

Gospel Doctrine Lesson 8: O How Great the Goodness of Our God

(2 Nephi 6-10)

LESSON GOAL: To help us understand our need for the Atonement of Jesus Christ and to teach us how to receive all the blessings of the Atonement.

Bruce R. McConkie: Let this message be sounded in every ear with an angelic trump. Let it roll round the earth in resounding claps of never-ending thunder. Let it be whispered in every heart by the still, small voice. **Those who believe the Book of Mormon and accept Joseph Smith as a prophet thereby open the door to salvation;** those who reject the book outright or who simply fail to learn its message and believe its teachings never so much as begin to travel that course along the strait and narrow path that leads to eternal life. (C.R., Oct. 1983, 104).

1. Jacob teaches about our relationship with the Savior (2 Ne. 6-8)

We may sometimes wonder why Nephi and Jacob quote Isaiah so much. There are two reasons:

1. Jacob, Isaiah and Nephi all had something in common: **each is a personal witness of the Lord Jesus Christ.** In adding the three together, Nephi is combining three witnesses together of Jesus' premortal existence and his forthcoming role as Messiah and Savior of the world. The Hebrew law of witnesses is an ancient concept that Nephi and the Lord took seriously.
2. Nephi understands that ancient commentaries often included **quoting a scriptural text, and then commenting on it in a way to apply it to the commenter's day.** We see Nephi and Jacob doing the same thing. That Nephi and Jacob quoted Isaiah so extensively is actually evidence of the Book of Mormon's veracity.

Look for words in these scriptures that refer to things the Savior does for us:

2 Ne. 6:17: But thus saith the Lord: Even the captives of the mighty shall be taken away, and the prey of the terrible shall be **delivered**; for the Mighty God shall **deliver** his covenant people. For thus saith the Lord: I will contend with them that contendeth with thee—

2 Ne. 7:2: Wherefore, when I came, there was no man; when I called, yea, there was none to answer. O house of Israel, is my hand shortened at all that it cannot **redeem**, or have I no power to deliver? Behold, at my rebuke I dry up the sea, I make their rivers a wilderness and their fish to stink because the waters are dried up, and they die because of thirst.

2 Ne. 8:3: For the Lord shall **comfort** Zion, he will **comfort** all her waste places; and he will make her wilderness like Eden, and her desert like the garden of the Lord. Joy and gladness shall be found therein, thanksgiving and the voice of melody.

4 Harken unto me, my people; and give ear unto me, O my nation; for a law shall proceed from me, and I will make my **judgment** to rest for a **light** for the people.

5 My righteousness is near; my **salvation** is gone forth, and mine arm shall **judge** the people. The isles shall wait upon me, and on mine arm shall they trust.

6 Lift up your eyes to the heavens, and look upon the earth beneath; for the heavens shall vanish away like smoke, and the earth shall wax old like a garment; and they that dwell therein shall die in like manner. But my **salvation** shall be forever, and my **righteousness** shall not be abolished.

2 Ne. 8:12: I am he; yea, I am he that **comforteth** you. Behold, who art thou, that thou shouldst be afraid of man, who shall die, and of the son of man, who shall be made like unto grass?

Now look at the words that are related to what the Savior is willing to do for his people:

- (2 Nephi 6:11) "merciful"
- (2 Nephi 6:12) "saved"
- (2 Nephi 6:14) "manifest himself"
- (2 Nephi 6:14) "recover,"
- (2 Nephi 6:17) "deliver"
- (2 Nephi 7:2) "redeem"
- (2 Nephi 7:5-9) "help,"
- (2 Nephi 7:5-9) "justify"
- (2 Nephi 8:3,12) "comfort"
- (2 Nephi 8:4-6) "light,"
- (2 Nephi 8:4-6) "salvation,"
- (2 Nephi 8:4-6) "judge"
- (2 Nephi 8:16) "covered" [protected]
- (2 Nephi 8:22) "pleads"

Look at a few descriptions of the Savior's character and His love for us:

D&C 19:17-19: But if they would not repent they must suffer even as I; **Which suffering caused myself, even God, the greatest of all, to tremble because of pain**, and to bleed at every pore, and to suffer both body and spirit—and would that I might not drink the bitter cup, and shrink—Nevertheless, glory be to the Father, and I **partook and finished my preparations unto the children of men.**

Mosiah 3:7: And 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.

Luke 22:44: 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.

Look at what the Savior asks us to do in response to the things he is willing to do for us:

2 Ne. 8:4--- **"Hearken unto me, my people;** and give ear unto me, O my nation"

2 Ne. 8:7--- **"Hearken unto me, ye that know righteousness,** the people in whose heart I have written my law"

2 Ne. 8:7--- **"Fear ye not the reproach of men,** neither be ye afraid of their reviling"

2 Ne. 8:9--- **"Awake, awake! Put on strength,** O arm of the Lord; awake as in the ancient days"

2 Ne. 8:17--- **"Awake, awake, stand up . . . "**

2 Ne. 8:24--- **"Awake, awake, put on thy strength,** O Zion; put on thy beautiful garments, O Jerusalem"

2 Ne. 8:25--- **"Shake thyself from the dust;** arise, sit down, O Jerusalem; loose thyself from the bands of thy neck, O captive daughter of Zion"

Jacob has never visited Jerusalem, but he has seen it in vision and has seen that Lehi's prophecies have been fulfilled. (2 Ne. 6:8) He has seen the ministry and death of the Holy One of Israel, and the suffering of the Jews that would thereafter come upon Israel. (2 Ne. 6:9,10). But he has also seen the gathering and has explained the sequence of that gathering in the same way that it has been and will be explained many times in the Book of Mormon:

2 Nephi 6:11: Wherefore, after they are driven to and fro, for thus saith the angel, many shall be afflicted in the flesh, and shall not be suffered to perish, because of the prayers of the faithful; they shall be scattered, and smitten, and hated; nevertheless, the Lord will be merciful unto them, that *when they shall come to the knowledge of their Redeemer, they shall be gathered together again to the lands of their inheritance.*

The gathering of the House of Israel to the lands of their inheritance comes after they believe in Christ.

2. Through His Atonement, Jesus Christ offers redemption from temporal death and spiritual death (2 Ne. 9)

The Savior asks us to do certain things if we desire to receive the full blessings of the atonement.

- 2 Ne. 9:18-----**Believe** in the Holy One of Israel; endure the crosses of the world; despise the shame of the world.
- 2 Ne. 9:21-----**Hearken unto the Savior's voice.**
- 2 Ne. 9:23-----**Repent, be baptized,** and have faith.
- 2 Ne. 9:24-----**Endure to the end.**
- 2 Ne. 9:39-----**Be spiritually minded.**
- 2 Ne. 9:41-----**Come unto the Lord;** walk the straight and narrow course.
- 2 Ne. 9:50,51--**Feast on that which will not perish.**
- 2 Ne. 9:52-----**Remember the words of God,** pray continually, and give thanks.

Notice that in 2 Ne 9:7, the sacrifice of the Savior is called an *infinite atonement*. Knowing Jesus will redeem through an "infinite atonement" comforts us.

Tad R. Callister, in his book *The Infinite Atonement*, lists eight ways Atonement is "Infinite" :

1. It is infinite due to the **divinity of Jesus Christ.**
2. It is infinite in its **power.**
3. It is infinite in **time**, reaching into the past and into the future.
4. It is infinite in **coverage** or comprehensiveness.
5. It is infinite in its **depth** both in "whom it covers and what it covers." 6. It is infinite in the degree of suffering endured by the Redeemer.
7. It is infinite in **love**, for Christ's love is undiminished in every way.
8. It is infinite in the **blessings** it bestows.

If there were no atonement and resurrection "our spirits must become subject to . . .the devil to rise no more (v7-9)

Bruce R. McConkie: "Our spirits, stained with sin, unable to cleanse themselves, would be subject to the author of sin everlastingly; we would be followers of Satan; we would be sons of perdition." (*A New Witness for the Articles of Faith*, 129-130).

In 2 Nephi 9, Jacob praises the Lord for the great plan of salvation that rescues mankind from such an awful and inevitable condition. Look at God's attributes that Jacob has listed:

- (v 8) O the **wisdom** of God, his mercy and grace
- (v 10) O how great the **goodness** of our God
- (v 13) O how great the **plan** of our God!
- (v 17) O the greatness and the **justice** of our God
- (v 19) O the greatness of the **mercy** of our God, the Holy One of Israel
- (v 20) O how great the **holiness** of our God! for he **knoweth** all things

Bruce R. McConkie: "O the wisdom of God, his mercy and grace!" Jacob exults. Why? Because if there were **no atonement**, there would be **no resurrection**; and if there were no resurrection, "our spirits must become subject to that angel who fell from before the presence of Eternal God, and became the devil, to rise no more. And 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." (2 Ne. 9:8-9.) That is to say, **if there were no resurrection, which comes by the grace of God, all men would be sons of perdition, the most horrible and awful punishment in all the eternities.** (*The Promised Messiah*, 347).

Through the Atonement of Jesus Christ, all people will be restored to God's presence to be judged (2 Nephi 9:15). However, not all people will be "saved in the kingdom of God," or permitted to dwell in God's presence forever (2 Ne.9:23). According to Jacob, these are some of the things we must do to be "saved in the kingdom of God"

1. Believe in Jesus Christ, the Holy One of Israel, and come unto Him (v 18, 23-24, 41).
2. Endure the crosses of the world and despise the shame of the world (v 18).
3. Hearken to the voice of the Lord (v 21).
4. Repent, be baptized, and endure to the end (v 23-24).
5. Be spiritually minded (v 39)
6. "Feast upon that which perisheth not" (v 50-51).
7. Remember the words of God (v 52).
8. Pray continually and give thanks (v 52).

Listen to these glorious words about coming to Christ:

2 Ne. 9:50-52: Come, my brethren, **every one that thirsteth**, come ye to the waters; and he that hath no money, **come buy and eat**; yea, come buy wine and milk without money and without price.

51 Wherefore, do not spend money for that which is of no worth, nor your labor for that which cannot satisfy. **Hearken 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**.

52 Behold, my beloved brethren, **remember the words of your God**; pray unto him continually by day, and **give thanks unto his holy name by night. Let your hearts rejoice**.

3. Certain attitudes and actions keep us from the blessings of the Atonement (2 Ne. 9)

In addition to speaking of requirements for receiving all the blessings of the Atonement, Jacob spoke of attitudes and actions that prevent us from receiving all the blessings of the Atonement. Jacob then delivered many warnings against wickedness, easily found by looking for the word "Wo."

1. **Wo unto them who have God's law and commandments, who transgress them because they are learned and think they are wise.** They hearken not unto the counsel of God, supposing they know of themselves. Therefore, their wisdom is foolishness, and they shall perish (vv. 27-29).
2. **Wo unto the rich.** Because they are rich, they despise the poor. Their treasure is their God, and their treasure shall perish with them (v. 30).
3. **Wo unto the deaf** who will not hear, for they shall perish (v. 31).
4. **Wo unto the blind** who will not see, for they shall perish also (v. 32).
5. **Wo unto the uncircumcised of heart**, for a knowledge of their iniquities shall smite them at the last day (v. 33).
6. **Wo unto the liar**, for he shall be thrust down to hell (v. 34).
7. **Wo unto the murderer** who deliberately kills, for he shall die (v. 35).
8. **Wo unto them who commit whoredoms**, for they shall be thrust down to hell (v. 36).
9. **Wo unto those who worship idols**, for the devil of all devils delights in them (v. 37).
10. **Wo unto all those who die in their sins**, for they shall return to God, behold his face, and remain in their sins (v. 38).

4. The Lord remembers His covenants with His people and Israel (2 Ne. 10)

Boyd K. Packer: "The discouraging idea that a mistake (or even a series of them) makes it everlastingly too late, does not come from the Lord. He has said that *if we will repent, not only will He forgive us our transgressions, but He will forget them and remember our sins no more*" (Conference Report, Apr. 1989, 72).

Jacob teaches that we need light to make our way through mortality; the Savior is the only source of light:

2 Ne. 8:10: Who is among you that feareth the Lord that obeyeth the voice of his servant, that walketh in darkness and hath no light?

2 Ne. 8:11: Behold all ye that kindle fire that compass yourselves about with sparks, walk in the light of your fire and in the sparks which ye have kindled. This shall ye have of mine hand—**ye shall lie down in sorrow,**

2 Ne. 9:14: . . . for I, the Lord, . . . will be their king, and I will be a light unto them forever, that hear my words.

Larry R. Lawrence (of the Seventy): "Would you be surprised to learn that your success in life depends upon how much light you gain while you are here? Success is not about how much money you make or how many medals you win or how much fame you achieve. The real objective of our existence is to gain light.

Exceeding light is an attribute of every resurrected celestial being. . . . When it comes time for each of us to be resurrected, how will the Lord determine whether we receive a celestial body, a terrestrial body, or a celestial body? The answer is easier than you may think. If we have accumulated enough celestial light in our spirits, we will be resurrected with celestial bodies. If we have accumulated only enough light to qualify for terrestrial or celestial bodies, that is the glory we will receive in the Resurrection.

How can we obtain more light so that it "groweth brighter and brighter" within us? I suggest five ways.

- **Love Others:** Love rapidly brings more light into our spirits; contention and jealousy take light away.
- **Study the Scriptures:** If you want to grow spiritually, you have to feed your spirit by feasting on the word every day.
- **Obey the Commandments:** As you learn truth, you must apply it to accumulate light.
- **Hearken to the Holy Ghost:** You will experience a spurt of spiritual growth and a big infusion of light.
- **Serve in the Temple:** There is so much light and truth to be gained from temple service that the temple may be referred to as the University of the Lord. Consider yourself blessed if you bask in this heavenly light on a regular basis.
- **Be a Light:** Every Latter-day Saint home, and every Church member should be a light to the world.

("The Light of the Perfect Day," *Ensign*, March 2016).

5. Conclusion

Bruce R. McConkie: "Why was Israel scattered? Our Israelite forebears were scattered because **they rejected the gospel, defiled the priesthood, forsook the church, and departed from the kingdom.** They turned from the Lord, worshipped false gods, and walked in all the ways of the heathen nations. They forsook the Abrahamic covenant, trampled under their feet the holy ordinances, and rejected the Lord Jehovah. **Israel was scattered for apostasy.** . . .

"What, then, is involved in the gathering of Israel? The gathering of Israel consists in **believing and accepting and living** in harmony with all that the Lord once offered his ancient chosen people. It consists of **having faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, of repenting, of being baptized and receiving the gift of the Holy Ghost, and of keeping the commandments of God.** It consists of believing the gospel, joining the Church, and coming into the kingdom" (*A New Witness for the Articles of Faith* [1985], 515).

2 Nephi 10:23-25: "Therefore, **cheer up your hearts, and remember that ye are free to act for yourselves--to choose the way of everlasting death or the way of eternal life.** Wherefore, my beloved brethren, **reconcile yourselves to the will of God,** and not to the will of the devil and the flesh; and remember, after ye are reconciled unto God, that it is only in and through the grace of God that ye are saved. Wherefore, **may God raise you from death by the power of the resurrection, and also from everlasting death by the power of the atonement, that ye may be received into the eternal kingdom of God, that ye may praise him through grace divine. Amen."**

President Gordon B Hinckley: "We carry in our hearts a firm and unshakable conviction of the divine mission of the Lord Jesus Christ. . . . We honor His birth. But without His death, that birth would have been but one more birth. **It was the Redemption which He worked out in the Garden of Gethsemane and upon the cross of Calvary which made His gift immortal, universal, and everlasting.** His was a great Atonement for the sins of all mankind. . . . "[Jesus Christ's] **Atonement is the greatest event in human history.** There is nothing to compare with it. It is the most fundamental part of our Father's plan for the happiness of His children. Without it, mortal life would be a dead-end existence with neither hope nor future. The gift of our divine Redeemer brings an entirely new dimension to our lives. **Because of our Savior's sacrifice, instead of dismal oblivion, death becomes only a passage to a more glorious realm. The Resurrection becomes a reality for all**" (*Ensign*, Sept 2007, 4- 8).