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Characters and Teachings of The Book of Mormon: Lesson 45—Moroni Explains Principles and Ordinances of the Gospel

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LESSON DEPARTMENT

Theology—Characters and Teachings of The Book of Mormon

Lesson 45—Moroni Explains Principles and Ordinances of the Gospel

Elder Leland H. Monson

(Text: The Book of Mormon: the Book of Mormon, chapters 8 and 9; the Book of Ether, chapters 5 and 12:5-41; the Book of Moroni, chapters 1-7, and chapter 10)

For Tuesday, February 5, 1957

Objective: To show “. . . if the day cometh that the power and gifts of God shall be done away among you, it shall be because of unbelief” (Moroni 10:24).

Moroni the Last Nephite Survivor

FOR a period of at least twenty-one years (400-421 A.D.), Moroni, son of Mormon, roamed the wilderness and the plains as the last, sad survivor of a once mighty people. (See Mormon 8:3-6.) He was a wayfarer, living a lonesome and a forlorn life; a hunted man, for he knew that if the Lamanites found him they would kill him. The manner of his death is still a mystery.

After the battle of Cumorah, fought in 385 A.D., in which Moroni led ten thousand people, he was given custody of the sacred records, the brass plates, the twenty-four gold plates, the large plates of Nephi, and the plates of Mormon, including the small plates of Nephi.

Moroni studied the records and familiarized himself with the prophecies foretelling the destruction of his people and with the history of the Nephites and the Jaredites. He engraved an abridgment of the Jaredites, recorded on the twenty-four gold plates, upon his father's plates. This abridgment, the Book of Ether, was the first book we read in this course of study. It is a summary of a great civilization that suffered extinction because the people sought for blood and revenge (Moroni 9:23), and because they refused to serve the God of this land who is Jesus Christ.

Moroni Finishes His Father's Book

Before engraving the history of the Jaredites on Mormon's plates, Moroni wrote two chapters (chapters eight and nine) to conclude his

father's book, the Book of Mormon. In these two chapters, he recounts the death of his father and all other Nephites save himself:

And my father also was killed by them, and I even remain alone to write the sad tale of the destruction of my people. But behold, they are gone, and I fulfil the commandment of my father. And whether they will slay me, I know not (Mormon 8:3).

Conditions in Latter Days Given

Moroni relates the conditions that would exist when his father's record would come forth, he gives his testimony concerning the three Nephites and Jesus Christ, and addresses unbelievers.

Moroni writes:

Behold, I speak unto you as if ye were present, and yet ye are not. But behold, Jesus Christ hath shown you unto me, and I know your doing (Mormon 8:35).

There was no question in Moroni's mind about the coming forth of the writings:

And no one need say they shall not come, for they surely shall, for the Lord hath spoken it; for out of the earth shall they come, by the hand of the Lord, and none can stay it; and it shall come in a day when it shall be said that miracles are done away; and it shall come even as if one should speak from the dead (Mormon 8:26).

Moroni describes the social and religious conditions that would exist at the time of the coming forth of the record:

And it shall come in a day when the blood of saints shall cry unto the Lord, because of secret combinations and the works of darkness (Mormon 8:27).

He further testifies that:

Yea, it shall come in a day when the

power of God shall be denied, and churches become defiled and be lifted up in the pride of their hearts; yea, even in a day when leaders of churches and teachers shall rise in the pride of their hearts, even to the envying of them who belong to their churches.

Yea, it shall come in a day when there shall be heard of fires, and tempests, and vapors of smoke in foreign lands;

And there shall also be heard of wars, rumors of wars, and earthquakes in divers places (Mormon 8:28-30).

Moroni further notes that the record will come forth in a day when, ". . . there shall be churches built up that shall say: Come unto me, and for your money you shall be forgiven of your sins" (Mormon 8:32), in a day when churches will have been built ". . . to get gain . . ." (Mormon 8:33).

And I know that ye do walk in the pride of your hearts; and there are none save a few only who do not lift themselves up in the pride of their hearts, unto the wearing of very fine apparel, unto envying, and strifes, and malice, and persecutions, and all manner of iniquities; and your churches, yea, even every one, have become polluted because of the pride of your hearts.

For behold, ye do love money, and your substance, and your fine apparel, and the adorning of your churches, more than ye love the poor and the needy, the sick and the afflicted (Mormon 8:36-37).

Address to Unbelievers

To the unbelievers, Moroni says:

. . . turn ye unto the Lord, cry mightily unto the Father in the name of Jesus, that perhaps ye may be found spotless, pure, fair, and white, having been cleansed by the blood of the Lamb, at that great and last day (Mormon 9:6).

To those who deny latter-day revelation and the gifts of the spirit,

he says that they know not the gospel:

For do we not read that God is the same yesterday, today, and forever, and in him there is no variableness neither shadow of changing? (Mormon 9:9).

Moroni states that the only reason for a lack of miracles is a lack of faith in God. (Mormon 9:20) Recalling the visit of Christ to the Nephites, Moroni calls attention to the fact that Jesus said:

And these signs shall follow them that believe—in my name shall they cast out devils; they shall speak with new tongues; they shall take up serpents; and if they drink any deadly thing it shall not hurt them; they shall lay hands on the sick and they shall recover (Mormon 9:24).

Moroni calls upon unbelievers, “Be wise in the days of your probation See that ye art not baptized unworthily; see that ye partake not of the sacrament of Christ unworthily; but see that ye do all things in worthiness, and do it in the name of Jesus Christ, the Son of the living God; and if ye do this, and endure to the end, ye will in nowise be cast out” (Mormon 9:28-29).

In concluding the Book of Mormon, Moroni asks those to whom the record will come:

Condemn me not because of mine imperfection, neither my father, because of his imperfection, neither them who have written before him; but rather give thanks unto God that he hath made manifest unto you our imperfections, that ye may learn to be more wise than we have been (Mormon 9:31).

Discourse on Faith

When Moroni was abridging the Book of Ether, he inserted some of his own teachings and experiences

which are inspirational and reveal the greatness of Moroni’s character. He addresses chapter 5 of Ether to the future translator of his writings, saying that the plates may be shown unto three by the power of God.

In the twelfth chapter of Ether, Moroni gives a discourse on faith:

. . . I would show unto the world that faith is things which are hoped for and not seen; wherefore, dispute not because ye see not, for ye receive no witness until after the trial of your faith.

For it was by faith that Christ showed himself unto our fathers, after he had risen from the dead; and he showed not himself unto them until after they had faith in him; wherefore, it must needs be that some had faith in him, for he showed himself not unto the world.

Wherefore, by faith was the law of Moses given. But in the gift of his Son hath God prepared a more excellent way; and it is by faith that it hath been fulfilled.

For if there be no faith among the children of men God can do no miracle among them; wherefore, he showed not himself until after their faith.

Behold, it was the faith of Alma and Amulek that caused the prison to tumble to the earth.

Behold, it was the faith of Nephi and Lehi that wrought the change upon the Lamanites, that they were baptized with fire and with the Holy Ghost.

Behold, it was the faith of Ammon and his brethren which wrought so great a miracle among the Lamanites.

Yea, and even all they who wrought miracles wrought them by faith, even those who were before Christ and also those who were after.

And it was by faith that the three disciples obtained a promise that they should not taste of death; and they obtained not the promise until after their faith.

And neither at any time hath any wrought miracles until after their faith;

wherefore they first believed in the Son of God.

And there were many whose faith was so exceeding strong, even before Christ came, who could not be kept from within the veil, but truly saw with their eyes the things which they had beheld with an eye to faith, and they were glad.

And behold, we have seen in this record that one of these was the brother of Jared . . . (Ether 12:6-7, 11-20).

Moroni points out that it was by faith that his ancestors obtained the promise that the record should come to their brethren through the Gentiles, and he expresses a fear which he told the Lord that the Gentiles would mock, when they would receive the record, because of the Nephites' weakness in writing. Moroni then states that the Lord had made the Nephites ". . . mighty in word by faith . . ." (Ether 12:23), but not in writing:

. . . because of the awkwardness of our hands. Behold, thou hast not made us mighty in writing like unto the brother of Jared, for thou madest him that the things which he wrote were mighty even as thou art, unto the overpowering of man to read them.

Thou hast also made our words powerful and great, even that we cannot write them; wherefore, when we write we behold our weakness, and stumble because of the placing of our words; and I fear lest the Gentiles shall mock at our words.

And when I had said this, the Lord spake unto me, saying: Fools mock, but they shall mourn; and my grace is sufficient for the meek, that they shall take no advantage of your weakness

I give unto men weakness that they may be humble

Behold, I will show unto the Gentiles their weakness, and I will show unto them that faith, hope and charity bringeth unto me—the fountain of all righteousness (Ether 12:24-28).

And Moroni says that he was comforted. He recalled that the brother of Jared removed a mountain by faith, ". . . wherefore thou workest after men have faith And I also remember . . . man must hope, or he cannot receive an inheritance in the place which thou hast prepared" (Ether 12:30, 32).

And again, I remember that thou hast said that thou hast loved the world, even unto the laying down of thy life for the world, that thou mightest take it again to prepare a place for the children of men.

And now I know that this love which thou hast had for the children of men is charity; wherefore, except men shall have charity they cannot inherit that place which thou hast prepared in the mansions of thy Father.

Wherefore, I know by this thing which thou hast said, that if the Gentiles have not charity, because of our weakness, that thou wilt prove them, and take away their talent, yea, even that which they have received, and give unto them who shall have more abundantly.

And it came to pass that I prayed unto the Lord that he would give unto the Gentiles grace, that they might have charity.

And it came to pass that the Lord said unto me: If they have not charity it mattereth not unto thee, thou hast been faithful; wherefore, thy garments shall be made clean. And because thou hast seen thy weakness thou shalt be made strong, even unto the sitting down in the place which I have prepared in the mansions of my Father.

And now I, Moroni, bid farewell unto the Gentiles, yea, and also unto my brethren whom I love, until we shall meet before the judgment-seat of Christ, where all men shall know that my garments are not spotted with your blood.

And then shall ye know that I have

seen Jesus, and that he hath talked with me face to face, and that he told me in plain humility, even as a man telleth another in mine own language concerning these things;

And only a few have I written, because of my weakness in writing.

And now, I would commend you to seek this Jesus of whom the prophets and apostles have written, that the grace of God the Father, and also the Lord Jesus Christ, and the Holy Ghost, which beareth record of them, may be and abide in you forever. Amen (Ether 12:33-41).

Teachings of the Book of Moroni

In beginning the Book of Moroni, Moroni says:

Now I, Moroni, after having made an end of abridging the account of the people of Jared, I had supposed not to have written more, but I have not as yet perished; and I make not myself known to the Lamanites lest they should destroy me (Moroni 1:1).

Moroni then discusses principles and ordinances of the gospel. He informs us that he writes these things:

. . . that perhaps they may be of worth unto my brethren, the Lamanites, in some future day, according to the will of the Lord (Moroni 1:4).

Moroni tells them concerning the bestowal of the Holy Ghost by the Nephite twelve. He writes concerning the ordination of priests and teachers. Moroni also gives the two prayers used by the Nephites in administering the bread and wine, both of which we use today in our sacramental service. Finally, he specifies the conditions and mode of baptism. People were not baptized except “. . . they came forth with a broken heart and a contrite spirit, and witnessed unto the

church that they truly repented of all their sins” (Moroni 6:2). After this ordinance was performed they were numbered among the people of the Church.

The people met together frequently:

. . . to fast and to pray, and to speak one with another concerning the welfare of their souls And . . . to partake of bread and wine, in remembrance of the Lord Jesus (Moroni 6:5-6).

These people:

. . . were strict to observe that there should be no iniquity among them; and whoso was found to commit iniquity, and three witnesses of the church did condemn them before the elders, and if they repented not, and confessed not, their names were blotted out

But as oft as they repented and sought forgiveness, with real intent, they were forgiven (Moroni 6:7-8).

Obtaining a Testimony of The Book of Mormon

Moroni, finally, closes his book and, of course, The Book of Mormon, writing to his brethren, the Lamanites, and giving some specific instructions on how a testimony of the truth of The Book of Mormon may be obtained:

Behold, I would exhort you that when ye shall read these things, if it be wisdom in God that ye should read them, that ye would remember how merciful the Lord hath been unto the children of men, from the creation of Adam even down until the time that ye shall receive these things, and ponder it in your hearts.

And when ye shall receive these tidings, I would exhort you that ye would ask God, the Eternal Father, in the name of Christ, if these things are not true; and if ye shall ask with a sincere heart, with real intent, having faith in Christ, he will manifest the truth of it unto you, by the power of the Holy Ghost.

And by the power of the Holy Ghost ye may know the truth of all things (Moroni 10:3-5).

Moroni's Farewell Exhortation

Moroni further exhorts the Lamanites not to deny the gifts of God, one of which is given to one man and another of which is given to another man. One man, however, may have several gifts, "... according as he will" (Moroni 10:17).

And I would exhort you, my beloved brethren, that ye remember that every good gift cometh of Christ.

And I would exhort you, my beloved brethren, that ye remember that he is the same yesterday, today, and forever, and that all these gifts of which I have spoken, which are spiritual, never will be done away, even as long as the world shall stand, only according to the unbelief of the children of men.

Wherefore, there must be faith; and if there must be faith there must also be hope; and if there must be hope there must also be charity.

And except ye have charity ye can in nowise be saved in the kingdom of God; neither can ye be saved in the kingdom of God if ye have not faith; neither can ye if ye have no hope

And now I speak unto all the ends of

the earth — that if the day cometh that the power and gifts of God shall be done away among you, it shall be because of unbelief (Moroni 10:18-21, 24).

Moroni closes his record with words that ring with assurance:

And I exhort you to remember these things; for the time speedily cometh that ye shall know that I lie not, for ye shall see me at the bar of God; and the Lord God will say unto you: Did I not declare my words unto you, which were written by this man, like as one crying from the dead, yea, even as one speaking out of the dust? (Moroni 10:27).

And now I bid unto all, farewell. I soon go to rest in the paradise of God, until my spirit and body shall again reunite, and I am brought forth triumphant through the air, to meet you before the pleasing bar of the great Jehovah, the Eternal Judge of both quick and dead. Amen (Moroni 10:34).

Questions on the Lesson

1. What records did Moroni have?
2. What was the condition of the Lamanites and Nephites in his day?
3. What were the attitudes of Mormon and Moroni toward the gifts of the Spirit?
4. What social and religious conditions did Moroni foretell would prevail when the Nephite record would be brought forth?

Autumn Mood

Vesta N. Lukei

Bright maple leaves, and oak, gold-washed with sun,
That grew beside a stream an hour ago
Now fill my home with autumn's benison,
Epitomize the whole day's vibrant glow.

So, too, some slightest thing we shared can hold
Our happiness, and while we are apart
Keep memory as bright as autumn gold
And love a burning flame within my heart.