

A person's hands are shown holding an open book. The book is held vertically, and a cloud of fine dust or particles is rising from the pages, creating a dramatic, ethereal atmosphere. The background is dark, making the dust and the book stand out. The overall mood is one of mystery and discovery.

SPOKEN

FROM THE

DUST

FEATURING *the* 17 MAJOR SPEECHES
from the BOOK OF MORMON

R. WAYNE SHUTE

WITH A THOUGHT-PROVOKING FORWARD
BY ROBERT L. MILLET

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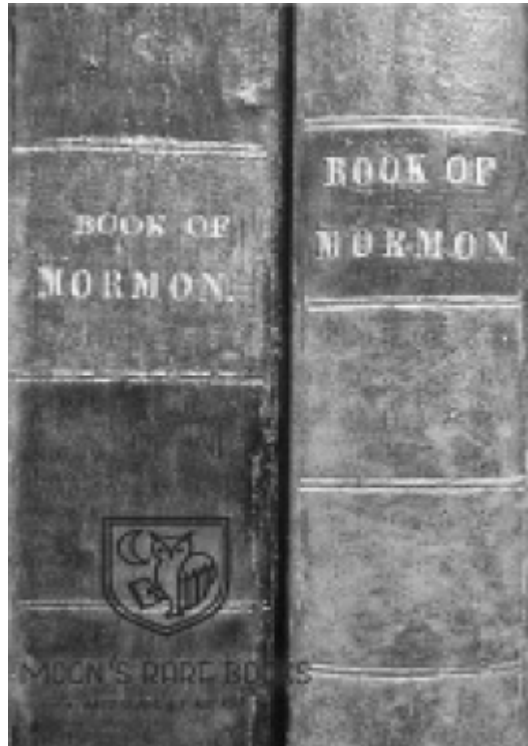
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Chapter One



Images of early editions of the Book of Mormon

The First Major Speech in the Book of Mormon

Jacob

“ . . . things which are, and which are to come . . . ”

2 Nephi 6:4

2 Nephi 6:2 to 2 Nephi 10:25

THE SETTING

559–545 BC

JACOB, WE REMEMBER, WAS BORN IN THE WILDERNESS WHILE ON THE FAMILY'S trek down through the Arabian Peninsula. He was tutored by his father (2 Nephi 2) and by his brother Nephi and by the Lord Himself, whom Jacob and Nephi saw in person (2 Nephi 11:2–3). He remained true and faithful to our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ and to his brother Nephi throughout his life.

Jacob, who was the son of Lehi and the brother of Nephi, delivered this speech sometime after the Nephites had separated themselves from their Lamanite brethren (2 Nephi 5). The speech was given between 559 and 545 BC. If it were given around 550 BC, Jacob could have been about 45 years old.

We don't know the size of Jacob's audience, but it could have been considerable. Since we don't know exactly how many people traveled with Lehi and Sariah from Jerusalem, nor do we know exactly how many people followed Nephi when he separated himself from the Lamanites, it is hard to estimate how many Nephites there would have been by this time. As Lehi's family had traveled through the desert, children had been born. Once settled in the Promised Land, their families would have multiplied. In Jacob 3:13, just a few years after this speech was given, we learn that the people "began to be numerous."

It is fitting that the first major public speech given in the Book of Mormon is one of the greatest doctrinal discourses found in scripture anywhere. Indeed, Jacob's speech, which focuses on the Atonement and the Resurrection of our Savior, could well be considered the foundation speech of all the speeches we find in the Book of Mormon with the obvious exception of the Savior's speeches.

His brilliant doctrinal discourses set the stage for much of our basic teachings of the gospel of Jesus Christ. This speech has powerful doctrine which we see over and over again in other speeches throughout the Book of Mormon. We'll have much more to say about this repetition as other speeches unfold.

Jacob's speech quotes liberally from Isaiah. Of course, much of Isaiah is difficult to understand by the layman, but we do know that we will understand

Isaiah when the things which he prophesied come to pass. What makes it somewhat difficult, according to Nephi, is that we don't understand the manner of prophesying among the Jews (2 Nephi 25). To those who do understand, then Isaiah's writings are quite plain. We are also grateful that Jacob quotes Isaiah because he includes verses in his speech which are not found in their exactness in the King James Bible.

**Please read Jacob's First Speech found
in 2 Nephi 6:2 to 2 Nephi 10:25.**

Abstract of the Speech

Jacob recounts Jewish history; how the Jews will be helped by the Gentiles; their latter-day restoration when they believe in the Messiah. Jacob quotes Isaiah who says that the Lord [Jesus Christ] shall comfort Zion and gather Israel including the Jews. He notes that the Atonement of Christ ransoms man from the Fall and saves mankind from the grasp of the awful monster, even death and hell; there shall be a resurrection; there shall be a judgment; penalties for sins are noted. He witnesses of the Savior, the Holy One who is the keeper of the gate.

JACOB TESTIFIES OF JESUS CHRIST

O the wisdom of God, his mercy and grace! For behold, if the flesh should rise no more our spirits must become subject to that angel who fell from before the presence of the Eternal God, and became the devil, to rise no more. (2 Nephi 9:8)

O how great the goodness of our God, who prepareth a way for our escape from the grasp of this awful monster; yea, that monster, death and hell . . . (2 Nephi 9:10)

O how great the plan of our God! (2 Nephi 9:13)

O the greatness and the justice of our God! (2 Nephi 9:17)

O the greatness of the mercy of our God, the Holy One of Israel! (2 Nephi 9:19)

O how great the holiness of our God! For he knoweth all things, and there is not anything save he knows it. (2 Nephi 9:20)

SUMMARY AND COMMENTARY

The Plates of Nephi

It comes as no surprise that Jacob would be the first major speaker in the Book of Mormon because we are told by Mormon that when he discovered these Plates of Nephi, he found those writings “which contained this small account of the prophets, from Jacob down to the reign of this king Benjamin, and also many of the words of Nephi” (Words of Mormon 1:3).

In a way, one gets a sense that the Small plates of Nephi could have easily been called the Small plates of Jacob. This sense we get from reading the Words of Mormon (verse 3 above). This is not intended to disparage in any possible way from the greatness of Nephi and his father Lehi, but it does attest to the confidence Mormon had in Jacob.

Although this speech is loaded with powerful doctrinal ideas, only a few of them will be included in this summary and commentary. Readers are encouraged to read and study the entire speech.

Jacob Is Called of God

Jacob begins by establishing the fact that he had been called of God and had been consecrated by his brother Nephi. We must remember that both his father Lehi and Nephi had taught him the gospel of Jesus Christ, which he expounded upon throughout his life. In fact, he makes a point of saying in the beginning of the speech that he had been consecrated by his brother Nephi, as well as being called of God.

He makes this disclosure to establish his authority in teaching the people the gospel of Jesus Christ and His atoning sacrifice.

The Atoning Sacrifice of Jesus Christ

It's important to remember that this speech, as well as others which follow, are linked closely to the atoning sacrifice of Jesus Christ. And rightly so! According

to the Prophet Joseph Smith, all doctrines and principles of the gospel are but appendages to the Atonement of Jesus Christ. In truth it is impossible to really understand any doctrine, principle, or any teaching espoused by the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints without seeing its relationship to the Atonement.¹³ That being said, it won't surprise us when reading this speech, that there is much talk of the Atonement of Christ. In fact, the Atonement of Jesus Christ¹⁴ is the dominant theme of this and most other speeches in the Book of Mormon.

So, we might ask, "what is the Atonement of Jesus Christ?" Elder Tad Callister defines the Atonement as follows:

In one sense, it is a series of divine events that commenced in the Garden of Gethsemane, continued on the cross, and culminated with the Savior's Resurrection from the tomb. It was motivated by an incomprehensible love for each of us. It required a being who was sinless, who had infinite power over the elements—even death; who possessed a boundless capacity to suffer the consequences of all our sins and ailments; and who, in fact, descended beneath it all. This was the mission of Jesus Christ—this was His Atonement.¹⁵

Jacob tells the people that Christ is the name of the Holy One of Israel which name an angel revealed to him. From the very beginning, he actually names our Savior, even Jesus Christ. He informs the people that He will come among the Jews, among those who are the more wicked part of the world, and be crucified. But because of priestcrafts, the Jews will stiffen their necks and will crucify Him. Because of this, great destructions shall come upon them, but the time will come when they will repent.

Of great importance to us is Jacob's strong testimony that the Savior will return to the earth a second time. There is no greater news for the faithful of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints than having the assurance that our Savior will return a second time to establish His kingdom. And what a privilege it is to know that we are His covenant people, and the time will come that all flesh shall know that "I the Lord am thy Savior and Redeemer, the Mighty One of Jacob" (2 Nephi 6:14–18).

There are two crucial parts of the Atonement of Christ according to the Bible Dictionary.¹⁶ The first is that its effects are unconditional "as pertaining to

the fall of Adam. Hence, all shall rise from the dead with immortal bodies . . .” The second part is that the Atonement is “conditional,” so far as each person’s individual sins are concerned, and touches everyone to the degree that he who has faith in Jesus Christ and repents of his sins, and obeys the gospel “will be saved.” Those who do repent and keep all the commandments of God will eventually enjoy eternal life in the celestial kingdom of God.

The Plan of the Evil One

And it shouldn’t surprise anyone that Jacob describes the nature of the evil one, with all his cunning deceptions:

O that cunning plan of the evil one! O the vainness, and the frailties, and the foolishness of men! When they are learned they think they are wise, and they hearken not unto the counsel of God, for they set it aside, supposing they know of themselves, wherefore, their wisdom is foolishness and it profiteth them not. And they shall perish. (2 Nephi 9:28)

Actually, it is my belief that it is impossible to know the truth of the gospel of Jesus Christ without understanding the nature of the evil one. We cannot fully appreciate the Savior and His atoning sacrifice without understanding evil. Said another way, it is impossible to see the light without knowing the dark. Lucifer is the father of all lies and waits to distract us to do evil. In truth, this is the great test of mortality, to overcome the temptations of the devil. Jacob enthusiastically testifies to us:

O how great the goodness of our God, who prepareth a way for our escape from the grasp of this awful monster; yea, that monster, death and hell, which I call the death of the body, and also the death of the spirit. (2 Nephi 9:10)

Jacob reminds us that we are delivered from this evil because of the Holy One of Israel and, for those who choose to follow the Savior, we are promised that we won’t be a part of Satan’s misery.

It is instructive also that Joseph Smith, Jr. had to battle against Lucifer as well as other prophets who bear strong testimony of our Savior’s atoning sacrifice. We cannot expect, even in our individual lives to be any different.

As for the Prophet Joseph Smith, it is important to note that the last thing Satan wanted was for the Father and the Son to appear to the young prophet

to open the Restoration of the gospel of Jesus Christ. Thus, we read that in the Sacred Grove, the evil one did all in his power to destroy the prophet and prevent the coming forth of the gospel. Joseph says that he was seized by Satan's power and,

*. . . at the very moment when I was ready to sink into despair and abandon myself to destruction—not to an imaginary ruin, but to the power of some actual being from the unseen world, who had such marvelous power as I had never before felt in any being . . .*¹⁷

Isaiah's Profound Influence on Jacob

In Jacob's speech, we are introduced to the writings of Isaiah who also has predicted throughout his writings prophecies pertaining to the gathering of Israel in these last days. And his love and focus is always on the Savior of mankind.

Jacob is also touched by the beauty and power of Isaiah's words which appear in other places in the Book of Mormon as well. A taste of this beautiful language follows:

Behold, I will lift up mine hand to the Gentiles, and set up my standard to the people; and they shall bring thy sons in their arms, and thy daughters shall be carried upon their shoulders.

And kings shall be thy nursing fathers, and their queens thy nursing mothers . . . (2 Nephi 6:6–7)

And again, Jacob quotes other wonderful words so poignant and germane for us in these last days:

For the Lord shall comfort Zion, he will comfort all her waste places; and he will make her wilderness like Eden, and her desert like the garden of the Lord. Joy and gladness shall be found therein, thanksgiving and the voice of melody.

Awake, awake! Put on strength, O arm of the Lord; awake as in the ancient days. (2 Nephi 8:3; 9)

Much more will be said about Isaiah as this book proceeds.

The Scattering and Gathering of Israel

Jacob points out that the House of Israel will be scattered and that there will eventually be a gathering in the last days. Indeed, in our time, in fulfillment of Jacob's prophesy, we are part of this great gathering of the House of Israel. This responsibility falls mainly on the Tribe of Ephraim. From the Bible Dictionary we read:

*Ephraim was given the birthright in Israel, and in the last days it has been the tribe of Ephraim's privilege first to bear the message of the Restoration of the gospel to the world and to gather scattered Israel.*¹⁸

Those of us who are of the tribe of Ephraim have been given the responsibility in these last days to take the lead in the gathering of Israel. Indeed, from our peculiar position in the "tops of the mountains," we believe that we have a special responsibility for the gathering of Israel. Of this responsibility, Hyrum G. Smith observed:

*I pray that the Lord will continue to be mindful of us that we may be more loyal in the future than we have been in the past, loyal to our callings and to our responsibilities; . . . We are only a few in number compared to the great host in the world, and we must remember and know that where the Lord requires responsibility, he expects us to be loyal and true to it. Therefore, the responsibility is upon our shoulders as gathered Ephraim, living here in the land of Ephraim, in the tops of the mountains, in the midst of the everlasting hills, where the Lord has selected a gathering place and named it through the mouths of his holy prophets, both ancient and modern. . . . here it [our responsibility] will be required at our hands, not only by our words but by our everyday conduct.*¹⁹

And also, Orson F. Whitney, among many others, adds his voice pertaining to the responsibility Ephraim faces:

*In preaching the gospel to the world and gathering Israel from the nations, the Latter-day Saints—children of Ephraim—are helping to fulfil the covenant made by Jehovah with Abraham, Isaac and Jacob: "In thee and in thy seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed."*²⁰

In the April 1930 General Conference of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, Elder Orson F. Whitney was invited by President Heber J. Grant to read a dramatic poem entitled, “The Lifted Ensign—a Call to Israel” that he had written “especially for this occasion.” Elder Whitney’s poem is a cry, even a charge unto Ephraim to fulfill the responsibility that has been placed upon him and his fellows by the Lord to gather in the remnant of the House of Israel, including those who are of the House of Judah. The poem, which featured reading parts for Elias, Ephraim, and Judah, among other things, expresses much of what we believe about the important work of Ephraim.²¹

President Russell M. Nelson mentions over and over again that the gathering of Israel in these last days is one of our most important responsibilities. He has even involved the youth of the Church in this grand effort.²²

In this speech, Jacob makes us aware of the gathering of Israel from the long dispersion, from the isles of the sea, and from the four corners of the earth.

The Law of Justice and Mercy

Jacob makes mention of the crucial place of law. He declares that there is a law pertaining to the justice and mercy of God. This reminds us that as for justice, God must be “just” or “fair” with all His children. If they are perfectly obedient, they are justified and will be able to return to His presence. However, since all of His children have sinned, they don’t qualify for His justice and must find another way to return to His presence. That way is through keeping the doctrine of Christ. In other words, having faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, repenting of our sins, baptism, reception of the Holy Ghost, and enduring to the end. By meeting these requirements set by the Lord, we are able to qualify for His mercy which in turn, meets the “demands of justice.”

Note: I have included much more information about justice and mercy in the Abinadi Speech—Chapter Three.

A Pleasant Farewell

Jacob, although forthright throughout the speech, ends it on a cheerful note. He reminds the people that they must cheer up and remember that we are free

to act for ourselves, to choose the way of everlasting death or the way of eternal life. We must “reconcile” ourselves to the will of God and not to the devil because it is the only way we can be saved. He concludes the speech by saying:

Wherefore, may God raise you from death by the power of the resurrection, and also from everlasting death by the power of the atonement, that ye may be received into the eternal kingdom of God, that ye may praise him through grace divine. Amen. (2 Nephi 10:25).

JACOB’S VOICE OF WARNING

Beware of Things to Come

In this first speech, Jacob clearly warns us about the things that “are to come.” And he focuses his attention on Isaiah as one prophet who has predicted future events particularly pertaining to our time. He talks about the scattering and gathering of the house of Israel and the coming of the Holy Messiah to recover the house of Israel for the second time. And that He will manifest Himself in power and great glory in the last days unto the destruction of his enemies.

Then comes the warning concerning the devil who was in the presence of God before the world was. He came with an evil plan for us to become like him. He is the father of lies and “stirs up the children of God to do evil works of darkness.” And it is only through the goodness of God who provided “a way to escape from the grasp of this awful monster—death and hell, even death of the body and death of the spirit.” Of course, the devil is about his work in our day like never before. And we have been warned and forewarned about him and his evil schemes.

The Temptations of the Evil One

President Joseph F. Smith prophesied that the Latter-day Saints in these last days would face three great dangers:

There are at least three dangers that threaten the Church within, and the authorities need to awaken to the fact that the people should be warned unceasingly against them. As I see these, they are flattery of prominent men in the world, false educational ideas, and sexual impurity.²³

The first temptation President Smith warns us about has to do with the “flattery of prominent men.” I interpret this to mean the allure and influence of money; in other words, the temptation of affluence. The second temptation has to do with false educational ideas. No thinking person can deny that we are tossed and turned by all manner of false ideas in the days in which we live. The third temptation is sexual impurity. Witness in our time the power of pornography, homosexuality, fornication, and adultery, and all manner of perversions.

So here in a nutshell is the warning: Stay away from these temptations! Turn our hearts to our Savior Jesus Christ, the Holy One of Israel, and rely on Him to help us escape the awful monster death and hell (2 Nephi 9:10); in short, turn away from sin.

Since, as Jacob says, we will all have to face the judgment bar of God, if we succumb to temptation, we’d better repent, otherwise we will face an unfriendly judgment bar.

¹³. Tad R. Callister, *The Infinite Atonement* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Company, 2000) 3–4. Brother Callister notes: “All other events, doctrines, and principles are subservient to and appendages of that godly act [speaking of the Atonement].” He quotes the Prophet Joseph Smith: “The fundamental principles of our religion are the testimony of the Apostles and Prophets, concerning Jesus Christ, that He died, was buried, and rose again the third day and ascended into heaven; and all other things which pertain to our religion are only appendages to it.”

¹⁴. Robert J. Matthews, “The Atonement of Jesus Christ: 2 Nephi 9,” *The Book of Mormon: Second Nephi, The Doctrinal Structure*, Edited by Charles D. Tate and Monte S. Nyman (Salt Lake: Religious Studies, Brigham Young University, 1989), 179.

¹⁵. Tad R. Callister, “The Atonement of Jesus Christ,” *Ensign*, May 2019, 85.

¹⁶. See Bible Dictionary, “Atonement,” 617.

¹⁷. Joseph Smith—History 1:16

¹⁸. See Bible Dictionary, “Ephraim,” 666.

¹⁹. Hyrum G. Smith, in Conference Report, April 1923, 97–98.

²⁰. Orson F. Whitney, in Conference Report, April 1928, 58.

²¹. Heber J. Grant, in Conference Report, April 1930, 33–41.

²². Russell M. Nelson, “Witnesses, Aaronic Priesthood Quorums, and Young Women Classes,” *Ensign*, November 2019, 39.

²³. Joseph F. Smith, “Three Threatening Dangers,” *Improvement Era*, Mar. 1914, 476–477.

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