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KnoWhy #528 - Why do New Testament Words and Phrases Show Up in the Book of Mormon? Part 2: The Resurrected Jesus as the Source

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Abstract: As was noted in Part 1 of this series of KnoWhys, readers of the Book of Mormon have always been aware of the existence of quotations from, allusions to, and echoes of biblical passages throughout the Book of Mormon. This KnoWhy (Part 2) explores the possibility of New Testament language entering into the Book of Mormon through Christ's teachings to the Nephites.

The Book of Mormon testifies that Christ appeared and spoke to descendants of Lehi in the New World. Jesus' appointed ministers there remembered and apparently immediately recorded His words, which paralleled his New Testament teachings. That being the case, it is not surprising that Joseph Smith's divinely revealed translation should likewise accurately reflect the New Testament-type sayings of the Lord Jesus Christ.



“My Other Sheep” by John Zamudio

KnoWhy #528
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WHY DO NEW TESTAMENT WORDS AND PHRASES SHOW UP IN THE BOOK OF MORMON?

PART 2: THE RESURRECTED JESUS AS THE SOURCE

And behold, I am called Mormon . . . Behold, I am a disciple of Jesus Christ, the Son of God. I have been called of him to declare his word among his people.

3 Nephi 5:12–13

This is the second in a series of KnoWhys looking at the question of “Why Do New Testament Words and Phrases Show Up in the Book of Mormon?”

THE KNOW

As was noted in Part 1 of this series of KnoWhys, readers of the Book of Mormon have always been aware of the existence of quotations from, allusions to, and echoes of biblical passages throughout the Book of Mormon. This KnoWhy (Part 2) explores the possibility of New Testament language entering into

the Book of Mormon through Christ’s teachings to the Nephites.

It should first be noted that Jesus set the example of quoting His foundational teachings. For instance, at the end of His ministry among the Nephites, Jesus admonished the people, “Enter ye in at the strait gate; for strait is the gate, and narrow is the way that leads to life, and few there be that find it; but wide is the gate, and broad the way which leads to death, and many there be that travel therein” (3 Nephi 27:33). This

statement inversely quotes from Christ's early teachings in 3 Nephi 14:14 (about the strait and narrow way of life) and then 3 Nephi 14:13 (about the wide gate and broad way of death).¹

As demonstrated in the following chart, Mormon and Moroni followed Christ's example by quoting from or alluding to His teachings from the Sermon at the Temple recorded in 3 Nephi 12–14 (cf. Matthew 5–7).²

| Christ's Sermon at the Temple | | Quotations/Allusions | |
|-------------------------------|--|----------------------|--|
| 3 Nephi 12:22 | and whosoever shall say, Thou fool, shall be in danger of hell fire. | Mormon 8:17 | therefore, he that condemneth, let him be aware lest he shall be in danger of hell fire. |
| 3 Nephi 14:20 | Wherefore, by their fruits ye shall know them. | Moroni 7:5 | For I remember the word of God which saith by their works ye shall know them; for if their works be good, then they are good also. |
| 3 Nephi 14:11 | If ye then, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children, how much more shall your Father who is in heaven give good things to them that ask him? | Moroni 7:10 | Wherefore, a man being evil cannot do that which is good; neither will he give a good gift. |
| 3 Nephi 14:2 | For with what judgment ye judge, ye shall be judged; and with what measure ye mete, it shall be measured to you again. | Moroni 7:18 | see that ye do not judge wrongfully; for with that same judgment which ye judge ye shall also be judged. |
| 3 Nephi 14:7 | Ask, and it shall be given unto you; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you. | Moroni 7:26 | Whatsoever thing ye shall ask the Father in my name, which is good, in faith believing that ye shall receive, behold, it shall be done unto you. |

On the other hand, rather than referencing Christ's recorded teachings in 3 Nephi, such as His Sermon at the Temple, some of Mormon and Moroni's teachings instead quote or allude to New Testament teachings of Christ that were not recorded in 3 Nephi. A few examples are shown in the following chart.

| Christ's Teachings Not Included in 3 Nephi | | Quotations/Allusions | |
|--|--|----------------------|---|
| Mark 16:15–18 | And he said unto them, Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature. He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned. 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 9:22–24 | For behold, thus said Jesus Christ, the Son of God, unto his disciples who should tarry, yea, and also to all his disciples, in the hearing of the multitude: Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature; And he that believeth and is baptized shall be saved, but he that believeth not shall be damned; 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; |

| | | | |
|----------------|---|--------------|---|
| Mark 12:30 | thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind, and with all thy strength | Moroni 10:32 | and love God with all your might, mind and strength |
| Matthew 24:6–7 | And ye shall hear of wars and rumours of wars ... and earthquakes, in divers places. | Mormon 8:30 | And there shall also be heard of wars, rumors of wars, and earthquakes in divers places. |
| Matthew 11:29 | Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart: | Moroni 7:43 | And again ... he cannot have faith and hope, save he shall be meek, and lowly of heart. |
| Matthew 18:4 | Whosoever therefore shall humble himself as this little child , the same is greatest in the kingdom of heaven. | Moroni 8:10 | Behold ... teach parents that they must ... humble themselves as their little children , and they shall all be saved with their little children. |

| | |
|--|---|
| he that believeth not shall be damned. And these signs shall follow them that believe; In my name shall they cast out devils; | me, and believe in my gospel, and be baptized in my name; for he that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned; and signs shall follow them that believe in my name |
| Mark 2:17 They that are whole have no need of the physician, but they that are sick: I came not to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance. Luke 5:31 And Jesus answering said unto them, They that are whole need not a physician; but they that are sick. | Moroni 8:8 Listen to the words of Christ, your Redeemer, your Lord and your God. Behold, I came into the world not to call the righteous but sinners to repentance; the whole need no physician, but they that are sick |

It is also important to remember that Mormon and Moroni abridged the earlier Nephite and Jaredite records.³ This might further explain why many New Testament parallels exist throughout the Book of Mormon. Additional possible reasons will be discussed in following entries in this series.

THE WHY

The Book of Mormon testifies that Christ appeared and spoke to descendants of Lehi in the New World. That being accepted as true, it makes sense that His words in 3 Nephi would be similar, with appropriate differences, to words that He had spoken in the Old World.

Jesus’ appointed ministers in the New World remembered and apparently immediately recorded the words of this extraordinary divine visitor. They were thus in a position, the very next day, to minister “those same words which Jesus had spoken—nothing varying from the words which Jesus had spoken” (3 Nephi 19:8). That being the case, it is not surprising that Joseph Smith’s divinely revealed translation should likewise accurately reflect the very words of the Lord Jesus Christ.

The Book of Mormon has been subtitled “Another Testament of Jesus Christ,” and many people have noted how often Christ is mentioned in its pages.⁴

How did *these* New Testament phrases find their way into Mormon’s and Moroni’s writings? Mormon opened up one very likely possibility when he explained that he could not record “even a hundredth part of the things which Jesus did truly teach unto the people” (3 Nephi 26:6; cf. 3 Nephi 28:33). In other words, Jesus could very well have taught these things to the Nephites, but they were simply not included in Mormon’s abridgment.

Furthermore, it should be remembered that on some occasions, Jesus spoke directly to Mormon and Moroni. His words to them on those occasions could have been similar to His words directly quoted or indirectly reflected in the books of the New Testament. Here are some examples that fit this scenario:

| Christ’s New Testament Teachings | Quotations/Allusions |
|---|---|
| Mark 16:16–17 He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but | Ether 4:18 Therefore, repent all ye ends of the earth, and come unto |

Based on the above discussion, it is quite likely that readers of the Book of Mormon are actually encountering words of Christ more frequently than they may have realized.

All this helps to fulfill one of the main declared purposes of the Book of Mormon: “the convincing of the Jew and Gentile that Jesus is the Christ, the Eternal God” (Book of Mormon, Title Page). The more readers embrace the Book of Mormon, the more they will feast upon the words of Jesus Christ Himself, which will draw them closer to Him.

FURTHER READING

Book of Mormon Central, “[Why Does Part of the Long Ending of Mark Show Up in the Book of Mormon? \(Mormon 9:24\)](#),” *KnoWhy* 522 (June 26, 2019).

Book of Mormon Central, “[Why Is the Book of Mormon Called an ‘Abridgment’? \(Title Page\)](#),” *KnoWhy* 519 (June 6, 2019).

Quinten Barney, “[Samuel the Lamanite, Christ, and Zenos: A Study of Intertextuality](#),” *Interpreter: A Journal of Mormon Scripture*, 18 (2016): 159–170.

John W. Welch, “[Echoes from the Sermon on the Mount](#),” in *The Sermon on the Mount in Latter-day Scripture*, ed. Gaye Strathearn, Thomas A. Wayment, and Daniel L. Belnap (Provo, UT: Religious Studies Center, Brigham Young University; Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 2010), 312–40.

David E. Bokovoy and John A. Tvedtnes, *Testaments: Links between the Book of Mormon and the Hebrew Bible* (Tooele, UT: Heritage Press, 2003), 56–60.

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NOTES

1. Christ’s statements here seem to follow a Hebrew pattern of quotation known as Seidel’s Law, which entails repeating a quote in reverse order. For more on Seidel’s Law and Jesus’ reuse of the Sermon at the Temple later on in 3 Nephi, see John W. Welch, “[Echoes from the Sermon on the Mount](#),” in *The Sermon on the Mount in Latter-day Scripture*, ed. Gaye Strathearn, Thomas A. Wayment, and Daniel L. Belnap (Provo, UT: Religious Studies Center, Brigham Young University; Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 2010), 312–340; Seidel’s Law in the Book of Mormon is also discussed by David Bokovoy, “Inverted Quotations in the Book of Mormon,” *FARMS Insights* 13, no. 9 (2000): 2, and “Seidel’s

- Law,” in David E. Bokovoy and John A. Tvedtnes, *Testaments: Links between the Book of Mormon and the Hebrew Bible* (Tooele, UT: Heritage Press, 2003), 56–60.
2. See Welch, “[Echoes](#),” 323–324.
3. See Book of Mormon Central, “[Why Is the Book of Mormon Called an ‘Abridgment’? \(Title Page\)](#),” *KnoWhy* 519 (June 6, 2019).
4. See Book of Mormon Central, “[Why Is the Book of Mormon So Focused on Jesus Christ? \(2 Nephi 25:26\)](#),” *KnoWhy* 484 (November 13, 2018); also <https://www.facebook.com/bookofmormon/photos/a.261378873918015/308694825853086/?type=3&theater>.