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Characters and Teachings of The Book of Mormon: Lesson 39—Signs of the Crucifixion; the Voice of Jesus Christ Is Heard

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Abstract: The objective of this lesson is to learn of the prophecies concerning the crucifixion and their fulfillment.



LESSON DEPARTMENT

Theology—Characters and Teachings of The Book of Mormon

Lesson 39—Signs of the Crucifixion; the Voice of Jesus Christ Is Heard

Elder Leland H. Monson

(TEXT: The Book of Mormon: 3 Nephi, chapters 8-10)

For Tuesday, April 3, 1956

Objective: To learn of the prophecies concerning the crucifixion and their fulfillment.

BY thirty-four A.D. people began to look for the fulfillment of the prophecy of Samuel the Lamanite relating to the crucifixion of Jesus Christ on the Eastern Hemisphere. Samuel had said:

. . . behold, in that day that he shall suffer death the sun shall be darkened and refuse to give his light unto you; and also the moon and the stars; and there shall be no light upon the face of this land, even from the time that he shall suffer death, for the space of three days, to the time that he shall rise again from the dead. Yea, at the time that he shall yield up the ghost there shall be thunderings and lightnings for the space of many hours, and the earth shall shake and tremble; and the rocks which are upon the face of this earth, which are both above the earth and beneath, which ye know at this time are solid, or the more part of it is one solid mass, shall be broken up (Helaman 14:20-21; see also verses 22-29).

Fulfillment of Prophecy of Destruction

In thirty-four A.D., this remarkable prophecy had its literal fulfillment. Mormon, recording the event, wrote:

And it came to pass in the thirty and fourth year, in the first month, on the fourth day of the month, there arose a great storm, such an one as never had been known in all the land. And there was also a great and terrible tempest; and there was terrible thunder, insomuch that it did shake the whole earth as if it was about to divide asunder. And there were exceeding sharp lightnings, such as never had been known in all the land (3 Nephi 8:5-7).

Mormon then details the nature of the destruction:

And there was a great and terrible destruction in the land southward. But . . .

there was a more great and terrible destruction in the land northward; for behold, the whole face of the land was changed, because of the tempest and the whirlwinds, and the thunderings and the lightnings, and the exceeding great quaking of the whole earth; And the highways were broken up, and the level roads were spoiled, and many smooth places became rough. And many great and notable cities were sunk, and many were burned, and many were shaken till the buildings thereof had fallen to the earth, and the inhabitants thereof were slain, and the places were left desolate (3 Nephi 8:11-14).

Zarahemla was gutted by fire, the city of Moroni sank into the sea, and Moronihah was buried beneath a mountain. And these are only examples of what happened to many others.

After this destruction "thick darkness" settled over the land, so thick that the people whose lives were spared could ". . . feel the vapor of darkness" (3 Nephi 8:20). In fact, it was impossible to light candles or torches.

. . . neither could there be fire kindled with their fine and exceedingly dry wood, so that there could not be any light at all; And there was not any light seen, neither fire, nor glimmer, neither the sun, nor the moon, nor the stars, for so great were the mists of darkness which were upon the face of the land (3 Nephi 8:21-22).

Lamentations of Survivors

Survivors of the destruction lamented that they had not heeded the prophets.

And in one place they were heard to cry, saying: O that we had repented before this great and terrible day, and then would our brethren have been spared, and they would not have been burned in that great city Zarahemla (3 Nephi 8:24).

The Voice of Jesus Christ Amidst these lamentations:

. . . there was a voice heard among all the inhabitants of the earth, upon all the face of this land, crying: Wo, wo, wo unto this people; wo unto the inhabitants of the whole earth except they shall repent; for the devil laugheth, and his angels rejoice, because of the slain of the fair sons and daughters of my people; and it is because of their iniquity and abominations that they are fallen! (3 Nephi 9:1-2).

And many great destructions have I caused to come upon this land, and upon this people, because of their wickedness and their abominations.

O all ye that are spared because ye were more righteous than they, will ye not now return unto me, and repent of your sins, and be converted, that I may heal you?

Yea, verily I say unto you, if ye will come unto me ye shall have eternal life. Behold, mine arm of mercy is extended towards you, and whosoever will come, him will I receive; and blessed are those who come unto me.

Behold, I am Jesus Christ the Son of God. I created the heavens and the earth, and all things that in them are. I was with the Father from the beginning. I am in the Father, and the Father in me; and in me hath the Father glorified his name.

I came unto my own, and my own received me not. And the scriptures concerning my coming are fulfilled.

And as many as have received me, to them have I given to become the sons of God; and even so will I to as many as shall believe on my name, for behold, by me redemption cometh, and in me is the law of Moses fulfilled.

I am the light and the life of the world. I am Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the end.

And ye shall offer up unto me no more the shedding of blood; yea, your sacrifices and your burnt offerings shall be done away, for I will accept none of your sacrifices and your burnt offerings.

And ye shall offer for a sacrifice unto me a broken heart and a contrite spirit. And whoso cometh unto me with a broken heart and a contrite spirit, him will I baptize with fire and with the Holy Ghost, even as the Lamanites, because of their faith in me at the time of their conversion, were baptized with fire and with the Holy Ghost, and they knew it not.

Behold, I have come unto the world to bring redemption unto the world, to save the world from sin.

Therefore, whoso repenteth and cometh unto me as a little child, him will I receive, for of such is the kingdom of God. Behold, for such I have laid down my life, and have taken it up again; therefore repent, and come unto me ye ends of the earth, and be saved (3 Nephi 9:12-22).

After these sayings there was silence in the land for many hours. Then the voice of Jesus was heard again, telling them that he had often wanted to gather this branch of the house of Israel together as a hen gathers her chickens, but they would not permit it. This instruction was followed by more weeping and howling over the loss of their kindred and friends.

Then it was that the three-day period was ended, and darkness dispersed from off the land, and the destruction ceased.

Appearance of Christ to Nephites

It was only the more righteous of the people who remained to rejoice over the appearance of the Son of God, only those who had received the prophets:

And the earth did cleave together again, that it stood; and the mourning, and the weeping, and the wailing of the people who were spared alive did cease; and their mourning was turned into joy, and their lamentations into the praise and thanksgiving unto the Lord Jesus Christ, their Redeemer (3 Nephi 10:10).

Mormon cautions the reader of the account to read with understanding:

And now, whoso readeth, let him understand; he that hath the scriptures, let him search them, and see and behold if all these deaths and destructions by fire, and by smoke, and by tempests, and by whirlwinds, and by the opening of the earth to receive them, and all these things are not unto the fulfilling of the prophecies of many of the holy prophets.

Behold, I say unto you, Yea, many have testified of these things at the coming of Christ, and were slain because they testified of these things.

Yea, the prophet Zenos did testify of these things, and also Zenock spake concerning these things, because they testified particularly concerning us, who are the remnant of their seed.

Behold, our father Jacob also testified concerning a remnant of the seed of Joseph. And behold, are not we a remnant of the seed of Joseph? And these things which testify of us, are they not written upon the plates of brass which our father Lehi brought out of Jerusalem? (3 Nephi 10:14-17).

Thus we see the literal fulfillment of the prophecies concerning the destructions which were to accompany the crucifixion of Christ. We see the glorious appearance of the Christ on the Western Hemisphere. Nephi became an active participant as one of the twelve disciples of Christ in helping to establish a period of freedom and security, of happiness and serenity.

Mormon does not unfold this portion of his record to us without showing how the Lord blessed those who had survived, saying:

And it came to pass that in the ending of the thirty and fourth year, behold, I will show unto you that the people of Nephi who were spared, and also those

who had been called Lamanites, who had been spared, did have great favors shown unto them, and great blessings poured out upon their heads, insomuch that soon after the ascension of Christ into heaven he did truly manifest himself unto them—Showing his body unto them, and ministering unto them; and an account of his ministry shall be given hereafter. Therefore for this time I make an end of my sayings (3 Nephi 10:18-19).

Questions and Topics for Discussion

1. What were the signs of the crucifixion?
2. What early prophecies were fulfilled by these signs and events which followed?
3. How is God's mercy shown in his dealings with these surviving Nephites?
4. To what did Mormon, the Nephite historian, attribute all this destruction?

Visiting Teacher Messages

Book of Mormon Gems of Truth

Lesson 39—"But Behold, the Resurrection of Christ Redeemeth Mankind, Yea, Even All Mankind, and Bringeth Them Back Into the Presence of the Lord" (Helaman 14:17).

Edith S. Elliott

For Tuesday, April 3, 1956

Objective: To show that Christ broke the bonds of death and all men will be resurrected.

EASTER time is accepted throughout the realm of Christianity as a time of rejoicing because it is the anniversary of the resurrection of Christ, the last act needed to complete his mission on earth. In his few years of mortal life he taught the plan of salvation, experienced death, then immortality. His whole life was one of example, proving to mortals that the plan is sound and workable.

Some may say, "Well, he knew the plan, he knew that he was the Son of God and the Savior of the world." Yes, he knew, and knowing it, has shared every phase of the plan with us. He outlined the way back to God's presence so clearly that anyone sincerely desiring salvation can follow. In John 11:25-26 is the summary of his plan and his promise.

... I am the resurrection, and the life: he that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live: And whosoever liveth and believeth in me shall never die

A careful analysis of the above quotation will prove the profundity of the statement. To know that this life is not the end of our activity is most rewarding. It challenges us to make our every act one that is acceptable to our Heavenly Father. We have our free agency and are not coerced, so think how great can be our blessing if we choose to follow the example of Jesus!

There should be no doubt about a life hereafter. We find its evidence in scripture and modern revelation. The loving concern of our Heavenly Father for his children proves without a doubt that his plan is to return them to his kingdom as sanctified, resurrected beings.