



Type: Magazine Article


Characters and Teachings of the Book of Mormon: Lesson 15—Nephi's Predictions, Promises, and Instructions

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Source: *Relief Society Magazine*, Vol. 40, No. 1 (January 1953), pp. 53–57

Published by: The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints

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Theology—Characters and Teachings of The Book of Mormon

Lesson 15—Nephi's Predictions, Promises, and Instructions

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(Text: The Book of Mormon, 2 Nephi, Chapters 25-33)

For Tuesday, April 7, 1953

Objective: To study Nephi's predictions concerning the Jews, Nephites, Lamanites, and the Gentiles.

NEPHI delighted in teaching his people that except Christ should come, all men must perish. For this purpose he quoted extensively from Isaiah and expounded his message to the people. Nephi felt that many truths expressed by Isaiah were hard for his people to understand because the Nephites did not understand "the manner of prophesying among the Jews." Nephi knew that until one is acquainted with the intellectual, social, political, and religious milieu or environment of a people, one finds it difficult to understand its literature. That is why he undertook to explain Isaiah to his people. He told them that he came out from Jerusalem and his eyes had beheld the things of the Jews, that the Jews understood the things of the prophets and none others understood them unless they had been taught after the manner of the things of the Jews in which way Nephi said he had not taught his children.

His explanation appears in the form of a major prophecy delivered in plainness in which he forecasted what would happen to the Jews. He also foretold the fate of the Nephites and the Lamanites, and of the Gentiles, extending his prophecy from his own time until the last days.

Jews

He first recounted the destruction of Jerusalem, telling his people that according to prophecy, Jerusalem had been destroyed, that many Jews had been killed, and others carried away captive into Babylon (2 Nephi 25:10). Notwithstanding this captivity, however, he foretold their restoration to the land of their inheritance (2 Nephi 25:11). He said that six hundred years from the time Lehi left Jerusalem, the Messiah whose name should be Jesus Christ, the Son of God, would be born among the Jews, and because of their iniquity and because of their hardened hearts, they would reject him and crucify him.

On the third day, however, he would rise from the dead.

Nephi further predicted many things which should happen to the Jews after the crucifixion and the resurrection of Jesus Christ. Jerusalem would again be destroyed, and the Jews be scattered among all nations. Babylon would also be destroyed and the Jews be scattered by other nations. When these other nations should have scourged the Jews from generation to generation, the Jews should then begin to accept Christ and no longer look forward to the coming of a Messiah. Then, and not till then, the Lord would set his hand again the second time to restore them from their lost and fallen state. Wherefore, the Lord would proceed to do a marvelous work and a wonder among the children of men. He should then bring forth his words unto them for the purpose of convincing them of the true Messiah who was rejected by them. Nephi declared Jesus Christ is the only name given under heaven whereby mankind can be saved (2 Nephi 25:20).

In order to accomplish this mission of taking his word to the nations, Nephi said the Lord had promised him that the things which he wrote should be kept and preserved and handed down from generation to generation unto Nephi's seed, and fulfill the Lord's promise to Joseph that his seed should never perish as long as the earth should stand (2 Nephi 25:21). Nephi spoke eloquently of Christ:

We talk of Christ, we rejoice in Christ, we preach of Christ, we prophesy of Christ, and we write according to our

prophecies, that our children may know to what source they may look for a remission of their sins (2 Nephi 25:26).

Blessed are parents today in Zion of whom such words can be written.

Nephi also promises the Jews that when they shall accept the Christ and live his teachings, they shall become a delightful people. (See 2 Nephi 30:7.)

Nephites and Lamanites

Turning from his prophecies concerning the Jews, Nephi predicted what should happen to his own descendants, the Nephites, and to the Lamanites. Nephi told them that after the crucifixion and resurrection of Jesus Christ on the Eastern Hemisphere, he would appear to the Nephites in the land of promise, the Western Hemisphere. Signs of Christ's birth and crucifixion on the Eastern Hemisphere would be given to the Nephites and Lamanites on this continent. At that time great tribulations and sorrow would come to their wicked descendants because of their rejection of the truth and their other sins.

Nephi wrote:

O the pain, and the anguish of my soul for the loss of the slain of my people! For I, Nephi, have seen it, and it well nigh consumeth me before the presence of the Lord; but I must cry unto my God: Thy ways are just (2 Nephi 26:7).

After this period of sorrow and tribulation, which should occur before the Savior visited the Nephites, peace should be restored among their people. Three or four generations would then pass away in righteousness, but at the expiration of this period of righteousness, and because of the moral degeneration

of their descendants, God would send a speedy destruction unto Nephi's people. "For the reward of their pride and their foolishness they shall reap destruction" (2 Nephi 26:10). The spirit of the Lord would cease to strive with them, and then speedy destruction would come, which Nephi said grieved his soul.

Concerning the Lamanites of our day, who would represent, in part, the remnants of Lehi's posterity, he prophesied that a book should come forth which would be of great worth to the children of men, and particularly to their seed, who are a remnant of the house of Israel.

Nephi writes:

And then shall the remnant of our seed know concerning us, how that we came out from Jerusalem, and that they are descendants of the Jews. And the gospel of Jesus Christ shall be declared among them; wherefore, they shall be restored unto the knowledge of their fathers, and also to the knowledge of Jesus Christ, which was had among their fathers. And then shall they rejoice; for they shall know that it is a blessing unto them from the hand of God; and their scales of darkness shall begin to fall from their eyes; and many generations shall not pass away among them, save they shall be a white and delightsome people (2 Nephi 30:4-6).

The Gentiles

Having foretold many things which would happen to the Jews and to the Nephites and Lamanites, Nephi then predicted what would be the condition of the Gentiles following in the wake of Columbus, when many Gentiles would migrate to America and establish a great free government. It is these Gentiles of our nation that Nephi had

in mind in the last part of his prophecy.

Nephi wrote:

But behold, I prophesy unto you concerning the last days; concerning the days when the Lord God shall bring these things forth unto the children of men. After my seed and the seed of my brethren shall have dwindled in unbelief, and shall have been smitten by the Gentiles; yea, after the Lord God shall have camped against them round about, and shall have laid siege against them with a mount, and raised forts against them; and after they shall have been brought down low in the dust, even that they are not, yet the words of the righteous shall be written, and the prayers of the faithful shall be heard, and all those who have dwindled in unbelief shall not be forgotten. 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 (2 Nephi 26:14-16).

Among the Gentiles at that time there will be many churches whose ministers shall teach for gain their own wisdom and learning. Among these sects there shall be envyings, strife, and malice. These churches will have put down the power and miracles of God and will have built up secret combinations as in times of old.

Nephi related that the visitations of the Lord of Hosts should come upon the Gentiles and predicted that all the nations that fight against Zion should be as a dream of a night vision. Then Nephi said, ". . . the Lord God shall bring forth . . . the words of a book, and they shall be the words of them which have slumbered" (2 Nephi 27:6).

When the book is delivered unto the man (Joseph Smith), the eyes of none shall behold it save it be that three witnesses shall behold it by the power of God. Nephi then adds that "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" (2 Nephi 27:13).

It was in accordance with these statements that the three and eight witnesses were permitted to view the plates. (See lesson 2, *The Relief Society Magazine*, August 1951, page 555.)

Nephi declared that "the things which shall be written out of the book shall be of great worth unto the children of men, and especially unto our seed, which is a remnant of the house of Israel."

Nephi also prophesied that many of the Gentiles would say, "Eat, drink, and be merry . . . for tomorrow we die; and it shall be well with us." Others would say, God will justify us "in committing a little sin . . . lie a little, take the advantage of one because of his words . . . there is no harm in this . . ." After this manner they would teach "false vain, and foolish doctrines." As a result of the pride of the people, the false teachers, and the false doctrines, the churches would have become corrupted. They would rob the poor to build fine sanctuaries, and all but a few who were the humble followers of Christ would have gone astray. (See 2 Nephi 28:7-13).

"But behold, that great and abominable church, the whore of all the earth, must tumble to the

earth, and great must be the fall thereof" (2 Nephi 28:18).

The devil would rage in the hearts of men and deceive the people in many ways. He would lull them away into carnal security and they would say, "Zion prospereth, all is well—and thus the devil cheateth their souls, and leadeth them away carefully down to hell" (2 Nephi 28:21). Others he would deceive with telling that there is no hell.

Then Nephi continued his warnings to those living in the last days:

Therefore, wo be unto him that is at ease in Zion! Wo be unto him that crieth: All is well! Yea, wo be unto him that hearkeneth unto the precepts of men, and denieth the power of God, and the gift of the Holy Ghost! Yea, wo be unto him that saith: We have received, and we need no more! And in fine, wo unto all those who tremble, and are angry because of the truth of God! For behold, he that is built upon the rock receiveth it with gladness; and he that is built upon a sandy foundation trembleth lest he shall fall. Wo be unto him that shall say: We have received the word of God, and we need no more of the word of God, for we have enough! (2 Nephi 28:24-29).

Nephi continued his teachings with the prediction that in the day that the Nephite record would be brought forth, many Gentiles would say: "A Bible! A Bible! We have got a Bible, and there cannot be any more Bible." To these Gentiles, Nephi wrote that God speaks unto the Jews, the Nephites, the other tribes of Israel, and unto all nations of the earth, and all these groups shall write what is spoken to them. These various records shall be united. Nephi wrote:

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 (2 Nephi 29:13).

Regarding the status of the Gentiles who repent, Nephi wrote that they thus would become then covenant people of the Lord, also, and would carry the words which had been written unto the remnant of Nephi's seed, who will know them, that they are descendants of the Jews.

After giving this extensive prophecy regarding the Jews, Nephites, and Lamanites, and the Gentiles of the last days, Nephi instructed his people concerning the doctrine of Christ, who, he had said, would come to the Jews six hundred years after Lehi left Jerusalem. His instructions remind us of our fourth article of faith:

We believe that the first principles and ordinances of the Gospel are: first, Faith in the Lord Jesus Christ; second, Repentance; third, Baptism by immersion for the remission of sins; fourth, Laying on of hands for the gift of the Holy Ghost.

Christ, Nephi says, was baptized to fulfill all righteousness. By subjecting himself to baptism, "he showeth unto the children of men that, according to the flesh he humbleth himself before the Father, and witnesseth unto the Father that he would be obedient unto him in keeping his commandments" (2 Nephi 31:7).

Christ taught the children of

men the straightness of the path, and the narrowness of the gate, by which they should enter, he having set the example before them (2 Nephi 31:9).

It is not enough, Nephi taught, to embrace the gospel, to accept and perform the first principles and ordinances of the gospel, but we must be steadfast in Christ and endure to the end in following the example of the Son of the living God. We must also pray always and not faint.

Nephi said that he was not "mighty in writing, like unto speaking; for when a man speaketh by the power of the Holy Ghost the power of the Holy Ghost carrieth it unto the hearts of the children of men" (2 Nephi 33:1).

Knowing that he must close his record, Nephi bade farewell to his brethren of the house of Israel and to all the ends of the earth, saying that he had charity for the Nephites, the Jews, and the Gentiles, but that all must be reconciled to Christ. He also urged all mankind to hearken to the words of Christ, for they teach men to do good.

Questions on the Lesson

1. What did Nephi predict concerning his seed and the seed of his brethren?
2. What did Nephi say would happen to the Gentiles in the last days?
3. What warnings did Nephi give to the people living in the last days?
4. What did he promise repentant Gentiles?
5. Discuss the meaning of the phrase "their speech shall whisper out of the dust" (2 Nephi 26:16).