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Lesson II. The Father in Heaven

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Abstract: The God-consciousness of the Book of Mormon writers—the preaching of Ammon to Lamoni—the doctrine of the unity of the Godhead—the plurality of Gods—the Father and the Son—God the Creator of all things—the Father of man—the personality of God—the kingdom of God—the doctrine of rewards—summary.

11. What became of the small plates?
12. What became of the large plates?
13. What is Mormon's "abridgment?"
14. How did the record of the small plates get into the Book of Mormon?
15. What are the two principal divisions of the Book of Mormon?
16. How many "books" are there in the Book of Mormon?
17. Name the books of the hierarchy.
18. Name the books of the monarchy.
19. Name the books of the republic.
20. What is the Book of Ether?
21. What does the Book of Mormon claim to be?
22. To what extent is God present with the writers of the Book of Mormon?
23. In what measure was the Gospel taught to the Nephites?

LESSON II.

THE FATHER IN HEAVEN.

There is perhaps no other quality of the Book of Mormon more striking than the God-consciousness of its historians and prophets. To them the God of heaven was an ever-present fact. Whether they moved in the field or in the forest, or attended to their duties in religion or in commerce, the great, eternal God overruled the affairs of men. In His providence men lived and died. In the unfolding of His plans, nations rose and fell. According to the divine economy, the world and all that has place therein, were governed and controlled to the accomplishment of the divine purpose. And the existence and the overruling watchcare of the Father in heaven were real. The fact was accepted with unwavering confidence—a confidence in which even the suspicion of doubt found no place. The fact was preached with firm conviction to the unbelieving. Witness the simple preaching of Ammon to King Lamoni:

"Now Ammon being wise, yet harmless, he said unto Lamoni, Wilt thou hearken unto my words, if I tell thee by what power I do these things? and this is the thing that I desire of thee.

"And the king answered him, and

said, Yea, I will believe all thy words; and thus he was caught with guile.

"And Ammon began to speak unto him with boldness, and said unto him, Believest thou that there is a God?

"And he answered, and said unto him, I do not know what that meaneth.

"And then Ammon said, Believest thou that there is a Great Spirit?

"And he said, Yea.

"And Ammon said, this is God. And Ammon said unto him again, Believest thou that this Great Spirit, who is God, created all things which are in heaven and in the earth?

"And he said, Yea, I believe that he created all things which are in the earth; but I do not know the heavens.

"And Ammon said unto him, the heavens is a place where God dwells and all his holy angels.

"And king Lamoni said, Is it above the earth?

"And Ammon said, Yea, and he looketh down upon all the children of men; and he knows all the thoughts and intents of the heart: for by his hand were they all created from the beginning.

"And king Lamoni said, I believe all these things which thou hast spoken. Art thou sent from God?

"Ammon said unto him, I am a man; and man in the beginning, was created after the image of God, and I am called by his Holy Spirit to teach these things unto this people, that they may be brought to a knowledge of that which is just and true;

"And a portion of that Spirit dwelleth in me, which giveth me knowledge, and also power, according to my faith and desires which are in God."^a

In the testimony of Ammon there is no quibbling, there is no sophistry, there is no doubt. The existence of God is an assured fact, and as such it is stated simply to the Lamanite king, without speculation. So simply and confidently did all the Nephite faithful believe in their God.

In the Nephite theology, it was taught that there was but one God. The Nephites should belong, therefore, to that class of people known by their form of worship as monotheists. Says the first Nephi, the founder of the nation, "And they [all people] must come according to the words which shall be established by the mouth of the Lamb * * * * * for there is one God and one Shepherd over all the earth."^b In like manner Alma, the great high priest and judge, taught that there is but one God.

"And Zeezrom said unto him [Amulek], Thou sayest there is a true and living God?"

"And Amulek said, Yea, there is a true and living God.

"Now Zeezrom said, Is there more than one God?

"And he answered, No."^c

So definitely and conclusively was this the accepted doctrine, that it admitted of no argument. Yet, to say that the Nephites were monotheists would not be strictly correct. For, with the very breath in which the prophets declared that there is only one God, they declared also that Christ is God. In what sense, then, were the Nephites

monotheists? In the same sense that the Latter-day Saints are monotheists: There is but one supreme God, the Father of all, to whom we pray; but associated with Him are God the Son, and God the Holy Ghost; moreover, it is possible for all of us to become Gods. Therefore, does Nephi say, "This is the doctrine of Christ, and the only and true doctrine of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost, which is one God, without end."^d Therefore does Mormon say, "unto the Father, and unto the Son, and unto the Holy Ghost, which are one God."^e And therefore did Mosiah attempt to explain:

"And now Abinadi said unto them, I would that ye should understand that God himself shall come down among the children of men, and shall redeem His people; and because he dwelleth in flesh, he shall be called the Son of God: and having subjected the flesh to the will of the Father, being the Father and the Son; the Father, because he was conceived by the power of God; and the Son because of the flesh; thus becoming the Father and the Son; and they are one God, yea, the very eternal Father of heaven and earth."^f

This rather difficult passage may be paraphrased in part thus: He who is known as the Son of God is really the Father, because of his oneness with the Father having subjected himself to the will of the Father; yet is he the Son, for he was conceived in the flesh through the power of the Father. In all things are they united, however, and are one God. Or, as it has been put in Modern Revelation,

"I am in the Father, and the Father in me, and the Father and I are one: the Father because he gave me of his

^aAlma 18:22-35.

^bI Nephi 13:41.

^cAlma 11:26-29; see also 11:35 and 14:5.

^dII Nephi 31:21.

^eMormon 7:7.

^hIII Nephi 28:10.

^fMos. 15:1-4.

fullness, and the Son because I was in the world and made flesh my tabernacle, and dwelt among the sons of men."^g

It is to be understood, then, that the monotheism of the Nephites consisted in the recognizing of a Supreme Being who was the supreme God; but associated with him were other Gods, and, moreover, under them may be many Gods. For Jesus Himself, when ministering to the Nephites, said, "Ye shall be even as I am, and I am even as the Father; and the Father and I are one."^h

In the Nephite theology, the triune God was recognized as the creator of all things, and the Father was worshiped as the Father of men. In the days of Alma there appeared among the Nephites an anti-Christ named Korihor. Korihor demanded a sign from Alma; "but Alma said unto him, Thou hast had signs enough; will ye tempt your God? * * * * The scriptures are laid before thee, yea, and all things denote there is a God; yea, even the earth, and all things that are upon the face of it, yea, and its motion; yea, and also all the planets which move in their regular form, doth witness that there is a supreme Creator."ⁱ

This testimony of the supreme Creator was strong in the minds of the Nephite prophets. Helaman describes Jesus Christ as "the Son of God, the Father of heaven and earth, the Creator of all things, from the beginning."^j Mosiah, too, describes Him in like terms.^k With these men there was present no doubt of the divine origin of the natural world. Nor was there any doubt concerning the divine origin

of man specifically. "For behold, by the power of His word, man came upon the face of the earth!"^l Thus emphatically and unquestioningly does Jacob state the sublime fact. And Mormon asks pertinently,

"Who shall say that it was not a miracle, that by His word the heaven and the earth should be; and by the power of His word, man was created of the dust of the earth."^m

Thus God the Father was believed to be the Father, not only of Jesus Christ, but also of all men, though Jesus Christ was his Only Begotten Son in the flesh.

Now, in the Nephite theology, the supreme Creator of all things was a real, tangible personality; he was endued with body, parts, and passions. In short, he was in form and attributes a Man—but an exalted Man. In the very earliest revelation in the Nephite dispensation, God was seen sitting upon a throne.ⁿ From that day to the utter destruction of the nation, the prophets of the Nephites taught that man had been formed in the image of God.^o And the Jaredites, too, knew that man was in the image of God. For the brother of Jared saw the spiritual body of Jesus, and it was like man's. And the brother of Jared trembled with fear, for he "knew not that the Lord had flesh and blood." And Jesus said to him, "Seest thou that ye are created after mine own image? Yea, even all men were created in the beginning, after mine own image."^p

It was the triune God, the Creator of all things, the Father of men,

^gDoc. and Cov. 93:3, 4.

^hAlma 30:44.

ⁱHel. 14:12.

^kMos. 3:8.

^lJac. 4:9.

^mMormon 9:17.

ⁿI Nephi 1:7, 8.

^oMos. 7:27; Alma 18:34; 22:12; 26:35.

^pEther 3:4-15.

Himself an exalted Man, that the Nephites were taught to worship. Of course, the King of kings must needs have a kingdom. It was called the kingdom of God. In the Nephite theology, only those were eligible to exaltation in the kingdom of God who had proved their worthiness by righteous living. For if the wicked were to gain place therein, then would the kingdom of God be filthy; "but behold, * * * the kingdom of God is not filthy, and there cannot any unclean thing enter into the kingdom of God."^q Who, then, shall inherit the kingdom of God? "Behold, the righteous, the saints of the Holy One of Israel, they who have believed in the Holy One of Israel, they who have endured the crosses of the world, and despised the shame of it; they shall inherit the kingdom of God, which was prepared for them from the foundation of the world, and their joy shall be full forever."^r And what shall become of the wicked? They who repent not from their wickedness can have no interest in the kingdom of God.^s What, then, shall become of the wicked? "There must needs be a place of filthiness prepared for that which is filthy. And there is a place prepared, yea, even that awful hell * * * and the devil is the foundation of it; wherefore the final state of the souls of men is to dwell in the kingdom of God, or to be cast out because of that justice of which I have spoken."^t

In the divine Gospel plan, as well understood by the Nephites, men were to be exalted or degraded in the future life according to the worthiness or unworthiness of their

earthly lives. The heavenly condition was predicated upon the degree of obedience in the earth-life. After the resurrection, men should be restored, as it were, to their former conditions.

"And if their works are evil, they shall be restored unto him for evil; therefore, all things shall be restored to their proper order; everything to its natural frame; mortality raised to immortality; corruption to incorruption; raised to endless happiness, to inherit the kingdom of God, or to endless misery, to inherit the kingdom of the devil, the one on one hand, the other on the other;

"The one raised to happiness according to his desires of happiness; or good, according to his desires of good; and the other to evil according to his desires of evil; for as he has desired to do evil all the day long, even so shall he have his reward of evil when the night cometh.

"And so it is on the other hand. If he hath repented of his sins, and desired righteousness until the end of his days, even so he shall be rewarded unto righteousness."^u

In that reward of righteousness, the righteous will be ushered into the kingdom of God, where they will shine forth forever.^v Therefore, "let us labor diligently; for if we should cease to labor, we should be brought under condemnation; for we have a labor to perform whilst in this tabernacle of clay, that we may conquer the enemy of all righteousness, and rest our souls in the kingdom of God."^w

We have learned in this lesson that the Nephites of the faith believed implicitly the following propositions: 1. There lives a God in the heavens above who directs and rules the destinies of men. 2. The Godhead consists of three, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost. 3. Yet, to men there is but

^qI Nephi 15:33, 34.

^rII Nephi 9:18.

^sMos. 4:18; Alma 5:22-25.

^tI Nephi 15:34, 35.

^uAlma 41:4-6; read also 40:26.

^vAlma 40:25.

^wMoro. 9:6.

one Supreme God to whom to pray; and because of their oneness in all things, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost are one God. 4. There is a plurality of Gods, under the Supreme Guidance, and all men may, by correct living, become gods. 5. The universe and all that is therein were organized by the power of God. 6. God is in very deed the Father of men. 7. God is in form and attributes a man—an exalted Man. 8. Into the kingdom of God no filthy thing may enter. 9. On the great judgment day, men will be judged according to their works.

LESSON OUTLINE.

The God-consciousness of the Book of Mormon writers—the preaching of Ammon to Lamoni—the doctrine of the unity of the Godhead—the plurality of Gods—the Father and the Son—God the Creator of all things—the Father of man—the personality of God—the kingdom of God—the doctrine of rewards—summary.

QUESTIONS.

1. What is perhaps the most striking quality of the Book of Mormon?
2. How did the prophets of the

Book of Mormon look upon the existence of God?

3. How is this attitude illustrated in the preaching of Ammon to King Lamoni?

4. What did the Nephite theology teach concerning the plurality of Gods?

5. Relate the conversation between Zeezrom and Amulek.

6. In what sense are God the Father, and God the Son, and God the Holy Ghost, one eternal God?

7. How is Jesus both the Father and the Son?

8. In how many Gods, then, did the Nephites believe?

9. What was the relation of the triune God, in Nephite theology, to the natural world?

10. What was considered to be the true relation between God and man?

11. What kind of being was God conceived to be, in the Nephite theology?

12. What is the kingdom of God?

13. Who, in the Nephite theology, were eligible to exaltation in the kingdom of God?

14. What will become of the wicked?

15. According to what judgment were men to be exalted or degraded in the after-life?

16. Summarize the teachings of this lesson.

17. How do they agree with the teachings of the Bible and of Modern Revelation?

JUNIOR LESSONS.

The Life of the Savior.

LESSON I.

THE GEOGRAPHY AND PEOPLE OF THE HOLY LAND.

Palestine, the land promised by God to His chosen people, forms a part of the eastern boundary of the Mediterranean Sea. That part of the country of especial importance in the life of the Savior is about 150 miles long, (the distance between the cities Dan and Beersheba). At the south end, the country is about 90 miles wide; at the north end it is

about 30 miles wide. Its total area is about 6,600 square miles.

Compared with Utah conditions, the length of Palestine is about equal to the distance between Logan and Spanish Fork. Its average width is not far from the distance between Salt Lake City and Provo. Its total area is 8 per cent or about one-twelfth the area of Utah.