
ETHER 13 – MORONI 6

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INTRODUCTION

The sad conclusion of this book is captured by the final record keeper of the Jaredite nation, Ether, a mighty prophet for whom Moroni must have had great empathy. Both witnessed the end of their people through a descent to wickedness and bloody battles driven by selfishness. This is all offered to us as a warning not to fall into the same trap.

Many years later, Moroni managed to make some more plates and add some final words. The first things he added offer insights into the Nephite Church practices but also gave Joseph Smith a basic understanding of important matters, such as administering the gift of the Holy Ghost, how to perform ordinations, how to administer the sacrament, and how to conduct meetings.

A simple outline of the chapters in this lesson is:

Topic	Reference	1830 Reference
Ether Prophecies and Writes	Ether 13	Ether 6
Blood and Carnage	Ether 14	
Final Battles	Ether 15	

In the case of Moroni, the chapter breaks for Moroni in our version and the 1830 edition are the same.

- Introduction – Moroni 1
- Gift of the Holy Ghost – Moroni 2
- Priesthood ordinations – Moroni 3
- Sacrament prayer, bread – Moroni 4
- Sacrament prayer, wine – Moroni 5
- Handbook of instructions – Moroni 6

ETHER 13 ETHER PROPHECIES AND WRITES

3 *the New Jerusalem, which should come down out of heaven.* The “new Jerusalem” is mentioned twice in Revelation (3:12; 21:2). But John does not offer much explanation, other than it will come down out of heaven, as Ether teaches. Ether and Moroni give us many more details.

4 *Ether saw the days of Christ.* This great prophet had many visions, including the mission of Christ himself. This means he was also acquainted with the ‘old’ Jerusalem in vision (v. 5). In this

verse, the “days of Christ” could refer to both his first mission and his second coming, given the context of the New Jerusalem.

6 a New Jerusalem should be built up upon this land. Many interpret John’s references to a change in the old Jerusalem that makes it new. But Ether taught that the New Jerusalem would be on the western hemisphere, not to replace the old city but to bring God’s presence to this land.

7 he was merciful unto the father of Joseph. Moroni (quoting Ether?) compared how the Lord preserved Jacob/Israel through the blessing of his son Joseph being brought to Egypt to the Nephites themselves preserving the house of Joseph by being brought to their land.

8 they shall build up a holy city. So will it come down out of heaven or be built by men? Moses 7:62-64 teaches that it shall be both. The righteous will be gathered together in the last days and build the holy city, and then Enoch’s Zion shall come down out of heaven and join them.

10 they whose garments are white. Those who dwell in the New Jerusalem are those who shall have relied fully on the atonement of Christ and labored diligently to share the news of his gospel with others, thus making their own garments white.

13 I was about to write more, but I am forbidden. We only get a taste of Ether’s greatness in the record Moroni left us.

he hid himself in the cavity of a rock. Because Ether had been rejected by the people, he hid in a cave, writing this record by day (v. 14) and only coming out at night to see the fulfillment of his prophecies.

18 there were many people who were slain. The wars began as those in secret combinations wanted to take over the kingdom from Coriantumr.

19 the sons of Coriantumr fought much and bled much. Working to defend their own position, they suffered greatly. The determination on both sides was strong but in the end, pointless.

20 in the second year. Two years Ether had lived in the cave. Now the Lord gave Coriantumr one last warning, a chance to still repent and save himself and his family. But Coriantumr rejected Ether’s warning and even tried to kill him (v. 22).

23 Shared. This man conquered Coriantumr the next year and put him in captivity, though the next year Coriantumr’s sons defeated him and returned the kingdom to their father (v. 24). In a raging battle that extended over a valley and a plain, Coriantumr defeated Shared and killed him, but was also wounded in the process such that it took two years for him to heal (v. 27-31).

ETHER 14 BLOOD AND CARNAGE

4 the brother of Shared. Interestingly, initially Oliver Cowdery wrote in the printer’s manuscript, ‘the brother of Jared.’ He quickly realized his mistake and changed it to ‘Shared.’ The mistake is understandable, given that the phrase ‘brother of Jared’ appears over 40 times in Ether (Skousen 2005-2008, 6:3865).

8 **Gilead**. Shared's brother picked up where Shared left off, and the battle continued. Gilead was successful in taking the capital city of Moron (v. 6), but he was killed by a wicked high priest (v. 9), who was then killed also by secret combinations (v. 10).

10 **Lib**. Lib killed the high priest who had killed Gilead, thus making himself king. Coriantumr attacked him in Moron, trying to retake the land. Coriantumr did drive Lib to the seashore, but was again wounded in the action (v. 12). The battle raged from the seashore to the wilderness and plains, until finally Lib was killed (v. 16).

16 **both women and children**. This is the only place this phrase occurs in the Book of Mormon. Elsewhere, it is always "men, women children" (e.g., 2 Nephi 9:21; Helaman 1:27; Ether 14:22, 31; 15:15; Moroni 9:7). So this text probably should include all three as well (Skousen 2005-2008, 6:3869-3871).

17 **Shiz**. Lib's brother continued the fight. He and Coriantumr would be the ones to destroy the entire civilization.

20 **they were divided**. People had to choose which side to be one—Shiz or Coriantumr. So great was the war, that "the whole face of the land was covered with the bodies of the dead" (v. 21). It was so bad that they left dead bodies laying in the open (v. 22) and could smell death throughout the land (v. 23).

28 **valley of Corihor...Shurr**. Having swept off everything in their path (v. 27), the two armies camped in nearby valleys and prepared for battle. When the trumpet sounded (v. 28), the battle began. Three attacks were repulsed, and Coriantumr was wounded so severely that he was carried away "as though he were dead" (v. 30).

ETHER 15 FINAL BATTLES

2 **two millions of his people**. Jaredites counted in the millions, unlike the Nephites whose highest recorded number is ten thousand. Coriantumr was overcome by the death and destruction he had helped cause and finally began to repent, but it was too late (v. 3). He wrote a letter to Shiz but the people were so angered now that the war continued (v. 4-6).

11 **by the hill Ramah**. Ramah is the same hill where Mormon hid the records of his people. Called Cumorah by the Nephites, this is where we may one day find all the Nephite records except the ones that Moroni buried to give to Joseph Smith in order to translate this record (see Mormon 6:6).

14 **four years gathering**. Preparing for the final battle, the people spent four years coming to this place—everyone except Ether (though he was near enough to observe it all).

15 **fought all that day**. The battle raged the first day with many dead, and the people wailing and lamenting all night (v. 16). This was repeated a second day (v. 17). Coriantumr wrote another letter of surrender, but it was rejected (v. 18-19), so the battle raged on day after day.

23 **they had all fallen**. Just over a hundred were left after several days of fierce battle. They "slept upon their swords" in exhaustion (v. 24) but would not relent. Each day the numbers decreased, and Shiz's army pursued Coriantumr's until all were dead but the two leaders (v. 25-29).

30 **he smote off the head of Shiz.** Wounded severely himself, Coriantumr mustered enough strength to rise and kill Shiz. Ether must have witnessed it all to record such details as leaning on his sword and Shiz rising up on his hands (v. 31). Coriantumr then fell as if he, too, were dead (v. 32). But we know that he lived for he eventually wandered in among the people of Zarahemla, fulfilling Ether's promise that he would see those that would inherit his land (Omni 1:20-22).

33 **that the people of Limhi did find them.** See Mosiah 8:7-12; 21:25-27.

34 **if it so be that I am saved.** Ether closed his record not knowing his fate, but also was focused on what mattered most—being with God in his kingdom. His final words are similar to Abinadi's in Mosiah 13:9.

MORONI 1 INTRODUCTION

1 **I had supposed not to have written more.** Moroni was both surprised to still be alive and to be able to write more. The final battle of the Nephites and Lamanites was in the year 385 after the sign of the birth of Christ. When Moroni starts writing in his father's record, it was 16 years later, in 401 (Mormon 8:6). As he wrote the new words in these chapters, it was the year 421 (Moroni 10:1), or 36 years after the final battle. He had been alone most of this time, still fearful of the Lamanites finding him.

2 **wars are exceedingly fierce.** Even after the Nephite civilization was destroyed, the Lamanites continued to fight among themselves, showing that at least at this time, their desire to make war was tantamount to all else.

3 **I, Moroni, will not deny the Christ.** Lamanite killed anyone who continued to hold to a belief in the Messiah who came to their fathers (v. 2). Moroni stood firm in his commitment so he had to hide and wander to preserve his life.

4 **I write a few more things.** Moroni must have located some additional ore which he could use to make these plates. In Mormon 8:5, when introducing himself to us, he stated that he had no ore so just had what was left on the plates his father had passed on to him, and that was very little room. So the addition of the books of Ether and Moroni would indicate he not only found some ore but knew what to do with it.

unto my brethren, the Lamanites. In Ether, Moroni wrote to the Gentiles (Ether 12:38). But these chapters are directed at the Lamanites of the future who would use this book to find and run the Church in the last days. It's intriguing to think of Joseph Smith and Oliver Cowdery translating the plates and concluding this had to apply to the Church they had not yet created. But instead of just declaring that the Book of Mormon was what they needed, the brethren relied on commandments and revelations from God to establish the pattern of the Church in the last days. Hence the pattern and authority to baptize came by revelation from John the Baptist, the sacrament prayers were re-revealed along with the duties of the priesthood in D&C 20. As will be noted below (3:3), the names of priesthood offices in the Church today appear to be different from those in the Book of Mormon and New Testament. In other words, we use many of the same names, but with different functions.

MORONI 2 GIFT OF THE HOLY GHOST

1 **The words of Christ.** 3 Nephi 18:37 records words that Jesus said to his twelve disciples but that the crowd did not hear. These appear to be those words. Moroni's source may well have been the three disciples, since he had spent time with them (Mormon 8:10-11).

as he laid his hands upon them. 3 Nephi 18:36-38 says that Jesus "touched them." This passage makes it clear the nature of the touch—it was the laying on of his hands. What he gave them was at once a bestowal of keys, a blessing, and a commission.

2 **he called them by name.** Though blessing only of the twelve disciples, the reference also speaks clearly to Christ's personal knowledge of each of us. That "he called them by name" shows how he knew them individually and didn't just bestow a group blessing, but gave them individual instruction and support.

call on the Father in my name, in mighty prayer. Jesus' counsel to the disciples was that *before* they acted in this ordinance that they were to first pray to the Father, that they might "have power" in order to give the Holy Ghost. This is reminiscent of a similar teaching from Nephi: "I say unto you that ye must pray always, and not faint; that ye must not perform any thing unto the Lord save in the first place ye shall pray unto the Father in the name of Christ, that he will consecrate thy performance unto thee, that thy performance may be for the welfare of thy soul" (2 Nephi 32:9).

for thus do mine apostles. "While in every instance the Nephite Twelve are spoken of as disciples, the fact remains that they had been endowed with divine authority to be special witnesses for Christ among their own people. Therefore, they were virtually apostles to the Nephite race" (Joseph Fielding Smith, in *Student Manual*, 382). The word 'apostle' in the New Testament is *apostolos*, meaning 'sent one' or 'delegate.' An apostle is one who has the authority to speak and act in behalf of another, as if the other were present. In that sense of the word, the Nephite disciples were definitely apostles, just as it was possible in the New Testament church to have apostles outside of the Twelve (see 1 Corinthians 15:5-7; Acts 14:14; Romans 16:7). The same has happened in our day. For example, Joseph F. Smith was ordained an apostle in 1866 but was not called to the Quorum of the Twelve until the next year in 1867, and Sylvester Q. Cannon who was ordained an apostle in 1938 but not called into the Quorum of the Twelve until 1939 (Flake 2001, 57, 473).

MORONI 3 PRIESTHOOD ORDINATIONS

1 **the disciples, who were called the elders.** 'Elders' is also a Biblical title meaning the older (and by implication, wiser) members of society. The leaders of each city were the elders, a council of which issued judgments and ruling (the Sanhedrin of the New Testament was the council of elders for Jerusalem, for example). The longest-living disciples were the three who ministered among the people for almost three hundred years (Mormon 1:13), which would make them the eldest of the elders. In short, it may have been more of a title or position than a priesthood office, as we use the word today in the Church.

ordained priests and teachers. As with elder, the titles 'priest' and 'teacher' do not appear to have had the same meaning among the Nephites as it has in the Church today. From the beginning, Jacob speaks of he and his brother, Joseph, being "consecrated priests and teachers" (Jacob 1:18; also 2 Nephi 5:26)). Priests and teachers are mentioned in other scriptures in relation to Church

administration (e.g., Mosiah 25:19; Alma 23:4). There is not enough information in the Book of Mormon to be clear about the exact functions of these offices, but from the description it could be that they were more like bishops or Melchizedek priesthood quorum leaders today. For example, Michael Rhodes concludes that ‘priests’ were likely high priests (Largey 2003, 658) and ‘teachers’ were leaders of individual congregations (Largey 2003, 752).

2 *After they had prayed unto the Father.* As with the gift of the Holy Ghost (2:2), prayer was to precede an ordination.

3 *I ordain you.* The language used here is simple and direct, yet covers the key parts of an ordination—act in the name of Christ, perform the ordination, and give them a commission . The ordination is done “by the power of the Holy Ghost.”

MORONI 4 SACRAMENT PRAYER, BREAD

1 *The manner of their elders and priests.* Christ first demonstrated and administered the sacrament among the Nephites. After him, it was the elders (the disciples) who gave it to the people. Moroni explains that it was the elders and senior priests who performed the ordinance of the sacrament.

2 *they did kneel down with the church.* From the wording, we can surmise that the entire congregation knelt during the sacramental prayer. The same wording is found in the modern description of the ordinance (D&C 20:76).

3 *O God, the Eternal Father.* As Joseph Smith was translating this passage, there was no latter-day Church. He and Oliver Cowdery had probably just been baptized and received the Aaronic priesthood, but had not administered the sacrament. As they read these prayers, perhaps they wondered if the Church they were going to organized would use the same words? Later, the latter-day prayers were revealed (D&C 20:76-79) with only one small difference—‘hath’ in this verse was replaced with ‘has.’ Elder David A. Bednar commented on the sacrament, saying, “Through the ordinance of the sacrament we renew our baptismal covenant and can receive and retain a remission of our sins” (*Student Manual*, 383).

sanctify this bread to the souls of all those who partake of it. The bread itself does not become sanctified or holy except to those who partake of it in a sacramental setting. That is why after the sacrament the leftover bread can be disposed of by any means. The sanctification comes from worthily partaking and renewing the covenant, not from some mysterious or magical power of the bread itself.

eat in remembrance. We have talked in this class before about the power and importance of ‘remembering’ in the Book of Mormon. It is an active verb, designed to bring us to action. In the sacrament, remembering the sacrifice of Jesus Christ in our behalf should drive us to better keep his commandments and become like him. We are to ‘always remember him,’ meaning not just at the moment of the ordinance but every minute of every day. See President Henry B. Eyring’s comments in *Student Manual*, 384.

witness unto thee. To ‘witness’ in the sacrament is not to view something but is related to making a covenant. One commentary suggests that the two words can be used interchangeably (McConkie 1991, 4:325).

take upon them the name of thy Son. Elder Dallin H. Oaks taught that this phrase has several meanings, including renewing baptismal covenants, becoming a member of the Church that bears his name, being willing to proclaim his name and do the work of the kingdom (*Student Manual*, 384).

always have his Spirit to be with them. Having the Spirit with us brings immeasurable blessings. This includes being cleansed from sin and spiritually healed, speaking with power, bringing important things to our memory, experiencing peace, joy, and comfort, receiving testimony and revelations, and knowing all things that we should do (McConkie 1991, 4:327).

MORONI 5 SACRAMENT PRAYER, WINE

2 **which was shed for them.** The prayer on the wine includes the language about remembering Christ’s blood which was shed for us. Christ’s body was given also, but the blood is powerfully symbolic of his suffering and sacrifice. He bled in the garden, while being beaten, while carrying his cross, and while hanging on the cross. In every step of the atonement, Jesus’ blood was freely given for our benefit, spilled even by those who would benefit from it.

MORONI 6 HANDBOOK OF INSTRUCTIONS

The title I gave this chapter may be somewhat misleading because today in the Church we have a long and detailed set of handbooks to help administer the Church. Chapter 6 does not equal that information. But it does complete the information given earlier in the book and highlights some key procedural and doctrinal issues relating to the functioning of the Church.

1-3 **they were not baptized save they brought forth fruit.** Baptism is not a casual ordinance, performed just to add numbers to the Church or to superficially declare a change of direction. The person being baptized had to show that they were mentally and spiritually prepared and worthy. This required some amount of time and sincere effort on the part of the applicant. In the Book of Mormon, they had to do three things: 1) show a “broken heart and contrite spirit,” meaning a spirit of humility and sorrow for sin; 2) show that “they truly repented of all their sins”; and, 3) take upon themselves “the name of Christ, having a determination to serve him to the end.” Likewise today, converts are only baptized after a sincere effort to attend church, read the Book of Mormon, pray, repent, and otherwise accept what they have been taught by the missionaries.

4 **their names were taken.** Joining the Church is not an anonymous activity. Because there is serious commitment involved both on the part of the new convert and on the part of the accepting congregation, people are known, progress tracked, and covenants recorded. In the Church today, it takes a letter to the First Presidency to have your name removed, should someone decide to pull away. Having your name added to the rolls of the Church is a decision taken very seriously, because you will be “remembered.”

nourished by the good word of God. Each baptized member should be fed spiritually through personal scripture study, family scripture study, and by the service of others. The *Student Manual* (p. 385-386) recounts a story from President Gordon B. Hinckley of a man who took someone under his wing, nourished and taught her and her family weekly so they would know the doctrines, and paved the way for them to be accepted in the Church. This is a marvelous example of this concept, which results in keeping someone “in the right way.”

continually watchful unto prayer. When we are “continually watchful” toward our salvation, looking to Christ and the saving grace of his atonement, it drives us to our knees in prayer, out of gratitude, out of humility, out of a desire for forgiveness and help overcoming our sins and weaknesses.

relying alone upon the merits of Christ. Because his is the only name given whereby salvation may come, we must learn to rely on Christ and nothing else. Relying on our own abilities, or on the testimonies of others, or on the righteousness of our spouse or any other person will not bring us even one step closer to exaltation. As Paul said, “that we should not trust in ourselves, but in God which raiseth the dead” (2 Corinthians 1:9).

the author and the finisher of their faith. The author of Hebrews used similar language in 5:9 and 12:2. An ‘author’ is the creator or producer of something, while a ‘finisher’ is ‘one who completes or perfects’ (*Student Manual*, 386). Christ offered himself to fulfill the will of the Father in the pre-existent councils and thus became the author of our salvation. In Gethsemane and on the cross, he completed his offer. Thus he allows us to be finished or made excellent through him.

5-6 *the church did meet together oft.* We don’t know the details of the Nephites meetings. But they did meet often to “fast and to pray, and to speak one with another concerning the welfare of their souls.” They regularly partook “of bread and wine” together, to remember Christ. Amazingly, Moroni can document this in the first person. Even as their civilization was collapsing in wickedness, there was a core group of righteous Church members that continued to exercise their faith and priesthood and stay true to the commandments of God. We will see more about this final group of Nephite Saints in next week’s lesson.

7 *their names were blotted out.* Church discipline has many purposes. As described here, it is principally to help the wayward person repent. If a person would not repent, the Nephite practice was to call three witnesses who could testify as to the person’s behavior, and remove their name from the records. To blot out means literally to cover over with drops of ink or another substance. In other words, the name on the record is obscured as if it was no longer there. This is not a punishment, per se, but an opportunity for the sinner to start over and go through the conversion process anew. With sincere repentance, the result would be forgiveness and full fellowship (v. 8), with the name once again added to the records in a new, fresh location, with no reference to the former life that was blotted out.

9 *the power of the Holy Ghost led them.* Nephite church meetings, like ours today, were led by the power of the Spirit. Of course, the Church does things in order today, and you can walk into any sacrament meeting in any country on any given Sunday and know exactly what is going to happen. I have sat through sacrament meetings in many different languages, and though I didn’t always understand what was said, I always felt completely at home, because the pattern is the same. The role of the Spirit in that meeting is tied first to the administration of the sacrament, that all present might experience the renewal of their covenants and the cleansing power of the Holy Ghost through

the atonement of Christ. Then we edify each other through word, song, and prayer, all of which are prepared by the Spirit and delivered by the Spirit, “that when ye are assembled together ye shall instruct and edify each other, that ye may know how to act and direct my church...and thus ye shall become instructed in the law of my church, and be sanctified by that which ye have received” (D&C 43:8-9).

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