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Characters and Teachings of the Book of Mormon: Lesson 12—Lehi's Later Exhortations

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Abstract: The objective of this lesson is to realize the great concern of Lehi for his people and the necessity of obeying the commandments of prophets.



Theology—Characters and Teachings of The Book of Mormon

Lesson 12—Lehi's Later Exhortations

Elder Leland H. Monson

(Text: The Book of Mormon, 2 Nephi, Chapters 1-4, 12)

For Tuesday, January 6, 1953

Objective: To realize the great concern of Lehi for his people and the necessity of obeying the commandments of prophets.

IN the declining years of his life, Lehi showed much concern for his people. He worried about the wickedness of part of the members of the colony, which had been established in the land of promise. He warned them of dark days ahead, except they repented. He repeated to them what the Lord had said: "Inasmuch as ye shall keep my commandments ye shall prosper in the land; but inasmuch as ye will not keep my commandments ye shall be cut off from my presence" (2 Nephi 1:20).

This land, he told his colony, had been promised to him and his seed forever and "There shall none come into this land save they shall be brought by the hand of the Lord" (2 Nephi 1:6).

Lehi warned, moreover, that if his descendants were wicked, God would bring other nations here to inherit the land, who would take their possessions from them and would smite and scatter them. On the other hand, he pointed out that

if those whom the Lord should bring out of the land of Jerusalem would keep his commandments, they should "be kept from all other nations, that they may possess this land unto themselves" (2 Nephi 1:9).

In accordance with this promise, we know that the Lord veiled the land from the time that Zedekiah was carried away captive into Babylon and the Mulekites came to the promised land, until Columbus discovered America. During this time the Lord developed in Europe a freedom-loving people, and Columbus and others were directed to this land. They scattered the remnants of Lehi's seed and took most of their best land from them. Later, the great Constitution of the United States was established under divine guidance which guaranteed religious liberty. Then the Lord restored his gospel through the Prophet Joseph Smith, and in accordance with ancient promises it was carried to the remnant of Lehi's descendants.

To return to Lehi's exhortations, he further told his children that God had been merciful to them by directing them out of Jerusalem. He told them that in vision he had seen that Jerusalem had been destroyed.

He cautioned the querulous and disobedient members of his family not to rebel against Nephi, and delivered a very convincing and moving defense of Nephi, saying, "He hath not sought for power nor authority over you, but he hath sought the glory of God, and your own eternal welfare" (2 Nephi 1:25). He promised them if they would listen to the voice of Nephi they would not perish (2 Nephi 1:28).

After Lehi had finished speaking to his sons, especially Laman and Lemuel, he singled out other individuals and groups for the purpose of blessing and instructing them. He promised Zoram, the servant of Laban, who had accompanied them to the land of promise, that because he was a true friend to Nephi, and faithful, his seed should be blessed upon the land of promise with Nephi's seed, provided they kept the commandments of the Lord (2 Nephi 1:30-32).

Turning then to Jacob, the first son who had been born amidst much tribulation and hardship in the wilderness, he blessed, comforted, and instructed him. He told Jacob, that God "shall consecrate thine afflictions for thy gain" (2 Nephi 2:2), thus giving us a fundamental concept of Mormonism.

Shakespeare recognized the principle when, in his play, *As You Like It*, he had Duke Senior say:

Sweet are the uses of adversity,
Which, like the toad, ugly and venomous,
Wears yet a precious jewel in his
head

Out of the furnace of affliction we may emerge refined as pure as gold. Hardships are a good means of discipline. (See D. & C., section 122:7.)

He instructed Jacob that "redemption cometh in and through the Holy Messiah," who would offer himself as a sacrifice for the sins of mankind, and would atone for the sins of all those who would repent. Modern revelation states:

For behold, I, God, have suffered these things for all, that they might not suffer if they would repent; But if they would not repent they must suffer even as I; Which suffering caused myself, even God, the greatest of all, to tremble because of pain, and to bleed at every pore, and to suffer both body and spirit—and would that I might not drink the bitter cup, and shrink—Nevertheless, glory be to the Father, and I partook and finished my preparations unto the children of men (D. & C. 19:16-19).

Lehi explained to Jacob that: "it must needs be, that there is an opposition in all things" (2 Nephi 2:11), righteousness and wickedness, holiness and misery, good and bad, so that man might have freedom of choice, free agency, under which plan there could be true growth and development.

And thou hast beheld in thy youth his [the Lord's] glory; wherefore, thou art blessed even as they unto whom he shall minister in the flesh; for the Spirit is the same, yesterday, today, and forever. And the way is prepared from the fall of man, and salvation is free.

And men are instructed sufficiently that they know good from evil. And the law is given unto men. And by the law

no flesh is justified; or, by the law men are cut off. Yea, by the temporal law they were cut off; and also, by the spiritual law they perish from that which is good, and become miserable forever.

Wherefore, redemption cometh in and through the Holy Messiah; for he is full of grace and truth.

Behold he offereth himself a sacrifice for sin, to answer the ends of the law, unto all those who have a broken heart and a contrite spirit; and unto none else can the ends of the law be answered.

Wherefore, how great the importance to make these things known unto the inhabitants of the earth, that they may know that there is no flesh that can dwell in the presence of God, save it be through the merits, and mercy, and grace of the Holy Messiah, who layeth down his life according to the flesh, and taketh it again by the power of the Spirit, that he may bring to pass the resurrection of the dead, being the first that should rise.

Wherefore, he is the firstfruits unto God, inasmuch as he shall make intercession for all the children of men; and they that believe in him shall be saved.

And because of the intercession for all, all men come unto God; wherefore, they stand in the presence of him, to be judged of him according to the truth and holiness which is in him. Wherefore, the ends of the law which the Holy One hath given, unto the inflicting of the punishment which is affixed, which punishment that is affixed is in opposition to that of the happiness which is affixed, to answer the ends of the atonement.

For it must needs be, that there is an opposition in all things. If not so, my first-born in the wilderness, righteousness could not be brought to pass, neither wickedness, neither holiness nor misery, neither good nor bad. Wherefore, all things must needs be a compound in one; wherefore, if it should be one body it must needs remain as dead, having no life neither death, nor corruption nor incorruption, happiness nor misery, neither sense nor insensibility.

Wherefore, it must needs have been created for a thing of naught; wherefore there would have been no purpose in the end of its creation. Wherefore, this thing must needs destroy the wisdom of God and his eternal purposes, and also the power, and the mercy, and the justice of God.

And if ye shall say there is no law, ye shall also say there is no sin. If ye shall say there is no sin, ye shall also say there is no righteousness. And if there be no righteousness there be no happiness. And if there be no righteousness nor happiness there be no punishment nor misery. And if these things are not there is no God. And if there is no God we are not, neither the earth; for there could have been no creation of things, neither to act nor to be acted upon; wherefore, all things must have vanished away.

And now, my sons, I speak unto you these things for your profit and learning; for there is a God, and he hath created all things, both the heavens and the earth, and all things that in them are, both things to act and things to be acted upon.

And to bring about his eternal purposes in the end of man, after he had created our first parents, and the beasts of the field and the fowls of the air, and in fine, all things which are created, it must needs be that there was an opposition; even the forbidden fruit in opposition to the tree of life; the one being sweet and the other bitter.

Wherefore, the Lord God gave unto man that he should act for himself. Wherefore, man could not act for himself save it should be that he was enticed by the one or the other (2 Nephi 2:4-16).

God established the plan of free agency and gave it to Adam and Eve in the garden of Eden. They were free to partake or to refrain from eating the fruit of the forbidden tree. Eve was deceived, but Adam knowingly partook of the fruit, realizing that Eve would be

driven from the garden, and consequently they would be able to multiply and replenish the earth. As Lehi presented the problem, "Adam fell that men might be; and men are, that they might have joy" (2 Nephi 2:25).

According to Lehi's instructions to Jacob:

. . . they are free to choose liberty and eternal life, through the great mediation of all men, or to choose captivity and death, according to the captivity and power of the devil; for he seeketh that all men might be miserable like unto himself (2 Nephi 2:27).

Choosing liberty and eternal life, men would achieve the full purpose of existence, which is joy (2 Nephi 2:25).

After concluding his remarks to Jacob, Lehi turned to Joseph, who was also born in the wilderness, and encouraged, instructed, and blessed him. To Joseph, Lehi explained that he was a descendant of Joseph who was sold into Egypt, and that God had made great covenants with Joseph in Egypt and with his seed. From his seed was to come a righteous branch of the house of Israel, not the Messiah, but another branch. But Lehi pointed out that this Messiah, Jesus Christ, would visit his posterity.

From the descendants of Joseph who was sold into Egypt, the Lord, so Lehi taught his son, would raise up a choice seer, whose name would be Joseph and whose father's name would be Joseph, referring, of course to Joseph Smith, Junior, the prophet, and his father, Joseph Senior.

And unto him will I give commandment that he shall do a work for the fruit of thy loins, his brethren, which shall be

of great worth unto them, even to the bringing of them to the knowledge of the covenants which I have made with thy fathers (2 Nephi 3:7).

Lehi quoted Joseph in Egypt as saying:

. . . the fruit of thy loins shall write; and the fruit of the loins of Judah shall write; and that which shall be written by the fruit of thy loins, and also that which shall be written by the fruit of the loins of Judah [referring to The Book of Mormon and the Bible] shall grow together, unto the confounding of false doctrines and laying down of contentions, and establishing peace among the fruit of thy loins, and bringing them to the knowledge of their fathers in the latter days, and also to the knowledge of my covenants, saith the Lord (2 Nephi 3:12).

Lehi promised his son Joseph that his seed should not be destroyed because they would hearken to the words of the book (2 Nephi 3:23).

Nephi tells us of the greatness of the prophecies which Joseph of Egypt had made concerning them and their future generations which were written upon the plates of brass (2 Nephi 4:1-2) about which Lehi spoke to the sons and daughters of Laman and Lemuel. Lehi told them that if they were brought up in the way they should go, they would not depart from it. Therefore, he told them that if they were cursed he would leave his blessing upon them that the cursing might be taken from them and answered upon the heads of their parents. He promised that God would be merciful to their seed forever and forever because of his blessing. Referring to the Lamanites of the last days, he said that in the end they should be blessed (2 Nephi 4:6-9).

We are not informed as to what Lehi said to the sons of Ishmael. To Sam, however, he gave the promise that his seed should inherit the land like unto Nephi's, that his seed should be numbered with the seed of Nephi, and that Sam should be blessed in all his days.

After this great patriarch of The Book of Mormon had blessed and instructed his household "according to the feelings of his heart and the Spirit of the Lord which was in him, he waxed old. And it came

to pass that he died, and was buried" (2 Nephi 4:12).

Questions and Problems

1. Why is the doctrine of free agency superior as a means of developing character to the doctrine of predestination?

2. Why did the Lord create a world in which we have opposites, good and evil, love and hate, etc?

3. What is meant by the statement, "Men are that they might have joy"?

4. What promises were given to the seed of Joseph in Egypt?

5. How, through his instructions, did Lehi show concern for his people?

Visiting Teacher Messages

Book of Mormon Gems of Truth

Lesson 12—"Wo Be Unto Him That Is at Ease in Zion!" (2 Nephi 28:24).

Leone O. Jacobs

For Tuesday, January 6, 1953

Objective: To point out the need for being always on guard against the wiles of Satan.

IF there were any place in the world one would naturally suppose he could be at ease, that place would be in Zion. However, constant vigilance is necessary always, even in Zion, for evil is not banished from the earth. The words of the song by Eliza R. Snow aptly express this thought:

THINK NOT, WHEN YOU
GATHER TO ZION

Think not when you gather to Zion,
Your troubles and trials are through
That nothing but comfort and pleasure
Are waiting in Zion for you:

No, no, 'tis designed as a furnace,
All substance, all textures to try,
To burn all the "wood, hay, and stubble,"
The gold from the dross purify

Think not when you gather to Zion,
The prize and the victory won.
Think not that the warfare is ended,

The work of salvation is done.

No, no; for the dread prince of darkness
A tenfold exertion will make,
When he sees you go to the fountain,
Where freely the truth you may take.

(Hymns, Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 1950 edition, page 21).

When we are complacent, satisfied with ourselves, that is the time we are most vulnerable to the enticings of Satan. When we are at ease Satan may lull us away "into carnal security," causing us to mistakenly believe all is well. This false sense of security is extremely dangerous. So long as there is any iniquity in Zion, all is not well, and we must not be at ease.

We should take nothing for granted. As parents, we should not take the security and well-being of