

THE BELOVED DISCIPLES AND THE CHILDREN OF CHRIST

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Growing up among Book of Mormon believing Christians I have heard many testimonies about the three disciples of Jesus Christ who have remained on the earth to bring souls unto their Lord.¹ They are often called *the three Nephites*. Three years after resuming a daily study of the Book of Mormon in May of 2004 the Lord blessed me with a clearer understanding of these three beloved disciples and their ministry.

Each evening I concluded my study time with a request to the Lord that a particular prophecy given through Nephi would soon be fulfilled. According to his prophecy, the Lamanites will someday be brought to the knowledge of their Redeemer and *the very points* of His doctrine so “*they may know how to come unto Him and be saved.*”²

On April 21, 2007 the Lord responded to my prayer by showing me that He had caused the last book in the Book of Mormon to be written in preparation of the fulfillment of Nephi’s prophecy concerning the restoration of the Lamanites.³ Specifically, I was shown that the Lord had led Moroni to prepare this concluding portion of the Nephite record to summarize His doctrine for the purpose of building up His church among the Lamanites in these latter days.⁴ In the words of Moroni, he wrote in the hope that his words “*may be of worth unto my brethren, the Lamanites, in some future day according to the will of the Lord.*”⁵

Moroni’s concise library of scripture, historical accounts, letters, prophecies, admonitions, and concluding invitation to come unto Christ and be perfected in Him⁶ are the key to unlocking the Lamanites’ understanding of the records of their brethren the Nephites. This includes all of the Book of Mormon and the records yet to come forth.⁷ In fine, the book of Moroni contains *the very points* of Jesus Christ’s doctrine.⁸ It contains the plainness and fullness of our Lord’s gospel by which the Lamanites may know how to repent and come unto Him and be saved.⁹

While I continued studying from the book of Moroni over the next several days, I became acutely aware that all who *feast* upon the words of Jesus Christ contained therein are *feasting* upon words penned expressly for the Lamanites.¹⁰ That is, they are partaking of a precious meal prepared for a specific people, the Lamanites. As I pondered these thoughts, I began to feel like a guest at this bountiful table, one who has an obligation, even a responsibility to assist the Lamanites in repenting and coming unto Jesus Christ to feast upon His love.¹¹

¹ See III Nephi 13:17,21

² I Nephi 4:19

³ I Nephi 4:16-29 with I Nephi 3:183-216

⁴ cf. D&C 2:6 & 3:10-12 with D&C 29:2c & Moroni 10:1-7

⁵ Moroni 1:4; cf. Alma 17:38,39 & I Nephi 4:19

⁶ cf. Moroni 10:27-30

⁷ cf. I Nephi 3:183-216 & Ether 1:109-117 with Moroni 10:1-7

⁸ cf. D&C 3:16,17 with I Nephi 4:19

⁹ cf. I Nephi 3:19, 4:16 & III Nephi 7:34-39, 9:64-69 with D&C 17:2c,d & 26:2a

¹⁰ cf. II Nephi 13:30 & 14:4-6 with Moroni 1:4 & 10:1-7

¹¹ cf. Jacob 2:50 with I Nephi 2:52 & 3:63-69; see also I Nephi 4:14-34 & II Nephi 6:99-106 with Romans 11:31, Jacob 3:26-153, D&C 2:6 & Helaman 2:71-73

Continuing in my study of Moroni's account, my thoughts were drawn evermore into a profound concern for the Lamanites. I also became increasingly aware of the yearnings of Jesus Christ's three beloved disciples who tarry among us for these, their brethren, who have dwindled in darkness and unbelief throughout many generations.¹² With these insights came the encouragement to continue in my prayers and to share what I was being taught with others for the intent that faith in the Lord's promises might increase.¹³

When speaking of these things with my family and our congregation, I referred to the three beloved disciples of Jesus Christ as *the three Nephites*. One evening while in prayer and study something happened to change the way I refer to them. I was given a word of correction as if by the disciples themselves. I was shown that these beloved disciples are no longer "ites." They have not transgressed their calling. They have remained just as they were when no "ites" existed among Lehi's posterity following Jesus Christ's ministry to them in the flesh,¹⁴ i.e. when "*there were no robbers, no murderers, neither were there Lamanites, nor any manner of ites; but they were in one the children of Christ, and heirs of the kingdom of God.*"¹⁵

I compared this insight with the Book of Mormon record and found a reference that is perhaps the reason for the title, *the three Nephites*. Mormon reported that 231 years after Jesus Christ visited his people, a great division occurred among them.¹⁶ According to this grouping the three disciples were included with those called *Nephites, Jacobites, Josephites, and Zoramites*.

Upon asking the Lord for clarification about Mormon's statement I was assured that this grouping was not made to suggest that the three disciples followed the prophesied decline of the people into becoming "ites" again.¹⁷ For, eventually, only Lamanites remained, being a mixture of all Lehi's posterity, including Nephite dissenters.¹⁸ Notwithstanding this decline, the three disciples remained true to their Lord and His calling on their lives and, because of the iniquity of the people, they were finally taken out of the land occupied by the Lamanites.¹⁹

These beloved disciples of Jesus Christ are still *in one, the children of Christ*.²⁰ They have remained on the earth to minister unto us so that we too may become one with them in Christ. But like them, we must not forget God's ancient covenant people.²¹ With the coming forth of the Book of Mormon has also come the call to take this precious record unto the Lamanites so that we all may be *in one, the children of Christ*.²² Let us, therefore, carry the precious feast prepared for the Lamanites unto them, a feast which contains *the key of knowledge, the fullness of the scripture*,²³ restored especially for them in the record of Moroni.²⁴ Great promises await all who will thrust in their sickle and reap while it is yet called day.²⁵

¹² See III Nephi 13:21,39 with III Nephi 13:20 & I Nephi 3:130-133

¹³ D&C 2:6 with D&C 1:4d,e, 3:10-18, etc.

¹⁴ cf. III Nephi 13:49-53 with IV Nephi 1:15,19 & Ether 5:17

¹⁵ IV Nephi 1:20

¹⁶ cf. IV Nephi 1:39-43

¹⁷ cf. I Nephi 3:114-134, III Nephi 13:9, etc.

¹⁸ cf. I Nephi 3:128-134,177 & I Nephi 4:16 with Mormon 2:25,44, 4:7-11, Moroni 1:1-3, etc.

¹⁹ cf. Mormon 1:14,17 & 4:12 with III Nephi 13:39

²⁰ IV Nephi 1:4,20

²¹ II Nephi 12:50 & Mormon 4:19

²² cf. Ether 1:109-117 with III Nephi 12:1-4

²³ Luke 11:53 IV & Matthew 23:10 IV

²⁴ cf. Moroni 10:1-7 with I Nephi 4:16-29, I Nephi 6:43-53 & II Nephi 6:99-105

²⁵ cf. Isaiah 43:11, 48:17, 54:5, 63:16 etc. with D&C 4:1, 6:1-4, 11:1-5, etc.