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KnoWhy #531 - Why Do New Testament Words and Phrases Show Up in the Book of Mormon? Part 4: Revelations to Nephite Prophets as the Source (Part B)

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Abstract: Jesus and other heavenly messengers spoke to Book of Mormon prophets before the Savior's appearance in the New World, These prophets may have learned New Testament-like phrases directly from them. Part 4 of this series will discuss specific examples of this potential source of New Testament language in the Book of Mormon. Note that Nephi and the apostle John were given essentially the same vision (1 Nephi 14:24–25), although they were greatly separated by time and space. If the Holy Ghost was able to give the same vision to both Nephi and John, He may have done the same for other prophets in both the Bible and the Book of Mormon. The Book of Mormon itself is “another testament of Jesus Christ” which contains many teachings, prophecies, and revelations that confirm and further help us understand similar ideas revealed in the Bible.



“The Apocalypse of Saint John the Evangelist” by Jan Massijs

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

PART 4: REVELATIONS TO NEPHITE PROPHETS AS THE SOURCE (PART B)

“I will give unto thee power, that whatsoever ye shall seal on earth shall be sealed in heaven and whatsoever ye shall loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven.”

Helaman 10:7; Matthew 16:19

This is the fourth 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

In Part 3 of this series, the phrase, “Repent ye, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand,” which is similar to

Matthew 3:2, was shown to have been delivered to Alma the Younger directly by the Holy Spirit, as Alma himself says in Alma 7:9. It seems clear that before the appearance of Jesus in the New World, He (or his Angel, or the Holy Spirit) spoke to Book of Mormon prophets such as Nephi, Jacob, Abinadi, Benjamin, Alma, and others, and they learned New Testament-

type phrases directly from Him. This Part 4 of the series will discuss specific examples of this source of New Testament language in the Book of Mormon. The following is a good example:

- In 2 Nephi 31:15, the first Nephi wrote that he had “heard a voice from the Father, saying: Yea, the words of my Beloved are true and faithful. He that endureth to the end, the same shall be saved.” This last phrase uses language nearly identical to what is found in Matthew 10:22, 24:13 and Mark 13:13.

Through revelation, Nephite prophets could also have been shown doctrines and principles that would subsequently also be taught or revealed in New Testament Christianity. For example:

- Alma reportedly taught, concerning the seed of the word of God, that “when the heat of the sun cometh and scorcheth it, because it hath no root it withers away” (Alma 32:38). This is essentially the same as what Jesus would later teach in the Parable of the Sower (Matthew 13:6). It is possible that Jesus revealed some version of the parable directly to Alma before He taught it during His mortal ministry.
- Nephi was shown in vision many things that would happen as the history of the world unfolded, including the fate of Christ’s Church both in its early years and in the latter days (1 Nephi 12–14), some of which is similar to words and imagery found in the book of Revelation. Nephi was instructed by his angelic guide not to write down everything he saw, “for the Lord God hath ordained the apostle of the Lamb of God (John) that he should write them” (1 Nephi 14:24–25).

THE WHY

This last point, of Nephi and the apostle John being shown the same things in vision by an Angel of God, is a good example of how the same divine knowledge can be revealed to two different individuals at different times and places. If the Holy Ghost was able to give the same vision to both Nephi and John, could He not

do the same for other prophets in both the Bible and the Book of Mormon?

Another possible example of this phenomenon, within the Bible itself, is the repetition of the same vision in both Micah 4:1–5 and Isaiah 2:1–5. The famous prophecy of the mountain of the Lord’s house being established in the top of the mountains in the last days appears in both prophetic books with only small variations.

Although some scholars have argued that either one prophet must have borrowed from the other or they were both dependent on an unknown prophetic source, there is no substantial evidence for either conclusion.¹ Some biblical commentators suggest that the two prophets may have received the same revelation from God independent of each other.² For those who believe that the Holy Ghost is the One who delivers the Word of God to the prophets, through divine revelation, this makes sense.

The Law of Moses stipulated that at least two witnesses were required to confirm any testimony: “at the mouth of two witnesses, or at the mouth of three witnesses, shall the matter be established” (Deuteronomy 19:15). If we apply this principle to the idea that God will always reveal His will concerning mankind to His prophets (Amos 3:7), it should be expected that important doctrines, principles, and teachings would be revealed to the world through more than one prophet. As stated in 2 Nephi 27:14, “in the mouth of as many witnesses as seemeth him good will [God] establish his word.”

The Book of Mormon itself is “another testament of Jesus Christ” which contains many teachings, prophecies, and revelations that confirm and further help us understand similar ideas revealed in the Bible. Regarding the coming forth of the Book of Mormon as another witness of His word, the Lord Himself said:

Wherefore murmur ye, because that ye shall receive more of my word? Know ye not that the testimony of two nations is a witness unto you that I am God, that I remember one nation like unto another? Wherefore, *I speak the same words unto one nation like unto another.* And when the two nations shall run together the testimony of the two nations shall run together also (2 Nephi 29:8, emphasis added).

FURTHER READING

Book of Mormon Central, “Why Is There a Need for the Testimony of Two Nations? (2 Nephi 29:8),” *KnowWhy* 56 (March 17, 2016).

Bruce A. Van Orden, “The Law of Witnesses in 2 Nephi,” in *Second Nephi, The Doctrinal Structure*, ed. Monte S. Nyman and Charles D. Tate Jr. (Provo, UT: Religious Studies Center, Brigham Young University, 1989), 307–21.

Glenn L. Pearson, “The Book of Mormon As a Witness of the Old Testament,” *Ensign* (June 1986).

Joseph F. McConkie, “A Comparison of Book of Mormon, Bible, and Traditional Teachings on the Doctrines of Salvation,” in *The Book of Mormon: The Keystone Scripture*, ed. Paul R. Cheesman (Provo, UT: Religious Studies Center, Brigham Young University, 1988), 73–90.

Ensign Staff, “The Book of Mormon: A Witness with the Bible,” *Ensign* (October 2011): 24–27.

Russell M. Nelson, “A Treasured Testament,” *Ensign* (July 1993): 61–65.

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NOTES

1. See Thomas E. McComiskey, *The Expositor's Bible Commentary, Vol. 7: Daniel–Minor Prophets* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1985), 422; John N. Oswalt, *The New International Commentary on the Old Testament: Isaiah, Chapters 1–39* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1986), 115; McComiskey and Oswalt argue that Micah was the original author and that Isaiah borrowed it and adapted it to his own prophetic message. Alec Motyer, *Tyndale Old Testament Commentaries: Isaiah* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 1999), 51; Geoffrey Grogan, *The Expositor's Bible Commentary, Vol. 6: Isaiah–Ezekiel* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1986), 34 — Motyer and Grogan believe that Micah borrowed from Isaiah. Kenneth L. Barker and Waylon Bailey, *The New American Commentary, Vol. 20: Micah, Nahum, Habakkuk, Zephaniah* (Nashville: Broadman & Holman, 1998), 83; John J. Collins, *Introduction to the Hebrew Bible* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press), 323 — suggest that both prophets borrowed from an common unknown prophetic source; John Goldingay, *New International Biblical Commentary: Isaiah* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 2001), 42; Elizabeth Achtemeier, *New International Biblical Commentary: Minor Prophets I* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1996), 328 — concluded that it is not possible to know the original author of the oracle.
2. See Barker and Bailey, *The New American Commentary*, 83; Grogan, *The Expositor's Bible Commentary, Vol. 6*, 34; McComiskey, *The Expositor's Bible Commentary, Vol. 7*, 421.