
MORONI 7-10

Book of Mormon, Adult Institute Class, Monday, 10 May 2010

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INTRODUCTION

We come to the final words on the plates, the closing lines in our study of the Book of Mormon this year. In these precious chapters, Moroni chose to spend most of his energy recording his father's words. Only in the last chapter did he add his own comments. Even at the end of his life and in his solitude, he thought of his father and displayed a great loyalty to this creator of the book we now cherish. But Moroni's final words, made so carefully and on plates he had to personally manufacture, have been the trigger for millions to ask, 'Is this book true?' and thus come to a knowledge of things eternal and God's love for them.

In Moroni, the chapter breaks for Moroni in our version and the 1830 edition are the same, so a simple outline of the chapters in this lesson is:

- Faith, Hope, and Charity – Moroni 7
- Salvation of children – Moroni 8
- Be faithful in Christ – Moroni 9
- Moroni's witness and farewell – Moroni 10

MORONI 7 FAITH, HOPE, AND CHARITY

Moroni starts this section by including a sermon given by his father on faith, hope, and charity. The summation of it is that God is constant in his efforts to save us, and he strives to help us build all three of these attributes in our lives

1 ***the words of my father Mormon***. Chapter 7 is basically a 'sacrament meeting talk' given by Mormon as he taught a group gathered together in a synagogue that they had built. Who wrote it down so that Moroni could include it is not stated—perhaps it was Moroni himself.

2 ***my beloved brethren***. This shows that at least at some point during Mormon's life there were other members of the Church who were faithful and gathered together to partake of the sacrament, receive instruction, and worship God.

the gift of his calling unto me. Mormon wasn't just a military leader, but was a priesthood authority as well. We can't tell the state of the Church at this time, but from Mormon's record, they had to be few in numbers and perhaps poorly organized. Still, this implies that there was still a Church organization and someone in authority to give Mormon a calling to serve and teach. Mormon's attitude toward the calling is also very telling—it was a gift to him to be a servant. He called himself "a disciple of Jesus Christ...called of him to declare his word" (3 Nephi 5:13).

3 ***the peaceable followers of Christ***. This is a phrase unique to Mormon. The gospel of Christ teaches us to seek peace, not contention or war, even if the world around them (as it was with Mormon) is bent on everything but peace. “They [disciples of Christ] are peacemakers because they are at peace” (McConkie 1991, 4:333).

5 ***by their works ye shall know them***. There is no obvious cross-reference here. The footnote helpfully supplies a very close one—“by their fruits ye shall know them” (3 Nephi 14:20).

6 ***a man being evil cannot do that which is good***. Another quote with no obvious cross-reference, but this appears to be related to the one above, so a reference to 3 Nephi 14:17-18 is appropriate. Mormon appears to be interpreting Jesus’ words from the Sermon at the Temple.

8 ***wherefore he is counted evil before God***. Mormon is teaching that no matter how good your deeds are, it is really what is in your heart that matters. Likewise, King Benjamin taught that we must give to the poor, but if people are too poor to give to others, they still need to be willing to give. What is in the heart is what determines whether they are condemned or guiltless (Mosiah 4:21-25). This is why judgment is based on your heart more than your actions, and why the Book of Mormon focuses so much on a changed heart as the measure of discipleship. See also quotes from Elder Dallin H. Oaks and President Marion G. Romney in *Student Manual*, 388-389.

9 ***pray and not with real intent***. Even a prayer said without the intention of obeying any answer the Lord might give is a waste of time: “it profiteth him nothing, for God receiveth none such.”

11 ***if he follow Christ he cannot be a servant of the devil***. As 3 Nephi 13:24 says, “No man can serve two masters.” The summary of the message of John’s Revelation might be captured in the idea: ‘Choose God, not Satan.’ It is always the lot of mortals to choose good or evil—there is no fence-sitting.

12 ***all things which are good cometh of God***. Every good act is inspired by God, Mormon taught, and evil always comes from the devil. In the next verse, he went even further: “every thing which inviteth and enticeth to do good, and to love God, and to serve him, is inspired of God” (13). This means that those in other churches, for example, who are teaching about Christ or even directing people to live good lives are supported by God, at least so far as they are teaching truth. See *Student Manual*, 390 for a statement from the First Presidency related to this.

16 ***the Spirit of Christ***. Also known as ‘the Light of Christ’ (see v. 18-19), this gift is given to all people that they might distinguish between right and wrong. “It is a moral monitoring device, a directing and guiding influence which will strive with men and women and lead them to do good and choose righteousness” (McConkie 1991, 4:335).

22 ***he sent angels to minister unto the children of men***. Having taught about our two potential masters and the Light of Christ that teaches us between good and evil, Mormon next set out to tell us how “ye may lay hold on every good thing” (v. 21), which is faith. Angels have come and taught people the truth, which is focused on Christ, “and in Christ there should come every good thing.”

23 ***God also declared unto prophets***. A second witness of Christ are the prophets, who have heard about him directly from God.

24 ***there were divers ways that he did manifest things***. Besides angels and prophets, God speaks to man in many different ways, including personal revelation by the Holy Spirit. All of these things

come from Christ himself, as Paul taught: “faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God,” Christ being the manifestation of the word of God (Romans 10:17; John 1).

men were fallen, and there could no good thing come. In other words, all these divine communications—angels, prophets, the Spirit, etc.—come *in spite* of man’s fallen state; they are gifts from God, a manifestation of his grace toward us.

25 **men began to exercise faith.** Because all of these witnesses are by the grace of God, so faith is a gift from God, because it comes as a result of God’s grace and teachings. And it is by this faith that we begin to “lay hold upon every good thing.”

26 **Whatever thing ye shall ask.** The quotation here is from 3 Nephi 18:20, with one word difference: in Mormon’s commentary, “good” replaces “right,” which matches the point he is making.

28 **he claimeth all those who have faith in him.** With his atonement complete, Jesus sits “on the right hand of God, to claim of the Father his rights of mercy” (v. 27). By virtue of his personal sacrifice in our behalf, he can advocate before the Father for those who exercise faith in him.

32 **men may have faith in Christ.** Closing the logical loop, Mormon taught that Christ sends angels, “chosen vessels,” and the Holy Ghost to teach and build faith.

33 **ye shall have power.** This verse is a quotation from Christ, but not found in any scripture we have. Mormon is probably quoting from the longer record of Christ’s visit to the Nephites but this particular verse was omitted from his abridgement.

34 **Repent all ye ends of the earth.** Another quotation from Christ, but this one we can find (at least the first part of the verse)—3 Nephi 27:20.

37 **so long as time shall last.** This is God’s eternal pattern for bringing us to salvation—angels, prophets, and the Holy Ghost all teaching and bearing record of the necessity of faith in Christ. He will continue this effort until every last person has had the opportunity to gain faith.

40 **I would speak unto you concerning hope.** Shifting gears a bit, Mormon turned next to hope, which is closely tied to faith. Indeed, he points out that “if a man hath faith he must needs have hope” (v. 41). We hope to be cleansed by the atonement and to be resurrected.

43 **save he shall be meek.** Humility is the key to having both faith and hope. Without humility and meekness, a person’s “faith and hope is vain” (v. 44).

44 **he must needs have charity.** If we have built up our faith and hope and are sufficiently humble, then we will also strive to have charity, without which we are nothing.

45 **charity suffereth long.** Paul’s writings on charity (1 Corinthians 13) are nearly identical to Mormon’s here. They were working from the same source—either an ancient prophet or the same spirit of revelation (McConkie 1991, 4:343).

47 **charity is the pure love of Christ.** Though other scriptures have equated charity with love (e.g., 2 Nephi 26:30; Ether 12:34), this uniquely Mormon definition of charity teaches us that the unconditional, self-sacrificing love of Christ himself is our model. In fact, his love is what endures forever.

48 ***pray...that ye may be filled with this love.*** It is by our prayer of faith that we may experience true charity, to love others as God loves them. Like faith and hope, charity is a gift from God, another manifestation of his grace toward us. When we reach the point of having charity, we shall see God, and “we shall see him as he is,” because we are “purified even as he is pure.” Some of the language in this verse matches that of 1 John 3:1-3.

MORONI 8 SALVATION OF CHILDREN

1 ***An epistle of my father Mormon.*** Moroni next included two letters from his father, written to him as they were both laboring to save their people. Mormon was leading the armies again and Moroni was serving in the ministry.

2 ***Jesus Christ...hath called you to his ministry.*** Mormon and Moroni are both clear about who they follow and who has given them power and authority to speak and act as they do.

3 ***I am mindful of you always in my prayers.*** The loving prayer of a father for his son serving far away, something many parents in the Church today can relate to.

5 ***disputations among you concerning the baptism of your little children.*** The early Church in the old world faced his problem, as did the Church in Mormon’s day. If baptism is required for salvation, shouldn’t it be done as soon as possible for children to ensure their salvation? In the Greek and Roman church, the answer became yes, based on the wisdom of men. In the Book of Mormon, the military prophet leader attempted here to guide his son and the people to the correct answer—children are saved in Christ and need no baptism. This was also the thing that Abraham learned from God during his life (JST Genesis 17).

7 ***the word of the Lord came to me by the power of the Holy Ghost.*** This pattern of receiving revelation by the Spirit is the one most commonly followed in how the Church is run today.

8 ***little children are whole, for they are not capable of committing sin.*** On the surface, this might be puzzling. Do children do things that are wrong? Of course. So how is it that these wrong things are not sins? “The curse of Adam is taken from them in me,” said Christ. All of us are born under the curse that God gave to Adam and Eve in the garden—we are fallen and not in the presence of God. But through the atonement of Christ, we are brought back into the presence of God through faith and repentance. But that same atonement grants to children a period of non-accountability, so that their mistakes are not counted as sins. See D&C 29:46-47.

21 ***I speak it boldly.*** With authority from God, Mormon corrected this error with firm and precise language. If the old world Church had had such a leader, this “awful wickedness” might not have crept in either.

22 ***also all they that are without the law.*** Mormon taught that it is not just little children but others who are “without the law.” Church leaders have taken this to mean those who are not mentally or physically capable of comprehending the gospel and repenting (McConkie 1991, 4:354).

27 ***the pride of this nation...hath proven their destruction.*** See President Ezra Taft Benson, “Beware of Pride,” *Ensign*, May 1989, pp. 4-7.

MORONI 9 BE FAITHFUL IN CHRIST

1 *I write unto you again.* Moroni recorded a second letter from his father. This one is more dismal and recounts some of the events in the last days of the Nephites.

3 *the Lamanites shall destroy this people; for they do not repent.* In the first letter, Mormon asked Moroni to keep praying for the people, with the hope that repentance might still save them (8:28).

4 *the Spirit of the Lord hath ceased striving with them.* Mormon continued to labor with the Nephites, but had no positive responses—in fact, just the opposite. He faced anger and sharpness, and saw that they had “lost their love, one towards another,” focusing only on “blood and revenge” (v. 5).

6 *let us labor diligently.* In spite of fierce opposition and what appeared to be a hopeless cause, Mormon and Moroni kept teaching and loving and working, recognizing that they had “a labor to perform whilst in this tabernacle of clay.”

7 *the tower of Sherrizah.* The Lamanites captured this location and killed the men, then fed their bodies to the surviving women and children.

9 *doth not exceed that of our people in Moriantum.* The Nephites were even worse, raping and torturing the Lamanite women they captured, then eating their bodies as a “token of bravery.” In the next verses, Mormon details his sad feelings and more about the sins of the people.

22 *I recommend thee unto God.* Though he feared for the people, he was assured of the faithfulness of Moroni, praying that God would spare this life.

24 *I have sacred records that I would deliver up unto thee.* This helps date this and the previous letter, because it was before Mormon gave the plates to his son.

25 *be faithful in Christ.* Mormon’s last words in the Book of Mormon are a call to faithfulness and blessings from God to his son—and by extension to us, the readers of his words.

MORONI 10 MORONI’S WITNESS AND FAREWELL

1 *I write unto my brethren, the Lamanites.* Not only is Moroni clear about his audience for the first part of his farewell, but in a perfect example of charity, he writes in love to the very people who destroyed his own nation, his family, and drove him to about 40 years of solitary wandering.

more than four hundred and twenty years have passed away. This means it is at least the year 421 after the sign of Christ’s birth. We also get the sense that Moroni has lost track of time a bit in his lonely wanderings, because he sounds uncertain of the year.

3 *remember.* All through the Book of Mormon this has been the call—remember, remember. It is appropriate that Moroni concludes with the same call. We are to remember and take action, which action is to “ponder it in your hearts.”

4 **when ye shall receive these things.** Shared by thousands of missionaries with their investigators, this invitation means more than just to read. To “receive” means to take it into ourselves, to test it and try it, to exercise faith that what we are reading might be true. Then we can pray sincerely and receive a manifestation of the Spirit that it is true.

8 **deny not the gifts of God.** Moroni listed several gifts that we should seek, including teaching, having faith, healing, working miracles, prophesying, speaking in tongues, and interpreting languages (vv. 9-16). All of these come from Christ (v. 18).

20 **faith...hope...charity.** Calling on his father’s letter, Moroni reminded us of these three pillars of salvation, all of which are required for salvation (v. 21).

24 **I speak unto all the ends of the earth.** The rest of this chapter is written not just to the Lamanites but to the entire earth.

27 **Did I not declare my words unto you, which were written by this man.** With humility but boldness, Moroni testifies that his words are true and will stand up to the judgment of God at the last day. He will be there to witness of their truth.

30 **come unto Christ, and lay hold upon every good gift.** His plea is to receive the blessings of the atonement by accepting Christ and his grace.

31 **awake, and arise.** Quoting Isaiah 52:1-2, Moroni called us to build up Zion and her stakes.

32 **deny yourselves of all ungodliness.** Denial does not deprive us of anything, but rather prepares the way for greater blessings. The allure of ungodly sin is temporary and fleeting, but the eternal blessings of denying ourselves of these things are incredible.

then is his grace sufficient for you. If we deny the world and come to Christ, his grace can fully cover us and perfect us. Then we are sanctified and holy (v. 33).

34 **I am brought forth triumphant through the air.** This was literally fulfilled as Moroni appeared to Joseph Smith many times over the course of several years. He stands triumphant today as the angel of God that was instrumental in bringing the word of God from the dust to the hands of millions and bringing many, many souls to Christ.

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