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## Three Outstanding Messages of The Book of Mormon to this Generation

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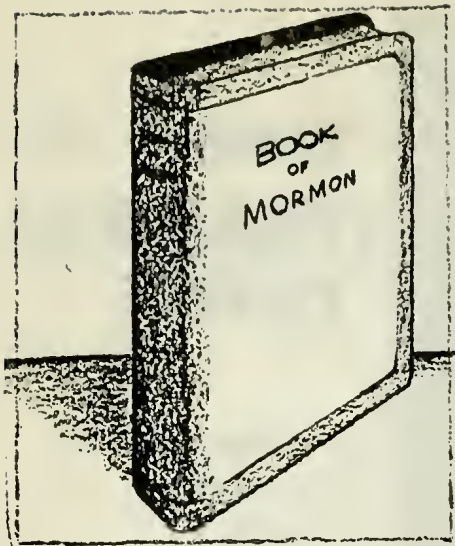
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**Abstract:** Sperry testifies that the Book of Mormon is first a warning voice to our day and time. We must serve God or perish, and beware of secret combinations. Second, it is a testimony that Jesus is the Christ. The third outstanding message shows the Lord's concern toward the house of Israel. The first part discusses the Book of Mormon as a warning voice.



## Three Outstanding Messages of The Book of Mormon to this Generation

by Sidney B. Sperry

**a** warning to the nations of the American Continent.—It becomes obvious as one reads the Book of Mormon that it is more especially directed to the Lamanites (American Indians) of our day, although Jew and Gentile are also included in its scope. (1) The writers of the volume have a very definite warning message to convey to the Lamanite “remnant” of this generation as well as to the other peoples—so much so that a clear philosophy of history is woven about it. The warning given by the Book of Mormon prophets, in its essence, is this: **Their own peoples, together with all others that shall in the future inhabit this land (America), must serve God or be destroyed; to violate this divine decree is fatal; it is imperative that the warning be heeded.** Whatever else the Nephite scripture is, it must be looked upon as a voice of warning to our age. Let us briefly proceed to trace the genesis and later use of this warning message.

The warning in substance seems first to have been given by the Lord to Nephi, the son of Lehi. When the Lord visited Nephi, then a very young

man, He said among other things these words:

“And inasmuch as ye shall keep my commandments, ye shall prosper, and shall be led to a land of promise; yea, even a land which I have prepared for you; yea, a land which is choice above all other lands. And inasmuch as thy brethren shall rebel against thee, they shall be cut off from the presence of the Lord.” (1 Nephi 2:20,21.)

At a later time it was expressed more concisely by Lehi who quoted the Lord as saying:

“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.)

When Lehi subsequently blessed the sons and daughters of Laman and Lemuel he repeated this injunction to them. (2 Nephi 4:4.) Jarom and Amaron were aware of it, but did not write it out in full. (Jarom 9; Omni 6.) King Benjamin emphasised its importance in his last formal address to his people. (Mos. 2:31.) Alma the Younger warned the wicked inhabitants of Ammonihah of the Lord’s

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words to Lehi. (Alma 9:13, 18.) When Alma gave commandments to his three sons, Helaman, Shiblon and Corianton he was careful to remind them of the divine warning. (Alma 36:1, 30; 57:13; 38:1.) It should be observed that the Lamanites were cut off from the Lord's presence through wickedness, but were not destroyed; like mercies were not extended to the Nephites as a people, because they were blessed with unusual gifts from God. (Alma 9:14, 18-23.) Notice this express statement to the effect that the Nephites were to be held more strictly accountable than their brethren:

"For behold, the promises of the Lord are extended to the Lamanites, but they are not unto you if ye transgress; for has not the Lord expressly promised and firmly decreed, that if ye will rebel against him that ye shall utterly be destroyed from off the face of the earth? (Alma 9:24.)

Thus it may be seen that to be "cut off from the presence of the Lord" was equivalent—at least for the Nephites as a nation—to destruction. Moreover, the Nephite nation was destroyed as Alma had warned. The destruction of the Nephite people thus comes to us at this day as a potent warning from the past; a "voice from the dust," so to speak.

Moroni, the last great Nephite prophet, brings to us another voice of warning from the past. When he abridged the records of the great Jaredite nation, a nation which preceded that of his own people upon this continent, his object was not only to give us the high-lights of their history, but also to point out to us that they were destroyed for the same reason that his own people (the Nephites) were. When the Jaredites kept the commandments of God they prospered; when they transgressed they were cut off from His presence and eventually fell as a nation. Moroni makes it crystal clear that God had manifested to a great Jaredite prophet that this is a land of promise only to those who serve Him. Notice this key passage:

"And He (God) had sworn in His

wrath unto the brother of Jared, that whoso should possess this land of promise, from that time henceforth and forever, should serve Him, the true and only God, or they should be swept off when the fulness of His wrath should come upon them. And now, we can behold the decrees of God concerning this land, that it is a land of promise; and whatsoever nation shall possess it shall serve God, or they shall be swept off when the fulness of His wrath shall come upon them. And the fulness of His wrath cometh upon them when they are ripened in iniquity. For behold, this is a land which is choice above all other lands; wherefore he that doth possess it shall serve God or shall be swept off; for it is the everlasting decree of God. And it is not until the fulness of iniquity among the children of the land, that they are swept off. And this cometh unto you, O ye Gentiles, that ye may know the decree of God—that ye may repent, and not continue in your iniquities until the fulness come, that ye may not bring down the fulness of the wrath of God upon you as the inhabitants of the land have hitherto done. Behold, this is a choice land, and whatsoever nation shall possess it shall be free from bondage, and from captivity, and from all other nations under heaven, if they will but serve the God of the land, who is Jesus Christ, who hath been manifested by the things which we have written. (Ether 2:8-12.)

Mark the fact that Moroni addresses himself to this generation of Gentiles and warns them not to continue in their iniquities so as to bring down upon their heads the wrath of God as the former inhabitants of this continent had done. In warning this generation, the prophet is obviously adhering to the same philosophy of history that was held by most of his predecessors. A little later in his writings Moroni emphasises the secret oaths and combinations that caused the destruction not only of the Jaredite but of his own people:

"And now I, Moroni, do not write

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the manner of their oaths and combinations, for it hath been made known unto me that they are had among all people, and they are had among the Lamanites. And they have caused the destruction of this people of whom I am now speaking, and also the destruction of the people of Nephi. And whatsoever nation shall uphold such secret combinations, to get power and gain, until they shall spread over the nation, behold, they shall be destroyed; for the Lord will not suffer that the blood of His saints, which shall be shed by them, shall always cry unto Him from the ground for vengeance upon them and yet He avenge them not. Wherefore, O ye Gentiles, it is wisdom in God that these things should be shown unto you, that thereby ye may repent of your sins, and suffer not that these murderous combinations shall get above you, which are built up to get power and gain—and the work, yea, even the work of destruction come upon you, yea, even the sword of justice of the Eternal God shall fall upon you, to your overthrow and destruction if ye shall suffer these things to be.” (Ether 8:20-23.)

Then the writer again addresses himself to the Gentiles of our day and warns of similar secret combinations that may overthrow us as they did the nations upon this land before us:

“Wherefore, O ye Gentiles, it is wisdom in God that these things should be shown unto you, that thereby ye may repent of your sins, and suffer not that these murderous combinations shall get above you, which are built up to get power and gain—and the work, yea, even the work of destruction

come upon you, yea, even the sword of justice of the Eternal God shall fall upon you, to your overthrow and destruction if ye shall suffer these things to be. Wherefore, the Lord commandeth you, when ye shall see these things come among you that ye shall awake to a sense of your awful situation, because of this secret combination which shall be among you; or woe be unto it, because the blood of them who have been slain; for they cry from the dust for vengeance upon it, and also upon those who built it up. For it cometh to pass that whoso buildeth it up seeketh to overthrow the freedom of all lands, nations, and countries; and it bringeth to pass the destruction of all people, for it built up by the devil, who is the father of all lies; even that same liar who beguiled our first parents, yea, even that same liar who hath caused man to commit murder from the beginning; who hath hardened the hearts of men that they have murdered the prophets, and stoned them, and cast them out from the beginning.” (Ether 8:23-25.)

We may, then, reasonably conclude that one of the most important considerations that guided the Book of Mormon prophets in their writing was that of warning our generation (their own not excepted of course) that destruction awaits those nations on this land that do wickedly and fail to acknowledge the God of the land Who is Jesus Christ. Even as the Doctrine and Covenants is a modern voice of warning to this generation (see sec. 1), so the Book of Mormon is a warning to us from the nations of the past that lived upon this continent.

- (1) See Jac. 4:2; Jar. 2; Morm. 7:1; also first paragraph of title page.

(Continued in the next issue)