

ENCYCLOPEDIA OF MORMONISM



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1:20). Nephi supports this thesis in 1 Nephi with stories of how God has intervened in human affairs to deliver his faithful followers, and Nephi in particular, from their enemies. But these are only types and shadows. Nephi's true proof is set forth in 2 Nephi, where he says that the atonement of Jesus Christ makes available to all who have faith in Christ a liberation from sin and spiritual redemption from hell and the devil, their greatest enemy. All men and women who follow the example of Christ and enter into his way through repentance and baptism will be blessed with a baptism of fire and the Holy Ghost—which brings a remission of sin and individual guidance—so that they might endure to the end in faith and receive eternal life (2 Ne. 31).

Into a more spiritual account on his small plates, Nephi also wove a vivid defense of his own political primacy by using allusions to MOSES and JOSEPH OF EGYPT (Reynolds, 1987). In defending his ruling position as a younger son, Nephi tells how the two oldest sons rejected their father and the Lord and how he (Nephi) was selected and blessed by the Lord and his father. He relates how, with the help of the Lord, he acquired the brass plates (1 Ne. 3–4), persuaded Ishmael and his family to join Lehi's group (1 Ne. 7), prevented starvation in the wilderness (1 Ne. 16), and constructed a ship and sailed it successfully across the ocean (1 Ne. 17–18). In these exploits, Nephi was consistently opposed and threatened, even with death, by Laman and Lemuel; but in each crisis, he was miraculously delivered by the power of the Lord and blessed to complete his task.

Though unable to bridge the gulf between himself and his brothers, Nephi's writings reveal that he was a man with an impressive range of human sensitivities, and he yearned for their welfare. He developed his enormous faith in his father and in the Lord at a young age and never faltered. Consequently, he obeyed without murmuring. He pondered his father's prophecies and repeatedly asked the Lord for personal understanding and direction. He had a deep love and sense of responsibility for his people: "I pray continually for them by day, and mine eyes water my pillow by night, because of them" (2 Ne. 33:3). He also had charity for all other people. Nephi gloried in plainness and in truth, and he knew that his words were harsh against unrepentant sinners (2 Ne. 33:5–9). He anguished deeply because of temptations and his own sins, and particularly because of his feelings of

anger against his enemies (2 Ne. 4:26–29). His spiritual strength and depth were grounded in the knowledge that Jesus Christ had heard his pleas and had redeemed his soul from hell (2 Ne. 33:6).

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NOEL B. REYNOLDS

NEPHI₂

Nephi₂ succeeded his father HELAMAN₃ in 39 B.C. as the Nephite chief judge, evidently at a young age. Because of wickedness among the Nephites, he resigned the judgment seat in 30 B.C. and went with his younger brother Lehi to preach the gospel of Jesus Christ among the Lamanites. Although imprisoned and threatened with death, they were preserved by the power of God and converted thousands of Lamanites (Hel. 5).

Nephi returned thereafter to Zarahemla, boldly condemned the corrupt Nephite leaders, miraculously revealed the identity of a murderer, and exercised the power of God to invoke a famine on the Nephites. Although the Nephites repented occasionally, their conversion and the peace that followed did not last. When time was about to expire on the prophecy of SAMUEL THE LAMANITE regarding the birth of Christ, Nephi passed the records to his son Nephi₃ and left, never to be heard of again (3 Ne. 1:3; 2:9).

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