



Type: Magazine Article

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## Characters and Teachings of the Book of Mormon: Lesson 19—Teachings of King Benjamin

Author(s): Leland H. Monson

Source: *Relief Society Magazine*, Vol. 40, No. 9 (September 1953), pp. 624–628

Published by: The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints

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*Theology*—Characters and Teachings  
of The Book of Mormon

Lesson 19—Teachings of King Benjamin

*Elder Leland H. Monson*

(Text: The Book of Mormon: Words of Mormon 12-18; Mosiah 2-6)

For Tuesday, December 1, 1953

Objective: To learn and apply to ourselves a correct understanding of the teachings of King Benjamin.

*Address of King Benjamin*

**K**ING Benjamin was a high-minded man who worked assiduously to induce his people to transmute the gospel into terms of daily life. Even a cursory reading of his address to his people impresses us with the practical nature of the gospel he taught.

Before he delivered his great address, he and his son, Mosiah, instructed the people to assemble together. Because the temple was too small to hold the crowd, Benjamin built a tower near the temple and talked to the people from it. Because of the greatness of the multitude, all could not hear his message, so King Benjamin had the address written and distributed among those who were not within the sound of his voice.

The first part of his message was concerned with himself and his service to the people. He humbled himself before them, declaring that he was mortal like themselves, and that he was subject to the same infirmities of mind and body.

Benjamin was careful to establish in the people's minds his right to be their king and ruler. He informed them that he had been chosen by them, had been consecrated by his father, and had been "suffered by the hand of the Lord" in his position. As their rightful servant, he said, he had sought the eternal welfare of his people by serving them with all the mind, might, and strength the Lord had given him. He referred to his having labored with his own hands for his livelihood in order that the people would not be burdened with taxation. He called attention to the fact that government under him had been an institution to help and to protect the people.

Under his reign the people had not been confined to dungeons. They had not been allowed to enslave one another. They had been forbidden to murder, plunder, steal, commit adultery, or adopt any of the barbaric vices that tend to produce moral degeneration. He inspired the people with the proph-

ecies and doctrines recorded on the brass plates, and impressed them with the significance of all the words that had been spoken by their fathers since they left Jerusalem over four hundred years before. King Benjamin was a diligent preacher of the commandments of God.

#### *Service Above Self*

Feeling that the people might take his reference to his accomplishments as boasting, he told them that he had related these things to them that they might grow in wisdom. All that he, as king, had done was only in the service of God, he said. And then he gave them one of the most important messages of the gospel, "When ye are in the service of your fellow beings ye are only in the service of your God (Mosiah 2:17). No more practical gospel was ever taught to a people. It is the burden of Christ's message to mankind as given subsequently in his Sermon on the Mount.

Using his own worthy life as an example, Benjamin asked his people, "If I, whom ye call your king, do labor to serve you, then ought not ye to labor to serve one another?" (Mosiah 2:18). Continuing his chain of reasoning, based upon the rhetorical question, he gave them another question with its obvious answer. "If I, whom ye call your king, who has spent his days in your service, and yet has been in the service of God, do merit any thanks from you, O how you ought to thank your heavenly King!" (Mosiah 2:19).

King Benjamin then enumerated the reasons why they should be grateful to their Heavenly Father.

It was a process of counting their blessings for them. He impressed them with the fact that they were eternally indebted to their Heavenly Father for life, for protection, for happiness, and for the ability to live in peace one with another. For these blessings, he told them, God asked that they keep his commandments. And when they did keep God's commandments, he blessed them; he made them prosper in the land, so they were always in his debt.

#### *Mosiah Appointed King*

Then it was that Benjamin informed them he could no longer be their teacher or king. He said the Lord had commanded him that he should declare that Mosiah, his son, was king and ruler over them, and Benjamin begged them to keep the commandments of God as they should be given to them by Mosiah. And he warned them against allowing contentions to creep in among them.

King Benjamin, after appointing his son king and giving his people advice as to what their attitude should be towards Mosiah, gave the people the heart of the message he had for them.

#### *The Future Appearance of the Savior*

Benjamin told his people that an angel had awakened him and told him that he brought glad tidings of great joy. The tidings were related to the salvation of mankind. The angel had foretold the coming of the Lord Omnipotent to take a tabernacle of clay in the flesh. He had said that while Christ was tabernacled in the flesh, he would perform a wonderful mission among

the people. He would do many mighty miracles, such as healing the sick, raising the dead, causing the lame to walk, the blind to receive their sight, the deaf to hear, and curing all manner of disease. The angel had declared also that Christ should suffer temptations and pain of body, hunger, thirst, and fatigue. He had said that his name should be called Jesus Christ, and that his mother should be called Mary. Further, the angel had declared that Christ should be scourged, crucified, and rise the third day from the dead. His blood should atone for the sins of the world, thus making possible the salvation of the human race.

#### *Principles of the Gospel*

After reporting what the angel had unfolded to him, King Benjamin discussed the doctrine of the atonement, saying that the blood of Christ would atone for the sins of all those who have fallen because of the transgression of Adam, "who have died not knowing the will of God concerning them, or who have ignorantly sinned" (Mosiah 3:11). He further explained that the blood of Christ would atone for the sins of little children.

But King Benjamin warned all those who would hear the gospel and who sin knowingly, that their only recourse for remission of sins and salvation would be through repentance and faith on the Lord Jesus Christ.

Benjamin continued:

The time shall come when the knowledge of a Savior shall spread throughout every nation, kindred, tongue, and people. And behold, when that time cometh, none shall be found blameless before God, ex-

cept it be little children, only through repentance and faith on the name of the Lord God Omnipotent (Mosiah 3:20-21).

Benjamin taught that "*the natural man is an enemy to God, and has been from the fall of Adam, and will be, forever and ever, unless he yields to the enticings of the Holy Spirit*" (Mosiah 3:19). Man must exercise faith in the atoning blood of Jesus Christ, and must learn to bridle his natural disposition, and become meek, humble, patient, and filled with love, if he hopes to have salvation.

Benjamin also commented on the law of Moses and its relation to the atonement. This law had its symbols pointing forward to the coming of Christ and representing his mission for mankind, but it was of no value except through the atoning blood of Christ.

Every man is to be judged, however, according to his works, whether they be good or evil (Mosiah 3:24). If his works have been evil, he shall shrink from the presence of the Lord into a state of misery (Mosiah 3:25-27), and his torment shall be like a burning lake of fire and brimstone.

After completing this portion of his address, Benjamin looked over his people and discovered that they had fallen to the earth, for the fear of the Lord had come upon them. They cried aloud that they believed in the future appearance of Jesus Christ, and that they desired to subject themselves to his mercy.

#### *Conditions of Salvation*

Cognizant of their desires, Benjamin gave the people the conditions of salvation: first, they must

believe in God; second, they must repent of their sins and forsake them; and, finally, they must keep the commandments.

Benjamin desired his people to retain a remission of their sins, and told them they could help to do so by being liberal with their substance to the poor. He instructed them that every man must give according to that which he has (Mosiah 4:26).

He offered some very specific instructions to the rich, saying, "Ye will not suffer that the beggar putteth up his petition to you in vain, and turn him out to perish. Perhaps thou shalt say: The man has brought upon himself his misery; therefore I will stay my hand, and will not give unto him of my food, nor impart unto him of my substance that he may not suffer, for his punishments are just—But I say unto you, O man, whosoever doeth this the same hath great cause to repent; and except he repenteth of that which he hath done he perisheth forever, and hath no interest in the kingdom of God" (Mosiah 4:16-18).

Benjamin's instructions to the poor were equally specific. The poor must be willing sincerely to say to the beggar, "I give not because I have not, but if I had I would give" (Mosiah 4:24).

But Benjamin was careful to point out that all these things must be "done in wisdom and order; for it is not requisite that a man should run faster than he has strength" (Mosiah 4:27).

Benjamin told his people that if they kept the commandments they should be filled with love; should

increase in knowledge concerning the glory of God and of that which is just and true; should not have a desire to injure one another, but live peaceably together; should not allow children to go hungry, to transgress the commandments, or quarrel and fight, but teach them to love and serve one another. (See Mosiah 4:12-15.)

To live such a life, Benjamin said it was necessary to watch our thoughts and our deeds, and to observe the commandments. His unique contribution to our thinking upon this subject is the emphasis he places on watching our thoughts.

After completing his message, Benjamin inquired to obtain the response of the people. They cried that they believed all that he had spoken, and to witness it, they covenanted with God to keep his commandments the remainder of their days (Mosiah 5:5). Benjamin told them that because of this covenant, they should be called the children of Christ; for they had been spiritually begotten of Christ that day. Again, Benjamin emphasized the fact that Christ was the only name whereby salvation comes.

Whoever, he said, refused to take upon himself that name, must be called by another name, and would find himself on the left hand of God. In closing, he exhorted his people:

Therefore, I would that ye should be steadfast and immovable, always abounding in good works, that Christ, the Lord God Omnipotent, may seal you his, that you may be brought to heaven, that ye may have everlasting salvation and eternal life, through the wisdom, and power, and justice, and mercy of him who created all things, in heaven and in earth, who is God above all. Amen (Mosiah 5:15).

Benjamin then took the names of all who had entered into the covenant with God, and consecrated his son Mosiah to be their ruler.

### Questions for Discussion

1. How can we best serve our God?

2. Why did King Benjamin tell about his service to the people?

3. How did King Benjamin serve his people?

4. What words did Mormon use to describe King Benjamin?

## Visiting Teacher Messages

### Book of Mormon Gems of Truth

Lesson 19—"Behold, He Sendeth an Invitation Unto All Men, for the Arms of Mercy Are Extended Towards Them, and He Saith: Repent, and I Will Receive You" (Alma 5:33).

Leone O. Jacobs

For Tuesday, December 1, 1953

Objective: To point out the necessity to repent and overcome one's faults.

THIS statement from Alma is expressive of the boundless love of God to all those who repent. "Come unto me and ye . . . shall eat and drink of the bread and the waters of life freely" (Alma 5:34). All are bidden—not a preferred list or a selected few, but all mankind may come unto God by way of repentance.

The message of all the prophets throughout the ages has been that of repentance. Over and over they have extended the invitation of our Lord "Repent, all ye ends of the earth, for the kingdom of heaven is soon at hand" (Alma 5:50) is typical of their cry.

"Repentance is a means of pardon and is therefore one of God's great gifts to man" (*Articles of Faith*, page 114). Its importance cannot be overemphasized. No man is without sin, therefore, no man is exempt from the need to repent.

Knowing that men would make mistakes, a way was prepared by

which they might make reparation and be forgiven. The way was by means of repentance. We may not go back and live our lives over again and avoid the mistakes we have made; but, through the tender mercy of God, we are given the opportunity of sincerely repenting. Repentance is necessary in order that the atonement of Christ may be effective in our individual lives.

Repentance involves several progressive steps and conditions. Recognition of sin is the first step; then follows a deep sorrow for sin; the repentant one will do all in his power to make amends for any wrongs sustained; and lastly he will refrain from committing the sin again, and determine to accomplish good. (See *Articles of Faith*, page 109.) "By this ye may know if a man repenteth of his sins—behold, he will confess them and forsake them" (D. & C. 58:43).

Though there is always hope for the repentant one, yet we must