

April 1–7: Jacob 1–4, "Be Reconciled Unto God Through the Atonement of Christ"

Overview

We learn a lot about Jacob from the blessing he received from his father, Lehi

2 Nephi 2:1-2

1 And now, Jacob, I speak unto you: Thou art my firstborn in the days of my tribulation in the wilderness. And behold, in thy childhood thou hast suffered afflictions and much sorrow, because of the rudeness of thy brethren.

2 Nevertheless, Jacob, my firstborn in the wilderness, thou knowest the greatness of God; and he shall consecrate thine afflictions for thy gain.

3 Wherefore, thy soul shall be blessed, and thou shalt dwell safely with thy brother, Nephi; and thy days shall be spent in the service of thy God. Wherefore, I know that thou art redeemed, because of the righteousness of thy Redeemer; for thou hast beheld that in the fulness of time he cometh to bring salvation unto men.

4 And thou hast beheld in thy youth his glory; wherefore, thou art blessed even as they unto whom he shall minister in the flesh; for the Spirit is the same, yesterday, today, and forever. And the way is prepared from the fall of man, and salvation is free.

What blessings does Lehi give to Jacob and what do we learn about Jacob from Lehi's blessing?

(he shall consecrate thine afflictions for thy gain
I know that thou art redeemed)

Lehi knows that Jacob will be redeemed because, "thou hast beheld in thy youth his glory"

Small Plates of Nephi

Jacob 1:1-3

1 For behold, it came to pass that fifty and five years had passed away from the time that Lehi left Jerusalem; wherefore, Nephi gave me, Jacob, a commandment concerning the small plates, upon which these things are engraven.

2 And he gave me, Jacob, a commandment that I should write upon these plates a few of the things which I considered to be most precious; that I should not touch, save it were lightly, concerning the history of this people which are called the people of Nephi.

3 For he said that the history of his people should be engraven upon his other plates, and that I should preserve these plates and hand them down unto my seed, from generation to generation.

What does Nephi tell Jacob to record on the small plates?

(write upon these plates a few of the things which I considered to be most

precious
the history of his people should be engraven upon his other plates)

1 Nephi 9

3... I have received a commandment of the Lord that I should make these plates, for the special purpose that there should be an account engraven of the ministry of my people.

4... these plates are for the more part of the ministry...

5 Wherefore, the Lord hath commanded me to make these plates for a wise purpose in him, which purpose I know not.

6 But the Lord knoweth all things from the beginning; wherefore, he prepareth a way to accomplish all his works among the children of men...

Nephite Kings

Jacob 1:9-12

9 Now Nephi began to be old, and he saw that he must soon die; wherefore, he anointed a man to be a king and a ruler over his people now, according to the reigns of the kings.

10 The people having loved Nephi exceedingly, he having been a great protector for them, having wielded the sword of Laban in their defence, and having labored in all his days for their welfare—

11 Wherefore, the people were desirous to retain in remembrance his name. And whoso should reign in his stead were called by the people, second Nephi, third Nephi, and so forth, according to the reigns of the kings; and thus they were called by the people, let them be of whatever name they would.

12 And it came to pass that Nephi died.

What did Nephi do that set a standard for the kings of the Nephites?

It seems that because of the strong influence of Nephi that they always had a righteous king up thru Mosiah

Maybe Noah was the first wicked king and maybe that was enough for Mosiah to do away with a monarchy and institute rule by judges

Jacob Magnifies His Calling

Jacob explains that he must teach and bear witness to the Nephites in order to magnify his calling

Jacob 1:17-19

17 Wherefore I, Jacob, gave unto them these words as I taught them in the temple, having first obtained mine errand from the Lord.

18 For I, Jacob, and my brother Joseph had been consecrated priests and teachers of this people, by the hand of Nephi.

19 And we did magnify our office unto the Lord, taking upon us the responsibility, answering the sins of the people upon our own heads if we did not teach them the

word of God with all diligence; wherefore, by laboring with our might their blood might not come upon our garments; otherwise their blood would come upon our garments, and we would not be found spotless at the last day.

What was Jacob called to do?

(having first obtained mine errand from the Lord)
(Consecrated priests and teachers... by the hand of Nephi
teach them the word of God with all diligence)

What did Jacob do that demonstrated he magnified his calling?

(taking upon us responsibility... if we did not teach)
(laboring with our might... [to] be found spotless)

Hugh B. Brown

“President John Taylor said on one occasion, speaking to the brethren of the priesthood: 'If you do not magnify your callings, God will hold you responsible for those you might have saved, had you done your duty.'

“This is a challenging statement.... If I fail in my assignment as a bishop, a stake president, a mission president, or one of the General Authorities of the Church--if any of us fail to teach, lead, direct, and help to save those under our direction and within our jurisdiction, then the Lord will hold us responsible if they are lost as the result of our failure.” (CR, Oct. 1962)

Jacob gathers the Nephites to the temple to magnify his office by teaching the people important doctrine and calling them to repentance

Jacob 2:2,7-10

2 Now, my beloved brethren, I, Jacob, according to the responsibility which I am under to God, to magnify mine office with soberness, and that I might rid my garments of your sins, I come up into the temple this day that I might declare unto you the word of God.

7 And also it grieveth me that I must use so much boldness of speech concerning you, before your wives and your children, many of whose feelings are exceedingly tender and chaste and delicate before God, which thing is pleasing unto God;

8 And it supposeth me that they have come up hither to hear the pleasing word of God, yea, the word which healeth the wounded soul.

9 Wherefore, it burdeneth my soul that I should be constrained, because of the strict commandment which I have received from God, to admonish you according to your crimes, to enlarge the wounds of those who are already wounded, instead of consoling and healing their wounds; and those who have not been wounded, instead of feasting upon the pleasing word of God have daggers placed to pierce their souls and wound their delicate minds.

10 But, notwithstanding the greatness of the task, I must do according to the strict

commands of God, and tell you concerning your wickedness and abominations, in the presence of the pure in heart, and the broken heart, and under the glance of the piercing eye of the Almighty God.

What does Jacob recognize is the expectation of followers of Christ when they gather together to hear their priesthood leaders speak?

(hear the pleasing word of God... which healeth the wounded soul)

Dieter F. Uchtdorf

"It is our job to build up, repair, strengthen, uplift, and make whole. Our assignment is to follow the Savior's example and reach out to those who suffer. We 'mourn with those that mourn... and comfort those that stand in need of comfort' (Mosiah 18:9). We bind up the wounds of the afflicted. We 'succor the weak, lift up the hands which hang down, and strengthen the feeble knees' (D&C 81:5)....

"As priesthood leaders... we should be committed and dedicated healers. We carry in one hand a vial of consecrated oil for blessing the sick; in the other we carry a loaf of bread to feed the hungry; and in our hearts we carry the peaceable word of God, 'which healeth the wounded soul' (Jacob 2:8)....

"The Savior is the worker of miracles. He is the great Healer. He is our example, our light, even in the darkest moments, and He shows us the right way. Let us follow Him. Let us rise up to our role and become healers by serving God and our fellowmen." (CR, April 2013)

But why did he have to confront them about their sins?

(the responsibility which I am under to God, to magnify mine office I must do according to the strict commands of God, and tell you concerning your wickedness)

Pride

Jacob focuses on two topics as he address his people. The First is pride. He makes mention of this problem in chapter 1, before he begins his address.

Jacob 1:15-16

15 And now it came to pass that 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.

16 Yea, and they also began to search much gold and silver, and began to be lifted up somewhat in pride.

The 'pride cycle' among the Nephites that is so prevalent throughout their history

begins with the king after Nephi. This cycle is:
humility > prosperity > pride > destruction > humility > ...

Hugh Nibley

“Among the timeless lessons to be learned from the Book of Mormon are the perils of the prosperity cycle.... Whenever any group chose to keep the commandments of God, he blessed and prospered them. At that point, instead of returning constant thanks to him who had rewarded them... [they] lost sight of the source of their blessings.... Wealth became the end in life rather than a means to the accomplishment of good. Whenever the acquisition of 'things' became more important than people, then it was only a matter of time before class distinctions, caste systems, and the persecution of the poor followed." (Since Cumorah, pg. 393)

Jacob tells the people that because they have been blessed with prosperity they have become proud and if they don't repent then their pride will lead to destruction

Jacob 2:13-16

13 And 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.

14 And 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.

15 O that he would show you that he can pierce you, and with one glance of his eye he can smite you to the dust!

16 O that he would rid you from this iniquity and abomination. And, O that ye would listen unto the word of his commands, and let not this pride of your hearts destroy your souls!

What reason does Jacob give that the Nephites “are lifted up in the pride”?

(the hand of providence hath smiled upon you most pleasingly
because some of you have obtained more abundantly... ye suppose that ye
are better than they)

Usually the 'destruction' part of the cycle concerns your temporal well-being, but in verse 16 -

What is Jacob concerned that their pride will damage the most?

(pride of your hearts destroy your souls)

Jacob tells them how they can stay in the 'prosperity' part of the cycle

Jacob 2:17-19

17 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.

18 But before ye seek for riches, seek ye for the kingdom of God.

19 And 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.

What should you do to keep prosperity from leading to pride?

(Think of your brethren like unto yourselves, and be familiar with all and free with your substance
before ye seek for riches, seek ye for the kingdom of God)

Spencer W. Kimball

“Book of Mormon history eloquently reveals the corrosive effect of the passion for wealth.... Had the people used their wealth for good purposes they could have enjoyed a continuing prosperity. But they seemed unable for a sustained period to be simultaneously wealthy and righteous.” (The Miracle of Forgiveness, pg. 47-48)

What is a righteous reason for seek riches?

(for the intent to do good)

Polygamy

Jacob teaches the people about king David and king Solomon

Jacob 2:23-24

23 But the word of God burdens me because of your grosser crimes. For behold, thus saith the Lord: This people begin to wax in iniquity; they understand not the scriptures, for they seek to excuse themselves in committing whoredoms, because of the things which were written concerning David, and Solomon his son.

24 Behold, David and Solomon truly had many wives and concubines, which thing was abominable before me, saith the Lord.

What do you think that Jacob was referring to when he told the people that “they understand not the scriptures”?

(David and Solomon truly had many wives and concubines)

Jacob 2:27-29

27 Wherefore, my brethren, hear me, and hearken to the word of the Lord: For there shall not any man among you have save it be one wife; and concubines he shall have none;

28 For I, the Lord God, delight in the chastity of women. And whoredoms are an abomination before me; thus saith the Lord of Hosts.

29 Wherefore, this people shall keep my commandments, saith the Lord of Hosts, or cursed be the land for their sakes.

What is the clear message that the people should have learned about marriage if they had properly studied the scriptures?

(there shall not any man among you have save it be one wife)

And that the expedition to the law is only acceptable if the Lord commands it

Jacob 2:30

30 For if I will, saith the Lord of Hosts, raise up seed unto me, I will command my people; otherwise they shall hearken unto these things.

What reason is given that the Lord may command his people to practice polygamy?

(raise up seed unto the Lord)

Erastus Snow

"It is high time that the Lord, who wishes to raise up seed unto Himself, should command His people and renew upon them the obligations placed upon our first parents. It is to the Latter-day Saints that this mission has been committed, and the result is the multitude of school children that we find all over this Territory. Over fifty thousand Sabbath school children in the Territory of Utah—nearly one-third of the entire population, as shown in our statistics at our various Conferences—are children under eight years of age." (JD 26:213)

Joseph Smith

"Brother Levi, the Lord has revealed to me that it is his will that righteous men shall take righteous women even a plurality of wives that a righteous race may be sent forth upon the earth preparatory to the ushering in of the Millennial Reign of our Redeemer" (Autobiography of Levi Ward Hancock, pg. 61 - Church History Library)

Consider how the early saints had proven their faithfulness by enduring Kirkland, Missouri, Nauvoo, the Mormon trail, and settling Utah.
Consider how the commandment to practice plural marriage was only in effect for about one generation.
Consider how many children were born to this generation, particularly the early apostles, and the impact this had on establishing a faithful foundation for the church.

Immorality

Jacob points out one reason that immorality is such a great sin

Jacob 2:35

35 Behold, ye have done greater iniquities than the Lamanites, our brethren. Ye have broken the hearts of your tender wives, and lost the confidence of your children, because of your bad examples before them; and the sobbings of their hearts ascend up to God against you. And because of the strictness of the word of God, which cometh down against you, many hearts died, pierced with deep wounds.

What sins had the Nephites committed that Jacob stated was greater than those committed by the Lamanites?

Howard W. Hunter

“The Lord forbids and his church condemns any and every intimate relationship outside of marriage. Infidelity on the part of a man breaks the heart of his wife and loses her confidence and the confidence of his children.

“Be faithful in your marriage covenants in thought, word, and deed. Pornography, flirtations, and unwholesome fantasies erode one’s character and strike at the foundation of a happy marriage. Unity and trust within a marriage are thereby destroyed. One who does not control his thoughts and thus commits adultery in his heart, if he does not repent, shall not have the Spirit, but shall deny the faith and shall fear.” (CR, Oct. 1994)

In contrast, Jacob describes the blessings of those strive to keep their hearts pure

Jacob 3:1-2

1 But behold, I, Jacob, would speak unto you that are pure in heart. Look unto God with firmness of mind, and pray unto him with exceeding faith, and he will console you in your afflictions, and he will plead your cause, and send down justice upon those who seek your destruction.

2 O all ye that are pure in heart, lift up your heads and receive the pleasing word of God, and feast upon his love; for ye may, if your minds are firm, forever.

What does Jacob give as one blessing of maintaining a pure heart and living a moral life?

(he will console you in your afflictions, and he will plead your cause
feast upon his love)

Gerald N. Lund

"God allows us to be the guardians, or the gatekeepers, of our own hearts. We must, of our own free will, open our hearts to the Spirit, for He will not force Himself upon us.

"So how do we open our hearts?"

"In the Sermon on the Mount, the Savior said, 'Blessed are the pure in heart: for they shall see God' (Matt 5:8). If something is pure, it is not polluted or tainted by things which do not belong to it. Purity of heart is certainly one of the most important qualifications for receiving inspiration from God. While none of our hearts are perfect, the more diligently we strive to eliminate impurity, or push out things which do not belong there, the more we open our hearts to the Holy Spirit. Note this sweet promise of the prophet Jacob: 'O all ye that are pure in heart, lift up your heads and receive the pleasing word of God, and feast upon his love' (Jacob 3:2)." (CR, April 2008)

Jacob warns the people that they are facing the 'destruction' part of the cycle if they don't repent and strive to purify their hearts

Jacob 3:3,10

3 But, wo, wo, unto you that are not pure in heart, that are filthy this day before God; for except ye repent the land is cursed for your sakes; and the Lamanites, which are not filthy like unto you, nevertheless they are cursed with a sore cursing, shall scourge you even unto destruction.

10 Wherefore, ye shall remember your children, how that ye have grieved their hearts because of the example that ye have set before them; and also, remember that ye may, because of your filthiness, bring your children unto destruction, and their sins be heaped upon your heads at the last day.

What is Jacob's prophecy for the Nephites if they don't repent and strive to maintain a pure heart?

(the Lamanites... shall scourge you even unto destruction)

If they do not repent they will need to answer for the destruction and sins of their children

Focus on Christ

As with Nephi, Jacob states the purpose of his writings

Jacob 4:4,10-11

4 For, for this intent have we written these things, that they may know that we knew of Christ, and we had a hope of his glory many hundred years before his coming; and not only we ourselves had a hope of his glory, but also all the holy prophets which were before us.

10 Wherefore, brethren, seek not to counsel the Lord, but to take counsel from his hand. For behold, ye yourselves know that he counseleth in wisdom, and in justice, and in great mercy, over all his works.

11 Wherefore, beloved brethren, be reconciled unto him through the atonement of Christ, his Only Begotten Son, and ye may obtain a resurrection, according to the

power of the resurrection which is in Christ, and be presented as the first-fruits of Christ unto God, having faith, and obtained a good hope of glory in him before he manifesteth himself in the flesh.

What does Jacob state is the purpose of his writings?

(that they may know that we knew of Christ, and we had a hope of his glory many hundred years before his coming)

How can we obtain this same hope in Christ

(be reconciled unto him through the atonement)

Jacob warns about what can happen if lose focus on Christ and His atonement

Jacob 4:14

14 But behold, the Jews were a stiffnecked people; and they despised the words of plainness, and killed the prophets, and sought for things that they could not understand. Wherefore, because of their blindness, which blindness came by looking beyond the mark, they must needs fall; for God hath taken away his plainness from them, and delivered unto them many things which they cannot understand, because they desired it. And because they desired it God hath done it, that they may stumble.

Jacob warns us to not “[look] beyond the mark.” What do you think he means by that?

(despised the words of plainness... sought for things that they could not understand)

Dean L. Larsen

"Jacob speaks of people who placed themselves in serious jeopardy in spiritual things because they were unwilling to accept simple, basic principles of truth. They entertained and intrigued themselves with 'things that they could not understand.' They... obviously failed to stay within the circle of fundamental gospel truths which provide a basis for faith.... There are other ways in which many of us often look beyond the mark.... We do not draw close enough to the Lord to know him and feel of his redeeming love." (CR, Oct. 1987)

Neal A. Maxwell

"It matters so very much how we regard and view Jesus Christ. Some seek to substitute Caesars for Christ. Others are blinded because they are 'looking beyond the mark' when the mark is Christ. Many sects—without the reinforcing rods of revelation—have been badly shaken by theological tremors; the resulting ecclesiastical erosion has been so rapid it is measured in months, not centuries." (CR, April, 1976)