

Lesson Highlights

- *Mormon is given responsibility for the sacred records.*
- *Mormon becomes the leader of the Nephite armies. The Nephites suffer in battle because of wickedness.*
- *Mormon explains the purposes for the records he has abridged and written.*
- *In a final great battle, all but 24 of the Nephites are killed.*

A study of this lesson will help us see the importance of living according to gospel principles despite the increasing wickedness in the world.

Next Week

#44 "I Speak unto You As If Ye Were Present" -

Mormon 7-9

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Introduction



If you were sailing a boat, what equipment would you want it to have?

Mormon compared his people, the Nephites, to a boat that was lacking some essential pieces of equipment. Read **Mormon 5:17-18** and consider how people who do not follow the Savior are "as a vessel without sail or anchor". Unlike the rest of the Nephites, Mormon used the gospel as both a sail and an anchor in his life. He lived righteously even when it seemed that everyone around him was wicked.

This lesson discusses what happened to Mormon and his people and how we can use the gospel as a sail and an anchor in our lives. We should be able to see the importance of living according to gospel principles despite the increasing wickedness in the world around us.

Mormon was given responsibility for the sacred records.

Mormon was responsible for abridging all of the plates into the record we know as the Book of Mormon. Mormon 1-6 contains Mormon's record of his own time and people.

Mormon 1:2-3 Mormon was "about ten" years old when he was given responsibility for the sacred records by Ammaron, but he was told at that time not to retrieve the plates of Nephi until he was about 24 years of age.

Mormon 1:3-4 Ammaron instructed Mormon to take the plates of Nephi, leave the rest where they were deposited, and then to record the things he had observed about the people. Characteristics the young Mormon possessed that prepared him for his role in preserving and abridging the sacred records included being sober and observant. He was also educated in the learning of his people and he was a spiritually-minded youth.

Mormon 1:15 When Mormon was 15 years old, he "was visited of the Lord, and tasted and knew of the goodness of Jesus". Think about how you can come to know of the goodness of Jesus.

Mormon became the leader of the Nephite armies. The Nephites suffered in battle because of their wickedness.

Mormon 1:19; Mormon 2:1, 8, 10, 18 Conditions existing in Nephite society during Mormon's lifetime included witchcraft and sorcery, a predominant influence of Satan's power, a resumption of war between the Lamanites and Nephites; blood and carnage during continual revolution; no one could keep anything of his own; and wickedness and abominations flourished.

Mormon 1:19; Mosiah 12:4-8; Helaman 13:5-10 These conditions fulfilled the words of

Mormon 1:16-17 The Lord forbade Mormon to preach to the Nephites because they had willfully rebelled against their God and they had hardened their hearts.

Mormon 1:13-18 Other losses the Nephites experienced because of the hardness of their hearts included the loss of miracles and healings that had been performed by the "beloved disciples" who were taken away--the three Nephite disciples who had desired to remain on the earth until the Savior's Second Coming (see 3 Nephi 28:1-9); no gifts from the Lord nor any companionship of the Holy Ghost; the land was cursed and infested by the Gadianton robbers; and the Lord made their hidden worldly treasures "slippery" so that they could neither hold nor retain them when they buried them in the cursed land.

Ponder the losses you might experience if you were to harden your heart against the Lord and His servants.

earlier prophets including Abinadi and Samuel the Lamanite.

Alma 17:2-3; Helaman 3:35; D&C 121:45-46 Even though we, like Mormon, live in a time of much wickedness, these scriptures teach what we can do to maintain our faith and personal righteousness--pray, fast, study the scriptures, choose righteous associates, seek personal revelation, serve the Lord and his children by teaching the gospel, be humble and faithful, and purify your heart by yielding unto God and the influence of the Spirit.

Jeffrey R. Holland:
The Book of Mormon is the sacred expression of Christ's great last covenant with mankind. It is a new covenant, a new testament from the New World to the entire world. Reading it was the beginning of my light. It was the source of my first spiritual certainty that God lives, that he is my Heavenly Father, and that a plan of happiness was outlined in eternity for me. It led me to love the Holy Bible and the rest of the Standard Works of the Church. It taught me to love the Lord Jesus Christ, to glimpse his merciful compassion, and to consider the grace and grandeur of his atoning sacrifice for my sins and the sins of all men, women, and children from Adam to the end of time. The light I walk by is his light. His mercy and magnificence lead me in my witness of him to the world. (Christ and the New Covenant: The Messianic Message of the Book of Mormon [Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1997], 351)

Mormon 2:10-12 Mormon rejoiced when he saw the people mourning because he thought they were on the way to becoming righteous.

Mormon 2:13-14 His rejoicing was in vain because they were not choosing to repent but only to lament that they could not be happy in sinning.

2 Corinthians 7:9-10 The difference between "sorrowing...unto repentance" and "the sorrowing of the damned" is that godly sorrow works unto repentance and that brings salvation, while worldly sorrow only brings death.

Mormon 2:14; see also **3 Nephi 9:20; D&C 59:8** To "come unto Jesus with broken hearts and contrite spirits" is to seek his forgiveness and commit to follow his example forevermore.

Mormon 2:19 Mormon had hope and peace even when he viewed the wickedness of his people because he knew that he personally would be saved because he had been faithful and obedient.

Consider how you can maintain hope and peace amid the wickedness of the world today.

Mormon explained the purposes for the records he had abridged and written.

After refusing to lead the Nephite armies, Mormon said he would "stand as [a] witness," recording the events that were taking place among the Nephites" (Mormon 3:16).

In these verses, Mormon directly addresses those for whom his record is intended:

Mormon 3:17-19; Mormon 5:9-10, 14 Mormon's record was intended for the Gentiles and the House of Israel, including the twelve tribes across the face of the earth, and especially to the remnant of the house of Israel in the Americas in the latter-days.

In a final great battle, all but 24 of the Nephites were killed.

Mormon 4:5 In commenting on the Nephites' losses against the Lamanites, Mormon explained that "it is by the wicked that the wicked are punished". Think about what this means and how you see this happening in the world today.

Mormon 5:2 Mormon felt that the situation was hopeless when he agreed to lead the armies again.

Mormon 5:1 Mormon understood who could bring the Nephites victory in battle -- the Lord. His understanding differed from the Nephites' belief that Mormon as a military leader could lead them to victory.

Mormon 3:3 Mormon said that when his people defeated the Lamanites in battle, "they did not realize that it was the Lord that had spared them". Think about why it is important that we recognize that the blessings we receive are from the Lord.

Mormon 3:9-13 After more than 30 years of leading the Nephite armies, Mormon refused to lead them because of their wickedness and their desire to seek revenge. The Lord had commanded them not to seek revenge, and He declared, "Vengeance is mine" (Mormon 3:14-15).

Ponder the consequences that come when people seek vengeance. Then consider how you can overcome feelings of vengeance if they arise in your heart.

Mormon 3:12 We learn from Mormon that we should respond with love and sincere prayer for them when we encounter people who are hard-hearted.

Think seriously about how you can develop greater love for such people and why it is important to continue to pray for the hard-hearted.

Mormon 3:20-22; Mormon 5:14-15 Purposes for keeping and preserving the record included:

- "That ye may know that ye must all stand before the judgment-seat of Christ...to be judged of your works" (Mormon 3:20).
- "That ye may believe the gospel of Jesus Christ" (Mormon 3:21; see also Mormon 5:15).
- To provide a witness "that Jesus [is] the very Christ and the very God" (Mormon 3:21; see also Mormon 5:14).
- To "persuade all ye ends of the earth to repent" (Mormon 3:22).

Think about how Mormon's writings have helped fulfill these purposes in your life.

Mormon 4:23; see also **Mormon 1:3-4** Mormon took the plates from the Hill Shim because he understood that the land was about to fall to the Lamanites.

Mormon 6:6 Mormon hid the plates in the Hill Cumorah because he was getting old; he knew this would be the last great battle; and he knew that he had been commanded to safeguard the sacred records. It was very important to protect the plates because if the Lamanites gained possession of them, they would be destroyed.

Mormon 6:7-15 The result of the final battle at Cumorah was the destruction of the Nephites as a people with over 230,000 slain in that battle.



Mormon Bids Farewell to a Once Great Nation

Arnold Friberg

(*please see note-page 4)

Mormon 6:16-22; Mormon 8:2-3 After the battle of Cumorah, the Lamanites hunted down the remaining 24 Nephites and killed all but Moroni. The Nephite nation was thus completely destroyed.

Conclusion

The Nephite society was destroyed because of its great wickedness. Although we also live in a time of great wickedness, we must not be part of it. By following Mormon's example of steadfastness and faith, and by studying the records he so carefully preserved, we can withstand the evil influences of our day and provide an example of courage and hope for others.

Additional Teaching

Righteous youth: Mormon was only ten when Ammaron entrusted him with the records. (See Mormon 1:2-4.) And he was just fifteen when he saw Jesus Christ. (See Mormon 1:15.)

Joseph Smith was 14 years old when he received the First Vision of the Father and the Son, and he was 21 when he received the gold plates from the angel Moroni. Righteousness and wisdom are not limited by age or other circumstances. The Lord will bless those who serve Him at any age.

Mormon 1:13,16; Mormon 2:26-27; Mormon 3:2-3; Mormon 4:12; Mormon 5:2,16-19; Moroni 9:3-5,18-20 Such "great calamity" came upon the Nephites because they had embraced wickedness and abominations until the judgment of God was brought upon them.

We also live among much wickedness. How can individual righteousness make a difference in an unrighteous society?

Elder Neal A. Maxwell warned: *"Only reform and self-restraint, institutional and individual, can finally rescue society! Only a sufficient number of sin-resistant souls can change the marketplace. As Church members we should be part of that sin-resistant counterculture"* (Ensign, May 1993, 77).

Gospel Doctrine

Notebook

Record your thoughts on the teachings discussed in this lesson.

- How did you feel as you read about the destruction of the Nephite nation?
- What lessons can you apply to your life?

**Note from Doug: When I choose images for my handouts I generally look for those that are less familiar. Arnold Friberg's very familiar illustrations have helped bring the Book of Mormon to life for many readers. I'm sometimes reluctant to use his iconic portrayals because they are so memorably dramatic that they tend to define for us the feel and look of the Book of Mormon events. The depiction of Mormon bidding farewell has always been oddly Wagnerian to me. The following comments by the artist gave me a greater appreciation of his intent in portraying the great prophet in this fashion.*

**Comments of the artist Arnold Friberg June 3, 1986—
MORMON BIDS FAREWELL TO A ONCE GREAT NATION**

"Now we are talking about the last picture. This is after the last battle. This is downright Wagnerian, isn't it? Of course, I love Wagner. I love the great hero tales of Siegfried. The story of Moroni is the story of Siegfried. Every hero's story is the story of Siegfried. This represents after the last great battle. There are these heaps of bodies. If you read the Book, there are heaps of them, ten thousand in a heap. I tried to capture the Gotterdammerung feeling. This is the end. This is Wagnerian. Mormon was fatally wounded in the fight and so they have laid him down there."

"The dead are down here in the shadow. I did it as tastefully as I could. Today's movies would show the blood. But there is a sort of serenity here, of the peace of death, after a nation has died. And Mormon being wounded is dying. He is in half-shadow, and then in the full light is his son Moroni in full strength."

"Here is Mormon's helmet that they have taken off him, and I can just imagine him saying, 'Get me the plates! Get me the plates! There is a little more I want to add.' So I brought in the plates. It sort of sums up the history of the nation. And then, of course, Moroni took the plates and kept them, and finally added a little of his own after many years."

"Things like this one last leaf has a little symbolism. You see the buzzards circling because there is death all around. Blood on the sun! This is really Wagnerian stuff."

"Also you notice this flag (behind Moroni on the pole) is the same flag. I think they would have preserved that flag like they have the flags of the Alamo . I think they'd have kept that flag of Captain Moroni's, the old Title of Liberty. And I think at the end they would have said, 'We weren't worthy to live under Moroni 's flag. Let us at least die like men under the flag.' If I had been making a motion picture, I would have them get out the old flag of Captain Moroni's and say, 'At least let's die under it if we are men at all.'"

"There is a lot of drama to this thing and that's the way you build a story. I really think they would have preserved it. I don't think they would have thrown that flag away - like we keep the flags of the American Revolution. In England I was at one of the investiture services of the Order of St. John of Jerusalem that goes way back to 600 AD. And in their chapel in London they have got flags actually carried by the Crusaders."

"And I think they would have kept Moroni 's flag of liberty and I think they would have dragged it out for that last battle. It is all stained with blood. 'At least we can die under that flag.'" (Friberg statement to Vern Swanson, December 2000.)