allowed the translation to be shown to some of the relatives of Martin Harris. You will recall, also, that the translation was lost and that the Prophet was commanded not to re-translate from the large plates but to translate the small plates of Nephi instead. That the small plates were available—that they had been made and incorporated into Mormon's abridged record—was the result of God's wisdom, prophetically declared to both Nephi and Mormon.

"And now, as I have spoken concerning these plates, behold they are not the plates upon which I make a full account of the history of my people; for the plates upon which I make a full account of my people, I have given the name of Nephi; wherefore they are called the plates of Nephi, after mine own name; and these plates also are called the plates of Nephi.

"Nevertheless, I have received a commandment of the Lord, that I should make these plates, for the special purpose that there should be an account engraven of the ministry of my people.

"Upon the other plates should be engraven an account of the reign of the kings, and the wars and contentions of my people; wherefore these plates are for the more part of the ministry; and the other plates are for the more part of the reign of kings, and the wars and contentions of my people.

"Wherefore, the Lord hath commanded me to make these plates for a wise purpose in him; which purpose I know not.

"But the Lord knoweth all things from the beginning; wherefore, he prepareth a way to accomplish all his works among the children of men; for behold, he hath all power unto the fulfilling of all his words. And thus it is. Amen." I Nephi 9:2-6.

"And now I, Mormon, make a record of the things which I have both seen and heard, and call it the Book of Mormon.

"And about the time that Ammaron hid up the records unto the Lord, he came unto me, (I being about ten years of age; and I began to be learned somewhat after the manner of the learning of my people) and Ammaron said unto me, I perceive that thou art a sober child, and art quick to observe;

"Therefore when ye are about twenty and four years old, I would that ye should remember the things that ye have observed concerning this people; and when ye are of that age, go to the land Antum, unto a hill, which shall be called Shim; and there have I deposited unto the Lord, all the sacred engravings concerning this people.

"And behold, ye shall take the plates of Nephi unto yourself, and the remainder shall ye leave in the place where they are; and ye shall engrave on the plates of Nephi, all the things that ye have observed concerning this people.

"And I, Mormon, being a descendant of Nephi, (and my father's name was Mormon) I remembered the things which Amaron commanded me.

"And it came to pass that I, being eleven years old, was carried by my father into the land southward, even to the land of Zarahemla;

"The whole face of the land having become covered with buildings, and the people were as numerous almost, as it were the sand of the sea. (Mormon 1:1-7.)

VI. Space forbids that we enter upon anything like a full discussion of the fulfillment of prophecy number six. It fairly demands a volume. The Book of Mormon and the Bible join hands so remarkably in establishing the truths of the gospel of Jesus Christ. Witness the testimony of the Book of Mormon account of the mission of the Savior, of the resurrection, of the proper mode and necessity of baptism—in short of the whole gospel plan. At every turn the Book of Mormon re-enforces the Bible and makes clear its teachings. Prophecy declared that such should be the case.

"Wherefore, the fruit of thy loins shall write, and the fruit of the loins of Judah shall write, and that which shall be written by the fruit of thy loins, and also that which shall be written by the fruit of the loins of Judah, shall grow together, unto the confounding of false doctrines, and laying down of contentions, and establishing peace among the fruit of thy loins, and bringing them to the knowledge of their fathers in the latter days; and also to the knowledge of my covenants, saith the Lord. II Nephi 3:12.

In connection with this passage read I Nephi 13:35-41.

VII. When Joseph Smith translated the records that gave us the Book of Mormon, there were more and other records which he was not commissioned to translate. As he said, there were parts of the records which were sealed—parts which were to be preserved by the Lord to be brought forth in His own due time. These facts were altogether in keeping with the following prophecies:

"But the words which are sealed he shall not deliver, neither shall he deliver the book. For the book shall be sealed by the power of God, and the revelation which was sealed shall be kept in the book until the own due time of the Lord, that they may come forth; for behold they reveal all things from the foundation of the world unto the end thereof.

"And the day cometh that the words of the book which were sealed shall be read upon the house tops; and they shall be read by the power of Christ: and all things shall be revealed unto the children of men which ever have been among the children of men, and which ever will be, even unto the end of the earth.

"Touch not the things which are sealed, for I will bring them forth in mine own due time: for I will shew unto the children of men that I am able to do mine own work. II Nephi 27:10, 11, 21.

Read in this connection Ether 4:6, 7 and 5:1.

VIII. Reference has already been made in these lessons to the testimony of the witnesses of the Book of Mormon. Not only are these testimonies literary gems—not only do they give credence to the declarations of one of their fellow men—they fulfill literally two of the most striking prophecies relative to the coming forth of the Book of Mormon. In view of these passages it is an inspiration to know that only the three witnesses were privileged, according to their own declaration, to be shown the plates by the power of the Lord—the eight were shown them by the

Prophet himself. The two following paragraphs speak for themselves:

"Wherefore, at that day when the book shall be delivered unto the man of whom I have spoken, the book shall be hid from the eyes of the world, that the eyes of none shall behold it save it be that three witnesses shall behold it, by the power of God, besides him to whom the book shall be delivered; and they shall testify to the truth of the book and the things therein.

"And there is none other which shall view it, save it be a few according to the will of God, to bear testimony of his word unto the children of men: for the Lord God hath said, That the words of the faithful should speak as if it were from the dead." II Nephi 27:12, 13.

Consider in connection with these declarations II Nephi 11:3; Ether 5:2, 3, 4.

OUTLINE

Significance attached to the preservation of the Nephite records.

Predictions relative to the preservation and coming forth of the Book of Mormon record:

- A. Record to be hidden.
- B. To speak out of the dust.
- C. To be brought forth by one named Joseph.
- D. Not to be had for gain.
- E. The wisdom of a dual record.
- F. To corroborate the Bible.
- G. Sealed parts not to be translated by the Prophet Joseph.
- H. Records to be testified to.

QUESTIONS AND SUGGESTIONS.

1. Show how the keeping of records is significant in the progress of civilization.
2. Apply these truths to Nephite history.
3. Tell briefly the story of the preservation of the plates of Nephi.
4. Discuss fully each of the eight prophecies set down in this lesson.
5. Compare them with the predictions found in the twenty-ninth chapter of Isaiah.

LESSON XVII.

BOOK OF MORMON PROPHECIES.

(For Tuesday, March 15, or Sunday, March 27.)

THE LAST DAYS.

There are a few questions in which there is almost universal interest. The human mind likes to ponder questions that affect our ultimate destiny. We like to concern ourselves with such problems as Free Agency, Foreordination, the Resurrection, Salvation, Eternal Life, etc. As we come back to such questions there is perhaps no one to which we more frequently turn than to that of the Last Days. We inevitably speculate as to when we may expect "the books to close." When will the trump of judgment day be sounded? When shall God's purposes have been achieved?

Of course no one knows the specified year, or the exact hour for the culmination of this earth's history except the Lord, He Himself has so declared:

"I, the Lord God, have spoken it, but the hour and the day no man knoweth, neither the angels in heaven, nor shall they know until he comes." Doc. and Cov. Sec. 49:7.

But He has also declared that certain occurrences are to precede the end which may be taken as signs of His great second coming. Without being alarmists at all, let us turn to the Book of Mormon to see what signs have there been set down as heralding the approach of the millennium. Let us ponder the significance of events that make our own times so momentous—events which lead many of the world's greatest thinkers to declare that the end of the world seems to be drawing near.

At the outset it is of very great significance to note that the Lord has declared within the last one hundred years that His second coming is near at hand.