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Characters and Teachings of The Book of Mormon: Lesson 36—Predictions Concerning the Coming of the Messiah

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LESSON DEPARTMENT

Theology—Characters and Teachings of The Book of Mormon

Lesson 36—Predictions Concerning the Coming of the Messiah

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(Texts as cited in the Bible; Pearl of Great Price; The Book of Mormon)

For Tuesday, January 3, 1956

Objective: To show that the Israelites of the Western Hemisphere, as well as those of the Eastern Hemisphere, looked forward to the coming of Christ.

THE birth of Christ did not come unannounced and unheralded. The Israelites on the Eastern Hemisphere and on the Western Hemisphere looked forward to his birth in the flesh. The Hebrew nation had many records, accepted by them as revelations from God. These records were "rich in prediction and promise respecting the earthly advent of the Messiah."

Sacrifices Emblematical of the Sacrifice of Son of God

These records show that Adam and his descendants were instructed to offer sacrifices to God, emblematical of the great sacrifice of the Son of God who should come in the meridian of time. A modern revealed record of the fall of man in The Pearl of Great Price, contains the following narrative of this significant event:

And after many days an angel of the Lord appeared unto Adam, saying: Why dost thou offer sacrifices unto the Lord? And Adam said unto him: I know not, save the Lord commanded me. And then the angel spake, saying: This thing is a similitude of the sacrifice of the Only Begotten of the Father, which is full of grace and truth. Wherefore, thou shalt do all that thou doest in the name of the Son, and thou shalt repent and call upon God in the name of the Son forevermore. And in that day the Holy Ghost fell upon Adam, which beareth record of the Father and the Son, saying: I am the Only Begotten of the Father from the beginning, henceforth and forever, that as thou hast fallen thou mayest be redeemed, and all mankind even as many as will (P. of G. P., Moses 5:6-9).

Adam's posterity looked forward to the coming of the Only Begotten Son of God to redeem them from their sins. Dr. James E. Talmage wrote:

The system of sacrifice expressly en-

joined in the Mosaic code was essentially a prototype of the sacrificial death to be accomplished by the Savior on Calvary. The blood of countless altar victims, slain by Israel's priests in the course of prescribed ritual, ran throughout the centuries from Moses to Christ as a prophetic flood in similitude of the blood of the Son of God appointed to be shed as an expiatory sacrifice for the redemption of the race (*Jesus the Christ*, page 45).

Furthermore, blessing Judah, his father Jacob, prophesied:

The sceptre shall not depart from Judah, nor a lawgiver from between his feet, until Shiloh [Christ] come; and unto him shall the gathering of the people be (Gen. 49:10).

Job rejoiced in the redeeming power of the Messiah and prophesied: "For I know that my redeemer liveth, and that he shall stand at the latter day upon the earth" (Job 19:25).

Piercing the veil which separates the present from the future, Isaiah, "writing as if he saw the accomplishment of the divine purposes as if already achieved," wrote:

For unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given: and the government shall be upon his shoulder: and his name shall be called Wonderful, Counselor, The mighty God, The everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace. Of the increase of his government and peace there shall be no end, upon the throne of David, and upon his kingdom, to order it, and to establish it with judgment and with justice from henceforth even for ever. The zeal of the Lord of hosts will perform this (Isaiah 9:6-7).

Isaiah specifies conditions surrounding the Savior's humble life and sacrificial death. He saw that Jesus would be despised and rejected of men, that he would be a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief (see Isaiah 53:3), that he

would be a "patient and willing sacrifice" for the sins of men. (See also Isaiah 11:1; 7:14). Jeremiah, Ezekiel, Hosea, and Micah directed the attention of their generations to the future coming of the Messiah. (See *Jesus the Christ*, page 48.)

Behold, the days come, saith the Lord, that I will perform that good thing which I have promised unto the house of Israel and to the house of Judah. In those days, and at that time, will I cause the Branch of righteousness to grow up unto David; and he shall execute judgment and righteousness in the land (Jeremiah 33:14-15).

And I will set up one shepherd over them, and he shall feed them, even my servant David; he shall feed them, and he shall be their shepherd (Ezekiel 34:23).

Afterward shall the children of Israel return, and seek the Lord their God, and David their king; and shall fear the Lord and his goodness in the latter days (Hosea 3:53).

But thou, Bethlehem Ephratah, though thou be little among the thousands of Judah, yet out of thee shall he come forth unto me that is to be ruler in Israel; whose goings forth have been from of old, from everlasting (Micah 5:2).

Zechariah broke out in song regarding the entry of Jesus into Jerusalem:

Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Zion; shout, O daughter of Jerusalem: behold, thy King cometh unto thee: he is just, and having salvation; lowly, and riding upon an ass, and upon a colt the foal of an ass (Zechariah 9:9).

Zechariah also foretold the crucifixion and the contrition of the Jews: ". . . and they shall look upon me whom they have pierced . . ." (Zechariah 12:10).

And one shall say unto him, What are these wounds in thine hands? Then he shall answer, Those with which I was wounded in the house of my friends (Zechariah 13:6).

And I said unto them, If ye think good, give me my price; and if not, forbear. So they weighed for my price thirty pieces of silver (Zechariah 11:12).

Jesus Testifies of Prophecies Concerning Himself

That these prophecies which we have recounted did refer to the coming of Jesus in the flesh is explicitly stated by Jesus himself when he said to the apostles:

. . . These are the words which I spake unto you, while I was yet with you, that all things must be fulfilled, which were written in the law of Moses, and in the prophets, and in the psalms, concerning me. Then opened he their understanding, that they might understand the scriptures, And said unto them, Thus it is written, and thus it behoved Christ to suffer, and to rise from the dead the third day (Luke 24:44-46; see also Luke 24:25-27).

John the Baptist Testifies of Jesus as the Christ

Finally, John the Baptist proclaimed that:

I indeed baptize you with water unto repentance: but he that cometh after me is mightier than I, whose shoes I am not worthy to bear: he shall baptize you with the Holy Ghost, and with fire Then cometh Jesus from Galilee to Jordan unto John, to be baptized of him (Matthew 3:11, 13).

Prophecies of Christ in Book of Mormon

The scriptures kept by the people of the Western Hemisphere, The Book of Mormon, are just as explicit concerning the coming of the Son of God to redeem the world.

Nephi Testifies of Christ

Nephi, son of Lehi, informs us that as his father was journeying with the little colony across the wilderness towards the land of promise, that the Lord revealed the time and the place of the future advent of Jesus. Wrote Nephi:

Yea, even six hundred years from the time that my father left Jerusalem, a prophet would the Lord God raise up among the Jews—even a Messiah, or, in other words, a Savior of the world.

And he also spake concerning the prophets, how great a number had testified of these things, concerning this Messiah, of whom he had spoken, or this Redeemer of the world.

Wherefore, all mankind were in a lost and in a fallen state, and ever would be save they should rely on this Redeemer.

And he spake also concerning a prophet who should come before the Messiah, to prepare the way of the Lord—

Yea, even he should go forth and cry in the wilderness: Prepare ye the way of the Lord, and make his paths straight; for there standeth one among you whom ye know not; and he is mightier than I, whose shoe's latchet I am not worthy to unloose. And much spake my father concerning this thing.

And my father said he should baptize in Bethabara, beyond Jordan; and he also said he should baptize with water; even that he should baptize the Messiah with water.

And after he had baptized the Messiah with water, he should behold and bear record that he had baptized the Lamb of God, who should take away the sins of the world.

And it came to pass after my father had spoken these words he spake unto my brethren concerning the gospel which should be preached among the Jews, and also concerning the dwindling of the Jews in unbelief. And after they had slain the Messiah, who should come, and after he had been slain he should rise from the

dead, and should make himself manifest, by the Holy Ghost, unto the Gentiles (I Nephi 10:4-11).

Benjamin Testifies of Christ

King Benjamin, filled with the spirit of God, told his people:

For behold, the time cometh, and is not far distant, that with power, the Lord Omnipotent who reigneth, who was, and is from all eternity to all eternity, shall come down from heaven among the children of men, and shall dwell in a tabernacle of clay, and shall go forth amongst men, working mighty miracles, such as healing the sick, raising the dead, causing the lame to walk, the blind to receive their sight, and the deaf to hear, and curing all manner of diseases.

And he shall cast out devils, or the evil spirits which dwell in the hearts of the children of men.

And lo, he shall suffer temptations, and pain of body, hunger, thirst, and fatigue, even more than man can suffer, except it be unto death; for behold, blood cometh from every pore, so great shall be his anguish for the wickedness and the abominations of his people.

And he shall be called Jesus Christ, the Son of God, the Father of heaven and earth, the Creator of all things from the beginning; and his mother shall be called Mary.

And lo, he cometh unto his own, that salvation might come unto the children of men even through faith on his name; and even after all this they shall consider him a man, and say that he hath a devil, and shall scourge him, and shall crucify him.

And he shall rise the third day from the dead; and behold, he standeth to judge the world . . . (Mosiah 3:5-10).

Alma Testifies of Christ

Alma was equally as specific regarding the coming of the Messiah.

He wrote:

And behold, he shall be born of Mary, at Jerusalem which is the land of our forefathers, she being a virgin, a precious and chosen vessel, who shall be overshadowed and conceive by the power of the Holy Ghost, and bring forth a son, yea, even the Son of God (Alma 7:10). (Read also 7:11-13.)

To his wayward son, Corianton, Alma said:

And now, my son, I would say somewhat unto you concerning the coming of Christ. Behold, I say unto you, that it is he that surely shall come to take away the sins of the world; yea, he cometh to declare glad tidings of salvation unto his people (Alma 39:15).

Thus we see that in all ages and in the scriptures of both hemispheres, the prophets have borne testimony concerning the future coming of the Messiah. The literal fulfillment of the prophecies validates our claim that they were of divine origin. Indeed, the sacred scriptures did announce, did herald the coming of the Messiah to redeem mankind from their sins.

Questions and Topics for Discussion

1. Discuss the predictions concerning the advent of the Messiah in the Old Testament.
2. In what way was the system of sacrifice a prototype of the sacrificial death of Christ?
3. What Book of Mormon prophets are mentioned who foretold the coming of Christ?
4. How specific were their predictions?