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Robert J. Matthews

What the Book of Mormon Tells Us About Jesus Christ is a subject so large that it could take a lifetime to review. It is a spiritual topic, associated with faith, belief, testimony, emotion, revelation, and personal conviction. The Book of Mormon is a pillar of revealed truth supporting and upholding the chief cornerstone, who is Jesus Christ. Elder Bruce R. McConkie once described it as a book that would *shake* the earth. It truly is the keystone scripture.

In this chapter, I desire to discuss some of the fundamental things that the Book of Mormon relates about Jesus Christ. I do not pretend to any secret or new information or interpretation. I come equipped only with the holy scriptures, a personal conviction, and a desire to share my thoughts in meekness and sincerity, and in a manner I hope will be informative to you and acceptable to our Heavenly Father. I cannot speak for the Church—my views are my own, but I believe them to be correct.

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Life in a Spiritual Desert

We live in a day of great distress in many places. Earthquake, famine, war, wickedness, and bloodshed are occurring in many parts of the globe, among our fellow human beings, even at the very time we rest securely. It is distressing to realize that at this very moment most of the people of the earth live in a physical desert, without enough food, without comfortable homes and conveniences or the sustenance of a good life. Furthermore, to a far greater extent, they exist in a poverty-stricken spiritual desert without the saving principles of the gospel of Jesus Christ and the knowledge of God. There is even greater tragedy and calamity in the spiritual deserts of life than in the physical. Far too many people do not have the knowledge of Jesus Christ and the blessings of the gospel, and to make matters worse, most of them do not even know it. I am certain that permanent peace, an adequate supply of food, spiritual contentment, and lasting security can come to individuals, families, nations, and the whole earth only when they have a true knowledge of Jesus Christ and obey the gospel. The world is not going to solve its problems of war, famine, poverty, and unrest until mankind believes and obeys the gospel of Jesus Christ. The Book of Mormon teaches that salvation is not only individual, it is also global. As Nephi wrote, "Behold, all nations, kindreds, tongues, and people shall dwell safely in the Holy One of Israel if it so be that they will repent" (1 Nephi 22:28).

The World Needs the Savior

The world needs Jesus, but can find him only as individuals begin to seek after him to learn of his ways, to repent and to keep his commandments. It is an individual thing. The change must first take place in the heart, the mind, and the attitude of the individual; thus there is a special need to teach faith in Jesus Christ. Notice the words of Alma 4:18-19, wherein he gave up the judgment seat to another in order to allow himself more time to teach the word of God:

Now Alma did not grant unto him the office of being high priest over the church but he retained the office of high priest unto himself; but he delivered the judgment-seat unto Nephiah.

And this he did that he himself might go forth among his people, or among the people of Nephi, that he might preach the word of God unto them, to stir them up in remembrance of their duty, and that he might pull down, by the word of God, all the pride and craftiness and all the contentions which were among his people, seeing no way that he might reclaim them save it were in bearing down in pure testimony against them.

The superior effectiveness of teaching the gospel to get people to change is shown in Alma 31:5:

And now, as the preaching of the word had a great tendency to lead the people to do that which was just—yea, it had had more powerful effect upon the minds of the people than the sword, or anything else, which had happened unto them—therefore Alma thought it was expedient that they should try the virtue of the word of God.

I note here the words of President Harold B. Lee, spoken at a student fireside in Logan, Utah, in 1971, in which he discussed a general breakdown of faith in Jesus Christ.

Fifty years ago or more, when I was a missionary, our greatest responsibility was to defend the great truth that the Prophet Joseph Smith was divinely called and inspired and that the Book of Mormon was indeed the word of God. But even at that time there were the unmistakable evidences that there was coming into the religious world actually a question about the Bible and about the divine calling of the Master himself. Now, fifty years later, our greatest responsibility and anxiety is to defend the divine mission of our Lord and Master, Jesus Christ, for all about us, even among those who claim to be professors of the Christian faith, are those not willing to stand squarely in defense of the great truth that our Lord and Master, Jesus Christ, was indeed the Son of God. So tonight it would seem to me that the most important thing I could say to you is to try to strengthen your faith and increase your courage and your understanding of the place of the Master in the great Plan of Salvation.

The vital necessity of having that testimony was put in language by a beloved colleague of ours, the late President Charles A. Callis, who was a member of the Quorum of the Twelve, and before that served for many years as president of the Southern States Mission. He said: "Beautiful flowers do not grow on a rosebush unless the parent bush has its roots firmly planted in rich, fertile soil, unless it is watered, cultivated, unless it is pruned and carefully cared for by a gardener. Just so, beautiful flowers of sobriety, honesty, integrity, and virtue do not blossom in a human soul

unless the feet of that human soul are firmly planted in a divine testimony of the mission of the Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ.” (Unofficial transcript, LDS Student Association fireside, Utah State University, 10 October 1971.)

Since we know that what President Lee said is correct, we have to agree that it is an important matter for us to consider exactly what the Book of Mormon says about Christ. The doctrine of Christ is being challenged in the world today, in very subtle ways.

The scriptures tell us who Jesus is and, even more important, *how* we can come to him and *why* we ought to come to him. All of the standard works echo the beautiful promise of Jeremiah 29:13-14, expressed in Felix Mendelssohn’s marvelous oratorio *Elijah*: “If with all your heart ye truly seek me, ye shall surely find me, thus saith our God.”

The Lord has revealed his value system to mankind, telling what he sees as right, and what he sees as wrong, and what ought to be done about it. It is in this spirit that I will discuss what the Book of Mormon says about Jesus.

Jesus Is the Savior of All the World

The title page of the Book of Mormon declares that the book was written for “the convincing of the Jew and Gentile that *Jesus* is the *Christ*, the *Eternal God*, manifesting himself unto all nations.” That statement tells us who Jesus is. He is God and has been active among the peoples of the world. He is not an absentee landlord.

For many centuries the world has had the Old Testament, that tells of the God of Adam, and of Enoch, Noah, Abraham, Jacob, Joseph, Moses, and Elijah. This same God, who is often declared to be Jehovah, ministered as a heavenly being to the ancient Israelite prophets. This same Jehovah, who was then a spirit being, was also born into mortality and became Jesus Christ.

For many centuries the world has had the New Testament, which tells of Jesus’ birth in Bethlehem and his mortal ministry among the Jews in the Holy Land of the Middle East. It tells of his unique and divine birth, his violent death, and his bodily resurrection from the dead.

In addition to the Bible we now have the Book of

Mormon, which tells of Jesus' personal ministry as a resurrected, glorified being among the ancient Nephites in America a few months after his ascension from among the Jews. It also reveals that Jesus said he was personally going to visit the ten lost tribes of Israel after he left the Nephites. We do not have the actual record of that event yet, but we will have it when the Lord sees fit. The Book of Mormon does not compete with the Bible, but is a second witness, sent forth by the Lord to prove that the Bible record is true.

Thus the Book of Mormon enlarges the scope of our understanding of Jesus as the Savior. His ministry was not limited to the Jews of the Middle East, but extended also to America and then to the place of the lost tribes. But the Book of Mormon does not stop there. It tells us that the Lord Jesus has been active all along, in various ways, giving to every nation as much of the gospel as it could absorb and handle. This has *not* always been done by a *personal visit*, for we learn from 3 Nephi 15 that the Lord did not manifest himself personally to the gentile nations, but sent his servants to teach them. Yet the Lord has been active in one way or another among all peoples, doing for them all that he could according to their willingness, capacity, and desire to receive and to believe. Note these words from 2 Nephi 29:

Know ye not that . . . I rule in the heavens above and in the earth beneath; and I bring forth my word unto the children of men, yea, even upon all the nations of the earth? . . .

Know ye not that the testimony of two nations is a witness unto you that I am God, that I remember one nation like unto another? Wherefore, I speak the same words unto one nation like unto another. . . .

For I command all men, both in the east and in the west, and in the north, and in the south, and in the islands of the seas, that they shall write the words which I speak unto them; for out of the books which shall be written I will judge the world, every man according to their works, according to that which is written.

For behold, I shall speak unto the Jews and they shall write it; and I shall also speak unto the Nephites and they shall write it; and I shall also speak unto the other tribes of the house of Israel, which I have led away, and they shall write it; and I shall also speak unto all nations of the earth and they shall write it.

And it shall come to pass that the Jews shall have the words of the Nephites, and the Nephites shall have the words of the Jews;

and the Nephites and the Jews shall have the words of the lost tribes of Israel; and the lost tribes of Israel shall have the words of the Nephites and the Jews.

And it shall come to pass that my people, which are of the house of Israel, shall be gathered home unto the lands of their possessions; and my word also shall be gathered in one (2 Nephi 29:7-8, 11-14).

The prophet Alma expressed a desire to tell every nation personally about the gospel, but then realized that the Lord had made provision for that within each nation.

O that I were an angel, and could have the wish of mine heart, that I might go forth and speak with the trump of God, with a voice to shake the earth, and cry repentance unto every people!

Yea, I would declare unto every soul, as with the voice of thunder, repentance and the plan of redemption, that they should repent and come unto our God, that there might not be more sorrow upon all the face of the earth.

But behold, I am a man, and do sin in my wish; for I ought to be content with the things which the Lord hath allotted unto me. . . .

Why should I desire more than to perform the work to which I have been called?

Why should I desire that I were an angel, that I could speak unto all the ends of the earth?

For behold, the Lord doth grant unto all nations, of their own nation and tongue, to teach his word, yea, in wisdom, all that he seeth fit that they should have (Alma 29:1-3, 6-8).

The Book of Mormon tells us that the person we call Jesus Christ is the God of the whole world, and of all people, and has been working among all nations to the extent of their willingness and ability to receive, and in accordance with his own timetable.

When the time came for Jesus to be born among the Jews, angels announced his birth to shepherds, and a new star guided the wise men of East. These were almost "private" signs, since Jesus would be there among the Jews in person. Not everyone heard the angels or saw the star. To the Nephites in America a greater sign was given, so that they could know without a doubt that the Son of God had been born in the Holy Land. There was a day and a night and a day without any darkness. This was a public sign and everyone saw it. The night was as bright as noonday, even though the sun descended below the horizon (see Helaman 14:4; 3 Nephi 1:15-19). Also at his death there

were, in America, severe destructions, storms, and three days of darkness, and the voice of God was audibly heard among the people (see 3 Nephi 9-10). And kings upon the islands of the sea were wrought upon to exclaim, "The God of nature suffers" (1 Nephi 19:12). All of these were signs to the peoples of the world that the Son of God had been born and, some 33 years later, that he had died. None of these things are spoken of in the biblical record because it informs us only of what happened among the Jews. Thus it is the Book of Mormon that gives us the wider viewpoint. When we obtain the record of the lost ten tribes and read their account of the Savior's ministry among them, we no doubt will learn of various signs and miraculous happenings that they experienced of the birth and death of Jesus Christ whereby they could know, in similar fashion to the Nephites.

The concept of the worldwide mission and activity of Jesus, as God of all mankind, gives us some insight into the role of the wise men spoken of in Matthew chapter 2. Their mission was unique. They could not be ordinary men. They were no doubt special emissaries, prophets, if you will, coming from a land east of Palestine, to carry back to their own people a firsthand, personal knowledge of the birth of their Lord, Jesus Christ. They were spiritual men, with a mission, who knew what they were looking for. They were indeed wise men from the East—not astrologers or magicians, but prophets or seers, which is the wisest class of all men. And theirs was the greatest of all quests, as they sought the Son of God, the fount of all wisdom. Because the Book of Mormon widens our horizon as to the ministry of Jesus, we are able to gain a viewpoint about the wise men from the East that we might not have realized from the Bible alone.

I mentioned earlier that Jesus is Jehovah, born into the world with a body of flesh and bones, clothed with mortality. I will comment further on what the Book of Mormon says about that topic and will refer to four basic sources: First, in 1 Nephi 19:7-10, Nephi was at this point telling of the sacred nature of the things he had written and quoted what several earlier prophets had said about the God of Israel coming to earth.

For the things which some men esteem to be of great worth, both to the body and soul, others set at naught and trample under their feet. Yea, even the very God of Israel do men trample under their feet; I say, trample under their feet but I would speak in other words—they set him at naught, and hearken not to the voice of his counsels.

And behold he cometh, according to the words of the angel, in six hundred years from the time my father left Jerusalem.

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.

And the God of our fathers, who were led out of Egypt, out of bondage, and also were preserved in the wilderness by him, yea, the God of Abraham, and of Isaac, and the God of Jacob, yieldeth himself, according to the words of the angel, as a man, into the hands of wicked men, to be lifted up, according to the words of Zenock, and to be crucified, according to the words of Neum, and to be buried in a sepulchre, according to the words of Zenos, which he spake concerning the 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.

There is no mistaking the fact that Nephi wanted his readers to understand that the God of their fathers (Jehovah) would come to earth as the Messiah.

Second, we quote from King Benjamin's discourse the words given to him by an angel. This is Mosiah 3:5-10, given about 124 B.C.:

For behold, the time cometh, and is not far distant, that with power, the Lord Omnipotent who reigneth, who was, and is from all eternity to all eternity, shall come down from heaven among the children of men, and shall dwell in a tabernacle of clay, and shall go forth amongst men, working mighty miracles, such as 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.

And lo, 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.

And he shall be called Jesus Christ, the Son of God, the

Father of heaven and earth, the Creator of all things from the beginning; and his mother shall be called Mary.

And lo, he cometh unto his own, that salvation might come unto the children of men even through faith on his name; and even after all this they shall consider him a man, and say that he hath a devil, and shall scourge him, and shall crucify him.

And he shall rise the third day from the dead; and behold, he standeth to judge the world; and behold, all these things are done that a righteous judgment might come upon the children of men.

King Benjamin's words are quite clear that the Creator, the God of their fathers, the Lord Omnipotent, was the very person who would be born of Mary and would be the Son of God, the Messiah.

Third, the prophet Abinadi suffered death about 148 B.C. for teaching, among other things, that the coming Messiah, or Christ, would be the God of their fathers born into mortality. We read in Mosiah 7:27-28:

And because he said unto them that Christ was the God, the Father of all things, and said that he should 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, and take upon him flesh and blood, and go forth upon the face of the earth—

And now, because he said this, they did put him to death; and many more things did they do which brought down the wrath of God upon them.

Fourth, when Jesus visited the Nephites after his resurrection, he told them that he himself was the person who had led ancient Israel and had visited the prophet Moses. In 3 Nephi 15:4-5 Jesus is quoted as saying:

Behold, I say unto you that the law is fulfilled that was given unto Moses.

Behold, I am he that gave the law, and I am he who covenanted with my people Israel.

The foregoing are not by any means all of the references in the Book of Mormon identifying Jesus as the ancient God of Israel known as Jehovah, but they are sufficient to establish the idea. ✓

Jesus Rose from the Grave with His Physical Body

A major message of the Book of Mormon is that Jesus, who was slain, and whose body was very dead for three days, rose from the grave with his physical, tangible body and was from that time on very much alive. Not only did he rise from the grave with a live, warm, physical body, but because of his atonement all mankind will also rise from the dead, each individually in his own time.

The physical nature of Jesus' resurrected body is described in detail in 3 Nephi, in which Jesus said he had come among the Nephites to *show* them his body. He also said that he would visit the lost tribes to *show* them his body. Note the repeated emphasis on the word *show*. In 3 Nephi 10:18-19 we read:

And it came to pass that in the ending of the thirty and fourth year, behold, I will show unto you that the people of Nephi who were spared, and also those who had been called Lamanites, who had been spared, did have great favors shown unto them, and great blessings poured out upon their heads, insomuch that soon after the ascension of Christ into heaven he did truly manifest himself unto them—

Showing his body unto them, and ministering unto them; and an account of his ministry shall be given hereafter.

Also in 3 Nephi we have an account of the personal visit of Jesus to the Nephites. I will quote a brief part from 3 Nephi 11:6-17:

And behold, the third time they did understand the voice which they heard; and it said unto them:

Behold my Beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased, in whom I have glorified my name—hear ye him.

And it came to pass, as they understood they cast their eyes up again towards heaven; and he was clothed in a white robe; and he came down and stood in the midst of them; and the eyes of the whole multitude were turned upon him, and they durst not open their mouths, even one to another, and wist not what it meant, for they thought it was an angel that had appeared unto them.

And it came to pass that he stretched forth his hand and spake unto the people, saying:

Behold, I am Jesus Christ, whom the prophets testified shall come unto the world.

And behold, I am the light and the life of the world; and I

have drunk out of that bitter cup which the Father hath given me, and have glorified the Father in taking upon me the sins of the world, in the which I have suffered the will of the Father in all things from the beginning.

And it came to pass that when Jesus had spoken these words the whole multitude fell to the earth; for they remembered that it had been prophesied among them that Christ should show himself unto them after his ascension into heaven.

And it came to pass that the Lord spake unto them saying:

Arise and come forth unto me, that ye may thrust your hands into my side, and also that ye may feel the prints of the nails in my hands and in my feet, that ye may know that I am the God of Israel, and the God of the whole earth, and have been slain for the sins of the world.

And it came to pass that the multitude went forth, and thrust their hands into his side, and did feel the prints of the nails in his hands and in his feet; and this they did do, going forth one by one until they had all gone forth, and did see with their eyes and did feel with their hands, and did know of a surety and did bear record, that it was he, of whom it was written by the prophets, that should come.

And when they had all gone forth and had witnessed for themselves, they did cry out with one accord, saying:

Hosanna! Blessed be the name of the Most High God! And they did fall down at the feet of Jesus, and did worship him.

There were about 2500 persons who saw and felt his physical body on that occasion (see 3 Nephi 17:25). Even at three or four seconds each, "one by one," that would take several hours. The passage we have just read is one of the greatest scriptural records in our possession. It is clear that "showing" himself involved more than having them merely look. It was sight, sound, touch, and a witness of the Spirit.

In 3 Nephi 16:1-3 Jesus told why he was going to visit the lost tribes:

And verily, verily, I say unto you that I have other sheep, which are not of this land, neither of the land of Jerusalem, neither in any parts of that land round about whither I have been to minister.

For they of whom I speak are they who have not as yet heard my voice; neither have I at any time manifested myself unto them.

But I have received a commandment of the Father that I shall go unto them, and that they shall hear my voice, and shall be numbered among my sheep, that there may be one fold and one shepherd; therefore I go to show myself unto them.

This theme is repeated in 3 Nephi 17:4:

But now I go unto the Father, and also to show myself unto the lost tribes of Israel, for they are not lost unto the Father, for he knoweth whither he hath taken them.

The Book of Mormon Presents Nearly One Hundred Names for the Savior

The Book of Mormon contains approximately one hundred different names and titles that describe Jesus. Each of these has a different meaning or shade of meaning from the others. For example, he is called the Son of God, the Creator, the Lamb, the Messiah, the Advocate, the Shepherd, the Judge, the Holy One of Israel, the Great Spirit, the Redeemer, the Omnipotent, the Father, the Rock, the True Vine, the Law, and so on. I have mentioned only fifteen—about 15 percent of the total. Being the Creator is not the same as being the Shepherd or the Messiah, or the Law. These names identify different functions. Like the keys on a piano, each of these names bears a relationship and resemblance to the others, but each also manifests a meaning and tone of its own which is different from those of the ones next to it.

Because of its richness, the Book of Mormon plays a virtual symphony about Jesus. It tells a great variety of things. Its revelation of Christ is not a monotone. These one hundred names are used over and over again, until altogether there are almost 3500 instances wherein the Savior is mentioned. We could not strike two keys of a piano and feel that we had played a great musical composition. It takes all the keys played in numerous combinations to produce great music. In like manner, the wide range of names and the combinations in which they are presented make the Book of Mormon one of the greatest witnesses and records of Jesus Christ that can be found anywhere in the world. It truly is another witness, bearing record of who he is, what he said, what he did, why he did it, and *why* it is important. All of these things, including his second coming, are carefully documented, outlined, specified, and clarified in the pages of the Book of Mormon. It is a spiritual, Christ-centered symphony.

I am indebted to Susan Black for the statistics that the Book of Mormon contains 6580 verses and 3471 references to the Savior. I had myself previously analyzed 1 Nephi to find how many names were used to describe the Savior and how many times he was referred to. When I suggested to Susan several years ago that she might want to continue the study, she very willingly completed it through the remainder of the book. As a result of searching out the names for Jesus, she said she more perfectly sensed that the real message of the Book of Mormon is about Christ, and she expressed her feelings in these words:

Reading the Book of Mormon this way has opened up many new ideas for me. How exciting it has been to read the Book of Mormon in this manner. It has proven to me that although it is interesting to note the travels of Lehi, and study the cultural remains of the ancient peoples, far and away the central figure of this revealed book is my Savior Jesus Christ.

Further, I am indebted to Monte S. Nyman for the information that of the 239 chapters in the Book of Mormon, only 6 do not contain some direct reference to the Savior.

There are at least three major reasons for reading the Book of Mormon: (1) to get the general story, (2) to absorb what it says about Jesus, and (3) to learn the other gospel principles contained in it.

It is worth noting that the actual term "Christ" does not occur in the Book of Mormon until 2 Nephi 10:3, and there it occurs as a direct revelation from an angel to the prophet Jacob. The combined term "Jesus Christ" appears first at 2 Nephi 25:19. The book of 1 Nephi alone has 23 terms for the Savior and uses these terms 150 times, but it does not use either "Jesus" or "Christ." That "Christ" should be his name was a revelation from the angel, and it seems to have been a new idea.

The Book of Mormon Tells How the Atonement Works

In addition to identifying Jesus as the Son of God

and the Redeemer, and many other titles and ramifications about him, one of the greatest things the Book of Mormon tells us is how the atonement of Jesus Christ works. And it explains that better than any other book. It tells how God can be both a merciful and a just God. The Atonement is explained in such a manner that we can begin to understand how mercy can be applied without robbing justice. The biblical prophets and Apostles understood these concepts, but unfortunately their writings have not come to us as clearly or as completely as they were had originally. We should be grateful, therefore, that these fundamental principles of God's plan of salvation for the human family are plainly taught in the Book of Mormon.

It would not help much to know the names for the Savior, and various other things about his character and greatness, unless we also knew how the atoning sacrifice works and how we can come to Jesus and be saved. It is in this category that the Book of Mormon makes a splendid contribution and offers perhaps its most magnificent message. We note a few examples. First is 2 Nephi 2:6-9:

Wherefore, 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; and unto none else can the ends of the law be answered.

Wherefore, how great the importance to make these things known unto the inhabitants of the earth, that they may know that there is no flesh that can dwell in the presence of God, save it be through the merits, and mercy, and grace of the Holy Messiah, who layeth down his life according to the flesh, and taketh it again by the power of the Spirit, that he may bring to pass the resurrection of the dead, being the first that should rise.

Wherefore, he is the firstfruits unto God, inasmuch as he shall make intercession for all the children of men; and they that believe in him shall be saved.

The Book of Mormon shows the relationship between the fall of Adam and the atonement of Jesus. They go hand in hand. Both were necessary, and both were fore-known in the premortal world. The following words are quoted from the sermon of King Benjamin:

For behold, and also his blood atoneth for the sins of those who have fallen by the transgression of Adam, who have died not knowing the will of God concerning them, or who have ignorantly sinned. . . .

And even if it were possible that little children could sin they could not be saved; but I say unto you they are blessed; for behold, as in Adam, or by nature, they fall, even so the blood of Christ atoneth for their sins.

And moreover, I say unto you, that there shall be no other name given nor any other way nor means whereby salvation can come unto the children of men, only in and through the name of Christ, the Lord Omnipotent. . . .

For the natural man is an enemy to God, and has been from the fall of Adam, and will be, forever and ever, unless he yields to the enticings of the Holy Spirit, and putteth off the natural man and becometh a saint through the atonement of Christ the Lord, and becometh as a child, submissive, meek, humble, patient, full of love, willing to submit to all things which the Lord seeth fit to inflict upon him, even as a child doth submit to his father (Mosiah 3: 11, 16-17, 19).

King Benjamin also explained that through the atonement of Jesus Christ we not only can *obtain* a remission of sins, but can *retain* a remission from day to day, as long as we live.

As ye have come to the knowledge of the glory of God, or if ye have known of his goodness and have tasted of his love, and have received a remission of your sins, which causeth such exceedingly great joy in your souls, even so I would that ye should remember, and always retain in remembrance, the greatness of God, and your own nothingness, and his goodness and long-suffering towards you, unworthy creatures, and humble yourselves even in the depths of humility, calling on the name of the Lord daily, and standing steadfastly in the faith of that which is to come, which was spoken by the mouth of the angel.

And behold, I say unto you that if ye do this ye shall always rejoice, and be filled with the love of God, and always retain a remission of your sins; and ye shall grow in the knowledge of the glory of him that created you, or in the knowledge of that which is just and true (Mosiah 4:11-12; see also Alma 4:14).

Alma further explained the effects of the fall of Adam:

Now we see that Adam did fall by the partaking of the forbidden fruit, according to the word of God; and thus we see, that by his fall, all mankind became a lost and fallen people. . . .

And we see that death comes upon mankind, yea, the death which has been spoken of by Amulek, which is the temporal death, nevertheless there was a space granted unto man in which he might repent; therefore this life became a probationary state; a time to prepare to meet God; a time to prepare for that endless state which

has been spoken of by us, which is after the resurrection of the dead (Alma 12:22, 24).

In explaining that the Atonement requires the life of a God, not of a man, Amulek said:

For it is expedient that an atonement should be made; for according to the great plan of the Eternal God there must be an atonement made, or else all mankind must unavoidably perish; yea, all are hardened; yea, all are fallen and are lost, and must perish except it be through the atonement which it is expedient should be made.

For it is expedient that there should be a great and last sacrifice; yea, not a sacrifice of man, neither of beast, neither of any manner of fowl; for it shall not be a human sacrifice; but it must be an infinite and eternal sacrifice. . . .

Therefore there can be nothing which is short of an infinite atonement which will suffice for the sins of the world. . . .

And behold, this is the whole meaning of the law, every whit pointing to that great and last sacrifice; and that great and last sacrifice will be the Son of God, yea, infinite and eternal.

And thus he shall bring salvation to all those who shall believe on his name; this being the intent of this last sacrifice, to bring about the bowels of mercy, which overpowereth justice, and bringeth about means unto men that they may have faith unto repentance.

And thus mercy can satisfy the demands of justice, and encircles them in the arms of safety, while he that exercises no faith unto repentance is exposed to the whole law of the demands of justice; therefore only unto him that has faith unto repentance is brought about the great and eternal plan of redemption (Alma 34:9-10, 12, 14-16).

Next we read in Alma 42:

And now, ye see by this that our first parents were cut off both temporally and spiritually from the presence of the Lord, and thus we see they became subjects to follow after their own will.

Now behold, it was not expedient that man should be reclaimed from this temporal death, for that would destroy the great plan of happiness.

Therefore, as the soul could never die, and the fall had brought upon all mankind a spiritual death as well as a temporal, that is, they were cut off from the presence of the Lord, it was expedient that mankind should be reclaimed from this spiritual death.

Therefore, as they had become carnal, sensual, and devilish, by nature, this probationary state became a state for them to prepare; it became a preparatory state.

And now remember, my son, if it were not for the plan of redemption, (laying it aside) as soon as they were dead their souls were miserable, being cut off from the presence of the Lord.

And now, there was no means to reclaim men from this fallen state, which man had brought upon himself because of his own disobedience. . . .

And thus we see that all mankind were fallen, and they were in the grasp of justice; yea, the justice of God, which consigned them forever to be cut off from his presence.

And now, 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, that God might be a perfect, just God, and a merciful God also. . . .

And thus God bringeth about his great and eternal purposes, which were prepared from the foundation of the world. And thus cometh about the salvation and the redemption of men, and also their destruction and misery (Alma 42:7-12, 14-15, 26).

Helaman 14:16-19 says:

For all mankind, by the fall of Adam being cut off from the presence of the Lord, are considered as dead, both as to things temporal and to things spiritual.

But 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 conditions of repentance. . . .

Therefore repent ye, repent ye, lest by knowing these things and not doing them ye shall suffer yourselves to come under condemnation, and ye are brought down unto this second death.

In 2 Nephi 2:24-27 we read:

But behold, all things have been done in the wisdom of him who knoweth all things.

Adam fell that men might be; and men are, that they might have joy.

And the Messiah cometh in the fulness of time, that he may redeem the children of men from the fall. . . .

Wherefore, men are free according to the flesh; and all things are given them which are expedient unto man, And they are free to choose liberty and eternal life, through the great Mediator of all men, or to choose captivity and death, according to the captivity and power of the devil; for he seeketh that all men might be miserable like unto himself.

What If There Were No Christ?

I once heard President David O. McKay say, "If Shakespeare were to come into the room we would all stand up, but if Jesus came in, we would kneel down and worship

him.” That categorizes the special and exalted role of our Savior.

Isaiah said, “The people that walked in darkness have seen a great light. They that dwell in the land of the shadow of death, upon them hath the light shined” (Isaiah 9:2; also quoted in the Book of Mormon, 2 Nephi 19:2).

What if there had been no Jesus, no Savior, no redemption? What would have been our fate? Could we have saved ourselves? We seem to be quite clear in our understanding that without Jesus there would have been no resurrection of the body from the dead, but what of our spirits? What would have become of our spirits if there had been no atonement by the Lord Jesus Christ? We find an answer to this in 2 Nephi 9:6-9:

For as death hath passed upon all men, to fulfil the merciful plan of the great Creator, there must needs be a power of resurrection, and the resurrection must needs come unto man by reason of the fall; and the fall came by reason of transgression; and because man became fallen they were cut off from the presence of the Lord.

Wherefore, it must needs be an infinite atonement—save it should be an infinite atonement this corruption could not put on incorruption. Wherefore, the first judgment which came upon man must needs have remained to an endless duration. And if so, this flesh must have laid down to rot and to crumble to its mother earth, to rise no more.

O the wisdom of God, his mercy and grace! For behold, if the flesh should rise no more our spirits must become subject to that angel who fell from before the presence of the Eternal God, and became the devil, to rise no more.

And our spirits must have become like unto him, and we become devils, angels to a devil, to be shut out from the presence of our God, and to remain with the father of lies, in misery, like unto himself; yea, to that being who beguiled our first parents, who transformeth himself nigh unto an angel of light, and stirreth up the children of men unto secret combinations of murder and all manner of secret works of darkness.

In no other place is it stated so clearly. Thus we realize that we would have been doomed to a life of misery, no matter what else we may have done. Because of the fall of Adam, a broken law would have prevented every son and daughter of Adam and Eve from escaping damnation.

We further read that there is no other name under heaven by which we could be saved except the name of

Jesus Christ. I take that to mean that we could not save ourselves, not in my name, not in yours. There is no other name. We find this taught not only in the New Testament in Acts 4:12, but also in at least seven places in the Book of Mormon, beginning hundreds of years before Christ came (see 2 Nephi 25:20; 31:21; Mosiah 3:17; 4:7-8; 5:8; Alma 38:9; Helaman 5:9). In other words, not only is there no other name now that the Atonement has been made, but there never has been any other name for salvation since the day that Adam fell.

I will note only two of these Book of Mormon references to give us the flavor of what is said. From Mosiah 3:17:

And moreover, I say unto you, that there shall be no other name given nor any other way nor means whereby salvation can come unto the children of men, only in and through the name of Christ, the Lord Omnipotent.

And from chapter 4:6-8:

I say unto you, if ye have come to a knowledge of the goodness of God, and his matchless power, and his wisdom, and his patience, and his long-suffering towards the children of men; and also, the atonement which has been prepared from the foundation of the world, that thereby salvation might come to him that should put his trust in the Lord, and should be diligent in keeping his commandments, and continue in the faith even unto the end of his life, I mean the life of the mortal body—

I say, that this is the man who receiveth salvation, through the atonement which was prepared from the foundation of the world for all mankind, which ever were since the fall of Adam, or who are, or who ever shall be, even unto the end of the world.

And this is the means whereby salvation cometh. And there is no other salvation save this which hath been spoken of; neither are there any conditions whereby man can be saved except the conditions which I have told you.

Our relationship to Jesus is not casual, it is crucial. It is not optional, it is absolute. If Jesus had not effected the Atonement, nothing we could do could make up for the loss.

The Book of Mormon Tells What an Anti-Christ Is

Not only does the Book of Mormon profusely tell about Jesus and his gospel; it also discusses the enemies of Christ and points out examples of anti-Christ. The message would not be complete if it did not do this. In Jacob 7 we read of Sherem (500 B.C.), who denied that there should be a Christ and that any person could know of things to come. He also denied that an atonement was necessary, or that God gives revelation to men.

In Alma 1 we read of Nehor (91 B.C.), who taught a generous doctrine that God had created everyone and had redeemed everyone, and thus we had no need to worry; that all people, regardless of their works, would be saved and have eternal life. The people paid him well for teaching this popular doctrine. Nehor was fashionable, rich, proud, and very popular, because he taught that which was pleasing to the carnal mind. He professed to have great humanitarian virtues; yet, when confronted about his doctrine by the aging Gideon, a member of the Church, Nehor, the great lover of mankind, became so angry that he slew Gideon with the sword.

And finally, in Alma 30 we read of Korihor (74 B.C.), another "learned" man who had much influence among the people. He ridiculed the ideas of a Christ, an atonement, a spirit of prophecy, and a need for repentance. He taught that there is no God, no need for Christ, no fall of Adam, and that only those things known and experienced by one's physical senses can be true. He further said that there was no sin, and no future judgment day or day of reckoning; that each person was saved only by his intellect, and when a man was dead that was the end. This man exhibited a materialistic viewpoint, trusting in the things of the world and of the mind of man in preference to the things of the Spirit and of God.

The false and subtle philosophies that influenced these three men are likewise present in our society today. We should be aware that the Book of Mormon tells us they are the enemies of Christ.

The Lord Supports His Servants in All Manner of Trials

Another thing the Book of Mormon tells us about Jesus is that he supports his people and lightens their burdens when they call on him for help. He hears and answers prayers of faith. We read in Mosiah 24:12-16, of Alma and his people, who were persecuted by Amulon and were forbidden to pray, and were also placed under heavy physical burdens. By their faith and prayers their burdens seemed to become light and eventually were lifted altogether.

The Compassion and Tenderness of Jesus

Jesus is concerned for the individual, and he knows that we need to prepare our minds in order to understand the gospel. Note these words in 3 Nephi 17:1-3:

Behold, now it came to pass that when Jesus had spoken these words he looked round about again on the multitude, and he said unto them: Behold, my time is at hand.

I perceive that ye are weak, that ye cannot understand all my words which I am commanded of the Father to speak unto you at this time.

Therefore, go ye unto your homes, and ponder upon the things which I have said, and ask of the Father, in my name, that ye may understand, and prepare your minds for the morrow, and I come unto you again.

The people were not ready to receive all that Jesus had come to teach. Even with an excellent, perfect teacher, there is need for careful preparation on the part of the student. The passage continues in verses 5-9:

And it came to pass that when Jesus had thus spoken, he cast his eyes round about again on the multitude, and beheld they were in tears, and did look steadfastly upon him as if they would ask him to tarry a little longer with them.

And he said unto them: Behold, my bowels are filled with compassion towards you.

Have ye any that are sick among you? Bring them hither. Have ye any that are lame, or blind, or halt, or maimed, or leprous, or that are withered, or that are deaf, or that are afflicted in any manner? Bring them hither and I will heal them, for I have compassion upon you; my bowels are filled with mercy . . . for I see that your faith is sufficient that I should heal you.

And it came to pass that when he had thus spoken, all the multitude, with one accord, did go forth with their sick and their afflicted, and their lame, and with their blind, and with their dumb, and with all them that were afflicted in any manner; and he did heal them every one as they were brought forth unto him.

Alma taught his son Helaman that his (Alma's) faith in Jesus Christ had been a source of joy, a release from sorrow, and a support in time of trouble. After telling of his wayward past and an encounter he had had with an angel of God, Alma explained that he had been in deepest despair until he called upon Jesus for help. He then was filled with joy:

And oh, what joy, and what marvelous light I did behold; yea, my soul was filled with joy as exceeding as was my pain!

Yea, I say unto you, my son, that there could be nothing so exquisite and so bitter as were my pains. Yea, and again I say unto you, my son, that on the other hand, there can be nothing so exquisite and sweet as was my joy.

Yea, methought I saw, even as our father Lehi saw, God sitting upon his throne, surrounded with numberless concourses of angels, in the attitude of singing and praising their God; yea, and my soul did long to be there (Alma 36:20-22).

In addition to the things we have covered in this chapter, the Book of Mormon tells us many other things about Jesus, such as the facts that he teaches prayer, he knows all things, he is interested in complete and accurate records, and he cares for mankind.

A Testimony

We first became acquainted with the Lord Jesus Christ in the premortal life and have come into mortality to gain experience and to get a physical body and to make spiritual progress. I believe, and the Book of Mormon teaches, that left to ourselves, to our own resources, to our own strength and wisdom, none of us—nor all of us collectively—could steer a course that would take us back into the presence of God. We need a Savior, a Redeemer, an Advocate, a Messiah. No wonder angels sang and the heavens rejoiced at the birth of Christ. No wonder there was a night as bright as day. Jesus, the Son of God, has come to earth, he has paid for the fall of Adam uncondi-

tionally and for our individual sins on conditions of our faith, repentance, baptism, and continued obedience. The word *gospel* means “the good news.” What is that good news? That there is a Redeemer, and his name is Jesus Christ. He is the Way, the Truth, the Light, the Law, the King, the Creator, the Savior, the Example, the Judge. He is the Advocate, the Mediator, the Lawgiver, the Resurrection, and the Life—a name that is above every other name. All this and more is what I have found the Book of Mormon tells us about Jesus, and I know that what I have found is the truth.