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Introduction



The image of a small portion of Michelangelo's fresco, "Creation," found above serves as metaphor for this page's means and ends.

- ? How would you characterize God's arm in the fresco?
- ? How would you characterize Adam's arm?
- ? What is the message in Adam's limp wrist? In the fact that his arm rests on his knee?
- ? How does Adam, as painted in Michelangelo's fresco, represent all of us as we engage in scripture study and seek to understand scripture, scripture's divine author and our relationship to Him?
- ? How does Adam, as painted in Michelangelo's fresco, represent all of us as we seek God's enlivening, strengthening, and saving influence and presence in our daily lives?

Michelangelo reminds us of our desperate need for God's presence in our lives if we are to follow Him and be all that He hopes us to be. In relation to this page and its purposes, we are in need of God's help as we seek to understand and apply scripture.

The questions we posed and our brief commentary concerning the fresco represent an example of our approach to each scripture reading.

Scripture readings are accompanied by general and passage-specific questions to ponder along with brief comments. In addition to the passage-specific questions associated with each reading, the reader can apply the following **general questions** to most readings. These questions come from the purposes of scripture as identified in the introduction to our site, ponderthescriptures.com, found on the site's home page

- What does this reading reveal about the character of God?
- How and what does this reading testify of Christ?
- What wisdom and knowledge does this reading provide?
- How does this reading direct the way you think and act?
- Of what dangers does this reading warn? How does it help you avoid these dangers?
- How does this reading gladden your heart, encourage you, and give you hope?
- How does this reading expand your vision and increase your expectations of the possible?
- What does this reading discern or "read" about you?
- How will you apply this reading to your life, to how you relate with others, and to how you relate to Father, Son, and Holy Spirit?

It is not intended that the reader ponder every question. We introduce numerous and varied questions in hopes that readers will find a question or two that catches their imagination and interest, seems pertinent to their lives, and provides an opportunity for meaningful pondering and further spiritual insight. In addition, if the reader wishes, the many and varied ponder questions allow the reader to spend additional time to consider passages from various perspectives.

Finally, we suggest that during and after your reading and pondering experience you consider how you can incorporate your thoughts and feelings from the scripture reading into your personal prayer life. As you pray, share with Heavenly Father what you thought and felt as you studied and pondered. In your prayer, seek further insight from a God who is anxious to reveal himself, his will, and his interest in our lives. Incorporating your reading and pondering into your prayers can, we think, enliven a prayer life that can all too easily become mundane, mechanical, and rote.

1nephi 1.⁸⁻¹⁰

And being thus overcome with the Spirit, he was carried away in a vision, even that he saw the heavens open, and he thought he saw God sitting upon his throne, surrounded with numberless concourses of angels in the attitude of singing and praising their God. *He saw One descending out of the midst of heaven, and he beheld that his luster was above that of the sun at noon-day. And he also saw twelve others following him, and their brightness did exceed that of the stars in the firmament.

Questionary

- ? Who are the twelve who were following Jesus?
- ? What is the significance of the fact that Jesus' is light as bright as a mid-day sun while the twelve only shine as brightly as night starlight?
- ? How would you feel about living daily life with only the light of a starry night?

1nephi 1.²⁰

But behold, I, Nephi, will show unto you that the tender mercies of the Lord are over all those whom he hath chosen, because of their faith, to make them mighty even unto the power of deliverance.

Questionary

- ? What does Nephi mean by those who are “chosen”?
- ? Why are those whom Nephi calls “chosen” chosen?
- ? What role does trust in God play in being “chosen”?
- ? From what have you been delivered?

1 Nephi 2.¹¹⁻¹³— just scripture

Laman and Lemuel... did murmur in many things against their father, because he was a visionary man, and had led them out of the land of Jerusalem, to leave the land of their inheritance, and their gold, and their silver, and their precious things, to perish in the wilderness. And this they said he had done because of the foolish imaginations of his heart. And thus Laman and Lemuel, being the eldest, did murmur against their father. And they did murmur because they knew not the dealings of that God who had created them. Neither did they believe that Jerusalem, that great city, could be destroyed according to the words of the prophets....

Questionary

1. Nephi tells us that “Laman and Lemuel... did murmur in many things against their father.
 - ? What does it mean to murmur, as you think of it?
 - ? About what things does Nephi mention his brothers complaining about in this passage?
 - ? How are the following complaints related to each other?
 - Lehi “was a visionary man.”
 - Lehi “led them out of the land of Jerusalem.”
 - Lehi led them “to leave the land of their inheritance, and their gold, and their silver, and their precious things.”
 - Lehi led them “to perish in the wilderness.”
 - ? What was it about the value of inheritance, gold, silver, and other precious things in times of societal collapse that Laman and Lemuel did not understand?
 - ? How would you feel about the suggestion that “visionary” people always find it necessary to leave behind the false security and comfort of materialistic culture?
 - ? Are you more inclined toward Lehi’s “contempt” of materialistic culture or Laman and Lemuel’s reliance on materialistic culture for comfort and security? Why do you answer as you do?
2. Nephi informs us that Laman and Lemuel did not “believe that Jerusalem, that great city, could be destroyed.”
 - ? Why is it that individuals of all civilization and societies come to believe that theirs is inevitable and invincible?
 - ? To what degree, do you feel, do people today feel about their nation or society as Laman and Lemuel felt about theirs?
 - ? How do you feel about yours? Why do you answer as you do?

1nephi 10.¹⁹

For he that diligently seeketh shall find; and the mysteries of God shall be unfolded unto them, by the power of the Holy Ghost, as well in these times as in times of old, and as well in times of old as in times to come; wherefore, the course of the Lord is one eternal round.

Questionary

- ? What types of truths fall under Nephi's rubric, "mysteries of God"?
- ? How do you feel about Nephi's positive admonition to seek "the mysteries of God"?
- ? How do you apply Nephi's encouragement in your own daily life?
- ? What was the last "mystery of God" that the Holy Spirit revealed to you?

1nephi 19.⁸⁻¹⁰— Atonement

⁸And behold he cometh, according to the words of the angel, in six hundred years from the time my father left Jerusalem. ⁹And the world, because of their iniquity, shall judge him to be a thing of naught;

wherefore they scourge him, and he suffereth it;
and they smite him, and he suffereth it.

Yea, they spit upon him, and he suffereth it,

because of his loving kindness and his long-suffering towards the children of men.

¹⁰And the God of our fathers, who were led out of Egypt, out of bondage, and also were preserved in the wilderness by him, yea, the God of Abraham, and of Isaac, and the God of Jacob, yieldeth himself, according to the words of the angel, as a man, into the hands of wicked men,

to be lifted up, according to the words of Zenock,
and to be crucified, according to the words of Neum,
and to be buried in a sepulchre, according to the words of Zenos.

Questionary

This reading is one in a series of readings on Atonement that we entitle, “Sacrifice: What Jesus Suffered for Us.” *

1. In today’s reading, Nephi describes some of the things that Christ “yielded” to and “suffereth.”
 - ? With all the power he possessed, how easy or hard was it for the Savior to “yield” to the humiliation and pain of being “scourged,” “smitten,” and “spit upon”?
 - ? How badly might he have wanted to respond in a way that would show his persecutors that he was more powerful than they?
 - ? What made him endure all this pain, and resist the temptation to let those who opposed him feel the full measure of his power?
 - ? On the other hand, how is it that in enduring the pain and resisting the temptation to resist and lash out, he was, in fact, showing them and future generations the full measure of his power?
 - ? What would be the implications in our lives and our relationships if his power is best seen in his “yielding” and “suffering”?
 - ? What does it mean that he was “set at naught”?
2. Nephi says that he endured all of this “because of his loving kindness and his long-suffering towards the children of men.”
 - ? Take a moment to think about what it means to be “long-suffering.” How is this attribute exhibited toward us?
3. Nephi says that “the world, because of their iniquity, shall judge him to be a thing of naught.” He also says that Jesus “yieldeth himself... into the hands of wicked men.”
 - ? What do you think and feel when you note that Nephi puts Jesus’ suffering and death squarely on the shoulders of the world and its wicked?
 - ? How does this relate to the notion that Jesus was a sacrifice that the Father made, or was the victim of “justice” or the Father’s need to “satisfy justice” and thus be “appeased”?

* The following ten titles are part of our atonement series:

“Fall: Our Need of Atonement”

“Grace: The Savior’s Generous and Earnest Invitation”

“At-one-ment: The Savior’s unity and connectedness with us”

“Sacrifice: What Jesus Suffered for Us”

“Glorification: The Savior’s Resurrection, Ascension, and Enthronement”

“Justification: How We Repent and Change”

“Renewal: The Hope, Joy, Peace, and Power of Atonement”

“Sanctification: Imitating and living a life of Atonement”

“Thanksgiving: In Praise of Atonement”

“The Song of the Righteous: A Song unto Me”

2 Nephi 2.⁴⁻⁷—Atonement

⁴And the way is prepared from the fall of man, and salvation is free. ⁵And men are instructed sufficiently that they know good from evil. And the law is given unto men. And by the law no flesh is justified; or, by the law men are cut off. Yea, by the temporal law they were cut off; and also, by the spiritual law they perish from that which is good, and become miserable forever. ⁶Wherefore, redemption cometh in and through the Holy Messiah; for he is full of grace and truth. ⁷Behold, he offereth himself a sacrifice for sin, to answer the ends of the law, unto all those who have a broken heart and a contrite spirit; and unto none else can the ends of the law be answered.

Questionary

This reading is one in a series of readings on Atonement that we entitle, “Renewal: The Hope, Joy, Peace, and Power of Atonement.” *

1. Lehi teaches his son that “salvation is free.”
 - ? What does this mean to you?

We speak of “free markets.” This does not mean that everything in the market is without cost, but that everything in the market is open to all for purchase.
 - ? How does this relate to Lehi’s “free” salvation?
2. Lehi teaches that “by the law no flesh is justified; or, by the law men are cut off.” We might be tempted to read this in light of the apostle Paul’s doctrine of justification through faith without works. However, Paul’s thought was formed in the context of the debate swirling in the early Christian church concerning the law of Moses and his relationship with one’s right standing with God. Lehi’s teaching concerning justified must be placed in a different context.
 - ? In Lehi’s discussion, what “law” “cuts off” men?
 - ? How would you feel about thinking of the “law” as Lehi talks of it as something other than the Law of Moses?
 - ? What does he mean by a “temporal” law and a “spiritual” law?
 - ? How does the “law,” or the commandments as we presently have and live them serve to “cut us off” from God?
 - ? What is the remedy to this “cutting off?”
3. Lehi says that Jesus “answers the ends of the law.”
 - ? What does this mean to you?
 - ? What does “the law” say that Jesus “responds to”? (Hint: the answer is found in verses 4-5)
 - ? If the law claims that you are “unjustified,” “guilty,” “cut off” from God, and incapable of achieving anything “good,” what is Jesus’ response?
4. Lehi promises that the Savior offers himself for “all those who have a broken heart and a contrite spirit.” We sometimes read this as if it were a “command:” “If you want me to respond to the law’s verdict of “guilty,” and make you “not-guilty,” you had better have a broken heart and a contrite heart. Otherwise...
 - ? Is this how you read it? How do you feel about this reading?
 - ? What if we read it, not as a demand, but as an “invitation:” “If those of you who are broken, wounded, sick, or in other way not whole come to me, I will respond to the law’s charge that you are guilty by defending you as “not-guilty”?”
 - ? How do you feel about this reading?

I suggest that the latter reading is always how passages that speak of the broken hearted and contrite in spirit are to be read. It is welcoming invitation not strict demand.
 - ? Those who are spiritually broken, or wounded, are sometimes reluctant to approach their God. They think to wait until they are “better,” “healed,” or have “put themselves back together.” What would this passage say to such individuals?

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“Thanksgiving: In Praise of Atonement”

“The Song of the Righteous: A Song unto Me”

2 Nephi 2:8-10—Atonement

⁸Wherefore, how great the importance to make these things known unto the inhabitants of the earth, that they may know that there is no flesh that can dwell in the presence of God, save it be through the merits, and mercy, and grace of the Holy Messiah, who layeth down his life according to the flesh, and taketh it again by the power of the Spirit, that he may bring to pass the resurrection of the dead, being the first that should rise. ⁹Wherefore, he is the firstfruits unto God, inasmuch as he shall make intercession for all the children of men; and they that believe in him shall be saved. ¹⁰And because of the intercession for all, all men come unto God; wherefore, they stand in the presence of him, to be judged of him according to the truth and holiness which is in him.

Questionary

This reading is one in a series of readings on Atonement that we entitle, “Renewal: The Hope, Joy, Peace, and Power of Atonement.” *

1. Lehi teaches that “there is no flesh that can dwell in the presence of God, save it be through the merits, and mercy, and grace of the Holy Messiah.”
 - ? What is a “merit”?
 - ? What is a “demerit”? How does contemplating “demerits” help you understand and appreciate “merits”?
 - ? How do you feel about the necessity of relying upon Jesus’ “merits” rather than your own?
 - ? How do Jesus’ merits become applied to you?
2. Lehi speaks of Jesus making “intercession.”
 - ? What does this mean, in general?
 - ? What does it mean in the context of today’s reading?
 - ? One who “intercedes is often called an “advocate.” How does Jesus’ intercession as our advocate relate to his “answering the ends of the law”?
 - ? What might an advocate feel, say, and do in behalf of a broken individual?
 - ? Have you felt the need for an advocate?
 - ? Have you felt the Savior advocating for you?
 - ? Have you experienced his advocacy?

If so, take a moment to write the experiences down. If not, take a moment to write what you might not have considered or what you might have done to deny yourself this privilege.

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“Thanksgiving: In Praise of Atonement”

“The Song of the Righteous: A Song unto Me”

2nephi 4.³⁵

Yea, I know that God will give liberally to him that asketh. Yea, my God will give me, if I ask not amiss; therefore I will lift up my voice unto thee; yea, I will cry unto thee, my God, the rock of my righteousness. Behold, my voice shall forever ascend up unto thee, my rock and mine everlasting God. Amen.

Questionary

- ? What does it mean to ask God “amiss”?
- ? What does it mean that God gives “liberally”?

2 Nephi 9:⁶⁻⁹— atonement

⁶For as death hath passed upon all men, to fulfil the merciful plan of the great Creator, there must needs be a power of resurrection, and the resurrection must needs come unto man by reason of the fall; and the fall came by reason of transgression; and because man became fallen they were cut off from the presence of the Lord. ⁷Wherefore, it must needs be an infinite atonement—save it should be an infinite atonement this corruption could not put on incorruption. Wherefore, the first judgment which came upon man must needs have remained to an endless duration. And if so, this flesh must have laid down to rot and to crumble to its mother earth, to rise no more.

⁸O 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. ⁹And our spirits must have become like unto him, and we become devils, angels to a devil, to be shut out from the presence of our God, and to remain with the father of lies, in misery, like unto himself; yea, to that being who beguiled our first parents, who transformeth himself nigh unto an angel of light, and stirreth up the children of men unto secret combinations of murder and all manner of secret works of darkness.

Q

uestionary

This reading is one in a series of readings on Atonement that we entitle, “Fall: Our Need of Atonement.” *

1. This passage paints a grim reality of our eternal destiny without Christ and his Atonement. List the things we learn from this reading about our eternal destiny without Christ and his Atonement.
2. Consider the following realities of our eternal existence without atonement.

- We are “cut off from the presence of the Lord.”
- Upon dying, we would “rise no more.”
- “Our spirits must become subject to... the devil.”
- “Our spirits must have become like unto [the devil].”
- We would “become devils.”
- We would become “angels to a devil.”
- We would “remain with the father of lies, in misery, like unto himself.”

? How do you feel about these assertions about our eternal state without Christ?

? Do you believe them?

? What do you sense when you imagine the existence described here?

3. Consider all the good people who have lived. Think of individuals such as Abraham (remember what is said of him—great and noble, etc.), Captain Moroni (remember what is said of him—if everyone was like him, the powers of hell would be shaken), Joseph Smith, or Russel M. Nelson. Consider all the good people who have known in your own life.

? How do you feel about Jacob’s suggestion that everyone, including such individuals as these, would end up “like unto the devil” without atonement?

? How is this possible?

4. Solomon Stoddard, a well-known and inspired Colonial era preacher, once taught,

“Men must be led into the Understanding of the badness of their Hearts and the strictness of the Law, before they will be convinced of the Preciousness of Christ” (In Seasons of Refreshing, Keith J. Hardman, p. 45).

Two centuries later, Ezra Taft Benson, taught, essentially, the same principle,

“Just as a man does not really desire food until he is hungry, so he does not desire the salvation of Christ until he knows why he needs Christ.

“No one adequately and properly knows why he needs Christ until he understands and

accepts the doctrine of the Fall and its effects upon all mankind” (A Witness and A Warning, p. 33).

? How do the realities of today’s passage lead you to Christ and to rely on his Atonement?

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“Thanksgiving: In Praise of Atonement”

“Song of the Righteous: A Song unto Me”

2 Nephi 9. 8, 10, 13, 17, 19, 20 — atonement

⁸O 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.

¹⁰O how great the goodness of our God[! For he]¹ ~~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

¹³O how great the plan of our God! For on the other hand, the paradise of God must deliver up the spirits of the righteous, and the grave deliver up the body of the righteous; and the spirit and the body is restored to itself again, and all men become incorruptible, and immortal, and they are living souls, having a perfect knowledge like unto us in the flesh, save it be that our knowledge shall be perfect.

¹⁷O the greatness and the justice of our God! For he executeth all his words, and they have gone forth out of his mouth, and his law must be fulfilled.

¹⁹O the greatness of the mercy of our God, the Holy One of Israel! For he delivereth his saints from that awful monster the devil, and death, and hell, and that lake of fire and brimstone, which is endless torment.

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

Questionary

1. This reading is one in a series of readings on Atonement that we entitle, “Thanksgiving: In Praise of Atonement.” *
2. Today’s reading is a bit unusual in that it is not a single block of scripture, but several disjointed passages. However, together, they represent verses that are united in their praise of God. In the six “O” exclamation statements, Nephi lauds attributes and actions of God.
? What divine attributes and actions stand out to you?
3. For each Divine attribute and action, Nephi mentions a benefit that flows to mankind as a result.
? What benefits flow from the following?
 - “The wisdom of God, his mercy and grace”
 - “The goodness of our God”
 - “The [great] plan of our God”
 - “The greatness and the justice of our God”
 - “The greatness of the mercy of our God”
 - “The [greatness of the] holiness of our God”
4. Earlier in the chapter, Nephi spoke as follows concerning “God.”
“I know that ye know that in the body he shall show himself unto those at Jerusalem, from whence we came; for it is expedient that it should be among them; for it behooveth the great Creator that he suffereth himself to become subject unto man in the flesh, and die for all men, that all men might become subject unto him” (verse 5).

Nephi also speaks of God as “the Holy One of Israel,” who is Yahweh.

This all indicates, as we have seen in so many other passages, that Jesus is the principle God of

¹ In five of Nephi’s six “O” exclamation statements in which he lauds the greatness of God, the statement ends with an exclamation point, followed by a reason for the exclamation. This one is the exception. I have emended the text to make it compatible with the other five.

the Book of Mormon and the God worshipped by Nephites.

? How does this recognition impact your view and feelings of the Savior?

5. Of all the Divine attributes—wisdom, mercy, grace, goodness, greatness, justice, and holiness—only one is repeated.

? What is that attribute and what might be the significance of its double mention?

6. One of the beneficial aspects of scripture is that one can discern the feelings and sentiments of its inspired writers and compare those feelings and sentiments to oneself.

? As you consider the feelings that Nephi possesses and the sentiments he expresses, how do your own compare?

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“Thanksgiving: In Praise of Atonement”

“Song of the Righteous: A Song unto Me”

2 Nephi 9.¹⁹⁻²¹— atonement

¹⁹O the greatness of the mercy of our God, the Holy One of Israel!
For he delivereth his saints from that awful monster the devil,
and death, and hell, and that lake of fire and brimstone,
which is endless torment.

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

²¹And he cometh into the world that he may save all men if they will hearken unto his voice;
for behold, he suffereth the pains of all men,
yea, the pains of every living creature,
both men, women, and children,
who belong to the family of Adam.

Questionary

This reading is one in a series of readings on Atonement that we entitle, “Sacrifice: What Jesus Suffered for Us.” *

1. In a previous Read, Ponder, Pray, we pointed out the numerous exclamation points found in 2 Nephi 9.¹⁰⁻²⁴—in today’s reading there are two of them. Have another look at verses 10-24, identify the exclamation points, and ponder the significance and focus of each of them.
2. Jacob testifies that Jesus “delivereth his saints from that *awful monster*.”
 - ? Why do you think and how do you feel when you consider Jacob’s resort to the intense imagery of “monsters”?
 - ? What do you learn from today’s reading concerning the nature of this “monster”?
3. Jacob contends that Jesus “suffereth the pains of all men, yea the pains of every living creature, both men, women, and children, who belong to the family of Adam.”
 - ? In his efforts to be one with us and save us, how was Jesus subjected to “the awful monster”?
 - ? How did he suffer at the hands of the “devil”?
 - ? How did he suffer in “death”?
 - ? How did he suffer “hell”?
 - ? How did he suffer “fire and brimstone”?
 - ? How did he suffer an “endless torment”?

? How do you feel about his subjecting himself to the “awful monster”?
3. We sometimes uncharitably poke fun at other Christians for their use of the imagery, a “lake of fire and brimstone.” Yet here it is in the Book of Mormon.
 - ? What does this imagery suggest to you?
 - ? How is it appropriate as an analogy for spiritual torment?

? From what “torments” and “pains” would you have the Savior deliver you?

* The following ten titles are part of our atonement series:

“Fall: Our Need of Atonement”

“Grace: The Savior’s Generous and Earnest Invitation”

“At-one-ment: The Savior’s unity and connectedness with us”

“Sacrifice: What Jesus Suffered for Us”

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“Sanctification: Imitating and living a life of Atonement”

“Thanksgiving: In Praise of Atonement”
“Song of the Righteous: A Song unto Me”

2nephi 9.⁵¹— just scripture

Wherefore, do not spend money for that which is of no worth, nor your labor for that which cannot satisfy. Harken diligently unto me, and remember the words which I have spoken; and come unto the Holy One of Israel, and feast upon that which perisheth not, neither can be corrupted, and let your soul delight in fatness.

Questionary

- ? What is the nature of the “fatness” that God offers “your soul”?
- ? What do you do to obtain it?
- ? What evidences are there in relation to time spent, thoughts given, and efforts made that your priorities are placed on the things of God rather than the things of this world?

2 Nephi 11.⁴⁻⁶— atonement

⁴Behold, my soul delighteth in proving unto my people the truth of the coming of Christ; for, for this end hath the law of Moses been given; and all things which have been given of God from the beginning of the world, unto man, are the typifying of him.

⁵And also my soul delighteth in the covenants of the Lord which he hath made to our fathers; yea, my soul delighteth in his grace, and in his justice, and power, and mercy in the great and eternal plan of deliverance from death.

⁶And my soul delighteth in proving unto my people that save Christ should come all men must perish. ⁷For if there be no Christ there be no God; and if there be no God we are not, for there could have been no creation. But there is a God, and he is Christ, and he cometh in the fulness of his own time.

Questionary

This reading is one in a series of readings on Atonement that we entitle, “Fall: Our Need of Atonement.” *

1. In today’s passage, Nephi mentions four things that delight him.
? What are those four things?
2. Nephi delights
 - “In proving... the coming of Christ”
 - “In the covenants of the Lord”
 - “In [the Lord’s] grace... justice... power... and mercy in the great and eternal plan of deliverance from death”
 - “In proving... that save Christ should come all men must perish”

? What, do you think, is it about these four things that cause Nephi to take such delight in them?

? Do you share Nephi’s feelings about these truths?
3. When contemplating covenants, we most often focus on our role in a partnership with God. But here, notice the language. The focus seems to be exclusively on God. The Lord has made covenants “to our fathers,” not “with our fathers.” Here, it seems that we could replace the word covenant with “promise.” Promises can be made without acceptance or compliance on the part of a second party. Not all of God’s promises are conditioned on our acceptance or compliance. For example, God promised to send His son. Was that promise conditional? The effect of his coming may certainly be conditional, but the fact of his coming was not.

Nephi seems to delight, at least in part, in the simple fact that we have a God who makes and keeps promises independent of our response. Consider other promises—both conditional and unconditional—that God has made.

? How do you feel about His being the kind of Being who makes and keeps promises?
4. We might easily relate to Nephi’s first three delights. They are positive and hopeful.

? But how do you feel about Nephi’s delight in proving that all men perish without the Savior?

? Does it seem to be a tad on the negative side of things?

? How might this truth, though potentially disconcerting, actually serve to draw us to the Savior?

? Why is it so important that we understand and faithfully acknowledge this truth?

? How do you acknowledge this truth?
5. Nephi makes this startling declaration: “If there be no Christ there be no God.”

? We say it is startling... do you find this statement to be surprising?

- ? How do you understand this assertion?
- ? It might seem a little odd to “delight” in proving that “all men must perish” if not for Christ. Why is this such a delight?
- ? How does this truth that “all men must perish” without Christ impact and improve your daily life?
- ? Why would it be that if Christ did not exist, there would be no God?
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2 Nephi 25.¹³

Behold, they will crucify him; and after he is laid in a sepulchre for the space of three days he shall rise from the dead, with healing in his wings; and all those who shall believe on his name shall be saved in the kingdom of God. Wherefore, my soul delighteth to prophesy concerning him, for I have seen his day, and my heart doth magnify his holy name.

Questionary

- ? How closely do your own feelings about the Savior track with those expressed by Nephi in today's reading?
- ? What evidence would another see in your life that your feelings about the Savior track closely with those of Nephi?

2 Nephi 25.^{23, 26-27}

²³For we labor diligently to write, to persuade our children, and also our brethren, to believe in Christ, and to be reconciled to God; for we know that it is by grace that we are saved, after all we can do.

²⁶And we talk of Christ, we rejoice in Christ, we preach of Christ, we prophesy of Christ, and we write according to our prophecies, that our children may know to what source they may look for a remission of their sins. Wherefore, we speak concerning the law that our children may know the deadness of the law; and they, by knowing the deadness of the law, may look forward unto that life which is in Christ...

Q

uestionary

This reading is the 11th in a series of Advent readings and post-Advent readings that will continue through the end of December.

1. Nephi says “we talk of Christ, we rejoice in Christ, we preach of Christ, we prophesy of Christ, and we write [of Christ].”

? What can you do during this Christmas season to “talk,” “rejoice,” “preach,” “prophesy,” and “write” of Christ?

2. Nephi admonishes his people “to be reconciled to God.”

? What does it mean “to be reconciled”?

? Is there a difference between being “reconciled *with* another” and being “reconciled *to* another”? If so, what is that difference?

? What thoughts do you have if we suggest that being “reconciled to” another person or life circumstance means that one comes to peace with who the other person is or with the circumstances one faces?

Becoming reconciled to another or to one’s circumstances, then, is about changing oneself and one’s feelings, not changing another or another’s circumstances.

? What would you think and how would you feel if we suggested that “to be reconciled to God” is not about our God coming to peace with us, but our coming to peace with God?

? What do you think and feel if we said it like this: In reconciling us to God, Jesus didn’t come to change God’s feelings about us but to change our feelings about God?

? How does one demonstrate that they are not at peace with God or his character?

3. Nephi bears the following testimony: “We know that it is by grace that we are saved, after all we can do.” We usually read it something like this, “In order to be saved by grace, we first have to do “all we can do.”

? How is this reading not being “saved by justice” rather than being “saved by grace”?

? How is the following reading different? “After we have done “all we can do,” we are still unsaved and so require “grace” to be saved.

? How do you feel about this second reading?

? How accurately does it reflect the meaning of Nephi’s statement? Why do you answer as you do?

? How does the second reading allow salvation to still be “by grace” rather than “by justice”?

4. Nephi says that he and other believers “speak concerning the law that our children may know the deadness of the law; and they, by knowing the deadness of the law, may look forward unto that life which is in Christ.”

? What is it that “life which is in Christ” offers that a life in the law does not?

? In what ways is “the law” dead?

? How is this true not only of the “law of Moses,” but of any religious law, including that which we have today?

? How do you teach others, including children, concerning the “deadness of the law”?

2 Nephi 31.¹³

Wherefore, my beloved brethren, I know that if ye shall follow the Son, with full purpose of heart, acting no hypocrisy and no deception before God, but with real intent, repenting of your sins, witnessing unto the Father that ye are willing to take upon you the name of Christ, by baptism—yea, by following your Lord and your Savior down into the water, according to his word, behold, then shall ye receive the Holy Ghost; yea, then cometh the baptism of fire and of the Holy Ghost; and then can ye speak with the tongue of angels, and shout praises unto the Holy One of Israel.

Questionary

1. Today's passage says that two abilities are granted us upon reception of the Holy Spirit.
 - ? What are those abilities?
 - ? What does it mean to speak with the tongue of angels?
 - ? Why would the Holy Spirit give us the ability to "shout praises unto the Holy One of Israel"?
 - ? Of what benefit would these two abilities be to you and to others?
2. One of the signs of having the Holy Spirit is the desire to express appreciation for and praise toward Father and Son. Certainly, the best way to praise God is through the life we live. But, it is possible to act "obediently" because one is simply a type-A personality, or even compulsive, rather than committed to God out of a sense of gratitude and a real sense of relationship. How we feel about God and how we express it verbally is important to God.
 - ? Do you find yourself often wishing to express appreciation for and praise toward Father and Son?
 - ? How does the following passage relate to and enhance today's reading?

"Therefore, let us glory,
yea, we will glory in the Lord;
yea, we will rejoice, for our joy is full;
yea, we will praise our God forever.
Behold, who can glory too much in the Lord?
Yea, who can say too much of his great power,
and of his mercy, and of his long-suffering towards the children of men? Behold, I say unto you,
I cannot say the smallest part which I feel" (Alma 26.¹⁶).

2 Nephi 32.²⁻⁶

²Do ye not remember that I said unto you that after ye had received the Holy Ghost ye could speak with the tongue of angels? And now, how could ye speak with the tongue of angels save it were by the Holy Ghost? ³Angels speak by the power of the Holy Ghost; wherefore, they speak the words of Christ. Wherefore, I said unto you, feast upon the words of Christ; for behold, the words of Christ will tell you all things what ye should do.

⁴Wherefore, now after I have spoken these words, if ye cannot understand them it will be because ye ask not, neither do ye knock; wherefore, ye are not brought into the light, but must perish in the dark. ⁵For behold, again I say unto you that if ye will enter in by the way, and receive the Holy Ghost, it will show unto you all things what ye should do. ⁶Behold, this is the doctrine of Christ....

Questionary

1. It has become such a cliché that we should “feast” rather than “eat” or “nibble” the word of God that we hardly hear the admonition anymore. But consider “the feast” anew today.

Feasts are not only about the “amount of food,” or the “frequency.” True feasts are times of anticipation, expectation, and excitement. The thanksgiving feast is planned for over many days, even weeks. Everyone looks forward to the event; looks forward to being part of a united gathering. Everyone expects something above the norm.

- ? How does this relate to our feasting on the scriptures, the words of the living prophets, and the guidance of the Holy Spirit?
- ? Are you feasting? Do you look forward, for example, to your reading of scripture?
- ? When you read scripture, what do you expect to?
- ? Do you anticipate hearing the Lord speak to you? Do you expect to feel the Spirit of God? Do you anticipate that you will regularly feel the direction of the Spirit? Do you look forward to and feel excitement about the opportunity to commune with Heavenly Father through prayer?
- ? What can you do to turn your experience with the word of God into a true feast, with expectations of having a truly revelatory experience?

2 Nephi 32.⁸⁻⁹

⁸And now, my beloved brethren, I perceive that ye ponder still in your hearts; and it grieveth me that I must speak concerning this thing. For if ye would hearken unto the Spirit which teacheth a man to pray ye would know that ye must pray; for the evil spirit teacheth not a man to pray, but teacheth him that he must not pray. ⁹But behold, 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.

Questionary

1. Nephi laments that his people “ponder still in [their] hearts.” The “still” suggests that it has been going on for a while or has happened before. Review chapter 31 in order to find:
 - 1) What it is that they are pondering; and
 - 2) Why Nephi grieves that they continue to be uncertain.
2. Nephi teaches that the Holy Spirit instructs us to engage in one particular activity.
 - ? What is that activity?
 - ? How well do you follow the Spirit’s direction to pray?
 - ? What could you do to improve the frequency and especially the quality of your prayers?

Jacob 1.⁸—lent

Wherefore, we would to God that we could persuade all men not to rebel against God, to provoke him to anger, but that all men would believe in Christ, and view his death, and suffer his cross and bear the shame of the world...

Questionary

We are approaching the week before Easter, which is traditionally known as Holy Week. In this reading, our 38th for Lent 2024, we wish to prepare for the final events of Jesus' life with an invitation or admonition that the prophet, Jacob, extended to his people.

1. We often seem to dismiss Jesus' death on the cross, claiming to focus on the "living Christ."
 - ? What do you think and feel when you consider Jacob's admonition to "view his [Jesus'] death"?
 - ? Why, do you think, did Jacob extend this admonition?
 - ? What, do you think, does it look like to "view his death"?
 - ? What could you do to prepare to "view his death" during this Easter Season?
 - ? What would it mean to you to do so?
 - ? As we enter holy week, consider what you hope to see as you take the time to read, ponder, and pray about Jesus' final mortal experiences, including his experience of the cross.

Jacob 1.¹⁵⁻¹⁶— just scripture

¹⁵*The people of Nephi, under the reign of the second king, began to grow hard in their hearts, and indulge themselves somewhat in wicked practices, such as like unto David of old desiring many wives and concubines, and also Solomon, his son. ¹⁶Yea, and they also began to search much gold and silver, and began to be lifted up somewhat in pride.”

Questionary

Today’s reading represents introductory verses to Jacob’s discourse found in chapter 2. In this discourse, Jacob addresses growing Nephite sin and pride.

1. Jacob accuses the Nephites of “indulg[ing] themselves somewhat in wicked practices.”
 - ? What do you see in your mind when you contemplate “wicked practices”?
 - ? What does it mean to you to “indulge” oneself?
 2. David and Solomon’s desire for and “possession” of multiple wives has been a common, almost universal desire and prerogative of powerful/wealthy/elite males throughout history.
 - ? What is the point of the multiplicity of wives?
 - ? How does it relate to the physical pleasures of sex?
 - ? How does it relate to the desire for societal prestige?
 - ? How does it relate to the desire to form political/economic alliances?
 - ? How does it influence your view of the text’s criticism concerning multiply wives to consider that many such “wives” never became sexual partners?
 - ? How does knowing that such women were often being used to increase the male’s power and prestige impact your understanding of the criticism that the Nephites “began to grow hard in their hearts”?
 - ? How is such “use” of women indicative of hardness of heart?
 - ? How is such “use” of women indicative of pride?
 3. As a second part to his societal critique, Jacob says that the Nephites “began to search much gold and silver.”
 - ? Should we imagine that previous to this time there was no interest or searching after gold and silver?
 - ? If there had previously been interest and searching for gold and silver, what, do you suppose has changed?
 - ? How much weight and meaning should we give to the word “much”: they “began to search MUCH gold and silver”?
 - ? What would be the difference between searching for gold and silver and searching for MUCH gold and silver?
 - ? When is “enough, enough”? When is “much” too much?
 - ? How do you feel about the search for “much gold and silver” being labeled a “wicked practice”? Why do you answer as you do?
 - ? How would such a search indicate a hardening of the heart?
- ? Where, do you feel, is your present culture and society in relation to these two “wicked practices”?
 - ? Where are you?
 - ? Why do you answer these final two questions as you do?
 - ? What can you do to impact/improve yourself and your society in regard to these two “wicked practices”?

Jacob 2.¹²⁻¹⁴—just scripture

¹²And now behold, my brethren, this is the word which I declare unto you, that many of you have begun to search for gold, and for silver, and for all manner of precious ores, in the which this land, which is a land of promise unto you and to your seed, doth abound most plentifully. ¹³And the hand of providence hath smiled upon you most pleasingly, that you have obtained many riches; and because some of you have obtained more abundantly than that of your brethren ye are lifted up in the pride of your hearts, and wear stiff necks and high heads because of the costliness of your apparel, and persecute your brethren because ye suppose that ye are better than they. ¹⁴And now, my brethren, do ye suppose that God justifieth you in this thing? Behold, I say unto you, Nay. But he condemneth you, and if ye persist in these things his judgments must speedily come unto you.

Questionary

Today's reading is a portion of a longer discourse Jacob, brother of Nephi, delivered in response to increasing sin and pride among his people. In a previous reading (1.¹⁵⁻¹⁶), we found that one of the "wicked practices" in which the Nephites were engaged was searching after "much gold and silver." Today's reading continues this theme.

1. The land was plentiful in "gold," "silver," and "all manner of precious ores," after which the Nephites searched.
 - ? How does the plentifulness of "gold, and for silver, and "all manner of precious ores" relate to the wickedness of searching for "much"?
 - ? Why should the plentifulness of "gold," and "silver," and "all manner of precious ores" that is found in the "land of promise" not be viewed as justification for searching out much?
2. In all the searching for "gold, and for silver, and for all manner of precious ores" great inequality arose.
 - ? Why is economic inequality evil?
 - ? What other evils does economic inequality engender?
 - ? In what sense is economic inequality a form of "persecution"?
3. Jacob says that "the hand of providence hath smiled upon you most pleasingly that you have obtained many riches."
 - ? How do you understand this?
 - ? Does this assume that God desires the "obtaining of many riches"? Why do you answer as you do?
 - ? Does this preclude the possibility of an individual or society "obtaining many riches" without it being a consequence of "the hand of providence smiling on them? Why do you answer as you do?

Jacob 2.¹⁷— just scripture

Think of your brethren like unto yourselves, and be familiar with all and free with your substance, that they may be rich like unto you.

Questionary

1. Jacob speaks of others as “brethren.”
 - ? What does this suggest to you about the Lord’s expectations when it comes to how we treat those around us, specifically how we think of and treat others in terms of economic assistance?
 - ? Consider your response to your own family members who might be in need of economic assistance. How would you feel about and what would you do to assist them?
 - ? How do you feel about the Lord’s expectation that you will provide the same economic assistance to “strangers” that you provide to “family”?
 - ? How does this apply to the public policies you support in addition to your own private activities?
 - ? How does this relate to Jacob’s additional admonition that we be “familiar” with your economic resources?
2. Perhaps even more challenging, the Lord expects us to “think of” others “like unto yourselves.”
 - ? How do you feel about this expectation?
 - ? If you were in the midst of economic disruption and devastation, how would you want to be treated?
 - ? How is this expectation that we treat others as we would want to be treated consistent with what we see in Jesus’ behavior?
3. The Lord’s goal for our economic distribution is not simply the alleviation of worry and suffering among the vulnerable and poor. Rather, it is the much more comprehensive goal that “they may be rich *like unto you*.”
 - ? How do you feel about this larger goal?
 - ? How is it consistent with what you would hope for your own family members?
 - ? What are some of the justifications to both private and public resistance to such a divine imperative?

Jacob 2.¹⁸⁻¹⁹—just scripture

¹⁸But before ye seek for riches, seek ye for the kingdom of God. ¹⁹And after ye have obtained a hope in Christ ye shall obtain riches, if ye seek them; and ye will seek them for the intent to do good—to clothe the naked, and to feed the hungry, and to liberate the captive, and administer relief to the sick and the afflicted.

Questionary

1. Jacob provides 5 justifications for “seeking for riches.”
 - ? What are those four justifications?
 - ? What other “justifications” for seeking riches are often offered?
 - ? How do they fall short of justifying one’s search for riches?

2. Jacob says that with the proper motives one might “obtain riches” “*if ye seek them*”?
 - ? What does this “if ye seek them” suggest to you?
 - ? For what reason would one not “seek them”?
 - ? How do you feel about the fact that Jacob does not “encourage” individuals to “seek riches,” but only encourages them to consider their motivations for doing so?

Enos 1.²⁻⁹— atonement

²And I will tell you of the wrestle which I had before God, before I received a remission of my sins.

³Behold, I went to hunt beasts in the forests; and the words which I had often heard my father speak concerning eternal life, and the joy of the saints, sunk deep into my heart. ⁴And my soul hungered; and I kneeled down before my Maker, and I cried unto him in mighty prayer and supplication for mine own soul; and all the day long did I cry unto him; yea, and when the night came I did still raise my voice high that it reached the heavens. ⁵And there came a voice unto me, saying:

“Enos, thy sins are forgiven thee, and thou shalt be blessed.”

⁶And I, Enos, knew that God could not lie; wherefore, my guilt was swept away. ⁷And I said: “Lord, how is it done?” ⁸And he said unto me:

“Because of thy faith in Christ, whom thou hast never before heard nor seen. And many years pass away before he shall manifest himself in the flesh; wherefore, go to, thy faith hath made thee whole.”

⁹Now, it came to pass that when I had heard these words I began to feel a desire for the welfare of my brethren, the Nephites; wherefore, I did pour out my whole soul unto God for them.

Questionary

This reading is one in a series of readings on Atonement that we entitle, “Justification: How We Repent and Change.” *

1. This is the first of several stories we will ponder in which individuals or groups repent and come to know and experience God’s forgiveness and acceptance such that they become changed and new people. In each of these stories we will see the same basic pattern.
 - First, there is an individual and spiritual *crisis*. This crisis usually involves the acknowledgement or confession of personal sin, with its attendant pain and insecurity.
 - Second, there is a *confession* and a pleading *prayer* offered on the part of the person or persons in crisis for relief from the crisis
 - Third, there is a *response* from the Lord to the prayer offered in crisis.
 - Fourth, there is a statement of the *reason* that the Lord responded as he did to the individual’s prayer in crisis.

Identify the elements of this pattern as found in Enos’ story.

- ? What is the crisis?
- ? What is the nature of the prayer?
- ? What is the nature of the Lord’s response?
- ? What is the basis for Enos’ healing?

2. While our experiences may not be exactly like that of Enos, each of us can feel peace about past errors and know that God is pleased with us and our imperfect efforts.
 - ? Have you gone through a similar process and experienced God’s forgiveness?
 - ? If not, why not?
 - ? What did Enos have or do that you have not or cannot?

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Enos 1.²⁷— atonement

²⁷And I soon go to the place of my rest, which is with my Redeemer; for I know that in him I shall rest. And I rejoice in the day when my mortal shall put on immortality, and shall stand before him; then shall I see his face with pleasure, and he will say unto me:

“Come unto me, ye blessed, there is a place prepared for you in the mansions of my Father.”

Amen.

Questionary

This reading is one in a series of readings on Atonement that we entitle, “Renewal: The Hope, Joy, Peace, and Power of Atonement.” *

1. In today’s reading, we have opportunity to compare our own feelings, testimony, and assurance with those of a “holy man.”
 - ? Do you share Enos’ feelings of assurance?
 - ? Do you now feel that you are at “rest” in and with your Redeemer? Do you have a witness that you will “rest” in and with your Redeemer in eternity?
 - ? If so, why? If not, why not?
2. Enos rejoices that in death, he would “see [God’s] face with pleasure.”
 - ? Close your eyes and view yourself standing before God. Can you see yourself standing before God and seeing “his face with pleasure”?
3. Enos believes and, indeed, senses that a “mansion” is being prepared for him. Read Jesus’ comforting announcement found in John 14.¹⁻³.

“Let not your heart be troubled: ye believe in God, believe also in me. In my Father's house are many mansions: if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you unto myself; that where I am, there ye may be also.

- ? How does this passage relate to Enos’ confident assurance?
- ? Imagine the Savior “preparing a mansion” for you. What is the nature of his efforts?
- ? How does the Savior’s preparations for you in eternity affect the way you feel and act today?

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“Song of the Righteous: A Song unto Me”

Mosiah 3

Questionary 1 — Mosiah 3.¹⁻⁴

¹And again my brethren, I would call your attention, for I have somewhat more to speak unto you; for behold, I have things to tell you concerning that which is to come. ²And the things which I shall tell you are made known unto me by an angel from God. And he said unto me: “Awake.” And I awoke, and behold he stood before me. ³And he said unto me:

“Awake, and hear the words which I shall tell thee; for behold, I am come to declare unto you the glad tidings of great joy. ⁴For the Lord hath heard thy prayers, and hath judged of thy righteousness, and hath sent me to declare unto thee that thou mayest rejoice; and that thou mayest declare unto thy people, that they may also be filled with joy.

After a long and trying reign, and sensing his end nearing, King Benjamin gathered his sons around him for final counsel and instructed the oldest son, Mosiah, to gather his people so that he could offer them final counsel as well. King Benjamin’s final counsel to his people is found in Mosiah 2.^{9-5.15}. This gathering and the counsel King Benjamin offered is certainly a great highlight of the Book of Mormon. Mosiah 3, then, is a portion of the counsel that King Benjamin offered his people in anticipation of his own death. The chapter represents a message that an angel delivered to King Benjamin the night before the great gathering of his people. We study Mosiah 3 in several readings.

1. Mosiah 3.³⁻²⁷ represents a message that an angel gave to King Benjamin to give to his people. The angel offers specific purposes he hopes the message will achieve.
 - ? What are those purposes?
 - ? As you consider what follows in chapters 4 and 5, were the angel’s hopes achieved? Where and how were they achieved?
 - ? The hopes of the angel might also be achieved in the lives of all those who read his message. Has the angel’s message caused you to “rejoice” and “be filled with joy” because its “glad tidings of great joy”?
 - ? What is it specifically about the message that has caused you to rejoice and be filled with joy?

Questionary 2—mosiah 3.⁵⁻⁶

⁵For behold, the time cometh, and is not far distant, that with power, the Lord Omnipotent who reigneth, who was, and is from all eternity to all eternity, shall come down from heaven among the children of men, and shall dwell in a tabernacle of clay, and shall go forth amongst men, working mighty miracles, such as healing the sick, raising the dead, causing the lame to walk, the blind to receive their sight, and the deaf to hear, and curing all manner of diseases. ⁶And he shall cast out devils, or the evil spirits which dwell in the hearts of the children of men.

After a long and trying reign, and sensing his end nearing, King Benjamin gathered his sons around him for final counsel and instructed the oldest son, Mosiah, to gather his people so that he could offer them final counsel as well. King Benjamin's final counsel to his people is found in Mosiah 2.^{9-5.15}. This gathering and the counsel King Benjamin offered is certainly a great highlight of the Book of Mormon. Mosiah 3, then, is a portion of the counsel that King Benjamin offered his people in anticipation of his own death. The chapter represents a message that an angel delivered to King Benjamin the night before the great gathering of his people. We are studying Mosiah 3 in several readings.

1. In delivering his message to king Benjamin, the angel calls Jesus, the one who comes “down from heaven among the children of men,” *“the Lord Omnipotent who reigneth, who was, and is from all eternity to all eternity.”*
 - ? What do you think and feel about Jesus when you read that he is the “Lord Omnipotent who reigneth, who was, and is from all eternity to all eternity”?
 - ? What do you think and feel about Jesus when you read that he came “down from heaven among the children of men and... [dwelt] in a tabernacle of clay”?
 - ? Even if Jesus had lived a normal or even privileged life, life on earth would have served as a shock to his spiritual sensibilities. What do you think and feel when you consider the sacrifice it was for him to leave his glory behind and come to earth, no matter his circumstances?
2. The angel testifies of several “mighty miracles” that were part of Jesus’ earthly ministry.
 - ? What “mighty miracles” does the angel mention?
 - ? What examples of each of these wonders come most readily and impressively to your mind when you consider those reported in the New Testament Gospels?
 - ? What miracles has Jesus performed as he ministers to you in your life?
3. Among, and right alongside the other miracles Jesus performed is the miracle of Jesus “cast[ing] out devils, or the evil spirits which dwell in the hearts of the children of men.”
 - ? What comes to your mind immediately and most impressively when you consider this miracle?
 - ? What, if any, are the implications of the angel speaking not simply of “devils,” but of “evil spirits which dwell in the hearts of the children of men”?
 - ? In considering this miracle, we most often think of the exorcisms of alien life-forms from human bodies. In what way, other than the exorcism of alien life-forms, can we understand Jesus’ casing out “evil spirits which dwell in the hearts of the children of men”?
 - ? In what way do we all have “evil spirits” which we are unable to abandon without Jesus’ powerful intervention?

Questionary 3— mosiah 3.⁷

⁷And lo, he shall suffer temptations, and pain of body, hunger, thirst, and fatigue, even more than man can suffer, except it be unto death; for behold, blood cometh from every pore, so great shall be his anguish for the wickedness and the abominations of his people.

After a long and trying reign, and sensing his end nearing, King Benjamin gathered his sons around him for final counsel and instructed the oldest son, Mosiah, to gather his people so that he could offer them final counsel as well. King Benjamin's final counsel to his people is found in Mosiah 2.⁹⁻⁵.¹⁵. This gathering and the counsel King Benjamin offered is certainly a great highlight of the Book of Mormon. Mosiah 3, then, is a portion of the counsel that King Benjamin offered his people in anticipation of his own death. The chapter represents a message that an angel delivered to King Benjamin the night before the great gathering of his people. We study Mosiah 3 in several readings.

1. King Benjamin teaches that Jesus suffered “more than man can suffer, except it be unto death.”
? What do you think and feel when you consider that Jesus suffered, endured, and survived an ordeal that would have spiritually and physically killed any other of Heavenly Father's children, even the very greatest of them... Moses, Isaiah, Peter, Joseph Smith, Russell Nelson?
2. Only Luke reports the disintegration of Jesus' physical body as he suffered in the Garden of Gethsemane.

“And he came out, and went, as he was wont, to the mount of Olives; and his disciples also followed him. And when he was at the place, he said unto them, ‘Pray that ye enter not into temptation.’ And he was withdrawn from them about a stone's cast, and kneeled down, and prayed, saying,

‘Father, if thou be willing, remove this cup from me: nevertheless not my will, but thine, be done.’

And there appeared an angel unto him from heaven, strengthening him. And being in an agony he prayed more earnestly: and his sweat was as it were great drops of blood falling down to the ground” (Luke 22.³⁹⁻⁴⁴).

- ? Take time today to reread today's reading several times. Then take time to close your eyes and view, with an eye of faith, Jesus' suffering in the garden. What did you see and feel?

Questionary 4— mosiah 3.⁸⁻¹²

⁸And he shall be called Jesus Christ, the Son of God, the Father of heaven and earth, the Creator of all things from the beginning; and his mother shall be called Mary. ⁹And lo, he cometh unto his own, that salvation might come unto the children of men even through faith on his name; and even after all this they shall consider him a man, and say that he hath a devil, and shall scourge him, and shall crucify him. ¹⁰And he shall rise the third day from the dead; and behold, he standeth to judge the world; and behold, all these things are done that a righteous judgment might come upon the children of men.

¹¹For behold, and also his blood atoneth for the sins of those who have fallen by the transgression of Adam, who have died not knowing the will of God concerning them, or who have ignorantly sinned.

¹²But wo, wo unto him who knoweth that he rebelleth against God! For salvation cometh to none such except it be through repentance and faith on the Lord Jesus Christ.

After a long and trying reign, and sensing his end nearing, King Benjamin gathered his sons around him for final counsel and instructed the oldest son, Mosiah, to gather his people so that he could offer them final counsel as well. King Benjamin's final counsel to his people is found in Mosiah 2.⁹⁻⁵.¹⁵ This gathering and the counsel King Benjamin offered is certainly a great highlight of the Book of Mormon. Mosiah 3, then, is a portion of the counsel that King Benjamin offered his people in anticipation of his own death. The chapter represents a message that an angel delivered to King Benjamin the night before the great gathering of his people. We study Mosiah 3 in several readings.

1. This reading begins with the angel who delivered this message to King Benjamin giving Jesus of Nazareth four titles.
 - ? What are those titles?
 - ? What is the significance of these titles in how we understand him?
 - ? What is the significance of these titles in our daily lives?
 - ? For example, Jesus is called “the Creator of all things...” What still needs “created” or brought into existence in your life and what role does Jesus play in its creation in your life?
2. The angels says that Jesus “cometh unto his own.”
 - ? What does this mean to you? Who are “his own”?
 - ? Is this restricted to the Jewish nation or is it inclusive of all humanity? Why do you answer as you do?
 - ? 2 Nephi 10.³ claims that
 - “It must needs be expedient that Christ... should come among the Jews, among those who are the more wicked part of the world; and they shall crucify him—for thus it behooveth our God, and there is none other nation on earth that would crucify their God.”
 - ? How likely does this claim seem to you? Nazi Germany? Stalin's Russia? (And its not like Rome through one of its administrators tried to stop it)
3. The angel also teaches that Jesus' “blood atoneth for the sins of those who have fallen by the transgression of Adam, who have died not knowing the will of God concerning them, or who have ignorantly sinned.”
 - ? How many people is that?
 - ? What do you think when you consider untold billions of people standing before God sinless through Jesus' atonement?
 - ? Surely there have been far, far, far more people live without a knowledge of the will of God than who have lived with it? Why do you respond as you do?
4. Part of the reason for Jesus' life and death was so that “a righteous judgment might come upon the children of men.”

- ? How does Jesus' life and death create the possibility of a judgement appropriate to the conditions of each individual?

Questionary 5— mosiah 3.¹³⁻¹⁶

¹³And the Lord God hath sent his holy prophets among all the children of men, to declare these things to every kindred, nation, and tongue, that thereby whosoever should believe that Christ should come, the same might receive remission of their sins, and rejoice with exceedingly great joy, even as though he had already come among them. ¹⁴Yet the Lord God saw that his people were a stiffnecked people, and he appointed unto them a law, even the law of Moses. ¹⁵And many signs, and wonders, and types, and shadows showed he unto them, concerning his coming; and also holy prophets spake unto them concerning his coming; and yet they hardened their hearts, and understood not that the law of Moses availeth nothing except it were through the atonement of his blood. ¹⁶And even if it were possible that little children could sin they could not be saved; but I say unto you they are blessed; for behold, as in Adam, or by nature, they fall, even so the blood of Christ atoneth for their sins.

After a long and trying reign, and sensing his end nearing, King Benjamin gathered his sons around him for final counsel and instructed the oldest son, Mosiah, to gather his people so that he could offer them final counsel as well. King Benjamin's final counsel to his people is found in Mosiah 2.⁹⁻⁵.¹⁵ This gathering and the counsel King Benjamin offered is certainly a great highlight of the Book of Mormon. Mosiah 3, then, is a portion of the counsel that King Benjamin offered his people in anticipation of his own death. The chapter represents a message that an angel delivered to King Benjamin the night before the great gathering of his people. We study Mosiah 3 in several readings.

1. The angel speaks of the “remission of... sins” for all those who have believed or do believe in Christ and his coming.
 - ? What does the “remission of sins” mean to you?
 - ? Have you experienced it? When? How often? Why do you answer as you do?
 - ? Does it seem to you to be something that is experienced over and over again? Or is it something one experiences at the beginning of their faith in Christ and remains as long as one continues to believe in Christ, acknowledge error and sin, and strive to improve? Why do you answer as you do?
 - ? How do the following passages relate to the how God deals with sin on a daily basis?

“If thou, Lord, shouldest mark iniquities,
O Lord, who shall stand?” (Ps. 130.³)

“He hath not dealt with us after our sins;
nor rewarded us according to our iniquities” (Ps. 103.¹⁰)

“And all things are of God, who hath reconciled us to himself by Jesus Christ, and hath given to us the ministry of reconciliation; to wit, that God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them...” (2 Cor. 5.¹⁸⁻¹⁹).
 - ? How would you feel, for example, about the “remission of sins” not being a matter of God “marking” or “taking note of sin” and then “unmarking/erasing/forgetting/forgiving them, but of his free choice to not “take note” of the sin in the first place of one who has faith in Christ, continues to honestly acknowledge error, and seeks to improve?
2. Israel, having been given a law that would lead them to faith in Christ, “hardened their hearts, and understood not that the law of Moses availeth nothing except it were through the atonement of his blood.”
 - ? Why was the law insufficient, availing “nothing” without the atonement?
 - ? Is this true only of the “Law of Moses” or is it true of any law with its prescriptions and prohibitions, etc.? Why do you answer as you do?

3. The angels speaks of the law's "many signs, and wonders, and types, and shadows... concerning his [Christ's] coming">
 - ? What "signs," "wonders," "types," and "shadows" come to your mind as you consider this aspect of the Law of Moses?
4. The angel speaks of all humankind, including children, as being fallen "in Adam, or by nature."
 - ? What does this mean to you?
 - ? What, if any, does this suggest about human "nature"?
 - ? How do the following passage relate to this idea?

"Inasmuch as thy children are conceived in sin, even so when they begin to grow up, sin conceiveth in their hearts..." (Moses 6.⁵⁵).

"Now behold, O Lord, and do not be angry with thy servant because of his weakness before thee; for we know that... we are unworthy before thee; because of the fall our natures have become evil continually... (Eth. 3.²).

Questionary 6— mosiah 3.¹⁷⁻¹⁸

¹⁷And moreover, I say unto you, that there shall be no other name given nor any other way nor means whereby salvation can come unto the children of men, only in and through the name of Christ, the Lord Omnipotent. ¹⁸For behold he judgeth, and his judgment is just; and the infant perisheth not that dieth in his infancy; but men drink damnation to their own souls except they humble themselves and become as little children, and believe that salvation was, and is, and is to come, in and through the atoning blood of Christ, the Lord Omnipotent.

After a long and trying reign, and sensing his end nearing, King Benjamin gathered his sons around him for final counsel and instructed the oldest son, Mosiah, to gather his people so that he could offer them final counsel as well. King Benjamin's final counsel to his people is found in Mosiah 2.^{9-5.15}. This gathering and the counsel King Benjamin offered is certainly a great highlight of the Book of Mormon. Mosiah 3, then, is a portion of the counsel that King Benjamin offered his people in anticipation of his own death. The chapter represents a message that an angel delivered to King Benjamin the night before the great gathering of his people. We study Mosiah 3 in several readings.

1. The angel had called Jesus, "the Lord Omnipotent" in verse 5. In verse 8, he called him "Jesus Christ," "the Son of God," "the Father of heaven and earth," and "the Creator of all things from the beginning." In this reading, he twice more refers to Jesus as "the Lord Omnipotent."
? What effect do these titles, especially this last, "the Lord Omnipotent," have on your feelings about and for Jesus?
2. The angel teaches that "there shall be no other name given nor any other way nor means whereby salvation can come... only in and through the name of Christ." Then we read, "For behold he judgeth, and his judgment is just."
? What signal does this conjunction "for," with its causal effect, "because," send the reader?

Consider the angel's statement again: "There shall be no other name given nor any other way nor means whereby salvation can come... only in and through the name of Christ. *Because, understand,* he judgeth, and his judgment is just."

3. The angle teaches that "salvation was, and is, and is to come, in and through the atoning blood of Christ." In our atonement series of readings, we suggest that Jesus' at-one-ment refers to his "connectedness," "attachment," "linkage," or "unity" with us.
? How does Jesus' shedding of his own blood serve to form attachment between him and us?
? What does the following passage contribute to the answer to this question?
"And I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto me" (Jn. 12.³²)
? How does Jesus' willingness to suffer and die as he did draw you to him?
? How does it help you relate to him and feel more connected to him?

Questionary 7—mosiah 3.¹⁹

¹⁹For the natural man is an enemy to God, and has been from the fall of Adam, and will be, forever and ever, unless he yields to the enticings of the Holy Spirit, and putteth off the natural man and becometh a saint through the atonement of Christ the Lord, and becometh as a child, submissive, meek, humble, patient, full of love, willing to submit to all things which the Lord seeth fit to inflict upon him, even as a child doth submit to his father.

After a long and trying reign, and sensing his end nearing, King Benjamin gathered his sons around him for final counsel and instructed the oldest son, Mosiah, to gather his people so that he could offer them final counsel as well. King Benjamin's final counsel to his people is found in Mosiah 2.⁹⁻⁵.¹⁵ This gathering and the counsel King Benjamin offered is certainly a great highlight of the Book of Mormon. Mosiah 3, then, is a portion of the counsel that King Benjamin offered his people in anticipation of his own death. The chapter represents a message that an angel delivered to King Benjamin the night before the great gathering of his people. We study Mosiah 3 in several readings.

1. The angel that “the natural man is an enemy to God.”
 - ? What does it mean to be a “natural” human being?
 - ? In your mind, is there a difference between being “an enemy *to* [toward] God” rather than “an enemy *of* God” or “God’s enemy”? Why do you answer as you do?
 - ? What do humans say and do to demonstrate that they falsely think that God feels enmity with them?
 - ? How do you respond to the assertion that being an enemy to God means that we of take God as our enemy, though He never thinks of us as His enemy?
2. Humans believe and act as though God is their enemy unless and until they “yield to the enticings of the Holy Spirit.”
 - ? How does the Holy Spirit bring us to understand that God is not our enemy and keep us from thinking, feeling, and acting as if He is?
3. The angel speaks of becoming “a saint through the atonement of Christ the Lord.”
 - ? What is a “saint”? What does it mean to be a “saint”?

The word “saint” comes from the Latin root *sanctus*, often thought of as “holy.” The idea behind “holiness” is that of being “separate, unique, different, apart” While “natural” is common, “saintliness” is unique.
 - ? How do these observations shape the way you think of being a “saint”?
4. The angel speaks of the need to become as a “child,” and then lists some childlike attributes: “submissive, meek, humble, patient, full of love, willing to submit to all things which the Lord seeth fit to inflict upon him, even as a child doth submit to his father.”
 - ? What comes to your mind as you consider these attributes?
 - ? How are these attributes manifested in the life of a child?
 - ? How are they manifested in your life?

Questionary 8— mosiah 3.²⁰⁻²²

²⁰And moreover, I say unto you, that the time shall come when the knowledge of a Savior shall spread throughout every nation, kindred, tongue, and people. ²¹And behold, when that time cometh, none shall be found blameless before God, except it be little children, only through repentance and faith on the name of the Lord God Omnipotent. ²²And even at this time, when thou shalt have taught thy people the things which the Lord thy God hath commanded thee, even then are they found no more blameless in the sight of God, only according to the words which I have spoken unto thee.

After a long and trying reign, and sensing his end nearing, King Benjamin gathered his sons around him for final counsel and instructed the oldest son, Mosiah, to gather his people so that he could offer them final counsel as well. King Benjamin's final counsel to his people is found in Mosiah 2.^{9-5.15}. This gathering and the counsel King Benjamin offered is certainly a great highlight of the Book of Mormon. Mosiah 3, then, is a portion of the counsel that King Benjamin offered his people in anticipation of his own death. The chapter represents a message that an angel delivered to King Benjamin the night before the great gathering of his people. We study Mosiah 3 in several readings.

1. The angel predicts that “the time shall come when the knowledge of a Savior shall spread throughout every nation, kindred, tongue, and people.”
 - ? Have we arrived at this state yet? Why do you answer as you do?
 - ? Have we arrived at the state when everyone can be judged based upon a knowledge of the Savior and their response to him? Why do you answer as you do?
2. The angel speaks twice of being “blameless,” the first time “before God” and the second time “in the sight of God.”
 - ? What does it mean to you to be blameless?
 - ? Can one be blameless through their own spiritual performance? Why do you answer as you do?
 - ? What does it mean to be blameless through repentance and faith and how is it achieved?

Questionary 9—mosiah 3.²³⁻²⁷

²³And now I have spoken the words which the Lord God hath commanded me. ²⁴And thus saith the Lord: They shall stand as a bright testimony against this people, at the judgment day; whereof they shall be judged, every man according to his works, whether they be good, or whether they be evil.

²⁵And if they be evil they are consigned to an awful view of their own guilt and abominations, which doth cause them to shrink from the presence of the Lord into a state of misery and endless torment, from whence they can no more return; therefore they have drunk damnation to their own souls.

²⁶Therefore, they have drunk out of the cup of the wrath of God, which justice could no more deny unto them than it could deny that Adam should fall because of his partaking of the forbidden fruit; therefore, mercy could have claim on them no more forever. ²⁷And their torment is as a lake of fire and brimstone, whose flames are unquenchable, and whose smoke ascendeth up forever and ever. Thus hath the Lord commanded me. Amen.

After a long and trying reign, and sensing his end nearing, King Benjamin gathered his sons around him for final counsel and instructed the oldest son, Mosiah, to gather his people so that he could offer them final counsel as well. King Benjamin's final counsel to his people is found in Mosiah 2.⁹⁻⁵.¹⁵ This gathering and the counsel King Benjamin offered is certainly a great highlight of the Book of Mormon. Mosiah 3, then, is a portion of the counsel that King Benjamin offered his people in anticipation of his own death. The chapter represents a message that an angel delivered to King Benjamin the night before the great gathering of his people. We study Mosiah 3 in several readings.

1. We sometimes speak of using “carrots or sticks” to motivate people.
 - ? Which does the angel use as he concludes his message?
 - ? The angel talks about the negative consequences of being evil but says nothing about the positive consequences of being good. Why, do you suppose, does he do this?
 - ? How do you feel about the angel resorting only to the stick?
2. The angel speaks of “damnation” and the nature of damnation.
 - ? What is the nature of damnation found in this reading?

One aspect of damnation is being “consigned to an awful view of their own guilt and abominations, which doth cause them to shrink from the presence of the Lord into a state of misery and endless torment.”

- ? What do you think and feel when you read this inner torment?
 - ? How does this torment relate to the “torment” that “is as a lake of fire and brimstone, whose flames are unquenchable”?
 - ? How likely is it that you will experience damnation as it is described in this reading? Why do you answer as you do?
3. The angel speaks of “works” that are either “good” or “evil.”
 - ? How does one go about determining whether a work is good or evil, deserving of reward or punishment?
 4. The angel uses the imagery of a “cup” that is full of “the wrath of God.”
 - ? What do you envision when you contemplate such a cup?
 - ? What relationship, if any, does this cup have with the bitter cup that Jesus drank? Why do you answer as you do?
 5. In speaking the hellish state in which the wicked find themselves, the angels speaks of an “*endless* torment, *from which they can no more return*” and of “fire,” brimstone,” “flames,” and “smoke” that is “*unquenchable*” and go on “*forever and ever*.”
 - ? How does this jive with your understanding of “hell”?

? Does the following passage alter your understanding of “hell”? If so, how? If not, why not?

“Wherefore, I revoke not the judgments which I shall pass, but woes shall go forth, weeping, wailing and gnashing of teeth, yea, to those who are found on my left hand. Nevertheless, it is not written that there shall be no end to this torment, but it is written endless torment. Again, it is written eternal damnation; wherefore it is more express than other scriptures, that it might work upon the hearts of the children of men, altogether for my name’s glory.

Wherefore, I will explain unto you this mystery, for it is meet unto you to know even as mine apostles... For, behold, the mystery of godliness, how great is it! For, behold, I am endless, and the punishment which is given from my hand is endless punishment, for Endless is my name. Wherefore— Eternal punishment is God’s punishment. Endless punishment is God’s punishment” (DC 19.^{5-8, 10-12}).

Mosiah 3.⁵⁻⁹— atonement

⁵For behold, the time cometh, and is not far distant, that with power, the Lord Omnipotent who reigneth, who was, and is from all eternity to all eternity, shall come down from heaven among the children of men, and shall dwell in a tabernacle of clay, and shall go forth amongst men, working mighty miracles, such as healing the sick, raising the dead, causing the lame to walk, the blind to receive their sight, and the deaf to hear, and curing all manner of diseases. ⁶And he shall cast out devils, or the evil spirits which dwell in the hearts of the children of men. ⁷And lo, he shall suffer temptations, and pain of body, hunger, thirst, and fatigue, even more than man can suffer, except it be unto death; for behold, blood cometh from every pore, so great shall be his anguish for the wickedness and the abominations of his people. ⁸And he shall be called Jesus Christ, the Son of God, the Father of heaven and earth, the Creator of all things from the beginning; and his mother shall be called Mary. ⁹And lo, he cometh unto his own, that salvation might come unto the children of men even through faith on his name; and even after all this they shall consider him a man, and say that he hath a devil, and shall scourge him, and shall crucify him.

Questionary

This reading is one in a series of readings on Atonement that we entitle, “Sacrifice: What Jesus Suffered for Us.” *

1. King Benjamin says that Jesus shall “come down from heaven among the children of men, and shall dwell in a tabernacle of clay.”
 - ? What do you think and feel when you read this?
 - ? How is this an aspect of Jesus’ “sacrifice”?
 - ? How is this an aspect of Jesus’ “at-one-ment” or connectedness, unity with us?
 - ? What, do you think, might it feel like for God, the Son, to leave an eternal glory and live on a fallen planet with imperfect beings who live contrary to his nature?
 - ? What other “sacrifices” does King Benjamin mention Jesus suffering for us?
 2. King Benjamin teaches that Jesus suffered “more than man can suffer, except it be unto death.”
 - ? What do you think and feel when you consider that Jesus suffered, endured, and survived an ordeal that would have killed any other of Heavenly Father’s children, even the very greatest of them?
 3. King Benjamin teaches that Jesus worked “mighty miracles, such as healing the sick, raising the dead, causing the lame to walk, the blind to receive their sight, and the deaf to hear.” He also cured “all manner of diseases.... And he shall cast out devils, or the evil spirits which dwell in the hearts of the children of men.”
 - ? Do you think that such work “cost” Jesus anything; represented a sacrifice of any type?
 - ? In what way, other than the exorcism of alien life-forms, can we understand Jesus’ casting out “evil spirits which dwell in the hearts of the children of men”?
 - ? In what way do we all have “evil spirits” which we are unable to abandon without Jesus’ powerful intervention?
- ? What thoughts and feelings do you have when you contemplate that no one could have physically or spiritually survived the sufferings through which Jesus passed as he revealed the Atonement—God’s commitment to remaining connected to his children?
- ? What can you do to grow in your appreciation of Jesus, and to help others grow in their appreciation of him?
- * The following ten titles are part of our atonement series:
“Fall: Our Need of Atonement”
“Grace: The Savior’s Generous and Earnest Invitation”
“At-one-ment: The Savior’s unity and connectedness with us”

“Sacrifice: What Jesus Suffered for Us”

“Glorification: The Savior’s Resurrection, Ascension, and Enthronement”

“Justification: How We Repent and Change”

“Renewal: The Hope, Joy, Peace, and Power of Atonement”

“Sanctification: Imitating and living a life of Atonement”

“Thanksgiving: In Praise of Atonement”

“Song of the Righteous: A Song unto Me”

Mosiah 3.¹⁹— atonement

¹⁹For the natural man is an enemy to God, and has been from the fall of Adam, and will be, forever and ever, unless he yields to the enticings of the Holy Spirit, and putteth off the natural man and becometh a saint through the atonement of Christ the Lord, and becometh as a child, submissive, meek, humble, patient, full of love, willing to submit to all things which the Lord seeth fit to inflict upon him, even as a child doth submit to his father.

Questionary

This reading is one in a series of readings on Atonement that we entitle, “Fall: Our Need of Atonement.” *

1. In today’s reading, Benjamin teaches that the “natural man” (man without Atonement), is “an enemy to God.” The word “enemy” comes from the Latin word, ‘*inimicus*.’ *Inimicus* is a compound word formed from the Latin word ‘*in*,’ meaning “not,” and ‘*amicus*,’ meaning “friend. Enemy, then, literally means “not a friend.” It does not have to imply very negative, passionate, and even violent feelings.
 - ? When you think of an enemy, what images, experiences, and feelings comes to your mind and heart?
 - ? What difference would it make in meaning if Benjamin had spoken of being an “enemy of God” rather than an “enemy to God”?
 - ? What would you think and how would you feel if we suggested that while we can think of and act toward God as an enemy, he can never think of us or act toward us as an enemy?
 - ? In what ways do we exhibit enmity toward God?
 - ? If you do not think of God as being directly against you, in what ways do you sometimes think of him as being less than “friendly” to you?
 - ? What would you think and how would you feel if we suggested that one of the ways we exhibit enmity toward God is by thinking of him as being capable of feeling enmity toward us?
 - ? How does the Savior’s Atonement help us stop thinking of God as one who is “not our friend”?
2. Benjamin teaches that the only way to stop feeling enmity toward God—including falsely attributing to him feelings of enmity toward us—is to yield to the “enticings of the Holy Spirit.”
 - ? How does the Holy Spirit do this?
3. Benjamin speaks of us becoming “as a child, submissive, meek, humble, patient, full of love, willing to submit to all things which the Lord seeth fit to inflict upon him.”
 - ? Is this to be read as a “prerequisite” for “putting of the natural man” or something that those who have put off the natural man experience?
4. In today’s reading, Benjamin provides a reason that we need the Savior’s Atonement. The Savior’s Atonement is a revelation concerning God’s connectedness, attachment, unity with us. If properly understood it removes, among other things, all feelings of enmity we may feel toward God—an enmity that is often “reciprocal,” based upon an erroneous sense that God feels enmity with us.
 - ? How does Jesus’ Atonement remove all thoughts that God could possibly think of us with enmity?

* The following ten titles are part of our atonement series:

“Fall: Our Need of Atonement”

“Grace: The Savior’s Generous and Earnest Invitation”

“At-one-ment: The Savior’s unity and connectedness with us”

“Sacrifice: What Jesus Suffered for Us”

“Glorification: The Savior’s Resurrection, Ascension, and Enthronement”

“Justification: How We Repent and Change”

“Renewal: The Hope, Joy, Peace, and Power of Atonement”

“Sanctification: Imitating and living a life of Atonement”

“Thanksgiving: In Praise of Atonement”

“The Song of the Righteous: A Song unto Me”

Mosiah 4.¹⁻³— atonement

¹*When king Benjamin had made an end of speaking the words which had been delivered unto him by the angel of the Lord, that he cast his eyes round about on the multitude, and behold they had fallen to the earth, for the fear of the Lord had come upon them. And they had viewed themselves in their own carnal state, even less than the dust of the earth. ²And they all cried aloud with one voice, saying:

“O have mercy, and apply the atoning blood of Christ that we may receive forgiveness of our sins, and our hearts may be purified; for we believe in Jesus Christ, the Son of God, who created heaven and earth, and all things; who shall come down among the children of men.”

³And it came to pass that after they had spoken these words the Spirit of the Lord came upon them, and they were filled with joy, having received a remission of their sins, and having peace of conscience, because of the exceeding faith which they had in Jesus Christ who should come, according to the words which king Benjamin had spoken unto them.

Questionary

This reading is one in a series of readings on Atonement that we entitle, “Justification: How We Repent and Change.”*

- Remember the pattern of rebirth that we have seen in the other readings under the title “How we Repent and Change”:
 - Personal Crisis
 - Personal Prayer
 - The Lord’s Response
 - Reason for the Response

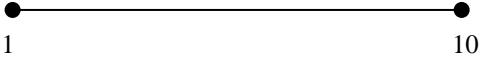
? Can you identify these elements in today’s reading?

? How did it contribute to King Benjamin’s experience of being born again?

? What were the key things that the people of King Benjamin did in order to be born again—that is, to be “filled with joy,” to receive a “remission of their sins,” and to have “peace of conscience.”

? How do you feel about our identification of being “filled with joy,” receiving a “remission of sins,” and having “peace of conscience with being “born again”?
- The text records that the people of King Benjamin “viewed themselves in their own carnal state.”
 - ? What does this mean to you?
 - ? Is this a “viewing” or “revelation” with which you can relate?
 - ? Have you experienced a crisis similar to what King Benjamin’s people had when “they... viewed themselves in their own carnal state, even less than the dust of the earth”?
 - ? If so, what did you do about it? How did you resolve it?

? On a scale of 1 to 10—‘10’ being: “I have experienced, and feel today the kind of ‘joy,’ ‘remission of sins,’ and ‘peace of conscience’ that is spoken of in today’s reading;” and ‘1’ being: “I have not experienced the kind of ‘joy,’ ‘remission of sins,’ and ‘peace of conscience’ that is spoken of in today’s reading, and am not sure that I can”—where are you in following the example of King Benjamin’s people?



? If you are not today where you would like to be, what could you do to imitate King Benjamin’s people and move toward it?

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“Justification: How We Repent and Change”
“Renewal: The Hope, Joy, Peace, and Power of Atonement”
“Sanctification: Imitating and living a life of Atonement”
“Thanksgiving: In Praise of Atonement”
“Song of the Righteous: A Song unto Me”

Mosiah 4.¹¹

And again I say unto you as I have said before, that as ye have come to the knowledge of the glory of God, or if ye have known of his goodness and have tasted of his love, and have received a remission of your sins, which causeth such exceedingly great joy in your souls, even so I would that ye should remember, and always retain in remembrance, the greatness of God, and your own nothingness, and his goodness and long-suffering towards you, unworthy creatures, and humble yourselves even in the depths of humility, calling on the name of the Lord daily, and standing steadfastly in the faith of that which is to come, which was spoken by the mouth of the angel.

Questionary

- ? After speaking of “the knowledge of the glory of God,” King Benjamin continues immediately “OR if ye have know of his goodness and have tasted of his love.” What does that “or” suggest to you?
- ? How is God’s goodness and love a reflection of his Glory, so that essentially, divine goodness and love are the same as divine glory?

Mosiah 4.^{16,19-21, 26}— atonement

¹⁶And also, ye yourselves will succor those that stand in need of your succor; ye will administer of your substance unto him that standeth in need; and ye will not suffer that the beggar putteth up his petition to you in vain, and turn him out to perish....

¹⁹For behold, are we not all beggars? Do we not all depend upon the same Being, even God, for all the substance which we have, for both food and raiment, and for gold, and for silver, and for all the riches which we have of every kind? ²⁰And behold, even at this time, ye have been calling on his name, and begging for a remission of your sins. And has he suffered that ye have begged in vain? Nay; he has poured out his Spirit upon you, and has caused that your hearts should be filled with joy, and has caused that your mouths should be stopped that ye could not find utterance, so exceedingly great was your joy. ²¹And now, if God, who has created you, on whom you are dependent for your lives and for all that ye have and are, doth grant unto you whatsoever ye ask that is right, in faith, believing that ye shall receive, O then, how ye ought to impart of the substance that ye have one to another....

²⁶And now, for the sake of these things which I have spoken unto you—that is, for the sake of retaining a remission of your sins from day to day, that ye may walk guiltless before God—I would that ye should impart of your substance to the poor, every man according to that which he hath, such as feeding the hungry, clothing the naked, visiting the sick and administering to their relief, both spiritually and temporally, according to their wants.

Questionary

This reading is one in a series of readings on Atonement that we entitle, “Sanctification: Imitating and living Atonement.” *

1. It is not enough to be born again, understand and experience the truth of God’s oneness and connectedness with us, and strive to live a life of oneness with him.
 - ? What more does today’s reading inform us is needed?
 - ? How is this an extension of the principle of at-one-ment, or connectedness?
 - ? According to today’s reading, in what specific ways and by what actions do we bear witness to and live the divine principle of at-one-ment with our fellowmen?
 - ? What happens to our lively sense of oneness with God when we do not accept and act upon our oneness with others?
2. King Benjamin as this rather challenging question: “Are we not all beggars?”
 - ? How do you feel about being called a “beggar”?
 - ? How do you feel about being seen as a “beggar” in the eyes of God?
 - ? How are we, in the eyes of God, like the lowliest of beggars are sometimes viewed in our eyes?
 - ? How would you like God to treat you, or how has he treated you when you have come begging to him?
 - ? Do you treat “beggars” as God has and does treat you?
 - ? What happens to you and your relationship with God when you do not?
3. King Benjamin mentions the need to administer to both temporal and spiritual needs, but there is a heavy emphasis on temporal assistance
 - ? What is it about “imparting of our substance” that makes it such a good indicator of one’s connectedness with others and the depth to which we understand and experience God’s oneness with us?
4. Luke tells us that John the Baptist warned that those who “bringeth not forth good fruit” would be “hewn down, and cast into the fire.” In response “commoners,” “publicans” (read, government officials), and soldiers who heard John’s warning asked, “What shall we do

then?” (Luke 3.⁹⁻¹⁰)

Here is John’s answer to each group respectively.

- “He that hath two coats, let him impart to him that hath none; and he that hath meat, let him do likewise.”
- “Exact no more than that which is appointed you.”
- “Do violence to no man, neither accuse any falsely; and be content with your wages” (Luke 3.¹¹⁻¹⁴).

? How do John’s instructions relate to and compliment those of Benjamin?

? How do you feel and what do you think when you consider that John’s answer to avoiding the fire focused solely on economic matters?

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“Sanctification: Imitating and living a life of Atonement”

“Thanksgiving: In Praise of Atonement”

“Song of the Righteous: A Song unto Me”

Mosiah 4.²⁶⁻²⁷

²⁶And now, for the sake of these things which I have spoken unto you—that is, for the sake of retaining a remission of your sins from day to day, that ye may walk guiltless before God—I would that ye should impart of your substance to the poor, every man according to that which he hath, such as feeding the hungry, clothing the naked, visiting the sick and administering to their relief, both spiritually and temporally, according to their wants. ²⁷And see that all these things are done in wisdom and order; for it is not requisite that a man should run faster than he has strength. And again, it is expedient that he should be diligent, that thereby he might win the prize; therefore, all things must be done in order.

Today's is the 11th reading for Lent 2024.

1. In addition to being a season of self-reflection, confession, and repentance, Lent is a season of alms giving. Today's passage talks a bit about that.
 - ? What is the relationship between Lent, Easter, and the hope of forgiveness that is central to the Season and the attitudes and actions that lie behind our giving of alms, especially to the ill and poor?
2. King Benjamin draws a direct link between our imparting "of [our] substance to the poor," and our "retaining a remission of [our] sins."
 - ? What is the nature of that link?
 - ? Why would our own ability to be and retain a remission of sins be dependent and contingent upon our care for the poor?
 - ? How do you feel about this interdependence?
 - ? How are you doing at retaining a remission of sin based upon this criterion?
 - ? How is society doing? What does society's actions toward its poor say about the state of its "forgiveness," and thus its relationship with God?
3. We noted in another reading (DC 84.¹¹²), that not only did disciples of Jesus have responsibility to assist the poor with "basic needs," but with "wants" as well.
 - ? Does today's reading give you any additional insight into this requirement? If so, what?
4. King Benjamin admonishes that assistance to the ill and poor be "done in wisdom and order; for it is not requisite that a man should run faster than he has strength."
 - ? How does one determine how fast they can run in the endeavor of caring for the ill and poor?
 - ? Given that Lent is also to be a time of intensified prayer, how can you enlist your personal prayers in establishing what and how much you can do, not looking for the charitable minimum but the most orderly and wise maximum?
 - ? How can you enlist your family prayers in this endeavor?

Mosiah 11.³⁻⁷— just scripture

³And he laid a tax of one fifth part of all they possessed, a fifth part of their gold and of their silver, and a fifth part of their ziff, and of their copper, and of their brass and their iron; and a fifth part of their fatlings; and also a fifth part of all their grain. ⁴And all this did he take to support himself, and his wives and his concubines; and also his priests, and their wives and their concubines; thus he had changed the affairs of the kingdom. ⁵For he put down all the priests that had been consecrated by his father, and consecrated new ones in their stead, such as were lifted up in the pride of their hearts. ⁶Yea, and thus they were supported in their laziness, and in their idolatry, and in their whoredoms, by the taxes which king Noah had put upon his people; thus did the people labor exceedingly to support iniquity. ⁷Yea, and they also became idolatrous, because they were deceived by the vain and flattering words of the king and priests; for they did speak flattering things unto them.

Questionary

Today's reading is the second of eight readings from the very important eleventh chapter of Mosiah. This chapter has much to teach us about the just society. It also, I believe, oddly enough provides interpretive clues as to the character of the Old Testament Solomon and his reign—something about which the Old Testament itself seems confused and torn.

1. King Noah, we are told “laid a tax of one fifth part of all they possessed.” I have on occasion heard this passage used to condemn the U.S. tax system. Consider Genesis 47.²⁶.

“And Joseph made it a law over the land of Egypt unto this day, that Pharaoh should have the fifth part; except the land of the priests only, which became not Pharaoh's.

Joseph instituted the exact same “tax rate” as that of King Noah.

- ? Is the text of Genesis critical of Joseph for this policy? Are you?
 - ? Why would the exact same tax rate elicit two very different reactions—Joseph's considered wise and just and Noah's considered unwise, unjust, and profligate.
 - ? For what purposes did Noah use his tax revenues?
 - ? How would you feel if the criticism of Noah's tax policies was due to the use to which Noah put his tax revenues, rather than the level of taxation?
 - ? Do you suppose that Noah would have come under the same criticism if he had been using tax revenues to care for vulnerable portions of society—orphans, the aged, the poor, veterans, etc?
2. Noah “consecrated new” priests to replace those who served his Father. We should not think of the priests principally in “religious” terms. They were more “political staff” than “spiritual” guides and counselors. The “vain and flattering words” they spoke involved “political” ideals as much as “spiritual” ones—ideals on such things as taxations and the uses to which taxes were put, for example.

Among the differences between the new and old priests was that the new were “lifted up in the pride of their hearts.” This characterization is presented in the course of the discussion on taxes and the uses to which those taxes were put.

 - ? What is the relationship between public officials' pride and the uses to which they put tax revenues?
 - ? How did the “idolatry” of the King and his royal officials—made possible through the self-aggrandizing use of tax revenues—contribute to the idolatry of the kingdom's citizenry?
 - ? What is the proper use of tax revenues, whatever their level?
 - ? Does current use of tax revenues contribute in any way to modern idolatry? If so, how and why?
- ? How do you feel about government officials who allow their privileged associates to live off government tax revenues?

? How does this happen in today's society?

Mosiah 11.¹⁶⁻¹⁹— just scripture

¹⁶*The Lamanites began to come in upon his people, upon small numbers, and to slay them in their fields, and while they were tending their flocks. ¹⁷And king Noah sent guards round about the land to keep them off; but he did not send a sufficient number, and the Lamanites came upon them and killed them, and drove many of their flocks out of the land; thus the Lamanites began to destroy them, and to exercise their hatred upon them.

¹⁸*King Noah sent his armies against them, and they were driven back, or they drove them back for a time; therefore, they returned rejoicing in their spoil. ¹⁹And now, because of this great victory they were lifted up in the pride of their hearts; they did boast in their own strength, saying that their fifty could stand against thousands of the Lamanites; and thus they did boast, and did delight in blood, and the shedding of the blood of their brethren, and this because of the wickedness of their king and priests.

Questionary

In verses 1-2, we found that the personal and public immoral life of the elite ruling class had a corrupting influence upon the population in general. In verses 3-7, we saw that the immoral and profligate—idolatrous—lifestyle of the ruling class was supported by tax revenues. The common people imitated the idolatry of the ruling class. In verses 8-11, we witnessed how tax revenues were not only used by the ruling elite for their own ends, but for building projects that were often nothing more than structures built for their own vanity. In verses 12-13, we were informed of addition building projects of an apparent military nature—that reflected government officials’ profligate and unfaithful ways. In 14-15, we witnessed the easy, relaxed, and luxurious lifestyle of the leadership. This luxurious lifestyle, as Paul warned Timothy concerning riches, caused them to “fall into temptation and a snare, and into many foolish and hurtful lusts... For the love of money is the root of all evil” (1 Timothy 6:9-10).

1. After discussing “domestic issues,” in today’s reading the text turns its attention to matters of “national security” during Noah’s reign. Several issues and evils arise in relation to national security.
 - ? What issues and evils related to national security do you see?
2. You may find other national security issues and evils, but here are four that stand out to me.
 - “Lamanites began to come in upon [Noah’s] people, upon small numbers”
 - “Noah sent guards round about the land... but he did not send a sufficient number.”
 - “Because of [the Nephites’] great victory [they] boast in their own strength.”
 - “[The Nephites] did delight in blood, and the shedding of the blood of their brethren.”
 - ? There is no doubt that the Lamanites were on the lookout for weakness in Nephite security measures. What do you think they saw in Nephite security measures that finally emboldened them to attack?
 - ? What do you see as the cause of the initial laxness of security measures?
 - ? How do you feel about the Nephite boast over their military victory?
 - ? Have you seen such braggadocio in your own society’s response to war and isolated military victories?
 - ? How do you feel about the “delight”—the increasing casualness and callousness—felt at the death of the enemy?
 - ? Have you seen such inhumanity in your own society’s response to the death of enemies, including “collateral” deaths of war?
 - ? As a member of society, how do you avoid adopting and condoning such evil attitudes so as to not be implicated in such evil?

Mosiah 15.¹⁻⁴

¹And now Abinadi said unto them: I would that ye should understand that God himself shall come down among the children of men, and shall redeem his people. ²And because he dwelleth in flesh he shall be called the Son of God, and having subjected the flesh to the will of the Father, being the Father and the Son—³the Father, because he was conceived by the power of God; and the Son, because of the flesh; thus becoming the Father and Son—⁴and they are one God, yea, the very Eternal Father of heaven and of earth.

Questionary

This reading is the first of twelve readings from Mosiah 15.¹.

1. If Abinadi is who the tradition claims him to be—a prophet living in 2nd century BC America and speaking to a live audience that sat before him and whose misunderstandings he was attempting to enlighten and to whose needs he ministered—it seems inappropriate to read and handle this reading as if it were some sort of commentary on the triune Godhead. It certainly clarifies nothing about that long-lasting Christian debate. It seems best to read these verses as commentary on the nature of Yahweh, the God of the Old Testament and the Book of Mormon. With that in mind, consider the following alternative version of today’s reading (all changes are in italics).

¹And now Abinadi said unto them: I would that ye should understand that Yahweh himself shall come down among the children of men, and shall redeem his people. ²And because Yahweh dwelleth in flesh Yahweh shall be called the Son of God, and having subjected the flesh to the will of the Father [Yahweh], being the Father [Yahweh] and the Son (³ the Father [Yahweh], because the Son was conceived by the power of Yahweh; and the Son, because of the flesh; thus becoming the Father [Yahweh] and Son) ⁴and they are one God, yea, the very Eternal Father [Yahweh] of heaven and of earth.

- ? What thoughts do you have as you consider this alternative reading?
- ? How does the suggestion that the central point of this reading is that Yahweh and the Son, Jesus, are the same person, impact your understanding of the entire passage.
- ? What do you learn about Yahweh, the God of the Old Testament and the Book of Mormon?
- ? When you consider all that the Old Testament says about Yahweh, his character, and his actions in Israel, what thoughts and feelings do you have as you contemplate his laying aside his glory as God and living in a body on earth with all the limitations and challenges that mortality entails?
- ? What do you think and feel when you consider that Jesus (Yahweh) remained true to all the plans and commitments that he had made as the disembodied God, Yahweh?

Mosiah 15.⁵⁻⁷

⁵And thus the flesh becoming subject to the Spirit, or the Son to the Father, being one God, suffereth temptation, and yieldeth not to the temptation, but suffereth himself to be mocked, and scourged, and cast out, and disowned by his people. ⁶And after all this, after working many mighty miracles among the children of men, he shall be led, yea, even as Isaiah said, as a sheep before the shearer is dumb, so he opened not his mouth. ⁷Yea, even so he shall be led, crucified, and slain, the flesh becoming subject even unto death, the will of the Son being swallowed up in the will of the Father.

Questionary

This reading is the second of twelve readings from Mosiah 15.

1. As before, in the previous reading from this chapter (1-4), we provide the alternative reading: “And thus the flesh [the Son/Jesus/Messiah] becoming subject to the Spirit [the disembodied Yahweh], or the Son [Jesus/Messiah] to the Father [Yahweh], being one God...”
? How does this alternative reading impact the way you understand Abinadi’s instruction and the point he is making?
2. After establishing that the disembodied God, Yahweh, and the tabernacled Son of God/ Jesus/ Messiah were one and the same Being (verses 1-4), Abinadi goes on in this reading to describe the consequences he suffered as a result of this choice to become mortal.
? What are those consequences as enumerated by Abinadi?
3. It might be difficult, perhaps impossible, to imagine the God, Yahweh, as he is described in the Old Testament, “suffering temptation,” or allowing “himself to be mocked...scourged... cast out... disowned... led... as a sheep...crucified, and slain.” Yet, that same Being, in the person of Jesus did just all of that.
? In light of the fact that the scriptures testify that “he is the same yesterday, today, and forever, what does this tell you about the nature of Yahweh?
? In light of the fact that Jesus claims to be a revelation of the nature of his Father—of all Gods?—what does this tell you about the nature of Godhood?
? In light of the fact that we are to imitate the example set by Jesus, what does this suggest to you about your own eternal existence?
? What does it suggest about the kind of character that is required for beings to live and endure in the cosmos?

Mosiah 15.⁸⁻⁹—Atonement

⁸And thus God breaketh the bands of death, having gained the victory over death; giving the Son power to make intercession for the children of men—⁹having ascended into heaven, having the bowels of mercy; being filled with compassion towards the children of men; standing betwixt them and justice; having broken the bands of death, taken upon himself their iniquity and their transgressions, having redeemed them, and satisfied the demands of justice.

Questionary

1. We have encouraged the creation of “scripture lists” before. These two verses contain quite the list of things Jesus does for humankind as the result of his ascension into heaven where he sits on the right hand of God.
 - ? Make a list of those things on a separate sheet of paper or place numbers—①,②,③, etc.—directly in your scripture text before each benefit?
2. Abinadi says that Jesus possesses “bowels of mercy.”
 - ? What do you think of when you read of “the bowels of mercy”?
 - ? One of the definitions of “bowels” is “the deepest inner parts or areas of something.” Is this how you thought of it? How does it shape your understanding of the phrase?
3. Abinadi says that Jesus stands “betwixt them and justice.”
 - ? What does this mean to you?
 - ? We often think of “justice” as a good thing, almost synonymous with “fairness” and “equity.” Clearly that meaning of justice is not appropriate here. So, what does “justice” mean in this context? With what words would you replace it?
 - ? It seems that it is a feature of the Book of Mormon that it always thinks of “justice” in negative terms, as if it were synonymous with “punishment” or “negative consequences” and rarely in positive terms. How do you feel about this observation and this feature of Book of Mormon vocabulary?
4. Abinadi says that Jesus “satisfied the demands of justice.”
 - ? What is it that “justice” demands?
 - ? How does Jesus “satisfy” these “demands”?
 - ? What did that “satisfaction” mean for him?
 - ? “Justice” in the negative sense is here almost presented as some sort of cosmic force or entity. How would you feel about viewing it as something entirely human, a psychological response to disappointment and failure? About seeing this manner of speech as rhetorical rather than literal?
 - ? If we take it in that sense, how does Jesus satisfy our inner need for punishment to accompany failure?
- * The following ten titles are part of our atonement series:
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 - “Thanksgiving: In Praise of Atonement”
 - “Song of the Righteous: A Song unto Me”

Mosiah 15.¹⁰⁻¹³

¹⁰And now I say unto you, who shall declare his generation?

Behold, I say unto you, that when his soul has been made an offering for sin he shall see his seed. And now what say ye? And who shall be his seed?

¹¹Behold I say unto you, that whosoever has heard the words of the prophets, yea, all the holy prophets who have prophesied concerning the coming of the Lord—I say unto you, that all those who have hearkened unto their words, and believed that the Lord would redeem his people, and have looked forward to that day for a remission of their sins, I say unto you, that these are his seed, or they are the heirs of the kingdom of God. ¹²For these are they whose sins he has borne; these are they for whom he has died, to redeem them from their transgressions.

And now, are they not his seed? ¹³Yea, and are not the prophets, every one that has opened his mouth to prophesy, that has not fallen into transgression, I mean all the holy prophets ever since the world began?

I say unto you that they are his seed.

Questionary

Today's reading is the 4th of 12 readings taken from Mosiah 15.

1. Abinadi speaks of being the “seed” of Messiah, Christ, Jesus, Yahweh, God.
? What, do you think, does he mean by “seed”?
2. In verse 11, Abinadi describes who are Christ's or God's “seed.”
? What allows one to become God's “seed”?
? How would you feel and what would you think if we suggested that “those who follow prophets” is not sufficiently specific?
? What more specificity is needed?
? How does the following addition that Abinadi provided help in answering the proceeding question?

“All those who have hearkened unto their [the prophets'] words, and believed that the Lord would redeem his people, and have looked forward to that day for a remission of their sins.”

Since we live after rather than before Christ's coming, we could change “and have looked forward to that day for a remission of their sins,” to “and look backward to that day for a remission of their sins.”

- ? How firmly do you believe the central prophetic message that a remission of sins comes through Christ?
- ? How firmly do you believe in a day of remission of sins in your own life?
- ? Has such a day come into your life, or are you still waiting?
- ? What would you be waiting for?
- ? How faithfully is one following prophets if they do not believe in or put off the day of remission of sins into the future?

Mosiah 15.¹⁴⁻¹⁹

¹⁴And these are they who have published peace,
who have brought good tidings of good,
who have published salvation;
and said unto Zion: Thy God reigneth!

¹⁵And O how beautiful upon the mountains were their feet!

¹⁶And again, how beautiful upon the mountains are the feet of those that are still publishing peace!

¹⁷And again, how beautiful upon the mountains are the feet of those who shall hereafter publish peace,
yea, from this time henceforth and forever!

And behold, I say unto you, this is not all.

¹⁸For O how beautiful upon the mountains are the feet of him that bringeth good tidings,
that is the founder of peace,

yea, even the Lord, who has redeemed his people;

yea, him who has granted salvation unto his people;

¹⁹For were it not for the redemption which he hath made for his people,
which was prepared from the foundation of the world,

I say unto you, were it not for this,

all mankind must have perished.

Questionary

Today's reading is the 18th in a series of Advent readings that will continue throughout the month of December. It is also the 5th of 12 readings taken from Mosiah 15.

1. In verse 14, messengers come with four messages.

? What are those messages?

? How do these messages relate to one another?

Ultimately, those who "have published peace," "brought good tidings of good," and "published salvation" have done so by declaring, "Thy God reigneth."

? What does "God reigneth" mean to you?

? What does the life of one who yields rule and control over their life to God look like?

? How does God's reign in one's life produce "peace," "good," and "salvation"?

2. Abinadi speaks of the "beauty" of the *feet* of those who have preached, do preach, and will preach about the peace, good, and salvation that comes into one's life by yielding control of their lives to God.

? Why, do you suppose, does the prophet speak of the beauty of their "feet" rather than another part of their anatomy?

? Who has been such a messenger in your life?

? How do you seek to be such a messenger in the life of others?

3. Finally, Abinadi identifies Jesus as the greatest of those who have ever borne this message of peace, good, and salvation, calling him "the founder of peace."

? How did Jesus fulfil this role as "founder of peace"?

? How does he continue today to fulfil this role in your life?

- ? Take a few minutes to describe, perhaps through writing, the beauty that you have found in Jesus.

Mosiah 16.³⁻⁷— atonement

³For they are carnal and devilish, and the devil has power over them; yea, even that old serpent that did beguile our first parents, which was the cause of their fall; which was the cause of all mankind becoming carnal, sensual, devilish, knowing evil from good, subjecting themselves to the devil. ⁴Thus all mankind were lost; and behold, they would have been endlessly lost were it not that God redeemed his people from their lost and fallen state. ⁵But remember that he that persists in his own carnal nature, and goes on in the ways of sin and rebellion against God, remaineth in his fallen state and the devil hath all power over him. Therefore, he is as though there was no redemption made, being an enemy to God; and also is the devil an enemy to God.

⁶And now if Christ had not come into the world, speaking of things to come as though they had already come, there could have been no redemption. ⁷And if Christ had not risen from the dead, or have broken the bands of death that the grave should have no victory, and that death should have no sting, there could have been no resurrection.

Questionary

This reading is one in a series of readings on Atonement that we entitle, “Fall: Our Need of Atonement.” *

1. Abinadi speaks of “that old serpent that did beguile our first parents, which was the cause of their fall.”
 - ? What does it mean to “beguile”?
 - ? What was the nature of the serpent’s deception?
 - ? How does the fact that the couple was deceived or tricked according to the Book of Mormon relate to and square with our occasional modern assertions that Adam and Eve wisely chose to eat the fruit after careful and insightful thought?
 2. Abinadi teaches some brutal truths about “all mankind.”
 - We are all “carnal, sensual, devilish”
 - “Knowing evil from good,” we all “subject” ourselves “to the devil”
 - “All mankind were lost”
 - ? How do you feel about Abinadi’s estimations of mankind?
 - ? Is any of this true of you? Why do you answer as you do?
 - ? What kind of behaviors and attitudes do you think could be thought of as “carnal, sensual and devilish”?
 - ? Are there any “carnal, sensual, and devilish” behaviors and attitudes in your own life?
 3. Consider and ponder the consequences that, according to today’s reading, come into a “carnal, sensual, and devilish” individual’s life.
 - “The devil has power over them.”
 - They “remaineth in [their] fallen state
 - They are “an enemy to God”
 - “He is as though there was no redemption made”
 - ? To what degree are you free from all of this? Why do you answer as you do?
 - ? To the degree that you are free from all of this, what role did Jesus play in your deliverance? What role did you play?
- * The following ten titles are part of our atonement series:
“Fall: Our Need of Atonement”
“Grace: The Savior’s Generous and Earnest Invitation”

“At-one-ment: The Savior’s unity and connectedness with us”
“Sacrifice: What Jesus Suffered for Us”
“Glorification: The Savior’s Resurrection, Ascension, and Enthronement”
“Justification: How We Repent and Change”
“Renewal: The Hope, Joy, Peace, and Power of Atonement”
“Sanctification: Imitating and living a life of Atonement”
“Thanksgiving: In Praise of Atonement”
“Song of the Righteous: A Song unto Me”

Mosiah 27.²³⁻²⁹—Atonement

²³*After they had fasted and prayed for the space of two days and two nights, the limbs of Alma received their strength, and he stood up and began to speak unto them, bidding them to be of good comfort:

²⁴“For,” said he, “I have repented of my sins, and have been redeemed of the Lord; behold I am born of the Spirit. ²⁵And the Lord said unto me:

‘Marvel not that all mankind, yea, men and women, all nations, kindreds, tongues and people, must be born again; yea, born of God, changed from their carnal and fallen state, to a state of righteousness, being redeemed of God, becoming his sons and daughters; ²⁶and thus they become new creatures; and unless they do this, they can in nowise inherit the kingdom of God.’

²⁷“I say unto you, unless this be the case, they must be cast off; and this I know, because I was like to be cast off. ²⁸Nevertheless, after wading through much tribulation, repenting nigh unto death, the Lord in mercy hath seen fit to snatch me out of an everlasting burning, and I am born of God. ²⁹My soul hath been redeemed from the gall of bitterness and bonds of iniquity. I was in the darkest abyss; but now I behold the marvelous light of God. My soul was racked with eternal torment; but I am snatched, and my soul is pained no more.”

Questionary

This reading is one in a series of readings on Atonement that we entitle, “Justification: How We Repent and Change.” *

In a previous atonement reading (Alma 36.¹⁴⁻²³), we reviewed Alma the Younger’s reflections with his son, Helaman, concerning his conversion, i.e., how he repented and began to change. In today’s reading, we look at Alma the Younger’s thoughts and feels in the immediate aftermath of his conversion.

1. In reviewing Alma the Younger’s later reflections on his conversion experience, we looked at words and phrases Alma used to describe his experience.
 - ? What words and phrases does Alma use in today’s reading to describe that from which God delivered him?
 - ? What images and feelings do these words and phrases bring to you heart and mind?
 - Everlasting burning
 - Bands of Iniquity
 - Eternal Torment
 - Gall of bitterness
 - Darkest Abyss
 - ? How do each of these represent a portion of what we would unavoidably experience without the Savior and his Atonement?
 - ? Have you to any degree felt the reality of such things in your life?
2. In speaking of his conversion, or his deliverance from the above realities, Alma uses another set of words and phrases.
 - ? What words or phrases does Alma use to describe his conversion?
 - ? Think about each of these words or phrases. Ponder their real-life meanings as well as their spiritual meanings?
 - Redeemed (bought back)
 - Born again
 - Changed

Snatched

- ? In what settings, for example, would the word ‘snatched’ be used?
 - ? What does the word, “snatched” imply?
 - ? Consider the imagery of physical birth as a metaphor for spiritual change and conversion. What do you see in a real live birth that can be likened to spiritual rebirth?
 - ? Is the child a fully formed and mature adult at birth?
 - ? Does its immaturity, its “imperfections” and “weaknesses” diminish or cancel in any way the reality of its having been born?
 - ? How does this apply to our own spiritual rebirth and life-time development?
 - ? What do you feel when you consider that one can be born again without being “fully developed spiritually”?
 - ? What do you feel when you consider that just as a child’s without flaws—not being able to walk, for example—does not negate its birth and being, so ones spiritual flaws, sometimes serious, does not negate one’s spiritual rebirth?
3. Alma teaches that “all mankind, yea, men and women, all nations, kindreds, tongues and people, must be born again... and unless they do this, they can in nowise inherit the kingdom of God.”
- ? How do you feel about the requirement that one be born again to enter the kingdom of God?

Consider the Doctrine and Covenants’ description of those who enter Celestial glory.

“They are they who received the testimony of Jesus, and believed on his name and were baptized after the manner of his burial, being buried in the water in his name, and this according to the commandment which he has given—that by keeping the commandments [the commands to receive and believe in Jesus and be baptized] they might be washed and cleansed from all their sins, and receive the Holy Spirit by the laying on of the hands of him who is ordained and sealed unto this power; and who overcome by faith, and are sealed by the Holy Spirit of promise, which the Father sheds forth upon all those who are just and true” (DC 76.⁵¹⁻⁵³).

- ? How is Alma’s teaching concerning the necessity of being born again corroborated by the Doctrine and Covenants’ description of those who enter Celestial glory?
- ? Have you been born again and thus made worthy to enter the kingdom of God or Celestial glory?
- ? If not, why not?

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“Renewal: The Hope, Joy, Peace, and Power of Atonement”

“Sanctification: Imitating and living a life of Atonement”

“Thanksgiving: In Praise of Atonement”

“The Song of the Righteous: A Song unto Me”

Mosiah 29.^{17, 21-23}— just scripture

¹⁷For behold, how much iniquity doth one wicked king cause to be committed, yea, and what great destruction!

²¹And behold, now I say unto you, ye cannot dethrone an iniquitous king save it be through much contention, and the shedding of much blood. ²²For behold, he has his friends in iniquity, and he keepeth his guards about him; and he teareth up the laws of those who have reigned in righteousness before him; and he trampleth under his feet the commandments of God; ²³And he enacteth laws, and sendeth them forth among his people, yea, laws after the manner of his own wickedness; and whosoever doth not obey his laws he causeth to be destroyed; and whosoever doth rebel against him he will send his armies against them to war, and if he can he will destroy them; and thus an unrighteous king doth pervert the ways of all righteousness.

Questionary

1. We suggest that today's reading is sadly, but remarkably similar to recent and ongoing political events in the United States.
 - ? How do you feel about this assertion?
 - ? What similarities do you find between this description and the state of American politics?
 - ? How well does Donald Trump, his administration, and his supporters match the description of "an iniquitous king" and "his friends in iniquity"? Why do you answer as you do?
 - ? How has he "trampleth under his feet the commandments of God" in his private life?
 - ? How did he enact policies that advanced his own interests and the interests of his "friends in iniquity"?
 - ? How have his "friends in iniquity" revealed themselves?
 - ? How many people's reputations has he defamed to protect himself in his wickedness?
 - ? How has he attempted to destroy those who have attempted to hold him accountable for his crimes?