

Introduction to 3 Nephi

1 What a blessing it would be if every family would frequently read together 3 Nephi, discuss its sacred contents, and then determine how they can liken it unto themselves and apply its teachings in their lives! Third Nephi is a book that should be read and read again. Its testimony of the resurrected Christ in America is given in purity and beauty... I testify that 3 Nephi is a true account of the resurrected Christ's visit to ancient America and contains His teachings in their pristine truth. I testify that Jesus is the Christ and that he stands at the head of His Church today, even The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. I testify that He will come again in power and great glory and that He will leave nothing undone for our eternal welfare.
Ezra Taft Benson, *A Witness and a Warning* [Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1988], 43-45.

2 Let us establish in our lives the habit of reading those things which will strengthen our faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, the Savior of the world. He is the pivotal figure of our theology and our faith. Every Latter-day Saint has the responsibility to know for himself or herself with a certainty beyond doubt that Jesus is the resurrected, living God. The Brethren of the Council of the Twelve are advocating that we read a chapter a day of the Gospels—that is, Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John in the Bible; and Third Nephi in the Book of Mormon, particularly beginning with the eleventh chapter of Third Nephi where is found an account of Christ's visit among the Nephites in this hemisphere. I should like to endorse this program and commend it to you and urge you to follow it.
President Gordon B. Hinckley, CR, April, 1093, 110.

3 Third Nephi gives us additional information in more detail than the four Gospels in the New Testament, and preserves the doctrines, teachings, and compassion of the Lord. For this reason there are many who refer to Third Nephi as the fifth Gospel.

4 I reflected a bit on where might I go to find the real words of the Savior. I knew I could not go to the Bible. We do not believe the Bible is absolutely correct. Students tell us there are 4500 different manuscripts of the Bible, and a few years ago it was estimated that there were 120,000 variations. Then it came to me almost as a revelation: Why do you not go to the Book of Mormon? So I took Third Nephi. I went over it with great care. I parallel-columned it with the parts of the New Testament concerning the Sermon on the Mount and the Sermon on the Plain. In the Old Testament I noted the instructions to Malachi as they were repeated by the Savior, because they had no record of Malachi, who lived after they left Jerusalem.

I found some differences, some omissions from the word that he was recorded as having spoken in Palestine. But I resorted to the Book of Mormon and to Third Nephi with the feeling that I was getting really what the Savior said. I commend an equal study by you brethren of those great books of the Book of Mormon and so far as the Savior's immediate mission was concerned, Third Nephi. There we may believe we have the true teachings, for the record was made by inspired men, abridged by another inspired man, study it, if you never have done so, you will find great joy in the doing.

J Reuben Clark, CR, April 1960, 43

3 Nephi 1: 15 *Meaning of the Term "A.D. 1"*

The Chronological material listed on the bottom of each page in the Book of Mormon did not appear in the first edition. These chronological notes were first added in the edition of 1920 at the recommendation of a committee headed by Elder James E. Talmage. The abbreviation B.C. is used to designate the number of years before the time of Christ. The abbreviation A.D. (from the Latin *Anno Domini*, meaning "in the year of our Lord") is used to indicate the number of years since the birth of Christ. Note that this calendar system does not go through a zero number. Thus the year before the birth of Christ is 1 B.C, and the year in which the Savior is born is A.D. 1. According to the calendar systems previously used by the Nephites, the year A.D. 1 occurs in the ninety-second year of the reign of judges (the record says the "ninety and first year had passed away") and in the six hundredth year from the time Lehi left Jerusalem. (3 Nephi 1:1)

Daniel H. Ludlow, *A companion to Your Study of the Book of Mormon* [Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Co. 1976], 252

3 Nephi 1: 86 *They did watch steadfastly*

In the Book of Mormon we find a pattern for preparing for the Second Coming. A major portion of the book centers on the few decades just prior to Christ's coming to America. By careful study of that time period, we can determine why some were destroyed in the terrible judgments that preceded His coming and what brought others to stand at the temple in the land of Bountiful and thrust their hands into the wounds of His hands and feet.

Ezra Taft Benson, *Conference Report*, Oct. 1966, p.5

3 Nephi 1: 4-9*"Signs"*

7 Gifts of the Spirit which the Lord bestows upon those who believe and obey the gospel of Christ are called signs. That is, their receipt stands as an evidence or sign of the presence of that faith which results from believing the truth. Signs are wonders and miracles; they always and invariably are manifest to and among the faithful saints.

In every gospel dispensation, the Saints have had this promise: "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; And whosoever shall believe in my name, doubting nothing, unto him will I confirm all my words, even unto the ends of the earth." (Mormon 9:24-25.)

Bruce R. McConkie, *Mormon Doctrine*, p. 7613

3 Nephi 1: 9

8 Here we witness a phenomenon which is repeated ad nauseam in the Book of Mormon; the wicked who refuse to believe dare not allow others to believe. There is no room in their tightly controlled epistemological system for faith or spirit or revelation or hope. They do not know, so they conclude that no one else knows. They cannot feel, so they dare not allow others to feel. In this case they shun the light of evidence that comes from God and refuse others the right to wait patiently on the Lord for the signs to be given.

Millet and McConkie, *BOM Commentary*, Vol. 4, p. 5.

3 Nephi 1:12-14

9 *Divine investiture of Authority*

The Book of Mormon account of Christ speaking to Nephi, the grandson of Helaman and saying, “On the morrow come I into the world” (3 Nephi 1:13), is not intended to infer that the spirit does not enter the body until the moment of the actual birth. Rather, this revelation to the Nephites was itself being conveyed in a miraculous and unusual way. Quite probably the one uttering the words was speaking in the first person as though he were Christ, in accordance with the law enabling others to act and speak for Deity on the principle of divine investiture of authority.

Bruce R. McConkie, *Doctrinal New Testament Commentary* [Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1975], 1:85.

3 Nephi 1: 14

10 *“The Father because of me and the Son because of my flesh”*

It sounds as though the Lord is stating that he will come onto the world to fulfill two wills—the will of Jehovah, the premortal God of the ancients (perhaps referred to here as “:me”), and the will of the mortal Messiah (the person of “flesh”). Of course we know that the, Jehovah and Jesus, are one and the same being. At the same time, this statement dramatizes the separate and severable roles that would be played by the Master, that of the Holy One of Israel (premortals) and that of Jesus of Nazareth (mortal). There is a sense, then, in which we might speak of the Lord Jehovah, acting always under the direction of Elohim, our Heavenly Father, as the one who sent Jesus Christ into the world. Note the following language from the Psalmist: “The LORD [Jehovah] said unto my Lord [Jesus]. Sit thou at my right hand, until I make thine enemies thy footstool” (Psalm 110:1; compare Matthew 22:41-45). A similar pattern emerges in the greatest of all messianic prophecies. In speaking of the suffering Savior, Isaiah wrote that “the LORD [Jehovah] hath laid on him [Jesus] the iniquity of us all.” Further, “it pleased the LORD [Jehovah] to bruise him [Jesus]; he Jehovah hath put him [Jesus] to grief” (Isaiah 53:6, 10; Mosiah 14:6, 10). In the same vein the Lord Jehovah spoke to the brother of Jared: “And whatsoever thing persuadeth men to do good is of me; for good cometh of none save it be of me. I am the same that leadeth men to all good; he that will not believe my words will not believe me—that I am; and *he that will not believe me will not believe the Father who sent me. For behold, I am the Father, I am the light, and the life, and the truth of the world*” (Ether 4:12; emphasis added).

R. Miller and J. F. McConkie, *Doctrinal Commentary on the Book of Mormon* [Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1992], 4

3 Nephi 1:14*Announcement of Christ's Birth*

- 11 I include the [announcement] of Christ's birth (3 Nephi 1: 4-21) in the Nephite record as part of the "American Gospel." It does for that gospel what Matthew 1:8-2:6 does for the first gospel in the New Testament.

Sidney B. Sperry, *The Book of Mormon Testifies* [Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1952], 286.

3 Nephi 1: 22

- 12 We live in troubled times—very troubled times. We hope, we pray, for better days. But that is not to be. The prophecies tell us that. We will not as a people, as families, or as individuals be exempt from the trials to come. No one will be spared the trials common to home and family, work, disappointment, grief, health, aging, ultimate death.

Boyd K. Packer, "The Cloven Tongues of Fire", *Ensign*, May 2000, 8.

- 13 Faith, not signs, brings true change. Change occurs within the heart and is not due to external signs. We should not seek signs to believe, for they will follow those with faith (see D&C 63:7-12). President Joseph F. Smith cautioned, "Show me Latter-day Saints who have to feed upon miracles, signs, and visions in order to keep them steadfast in the Church, and I will show you members of the Church who are not in good standing before God, and who are walking in slippery paths. It is not by marvelous manifestations unto us that we shall be established in the truth, but it is by humility and faithful obedience to the commandments and laws of God" (*Gospel Doctrine: Selections from the Sermons and Writings of Joseph F. Smith*, comp. John A. Widstoe [Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1919], 7). As President Kimball's title teaches us, faith precedes the miracle. Faith adds meaning to the miracle.

Ed. J. Pinegar, *Teachings and Commentary on the Book of Mormon*, p. 413.

3 Nephi 1: 24*Contention*

- 14 There are some of other faiths who do not regard us as Christians... I hope we do not argue over this matter. There is no reason to debate it... We must not become disagreeable as we talk of doctrinal differences... We can respect other religions, and must do so... We must teach our children to be tolerant and friendly toward those not of our faith... A holier-than-thou attitude is not becoming to us.

Gordon B. Hinckley, *Ensign*, May 1998, pp. 4-5.

- 15 We cannot be arrogant. We cannot be self-righteous. The very situation in which the Lord has placed us requires that we be humble as the beneficiaries of His direction.

While we cannot agree with others on certain matters, we must never be disagreeable. We must be friendly, soft-spoken, neighborly, and understanding.

Gordon B. Hinckley, in Conference Report, Oct. 2003 [Salt Lake City: The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 2003], 86.

16 Whenever you get red in the face, whenever you raise your voice, whenever you get “hot under the collar,” or angry, rebellious, or negative in spirit, then know that the Spirit of God is leaving you and the spirit of Satan is beginning to take over. At times we may feel justified in arguing or fighting for truth by contentious words and actions. Do not be deceived. Satan would rather have you contend for evil if he could, but he rejoices when we contend with one another even when we think we are doing it in the cause of righteousness. He knows and recognizes the self-destructive nature of contention under any guise.

Theodore M. Burton, in Conference Report, Oct. 1974 [Salt Lake City: The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 1974], 77.

3 Nephi 1: 29

17 *Apostasy can occur in just one generation*

The young people of the Church... hold the future in their hands. The Church has always been one generation away from extinction. If a whole generation were lost, which will not happen, we would lose the Church. But even a single individual lost to the gospel of Jesus Christ closes doors for generations of descendants, unless the Lord reaches out to bring some of them back.

Henry B. Eyring, “We Must Raise Our Sights”, [Church Educational System Conference on the Book of Mormon, Aug 14, 2001], 1

18 To our young people, the glorious youth of this generation, I say, be true. Hold to the faith. Stand firmly for what you know to be right.

You face tremendous temptation. It comes at you in the halls of popular entertainment, on the Internet, in the movies, on television, in cheap literature, and in other ways—subtle, titillating, and difficult to resist. Peer pressure may be almost overpowering. But, my dear friends, you must not give in. You must be strong. You must take the long look ahead rather than succumbing to the present seductive temptation...

You are the best generation we have ever had. You know the gospel better. You are more faithful in your duties. You are stronger to face the temptations which come your way. Live by your standards. Pray for the guidance and protection of the Lord. He will never leave you alone. He will comfort you. He will sustain you. He will bless and magnify you and make your reward sweet and beautiful. And you will discover that your example will attract others who will take courage from your strength.

Gordon B. Hinckley, in Conference Report, Oct. 2003, 86-88; or *Ensign*, Nov. 2003, 83-84.

Conclusion

19 An example of tremendous courage in the face of certain death is the story of Rafael Monroy and Vicente Morales, two brethren from Mexico who lived during the Mexican civil war. The rebels who fought against the government in hopes of gaining power were called Zapatistas; they were followers of Emiliano Zapata. The civil war caused much bigotry, cruelty, anarchy, and bloodshed, reaching into the most isolated villages. Amid the violence, personal, political and religious scores were often settled. In 1912 while this terrible civil war was in full swing, the

Monroy family was contacted by LDS missionaries. They eventually accepted the gospel and were baptized.

They were accused of having abandoned the faith of their fathers, consorting with foreigners, and selling poisoned food in their store. Even local religious leaders ridiculed them. Some townspeople began painting graffiti the walls of their home, while others boycotted their store. Despite these trials, the family stood firm with an increased commitment to the Church.

Rafael had been a member only three months when the civil war forced the evacuation of all foreign missionaries from Mexico. Before leaving Mexico, President Pratt ordained Brother Monroy to the Melchizedek Priesthood and set him apart as president of the San Marcos branch.

The Zapatistas eventually arrested President Monroy and his three sisters for associating with North Americans and for allegedly being in league with the Constitutionalists. The Zapatistas also arrested Vicente Morales, who had married into the Monroy family and served with Rafael in the San Marcos branch presidency.

Acting on erroneous reports that the Morales family was hiding guns and ammunitions, the Zapatistas ransacked the family store. Finding no weapons, they demanded that the men “give up their arms.” Brothers Monroy and Morales were beaten after they presented their scriptures in reply. Later, they were told their lives would be spared if they would denounce their faith. When they refused, they were executed. One author wrote of the family’s loss:

“It had rained most of the night, and the air was damp. Jesucita Monroy had not slept and was out on the street early, pleading with the officers of the Zapatistas army... Her early morning appeal was successful, and the Zapatistas released her three daughters from army custody. After getting two of her daughters home, Jesucita and her oldest, Guadalupe, went to the place where the two executions had taken place the evening before. Already burdened with emotion and grief, these two women began the task of moving the bodies of their son and brother, Rafael, and their nephew-in-law and cousin-in-law, Vicente Morales, home to prepare for the funeral and burial. Victims of the brutality of a civil war in Mexico, these two men had lost their lives in the violence they had deplored. For many members of the family and for many friends, Rafael and Vicente became examples of faith and dedication to The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.” (F. LaMond Tullis, “Los Primeros: Mexico’s Pioneer Saints,” *Ensign*, July 1997, pp. 49-51.)

Scripture Study for Latter-day Saint Families: The Book of Mormon, Published by Deseret Book, p. 271-272.