1 Nephi 3:3

Contents of Brass Plates

The brass plates obtained from Laban contained...a record of the Jews from the beginning down to Zedekiah, and the prophecies of the prophets from the beginning down to Jeremiah. (1 Nephi 3:3-20, 5:11-13.) This would explain how the biblical stories were known by the American Indian groups even before the arrival of the Catholic fathers and their Bibles after the time of Columbus. Historians have concluded the American Indians knew of the story of the creation, the flood, etc., before the time of Columbus, although they have not been able to explain how the Indians came into possession of this knowledge.


1 Nephi 3:5

A Hard Thing

This writer and accompanying friends learned by walking it that the distance between Jerusalem and the Red Sea is 200 mils...An agreeable pace for a group of people on camels would be between twenty and thirty miles a day. So the journey was a minimum of seven or eight days. Add to that the three days they traveled after reaching the Red Sea, and the figures are up to 260-290 miles in ten or eleven days. That is one direction only. The round-trip that the Lord and Father Lehi were asking of the four sons was over 500 miles and at least three weeks through some of the most rugged terrain in the Near East!


1 Nephi 3:7

I made this my rule: *When the Lord commands, do it.*

Joseph Smith, History of the Church, 2:170; emphasis in original

Obedience is a powerful spiritual medicine. It comes close to being a cure-all.

Boyd K. Packer, That All May be Edified, 67

Obedience is the first law of heaven....There is nothing in all eternity more important than to keep the commandments of God.

Bruce R. McConkie, Promised Messiah, 126

The Lord will always prepare a way for us to keep his commandments

When my feeling of incompetence wholly overwhelmed me, I remembered the words of Nephi....I rely upon that promise of the Lord that he will strengthen and empower me that I may be able to do this work to which I have been called.

Spencer W. Kimball, in Conference Report, October 1943, 18. See also 1 Corinthians 10:13

I Will Do What the Lord Commands

I believe with all my heart, for example, that if our young people could come out of our homes thoroughly acquainted with the life of Nephi, imbued with the spirit of his courage and love of truth, they would choose the right when a choice is placed before them.

How marvelous it would be if, when they must make a decision, there would flash into their minds, from long and intimate association with them, the words of Nephi: "I will go and do the things which the Lord hath commanded,

Elder Marion G. Romney, Conference Report, April 1960, Afternoon Meeting 112
There are some people who seem to have the idea that rebellion and disobedience are evidences of independence and of manhood. Well, I am glad to know that, so far as I am concerned, I never took that view. I always felt that I was just as independent in being obedient, and I know I felt much better than I could possibly feel if I were disobedient. It is not necessary to be disobedient to show independence… I suppose each one of us is fond of having his own way. I know I am. I am willing to confess that I like to have my own way. But I do not like my own way well enough to want it in opposition to [the leaders of the Church].


To obey! To hearken! What a difficult requirement! Often we hear: "Nobody can tell me what clothes to wear, what I shall eat or drink. No one can outline my Sabbaths, appropriate my earnings, nor in any way limit my personal freedoms! I do as I please! I give no blind obedience!"

Blind obedience! How little they understand! The Lord said through Joseph Smith: "Whatever God requires is right, no matter what it is, although we may not see the reason thereof until long after the events transpire."


When my feeling of incompetence wholly overwhelmed me, I remembered the words of Nephi when he said: "...I will go and do the things which the Lord hath commanded, for I know that the Lord giveth no commandments unto the children of men, save he shall prepare a way for them that they may accomplish the thing which he commandeth them." (I Nephi 3:7.) I want to tell you that I lean heavily on these promises, that the Lord will strengthen and give me growth and fit and qualify me for this great work. I have seen the Lord qualify men. In my Church experience I have helped to...[call] many bishops. I have seen them grow and prosper and become great and mighty men in the Church; men who were weak and men who were foolish, and they became strong and confounded the wise, and so I rely upon that promise of the Lord that he will strengthen and empower me that I may be able to do this work to which I have been called.

Elder Spencer W. Kimball, *Conference Report*, October 1943, First Day—Opening Session 18

**1 Nephi 3:11**

Casting lots was a means used to settle disputed questions....This ancient equivalent of “flipping a coin” resolved the matter quickly and decisively. Though the means might appear arbitrary, participants fully believed God was involved....God could certainly have directed the results of any such process. [He wouldn’t] use a lottery to pick an apostle.

*Quest Study Bible*, 890

**1 Nephi 3:15**

*Oath*

This matter of swearing with an oath in ancient days was far more significant than many of us have realized. For instance: Nephi and his brethren were seeking to obtain the brass plates from Laban. Their lives were in peril. Yet Nephi swore this oath: “As the Lord liveth, and as we live, we will not go down unto our father in the wilderness until we have accomplished the thing which the Lord hath commanded us” (1 Nephi 3:15). Thus Nephi made God his partner. If he failed to get the plates, it meant God had failed. And because god does not fail, it was incumbent upon Nephi to get the plates or lay down his life in the attempt.

1 Nephi 3:19-20

Why Preserve the Plates?

To “preserve…the[ir] language” (1 Nephi 3:20)
To “preserve…the words…of all the holy prophets” [to have the scripture] (1 Nephi 3:20)
To keep a nation from dwindling in unbelief (see 1 Nephi 4:13)
To perhaps save the plates from being destroyed along with the rest of Jerusalem

1 Nephi 3:25

A few deft and telling touches resurrect the pompous Laban with photographic perfection. We learn in passing that Laban commanded a garrison of fifty, that he met in full ceremonial armor with “the elders of the Jews” for secret consultations by night, that he had control of the treasury, that he was of the old aristocracy, being a distant relative of Lehi himself, that his house was a depository of very old family records, that he was a large man, short-tempered, crafty, and dangerous, and to the bargain cruel, greedy, unscrupulous, weak, vainglorious, and given to drink.

1 Nephi 3:29-31

Laban stole their wealth and tried to destroy them. Nephi’s brethren commenced to murmur again, and they took a rod and beat him with it. As they did so an angel of the Lord stood before them, and he commanded them to go up again, promising that God should deliver Laban into their hands. I call the attention of the young men and young ladies to this, for I have heard many of them say, “Oh, if I could only see an angel, I would believe and forever be faithful.” The seeing of an angel amounts to nothing, unless you are keeping the commandments of God. No sooner had the heavenly messenger departed than these elder brethren, who were lacking in faith and did not keep the commandments of God, commenced to murmur, and instead of having faith in the promises of the angel, they said unto Nephi, “How is it possible that the Lord will deliver Laban into our hands? Behold, he is a mighty man, and he can command fifty, yea, even he can slay fifty: then, why not us?” Did this discourage Nephi? Did he lack faith? No; he believed in the promises of the angel of God, and he said unto them, “Let us go up again unto Jerusalem, and let us be faithful in keeping the commandments of the Lord; for behold He is mightier than all the earth, then why not mightier than Laban and his fifty, yea, or even than his tens of thousands?” They went up and were successful.
CR, Oct. 1900, 34

President Joseph Fielding Smith has taught that “a visitation of an angel…would not leave the impression” that we “receive through a manifestation of the Holy Ghost. Personal visitations might become dim as time goes on [note Laman and Lemuel’s rationalizations on a later date—1 Nephi 16:38], but this guidance of the Holy Ghost is renewed and continued, day after day, year after year, if we live to be worthy of it.”
Doctrines of Salvation, 1:44

1 Nephi 3:29-31

Several decisions faced these young men as they approached Laban to ask for the records. It’s most interesting to me to note the process by which they made those decisions. First, the decision was to leave it to chance. And they cast lots, and the lot fell to Laman….Laban was not too pleased with this request.….He said, “Behold thou art a robber, and I will slay thee” (1 Ne. 3:13). That was enough for Laman; he fled and came back and reported to his brothers that leaving the assignment to chance did not work.

So they approached the house of Laban and displayed the gold and silver and offered to trade these precious things for the plates of brass. When Laban saw the property and that it was exceedingly great, he did last after
it….He sent his servants after the boys to slay them, and they had to flee, leaving their property behind. Things of
the world did not produce the records.

So by night Nephi led his brothers outside the wall of Jerusalem. He crept inside into towards the house of
Laban, this time not leaving it to chance or to worldly things, but going by faith. He said, “I was led by the Spirit, not
knowing beforehand the things which I should do” (1 Ne. 4:6)....

As he came to the house of Laban, he found a man fallen to the earth, drunken with wine. On coming closer, he
discovered it was Laban. Laban had been delivered into his hands. The Lord had opened the way to obtain the
record. Making the decision to place his trust in the Lord produced the results.
L. Tom Perry, “Making the Right Decisions,” Ensign, November 1979, p. 35

Kirtland history is filled with examples of Saints who willingly sacrificed their worldly possessions to gather to
Kirtland. Three families, the Millets, the Tanners, and the Huntingtons, exemplify how sacrifice and spiritual
commitment overshadowed worldly concerns.

The Millet Family

Artemus Millet was a wealthy builder in Canada at the time he and his wife learned of the restored gospel in late
1832. A family history tells the story:

Brigham Young was given a special mission [by the Prophet Joseph Smith] to go to Canada and baptize
Brother Artemus Millet,…which call resulted from a consultation held at Kirtland respecting the building of the
Temple there, and as to who they could get that was capable of taking charge of the work. When Elder Lorenzo
Young exclaimed to the Prophet “I know the very man who is capable of doing this work,” “Who is he?” asked
the Prophet. Lorenzo replied [“It] is Artemus Millet.” The Prophet turned to Brigham and said, “I give you a
mission to go to Canada and baptize Brother Artemus Millet, and bring him here. Tell him to bring a thousand
dollars with him.” Artemus was much surprised when Brigham announced his mission to him and [he] asked
“What kind of a church is that?” Then Brigham explained the principles of the Gospel to him and he accepted
and was baptized.

Artemus, obedient to the Prophet’s call, left his family and went immediately to Kirtland, where he selected stone
for the temple foundation. He later returned to Canada, disposed of his property on credit (which became difficult to
collect), and took his family to Kirtland to supervise the masonry work on the temple. He deposited money in the
Kirtland Safety Society Bank and loaned money to the Church that he never collected. Despite his financial
sacrifices, however, Artemus Millet maintained his testimony. He later immigrated with his family to Utah, where his
large posterity now enjoy the blessings of the gospel.
Karl Ricks Anderson, Joseph Smith’s Kirtland, p.15-16