

# Mosiah 1–3 – S03E15

“Filled with Love towards God and All Men”

In his end-of-life address, King Benjamin fulfils a crucial requirement of the Law of Moses, teaches how to obtain salvation, and demonstrates why the Nephites were so important to God.

I’m Mark Holt, and this is Gospel Talktrine.

Welcome to Gospel Talktrine. So grateful to have you with us, as we discuss the “Come Follow Me” lessons, of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.

## Listener question: What made conference unforgettable for you?

We have a question this week. It comes from Toran from Dallas. And Toran is a nephew of mine, and it brings me great pleasure to know that some of my family is listening. As I may have mentioned on the program, many of my family have not remained in the Church since the time when I grew up, and so those who are make me very happy to hear from them. So Toran’s question is this: “I loved Conference. For me, the amount of time I prepared made it most special. I’ve never thought so much about it in the six months leading up to conference. The spirit was strong, and I have several goals to improve myself, as I do every conference.

Much of what was unforgettable, however, was circumstantial: COVID19, social distancing, temples in Dubai and Shanghai, and a world-wide fast among other things. I’m worried that I may have missed the mark, and I intend to go study the talks. My question is: What made conference unforgettable for you?”

So General Conference, as you hopefully experienced, was truly amazing. For me, I probably have to say, my favourite talk that comes into my mind right now – one of my favourites, since there’s so many wonderful ones – was Elder Gong’s talk on Hosanna and Halleluiah. And we’ll briefly spend a minute or two just reviewing why.

## Hosanna for Palm Sunday, and Halleluiah for Easter Sunday

First of all, *Hosanna*, as we’ve discussed many times on the program, it means “Save now” or “Save, we pray.” It is a plea. The “we” is included. And it basically is, what we would call in English, the imperative tense of the verb. It is a request or direction to save us. And this is what the people shout as Christ rides into Jerusalem on Palm Sunday, what we call Palm Sunday. So Hosanna; “Save now” or “Save we pray.”

*Halleluiah* is also an imperative command. It means “Praise ye the Lord,” the command to others to praise the Lord and thank him for what he has done.

So *Hosanna*, as Elder Gong mentioned, is an appropriate shout on Palm Sunday, the day when it seems like the promises of Christ are about to be filled. And then, *Halleluiah* is an appropriate shout on Easter Sunday, when the resurrection was completed. One week separated those two events in the New Testament. This is not from Elder Gong’s talk, but to me this is some of my thoughts on it.

## Resurrection includes the restoration of all of our works unto us

And another thing that Elder Gong mentioned was that resurrection includes not only the restoring of our spirit to our bodies, but as we’ve mentioned on this program, the central message of the Book of Mormon is that resurrection includes the restoration of our works, all of our works – whether they be good or evil – will be restored unto us. King Benjamin, in his talk that we’ll discuss today, makes specific mention of that.

Elder Gong also mentions the first Passover, and Passover as you may know, occurs around the time of Easter every year. And the first Passover was a celebration, a way – because God knew in advance what would happen – it was a way of the Israelites commemorating, as it was happening, their salvation from the plagues of Egypt. And basically, from the destruction that would come upon the world because of its sinfulness. That’s in a broader sense. So that’s the meaning of Passover.

I hope I’ve answered that question, and as always, should you wish to ask a question, send me email at gt@gospletalktrine.com.

## This week’s lesson material

And that takes us right into our lesson. Before we talk about King Benjamin today, I’ve got a number of things to discuss. And this is along the lines of us “packing our bags,” as I’ve said before. And this is really a two-parter. Because a lot of the reason why I will talk at length now about the Old Testament is because it applies to both parts of King Benjamin’s address.

So hopefully you’ll remember a lot of this for next time, because there’s a big pay-off for why I’m discussing this that will only come at the end of King Benjamin’s address. I didn’t want to steal the thunder of next week’s lesson and discuss it all today.

## Three pilgrimage festivals in ancient Judaism

So with that introduction, I’ll begin. We were talking about Passover, and I’m going to talk about the ancient Israelite festivals. Now, there were three what are called pilgrimage festivals in ancient Judaism. And these were the festivals when Jews would travel from wherever they were in the land of Israel to Jerusalem, to be at the Temple, or the environs of the Temple, on a specific day of the year.

Interestingly, the Jewish calendar is – and has always been – a lunar one. So their months begin on a new moon. And a lot of people think that Easter has the date it has – which by the way, Easter is always the first Sunday, after the first full moon, after the Equinox, which is an interesting way to calculate a holiday! And a lot of people think, even if you look this up on Wikipedia for example, it will say, “Oh, it has it’s root in European pagan tradition.” It actually has its root in Hebrew calendar tradition.

## Passover, and the Feast of Unleavened Bread

The Hebrew calendar, the month of *Nisan* – or the month of *Aviv*, as it was called then – begins on the new moon, and it’s two weeks later that the Passover feast is celebrated. And then that sets off seven days of the Feast of Unleavened Bread. And so the Passover is always held on a full moon. So, anyway, that’s just a little piece of trivia.

So Passover was a time when Israel would remember their salvation from slavery in Egypt. And specifically, from the plague that killed all first-born children, first-born flocks of animals, everything. And if they were willing to take the blood of a lamb that they had slain specifically for the purpose, and then to put it on their door-posts, then the Israelites could be spared from this plague. You may remember the story, hopefully you do.

And then the Feast of Unleavened Bread is a commemoration of the fact that Israel left Egypt in such a hurry that they could not wait for their bread to rise. There was no time. They had to eat – part of the celebration of Passover is to eat standing up, to eat quickly. And eat with your shoes on your feet. So it’s an interesting fast, because it’s made to commemorate a specific event, and God gave specific instructions to Moses – this is how you are to observe it – even before it happens. So God obviously knew what was coming, and the Israelites on the very first Passover, they performed all of these actions, and then they were instructed to do it for ever after, to remember what God had done for them.

And this commandment is what would bring Jews to Jerusalem, every springtime. It is what Jesus was in Jerusalem for on Palm Sunday, it is why he entered Jerusalem; to prepare for what would come later in the week, a Passover feast.

## *Shavuot*, the Feast of Weeks

The second feast that you may have heard of is called *Shavuot*. Passover is called *Pesach*, Shavuot means *Weeks*. And seven weeks after Passover, God commanded the Israelites to celebrate the first fruits. So the next day after those seven weeks were expired – which generally could occur anywhere from mid-May to mid-June – they would celebrate the first fruits of their harvest, the spring harvest. So the growing season in ancient Israel was from the Fall to the Spring, that was the rainy season. So then they would have the very first fruits, the harvest of barley around the time of Passover, and then the end of that spring harvest would be seven weeks later. They would finally harvest their wheat.

So this is the point of the Pentecost, which it is called the New Testament, or the *Shavuot*, the Feast of Weeks.

And they’re called festivals or feasts, but basically what it is, is a commemoration, and it often involves a meal. But it can be a solemn commemoration as well, even though it’s called by the name of “festival.”

## The autumn festival complex

So those are the first two festivals. And this brings us to final festival, or what is called in some circles, the autumn festival complex, because there are a few Holy Days there, which occurs later in the fall. Usually, because the calendar is lunar, it doesn’t always have the same date in our calendar, but it usually is in the month of September.

## *Rosh Hashana*, the Feast of Trumpets

And the first festival in this autumn festival complex is the Feast of Trumpets, which is a day when trumpets are blown. And it is the run up, or the introduction to the ten days of repentance, in which the Israelites were preparing for the Day of Atonement. So this was the first day of the seventh month, was the Festival of Trumpets – incidentally that was the day on which Joseph Smith received the golden plates from Moroni in that particular year, that fell on the Feast of Trumpets late in September.

## *Yom Kippur*, the Day of Atonement

Now ten days later, the time for repentance, the warning time has passed, and this is the Day of Atonement, in which the High Priest kills the lamb without blemish, and carries that sacrificial blood into the Temple, and sprinkles it – this is the holiest day of the year – he sprinkles it towards the Ark of the Covenant, or even on the Ark of the Covenant, and passes through the veil. He is able, on this day, to speak the name of God.

And so, a very sacred time. The Jews considered this to be a time in which they were judged for all of their actions of the last year. So if they hadn’t done a good enough job at repenting, especially in this time running up to the Day of Atonement, then their sins were recorded forever. It’s almost like, the clock is ticking. And you have until the Day of Atonement to make up to God for what you’ve done.

So this might lead you to think that it’s something like baptism, and they did see it that way, or the sacrament, very similar. And if they did do a good enough job in repenting then the new year, the Jewish New Year is the Festival of Trumpets, also called *Rosh Hashana*. And *Yom Kippur* is another name for the Day of Atonement. So if you did a good enough job preparing for the Day of Atonement, then you begin the year on a clean slate.

## *Sukkot,* the Festival of Booths, or the Feast of Tabernacles

And five days later, the final feast of this fall festival complex was called *Sukkot*, or the Festival of Booths, or the Feast of Tabernacles – it has a number of different names, depending on how it’s translated. But tabernacles, remember, in the Old Testament, simply meant a dwelling place, and often meant a tent. And that’s where “booths” comes from. So it was generally some sort of nomadic dwelling, or temporary or portable dwelling.

And the nature of the observance of Sukkot was, Israelites would come – this was the festival in which they performed the most sacrifices, it was the festival most associated with the sacrificing of animals, of all of the festivals. And they would bring their firstlings of their flocks. So the other festivals are harvest festivals; this is a festival of flocks.

And part of the law of Moses was, when a mother bears her first-born child, that child will belong to the Lord. So this is when the firstlings of the flock would be brought to the Temple in Jerusalem, and all of Israel would gather around there for a week. The first day of this eight-day long Feast of Tabernacles was a sabbath day, and the eighth day was also a sabbath day; there could be no work performed. And so all of these festivals are actually, by the way, are called sabbatical festivals.

## Sabbaths and sabbatical festivals

The word *sabbath*, we think of it applying to just one day in the week, but it actually applies to a time that we take apart, and we have it as holy. We set it aside from normal earthly cares, so we don’t work on the sabbath. The Israelites saw these festivals as sabbaths. And this was specifically part of the commandment that God gave to Moses, that when you observe these festivals you don’t work. So they were called sabbatical festivals.

And additionally, there were more sabbaths. There were the sabbath days every week, there were the sabbath days every year, And then every seven years, the entire year was a sabbath, a type of sabbath. And the Israelites were forbidden from engaging in any agricultural work during that sabbath year. This was a requirement they were notorious for breaking. Nevertheless, that was the commandment, was that they were not to raise crops on the seventh year.

Then every seven sabbath years, the year after that, the fiftieth year would be a so-called *Jubilee* year, in which many observances were held, like freeing of captives, and forgiving of debts, and returning of property, and assisting the poor.

This is the nature of Jewish sabbaths, this is how they understood it, and this is definitely part of the law of Moses. So that’s a brief introduction into what Jewish festivals are like.

## More about Sukkot, the Festival of Booths

So now we’re going to talk a little bit more about this final one, this Feast of Tabernacles, or the Festival of Booths. The reason for the observance of it was, they would have a tent, and they would camp around Jerusalem, to commemorate the way in which the ancient Israelites lived during the Exodus. So the privations that they suffered, and the miraculous help that God sent them, in the form of manna, water in the wilderness, quail. There were a number of miraculous interventions that God made on behalf of Israel, as they travelled through the wilderness. And nevertheless, it was a time of great physical hardship. And so, Sukkot was the commemoration of all of those things, both the hardship, and the miraculous salvation.

First of all, in the book of Exodus, chapter 24, this is when Sukkot happened for the first time. And God commanded Moses, “I want you to remember this, I want you to remember how this is going. All of these people are receiving the law from your hand, and you are making my covenant with them, and you are living on my largesse here in the wilderness, and I want you to remember this. This is another festival. So I’ve already commanded you about the Passover, and now I’m commanding you that you will commemorate living in tents, and having me provide for you.”

And Moses makes this a sabbath year commandment, to read the law, every seven years during Sukkot, in Deuteronomy chapter 31. So I encourage you to read – there are three chapters that you could look over, if you want to understand this in greater depth. The first is Exodus chapter 19, we’ll talk a little bit more about that in a minute. The second is Exodus 24, which is as I mentioned the first Sukkot, and the third is Deuteronomy, chapter 31, verses 9 through 13, when Moses makes the teaching of the law a commandment during Sukkot.

## The Festival of Booths and King Benjamin’s Temple address

So why is Sukkot so important? Well, as we examine the context of King Benjamin’s Temple address, we find way more similarities than could possibly be explained by coincidence.

So first of all, Sukkot was the time for reading aloud of the law, as I mentioned, as Moses commanded in Deuteronomy 31. And it was the time of getting the people’s vocal agreement to that law. It was a time of coronation of new kings, it was a time for remembering the sacrifices and the privations of ancestors, as we’ve mentioned, and it was a time for dedicating the Temple. This was when Solomon dedicated his Temple in Jerusalem. He finally completed it, and it was during the occasion of Sukkot that he made that dedication.

So I’m going to draw a number of parallels here. If you’re guessing where I’m heading – that King Benjamin is obviously making his speech during a time of the Feast of Tabernacles for the ancient Nephites – then you’re exactly right. So I’m going to draw a few more parallels, and we’ll see why it matters in just a few minutes.

So Stephen Ricks, a BYU Professor, he delineated several parallels, and now we’re going to get to Exodus chapter 19. These parallels between Exodus chapter 19, and Mosiah chapters 1 through 6 – in other words the chapters that we’ll study this week and next – first of all, the parallels that he noticed were specifically what the High Priest or the prophet or the governing ecclesiastical authority, even the king, would say during this festival when he would address the people.

First of all, there was a preamble, and the preamble would include the information that God is initiating a covenant with you. “You who are listening, you hear O Israel,” in other words, and he’s speaking through a prophet, and you can find that Old Testament example in Exodus 19:3. This is prior to Moses delivering the Ten Commandments, by the way. And you can compare that with Mosiah chapter 1, and the first part of chapter 2, until verse 9. So, Mosiah 1:1 to 2:9.

Then Moses give the history, God’s review of God’s relationship with Israel. And how they have reacted to his blessings in the past, and the things that God has done for them in the past, Exodus 19 verse 4. And you can compare that with most of Mosiah chapter 2, verse 9 through 30.

The third thing that Dr Ricks delineated was terms of the covenant. Then the prophet would explain, “Here is the covenant I brought before you. The commandments and obligations that you Israelites will have to obey, that you will be expected to take upon yourselves.” And that’s in Exodus 19 verses 5 and 6. But you can compare that with Mosiah chapter 4, and we won’t get into it this week.

So we’ll discuss – as you can kind of guess – we’ll discuss some of this stuff this week, and some of it next.

After the terms of the covenant, then the people are expected to agree. They give their formal witness, that they bind themselves to obey. That’s found in Exodus chapter 19 verse 8. It’s also found in Mosiah chapter 5 verses 2 through 8.

After that happens, then the blessings and curses are given. And you might see in that pattern something reflected in modern day; which is, we don’t always know, when we make a covenant with God, exactly what’s involved until after we’ve made it. Sometimes covenants reveal themselves over time, and we’re expected to agree to it before fully knowing, because, we have faith in God, and that’s very strange. So the people first, they find out what their obligations are, then they bind themselves to obey, and only then do they find out the consequences of obedience. At least in the Mosiah version.

Now in the Old Testament version, they get the terms, and they get the list of consequences, all in Exodus 19 verse 5. But in Mosiah, they bind themselves to obey, then in Mosiah chapter 5, it’s in verses 9 to 15, that they find out the consequences of obedience and disobedience.

Finally, so the first of preamble, second the history, third the terms of the covenant, fourth the formal witness, five the blessings and curses, or the list of consequences of obedience and disobedience. And sixth – this is all from Dr Ricks, BYU Professor – sixth is the recital of the covenant. The prophet makes provision that in the future this covenant will be renewed, and it will be read, and this is what Moses has done in Deuteronomy chapter 31 for example. He leaves a commandment, “I want you to take what I’m giving you now, this sacred text, and I want you to put it in a very safe spot.”

Incidentally it’s believed that this very commandment that Moses made, this text that he put into the Ark, is what was discovered by King Josiah later in the Old Testament, and when he discovered it, he realised that the Israelites had not been keeping the law of Moses, and he cleaned up the country, basically. He brought everyone to repentance, much like King Benjamin has done, throughout his life. As it’s described in the Words of Mormon, it describes his life’s work was to call the Nephites to repentance. And he did this as a much younger man, and he did such a good job of it that he enjoyed peace the remainder of his days.

And so there’s a similarity there between King Josiah and King Benjamin. King Josiah from the Old Testament and King Benjamin from the Book of Mormon.

So the sixth parallel is that there is a provision made, that this covenant will be remembered, it will be read, it will be rededicated, re-entered into by people every so often. So you can find that in Exodus 19 verse 7, and in Mosiah chapter 6, the first part of Mosiah chapter 6.

So those are already six very, very specific parallels that tie Sukkot and the way that we see Sukkot being observed in the Bible, with the way that the Nephites are attending this speech given by King Benjamin. So it’s obvious, and it should be obvious, and to me it’s clear, and I’ve accepted, that what the Nephites are doing is, they are observing one of the Mosaic sabbatical feasts, one of the pilgrimage festivals that is required in the law of Moses, In fact it says right here in the first three chapters of the book of Mosiah, they were doing all these things, they were performing sacrifices, according to the law of Moses. And they were living the law of Moses.

I want to point out something about the law of Moses in the Book of Mormon. Again and again, we find the anti-Christs in the Book of Mormon putting their faith, and even bearing testimony in the law of Moses. So Sherem, for example, you’ll remember a few weeks ago we talked about Sherem, the first anti-Christ in the Book of Mormon, who had this confrontation with the prophet Jacob. And he said, “Look, everyone should obey the law of Moses, and it is the law of Moses by which salvation comes.” And Jacob had to say, “No. Obviously we have to obey the law of Moses, but it’s not the law of Moses that brings salvation. It’s Christ who brings salvation.”

And we’ll talk more about why that matters probably next week.

So Sukkot was also a time for solemn assembly. Now in 2 Chronicles 6 [verse 13](https://www.churchofjesuschrist.org/study/scriptures/ot/2-chr/6?lang=eng&id=13#p13), this is an interesting scripture. You see that during the dedication of Solomon’s Temple, Solomon had a brazen scaffold erected outside the Temple. The people are living in tents – it doesn’t necessarily go into detail about that at this point in 2 Chronicles – but this is the time of the year they were observing Sukkot at this point. So, they would have been living in tents near the Temple, perhaps facing towards the Temple, much as it’s described in Mosiah, and he had a tower erected, and then gave them his convocation, his solemn assembly. And they were all expected to agree while he spoke from the top of this tower, King Solomon.

Right, so I’ve done a little work here in getting us to see the address of King Benjamin in the context of ancient Israelite sabbatical observance. And the question you may be asking yourself is “Why is that so important? Why does it matter that King Benjamin’s address is so similar to Sukkot? Why does it matter whether it is Sukkot?”

## Nephites redeeming the history of the Israelites?

So I was pondering on this for a long time this week, and it seems to me like – it’s becoming clear to me, this is my opinion, but this is something that’s becoming clear to me – that the Nephites saw themselves as redeeming the history of the Israelites. So let’s go back over the history of the Israelites.

And the first scripture that I’m going to throw at you is one that I’m very fond of, this is Jeremiah 31, verses 31 through 34. So in this, Jeremiah says, “There will come a time when, I, God, make a new covenant with you Israel. And it won’t be like the covenant that you broke, that Moses made on Mount Sinai, because you broke that. This will be a covenant that you will keep.”

And so that’s just one quick parallel there. There are a number of parallels with [Jeremiah 31: 31-34](https://www.churchofjesuschrist.org/study/scriptures/ot/jer/31?lang=eng&id=31-34#p31) in these first chapters in Mosiah. That’s the first one, is that God is saying, “One day, I will make a better covenant with you. I will work harder, or you will work harder, or something will be different,” – it’s not exactly made clear in that scripture – “but it will work. Whereas in the past, my work among you has not worked. You have chosen to be wicked. And there will come a time when I will make a covenant that will actually work. And it will save the people, and they will choose to keep it, and it will bring them to me.” Ok.

So the Nephites see themselves – we have evidence again and again – the Nephites see themselves as being the people that Jeremiah was talking about. So I’m going to make a few parallels here, and see if you agree with me.

## Nephite parallels to the covenants of the Old Testament

First of all, what are the three important covenants of the Old Testament? There’s the Abrahamic covenant, where Abraham is given a promise that he will be given certain lands, the lands of Canaan, and in that land his people will multiply to the point that they will be as innumerable as the sand or as the stars. And that by his seed shall all the kindreds of the earth be blessed. So that’s the Abrahamic covenant.

Now, there’s also the Mosaic covenant, where Moses receives the law, he saves his people, he carries them from one land to another. Then he receives the law and gives them this law to live by, the scriptures that they will read, he has a vision of all creation. And in the mean time they go through a period of time where they are basically camping for years at a time.

And then finally the reach the place of their final inheritance, and they build a temple, and there’s a king there. The Davidic covenant is given to David, which is “Your dynasty will continue, and I, God, am going to redeem you.” Now the Davidic covenant is the promise of a Messiah. And it includes a temple, and Solomon, when he dedicated this temple, he did it from a tower, and it includes the promise of a future Messiah who will come and redeem them. Not only physically, but spiritually as well.

## Lehi and the covenant of Abraham

Now in the Abrahamic covenant, in the promises of the Abrahamic covenant, we can see a strong parallel with Lehi. Lehi received a similar covenant. It included the blessings of posterity and land that we see in the Abrahamic covenant.

## Seven tribes of the Nephites?

One of the things that I don’t think we talked much about, when we talked about 1 and 2 Nephi, but Lehi did similarly to what Jacob did at the time of his death, when he blessed his children. He divided them into tribes. We don’t actually see the evidence of this until later, but in Jacob 1:13, and echoed again in 4 Nephi 1:36-38, in Mormon 1:8, and then, after all of the Book of Mormon, in D&C 3:17-18 – so four times – are echoed an enumeration of the tribes of the Nephites. And there are seven. And they’re always mentioned – this is why it’s clear to me that they’re tribes – because they’re always mentioned in the same order.

Now we kind of get the impression from Jacob 1:13, what Jacob says is, “Look, there are Nephites, and there are Jacobites, Josephites, and Zoramites. But we’re just going to call them Nephites.” So when we hear that, we just think, “Oh, from this point on they’re known as Nephites.” But that is actually not the case, because it’s repeated, and it’s repeated in the same order, in 4 Nephi, and in Mormon.

So what Jacob was saying is, “I, for my convenience in writing these records, I’m not going to enumerate all the tribes every time. I’m just going to talk about Nephites and Lamanites. And I’m going to group all the tribes that where friendly to Nephi, I’m going to group them under one title. And I’m going to group everyone else under another title of Lamanites.”

But once we compare these four scriptures that I gave you together, we realise there were actually seven tribes of Nephites. There were the Nephites, the Jacobites, the Josephites, and the Zoramites, and those were the four tribes friendly to Nephi. And then there were the Lamanites, the Lemuelites, and the Ishmaelites, that were not friendly to Nephi. And those seven tribes are mentioned each time in each of the scriptures, including in modern-day revelation in the Doctrine and Covenants.

And so later on, for example in Mormon’s time, a thousand years later they’re still using these names. Obviously, the delineation of tribe perpetuated itself, because it was important to the people who were in a tribe that they identified themselves with their tribe. As important to the Nephites, apparently, as it was to the ancient Israelites.

They’re not going to forget, even over the course of generations, whether they’re in the tribe of Dan, or Naphtali, or of Joseph, or of Judah. They’re going to remember what tribe their people come from, because it’s part of their identity. And apparently the Nephites felt the same way.

So that is another way in which Lehi represents – or is another incarnation of, or another metaphor for – the ancient patriarchs: Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. He had a similar covenant, and he also divided his descendants into tribes.

## Nephi and the covenant of Moses

Nephi: who is Nephi? Nephi represents the covenant of Moses. So what did Moses do that was so notable? He had a vision, first of all, of all creation. And then he received the commandments of God that he carved, or he had carved, he received them carved into some sort of permanent material. In the case of Moses, it was carved into stone - the Ten Commandments. But in the case of Nephi, he wrote his observances and his revelations onto plates of gold. Either way, they were things that would last, and could be taken from one place to another, and carried in some sort of ark.

Secondly, Moses led his people from a place of wickedness, to a place where they could be on their own, and create their own land, and their own culture, and be separated from a sinful society.

If you want a little bit of context on this, just search in your Gospel Library app, just search for the word “tent.” One of the first instances of it is 1 Nephi 2:15. “My father dwelt in a tent.” It’s almost like “Jesus wept.” It’s a very short verse. And you think – until you do a little bit more analysis – you think, “Wow, that verse is so short, there can’t be much meaning buried in it.”

But then when you look at that, you have actually done this search for the word “tent”– and now in your Gospel Library app you can limit it to a specific standard work – and you limit it to the Book of Mormon, and you look at 1 Nephi and 2 Nephi, how many times “tent” shows up. And almost always, alongside the word tent, is the words “of my father.” “We went to the tent of my father,” “We returned to the tent of my father,” “We bore our tents in the wilderness.”

When Nephi says, “My father dwelt in a tent,” he is specifically making a claim, which he makes more explicit when he’s talking to his brothers, when they resist building the ship, he actually brings in the example of the Exodus. And he likens their family to the people of ancient Israel, travelling through the wilderness. So this isn’t me making this up. Nephi very much intended to be seen as having gone through a new Exodus.

Now whether he intended to put himself into the role of Moses, I’m not making that claim, but it does seem apparent from the role that he played, he had this wonderful vision. It’s clear to us – it may not have been his intention to take glory upon himself, I don’t want to put that on Nephi – but he did want his people to see themselves as going through an analogous experience to the Exodus.

And so that’s why he says, “My father dwelt in a tent.” That’s why he says, “We returneth to the tent of my father.” And in fact, they go through another exodus. In 2 Nephi chapter 5 or 7, “We took our tents again into the wilderness.” This is when the Nephites are fleeing from the Lamanites, the first time. Incidentally, 2 Nephi 5:10, he says “We did observe all things according to the law of Moses.” So the law of Moses, very important to the Nephites.

## Benjamin and the Davidic covenant

So, Lehi, analogous to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. Nephi; he’s the new Moses. Now Benjamin – you may have already guessed – he’s the new David / Solomon. So he’s constructed a temple. He may have constructed the Temple – we don’t have the exact details – of whether it was Benjamin who constructed the Temple, or whether it was his father Mosiah. But let’s look at the sequence of events.

If you back up just a little bit, go one page back from Mosiah 1 into the Words of Mormon, and then one more page into Omni, you can read a little bit about where we are in history.

The Nephites have had a major division among the people. And it’s been one generation ago, at the end of the life of King Benjamin, maybe two generations ago. So some time during the life of Benjamin’s father, Mosiah, there was this division among the Nephites, where there was this huge war. And again, someone had to have a revelation; “You’ve all got to get out of here. You’ve got to take your tents and you’ve got to go into the wilderness, you’ve got to undergo another exodus experience. And you’ve got to found a new civilisation in a new land.” And that is how they came into Zarahemla.

So King Mosiah the First – which is not the Mosiah we read in the book of Mosiah – King Mosiah the First was the one to undergo this experience, and bring his people out. And then King Benjamin, possibly, presumably, his son – much like Solomon the son of David was the one who constructed the temple that his father had planned and prepared the way for. If you remember from the Old Testament, David is the one who conquered Jerusalem, wanted very much to construct a temple, but God told him, “No, you’re not the one who is worthy to do this.” Possibly because of the way he had behaved with Bathsheba, and possibly simply because that was the will of God that it wasn’t time yet.

So, the Davidic covenant was, David was promised that his “son” – and I use that word in quotes, because it’s clear at some of the time in this revelation that King David receives – some of the time God is talking about his son Solomon, and some of the time he is not. He’s talking about a descendant of David, who at some distant date would accomplish some work. “I will establish the kingdom of thy son for ever and ever.” So, “Thy son will build me a house,” that’s clearly applies to Solomon, but also applies to Christ. “Thy son’s kingdom will last for ever and ever,” that does not apply to Solomon, but it does apply to Christ.

So Solomon constructs the Temple, addresses the people from a tower, and he is one of the manifestations of the Davidic covenant, in which the Messiah would come, redeem the people – the ultimate fulfilment of this Davidic covenant was, there would be a Messiah, a priest king, a prophet king, that would one day arise and redeem his people from all of their enemies, and from all of their sufferings.

That is why the Jews had such expectations on Jesus when they thought he was the Messiah. They expected him to be like David, a military leader. Solomon, who expanded David’s reign, they had an empire, and they were sovereign. And so they were beholden to no other earthly power, the way the Jews were beholden to Rome. So they were looking to Jesus, as someone who would actually establish another Israelite empire.

And when that didn’t happen, when it turned out the Messiah was actually going to redeem them in a much more profound, but much less visible way, then there were a lot of Jews who were disappointed.

And the point of King Benjamin’s speech here, is to say, “I going to give them a new name, by which they will be known, and by which they will be called forth.” So he is in this way taking the Davidic covenant, and applying it to every person listening. [Mosiah 1:10, Mosiah 5:7]

## Nephites and the olive tree of Zenos and Jacob

So here we have the three major covenants of the Old Testament, and they all have their Nephite analogues. If you remember, when we discussed Jacob 5, what God said about this tree, he loves this tree, it’s in the middle of his vineyard, and he wishes this olive tree could bear some fruit that he could actually enjoy. But the tree is about to die. So what he does is, he takes the vital parts of the tree, and he transplants them to other fertile ground, hoping that that ground would give this tree and this branch, and this bloodline, and this DNA of this tree another chance at life, and at producing this fruit, which in the past has been so marvellous and delicious.

And then the first time he goes back to look, “Wow, this fruit is actually really amazing. I’ve done a good job in transplanting this. I have preserved the bloodline of this tree. I have preserved the life of this tree.” And then later on, he grafts it back in. Well, we can understand why the Nephites saw themselves as, how they might have seen themselves – according to my theory here – as God taking another chance, God’s second chance at getting his covenant right. So as he expressed in Jeremiah 31, “There will come a time when I will try again. I’ll make another covenant with the children of men, and this time it will work.”

## Nephites and the prophesies of Jeremiah 31

And this is one of the final prophesies of Jeremiah before Lehi leaves Jerusalem. He was lucky to have it in the brass plates. And so the Nephites keep referring to this – now this is me guessing – the Nephites keep referring to this prophesy of Jeremiah, and thinking, “We can do this, we can be the ones. It seems clear to us, based on what Jacob said about the olive tree, that we *are* the ones! That God is actually… he is accomplishing his work with us.”

And why, in Jeremiah, why does God say that it will work? The reason he thinks it will work is, “I will forgive their sins,” as he says. “So, I’m going to have a covenant, and it’s going to accomplish my work with them. They’re going to keep it, because I’m going to forgive their sins.” And I encourage you, as I do often, to read those 3 verses in Jeremiah 31. And you’ll understand. [[Jeremiah 31:31-34](https://www.churchofjesuschrist.org/study/scriptures/ot/jer/31?lang=eng&id=31-34#p31)]

So part of the result of God forgiving them their sins, is that everyone will know the Lord. The law will be written in their hearts. Instead of having to be written on stone, and occasionally read aloud to them, it will be written on their hearts. And we’ll talk more about that next week.

So the three main covenants of the Old Testament, they’ve been echoed in the Book of Mormon, but they’ve been echoed with greater success, exactly as predicted in the vision of the olive trees by Jacob, and of Zenos.

Alright. So believe it or not, that’s the introduction to today’s lesson!

We’re going to spend most of the time required to talk about Mosiah’s address, we’re going to spend that next week, but I wanted t get that introduction across to you, because it’s so important. This is the context of the Book of Mormon. And the reason that it matters is because God really did care about creating a people that would preserve the covenants and the law, and the faithfulness of the people of Israel. He really did want to take this olive tree, and preserve it unto himself, the fruit of it. People observing the law of Moses, and believing in Christ at the same time. He wanted that fruit; it was so precious to him.

And so, now we can see, in the way that the people of Benjamin respond to his speech, we can see the fulfilment of the prophesy of Jacob 5. Which is, that the fruit will be delicious. These transplanted branches will bear this fruit, and it will be the original fruit, it will be everything that the master of the vineyard intended, and hoped for, and was missing, in this dying, decaying tree, in the centre of the vineyard. He had to take those branches and spread them around.

So you and I are the modern-day heirs of this spiritual legacy. Which is that God wanted to preserve this fruit, and now we get to see that God will take an unlimited number of pains to preserve this kind of fruit for himself. This is the whole reason for the Book of Mormon to exist, is that God wanted to preserve this fruit. That is why it’s important for us to understand, that King Benjamin was speaking during a festival – the Nephite equivalent of the Festival of Tabernacles. Because we can now understand that the Nephites were providing to God the fruit that he always wanted from Israel.

So I’ve referred a little bit to the background of King Benjamin. As I’ve mentioned, he’s the son of another prophetic king, who also led his people out of bondage into a new land. In King Benjamin’s time, there were wars with the Lamanites, there were dissentions from the Nephites to the Lamanites, there were false Christs, there were false prophets. You can find an account of those things in the Words of Mormon, verses 13 through 18.

And King Benjamin gave all of his strength, all of his spiritual, physical, mental strength, to combatting these dangers to his people. And what did he get out of it? We learn, during King Benjamin’s address, that he didn’t get anything out of it, at least not economically.

## A contrast: King Benjamin and King Solomon

So now we’re going to make a contrast. Let’s contrast… Now we know that Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, righteous prophets, righteous patriarchs. Moses, one of the best, most profoundly inspired prophets who ever lived. So those two analogues, of Lehi to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob; Nephi to Moses, we can find no weakness in their Old Testament equivalents. But when we make a comparison between King Benjamin and King Solomon, we can find something there to contrast them with as well.

## King Solomon: high taxes and indentured servitude

Now what did King Solomon do? King Solomon was famous for having high taxes. In fact, he put his people into bondage. If you go back to our podcast that we did on the building of the Temple, in order for him to get the rich materials that he wanted to put into the Temple, he instituted a form of indentured servitude for Israelites, where they actually owed their labour to the King of Lebanon, in exchange for the wood and the gold and a lot of the materials that would be used to build the Temple of Solomon. He wanted his temple to be so grand, that he was willing to sell his people to do it.

## King Solomon: many wives and concubines

In addition, King Solomon had what is described in the Bible, I believe it is 300 wives and 700 concubines. But I know that it’s a total of a thousand women, however you want to divide them up. Now what is a concubine? A wife – you know what a wife is. A concubine is a woman who – while she has lesser status than a wife – she is still in an officially sanctioned relationship with a man. And what this generally means in ancient Israel was, he was beholden to her for her monetary sustenance. That’s just a really basic… that’s not everything that was involved in the relationship of concubinage, which has a very sordid history in the Bible.

Nevertheless, what is clear is that King Solomon was supporting at least a thousand women for his sole and personal use.

Now he was supporting them economically, based on the taxes that came from the people of Israel, after having already taxed them in such a grievous way that there was no cash, and he had to sell their labour, he had to sell the promise of future labour to one of their – at least at the very best – rivals, right? And sometimes enemies. And so, he had put his people into a very weak position in order to increase his own glory, and then, to add insult to injury, he gave them all kinds of burdens, just to support the women that he wanted to have.

Now this is what happened later on in life to a man that was so wise that God called him the greatest of understanding of anyone who had ever lived.

## King Benjamin: Service and sacrifice

So the contrast is so plain and so stark between Benjamin and Solomon. And it is on purpose. Benjamin is being purposefully contrasted with Solomon here. Now they had the records of King Solomon. They would have known exactly how Solomon treated his people. And it may be that King Benjamin was aware that he was stepping into the role of Solomon, or he could be compared to another Solomon among his people.

And so he’s saying to them, one of the first things he says in his address is, “I have not given you taxes that are grievous to be born. I haven’t locked you up in dungeons.” Another famous thing in the Bible, in the book of Chronicles and in the book of Kings, it describes the dwelling of Solomon. It was almost as grand as the Temple. It was next to the Temple. It was grand, it was amazing. Some of the same materials were used.

And so he was willing to take his people and put them into debt, so he could have a dwelling, so he could have wives and concubines, so he could be wealthy all of his days, and so he could have glory.

And King Benjamin makes a point, in saying “I haven’t done any of those things. Instead, what have I done? Even though I’m a king. Even though I have put forward all of my spiritual, mental, physical energies in preserving you, from wickedness, from destruction, from military threats, from spiritual threats, from religious threats, I have not supported myself, at all, from the taxes of the people. So not only did I not give you burdens which were grievous to be borne, or lock you up in dungeons, but I have worked for my own sustenance, for my own living, my whole life. That’s the kind of king I’ve been to you.”

And he says this not as a way to glorify himself, but as a way to establish his credibility for what he’s about to say next.

Now the most important thing to remember about this first half of King Benjamin’s address, is that he is making a contrast between the worthiness and faithfulness of God on one hand, and the worthlessness – or nothingness as he calls it – the unworthiness of humankind on the other hand.

Now we’re moving into Mosiah chapter 2, which is… the words he’s actually saying in chapter 1, he has told his son, “I’ve got a plan. We’re going to get together tomorrow, and I’m going to give my people a name that will never be blotted out. So I want you to gather everyone.”

So this probably wasn’t hard to do, since it’s the time of Sukkot, according to the theory that we’ve advanced at least. And so Mosiah went out, and told everyone, “My father is going to be speaking tomorrow.”

Incidentally, there is a wonderful Book of Mormon video, put out by the Church of their YouTube channel, about this talk, and it shows some of the logistics that would have happened. And it shows people taking down the words, and running them out to people who were further away, what it might have looked like, the tower near the Temple. They truly did a wonderful job with that video. The man who acts as King Benjamin, you may remember him as Peter in some of the Bible videos, so it’s very well done. I recommend it.

## A contrast: The worthiness of God, the unworthiness of man

So, in chapter 2, we finally get into the words of the talk, and he’s making this contrast between the worthiness of God and the unworthiness of man, and he says, “I, you’re earthly king, look at all the good things I’ve done. If I deserve any thanks at all, think how much your heavenly king deserves to be thanked by you.” [[Mosiah 2:19](https://www.churchofjesuschrist.org/study/scriptures/bofm/mosiah/2?lang=eng&id=19#p19)] So he’s trying to say, “Look, I know I have done a lot of good for you, I know I’ve sacrificed a lot, and I’ve given up so much so that you could have freedom and here are all the blessing you have because of my protection of you.”

“And guess what: if I deserve anything, God deserves so much more. And *you*, if you served him with your whole souls, if you did everything you could, from the moment you woke up, to the moment you went to sleep, you would be unprofitable servants, because what does God do? He’s so faithful that he’s constantly supporting you. He actually sustains you from moment to moment, for you to have breath. And, whenever you do something that he commands you to do, he instantly blesses you” (or immediately blesses you, as he puts it,) “so you’re always in his debt.”

“So you, of yourselves, don’t deserve anything. It’s God who is faithful. He’s faithful as a king, and he’s faithful in the sense of making and keeping agreements. In this relationship between us, we will never be on the deserving end. And so, the best we can hope for is not justice, but mercy.”

So that’s the case that he’s making, that we don’t hope for justice. We of course appreciate the justice of God, and love him for it, King Benjamin would say, but justice is not our ultimate aim. Because of our unworthiness, and because of the worthiness of God.

## We only serve God by serving others

Now Benjamin says, “Look, I don’t actually see myself as having served you. I was serving God. And in fact, whenever you serve each other, you are only serving God.”

Now this is a very profound teaching, especially for the time period. And my question about it is this: What does it actually mean about God, is that the way we serve him is to serve each other?

Now you may be able to say this about someone you know, especially if you’ve ever had a calling in the youth of the Church. If you ever get through to a particular kid, and help that kid – a young man or a young woman – help them to see the truth of the Gospel, the importance of believing in Christ, the gratitude that that child’s parents is going to have towards you will be huge. Because you’ve served the parents by serving the child.

So that is true, that sometime we serve people indirectly. So think about how God would feel when we serve each other, we help them to believe, we help lift each other up, God is going to be so grateful to us. But now think about it. Take other people out of the equation, and try to answer this question: What could you do to serve God?

And to me, the answer to that question is very revealing as to the character of God. Because there is literally nothing that I can think of, that I could do towards God, to serve him, to make his life better, to actually give him anything that he needs, that doesn’t involve me serving another person.

There is plenty that somebody could do for me, that wouldn’t involve any other person. There’s a lot that someone could do; they could bring me things, they could bring me food, they could give me a raise at work, they could – I don’t know – give me a day off. All kinds of wonderful things people could do for me that would not involve serving another person. It would just involve serving me directly.

But when we think about trying to serve God directly, this is when we realise the point that Benjamin is making. Which is: we don’t actually have anything God needs. We only have – the only hold we have over him is how much he loves us. And therefore, he wants us to be happy and make good choices. Not because he needs it for himself. But because he loves us so much.

So the only way we serve him, is by helping other people to make good choices. Isn’t that an amazing testimony to the goodness of God, that we serve him by serving other people? This is an illumination into the character of God. What King Benjamin says here, when he says, in chapter 2 [verse 17](https://www.churchofjesuschrist.org/study/scriptures/bofm/mosiah/2?lang=eng&id=17#p17):

“I tell you these things that ye may learn wisdom; that ye may learn that when ye are in the service of your fellow beings ye are only in the service of your God.”

This is one of the most revealing statements that anyone could make about the character of God.

## A mention of Mosiah’s teachings: are they in the missing 116 pages?

Incidentally, in verse 32, Benjamin talks about “the evil spirit, which was spoken of by my father Mosiah.” And the reason I bring that verse up, is just to make you aware, we don’t have a record of his father Mosiah’s teachings at all. Somewhere, now we can presume this – Mormon is a very smart guy; I think everyone listening would agree – we can presume that Mormon would not have mentioned King Benjamin talking about his father’s teachings, unless Mormon had earlier included those teachings.

So Mormon would here – if he had taken out the earlier teachings, as he was doing in his abridgements – then he would not now include the mention by King Benjamin of those teachings.

So this is a hint, it’s a fun hint, it shows us that what we’re missing in those 116 (quote unquote) “pages” – now we talked about the fact that I personally believe there were significantly more than 300 pages that are missing from that manuscript that was lost by Joseph Smith and Martin Harris. But somewhere in that record – or in the record that Joseph Smith then skipped over, when he returned to translating, that God commanded him to skip over – somewhere in that record was more than just the book of Lehi.

So we were told about the book of Lehi, but there was a record all the way down to Benjamin’s father Mosiah, and possibly even the early reign of King Benjamin. And so that gives you a little bit more support for the idea that there is a significant amount of the Book of Mormon missing. And it’s a sad thing, because Mosiah was a prophet king as well, and he had powerful teaching. It was very important for the Nephites, to understand how driven and how motivated Satan was, to bring them to misery.

## Hell: a bright recollection of our own guilt is like fire

In fact, at the end of chapter 2 – chapter 2 ends with a description of hell that is very, very enlightening. The description of hell is – that you and I will be brought to a bright recollection of our own guilt. And that recollection – and the fact that we can never get rid of it – it’s like fire and brimstone, that we burn in forever. [[Mosiah 2:38](https://www.churchofjesuschrist.org/study/scriptures/bofm/mosiah/2?lang=eng&id=38#p38)]

So in the Bible, hell is also called fire, but it’s not clear exactly how. There are those, even today, who believe people will literally burn forever. It’s becoming a less popular belief as people start to think, “You know, what do I actually believe about God?” So, it’s not just for someone to burn in fire forever and ever, but is it just – and I’ll leave this question out there for a little bit – is it just for us to be in a state of us recollecting our own guilt forever and ever? Something to think about.

That’s the end of chapter 2.

## An angel from God: “I bring you glad tidings of great joy”

Now, Mosiah takes a little break here, from his own wisdom, from his own teachings. Chapter 3 is entirely made up of King Mosiah talking about his vision he had with an angel. And this marks him – as not just a king, not just a very wise man who had good morals, who was willing to make good decisions on behalf of his people, and make sacrifices – this marks him as a prophet, because what is revealed to him is the Plan of Salvation.

And the Plan of Salvation is revealed to him from heaven above, from no less than a heavenly messenger.

The first thing the angel says to King Mosiah is, “I bring you glad tidings of great joy.” [[Mosiah 3:2-3](https://www.churchofjesuschrist.org/study/scriptures/bofm/mosiah/3?lang=eng&id=2-3#p2)]

Now, if you were a sceptic about the Book of Mormon, you might think, “Oh, that’s convenient. Those were the words that were spoken of to the shepherds outside of Jerusalem, so it’s convenient that you would say those words.” But actually, the angels who spoke it to those shepherds, and the angel who speaks it to King Mosiah, they have a similar source. And that source is Isaiah. So the phrase “good tidings” has a rich history in the Old Testament. It generally means, the word “good tidings” is actually used to describe a messenger. A person who brings good tidings is a [*mə-bas-ser*](https://biblehub.com/hebrew/mevasser_1319.htm), or a particular kind of messenger, and you can find examples of that in the Old Testament. He’s a good man who brings good tidings. It’s actually one word, it’s somebody who is bringing us good news.

So the word for “good news” is actually the word for the messenger, in the Old Testament, in Hebrew.

## Examples of “good news” in the Old Testament

So the *good news*, described by the phrase *good tidings*, again you can do a search in your Gospel Library app for good tidings, and you will find it a few times in the Old Testament. It’s invariably used for news about a king. It’s some victory being relayed from the people who witnessed it, to the people who are still unaware that the king has had a victory. That’s what good tidings are. So this person who is willing to run from the site of a battle to the city where everybody is waiting to know “Did the enemy king win, or are we victorious in battle?” That is the mə-bas-ser, that is why “their feet is blessed upon the mountain”, because this person is willing to run, to bring us news about what is going to happen to our lives.

And just like that phrase implies, Isaiah uses the word *good tidings* to talk about – when he says, in Isaiah 52 – “How blessed on the mountain are the feet of those bringing good tidings.” [[Isaiah 52:7](https://www.churchofjesuschrist.org/study/scriptures/ot/isa/52?lang=eng&id=7#p7)]

But instead of bringing news about an earthly king, what is that messenger bringing? It’s saying to Israel “Thy God reigneth!” That’s the good tidings of the scriptures.

Isaiah chapter 40: Blessed is the person who is going to lift up his voice and say unto the cities of Judah, “Behold your God!” [[Isaiah 40:9](https://www.churchofjesuschrist.org/study/scriptures/ot/isa/40?lang=eng&id=9#p9)] So God here is visible. God is reigning. God is victorious.

In Isaiah chapter 61: “I have been sent to declare good tidings, because there will be a liberation of the captive, the poor, the miserable, they will all be redeemed. The liberating king will now set you free.” [[Isaiah 61:1](https://www.churchofjesuschrist.org/study/scriptures/ot/isa/61?lang=eng&id=1#p1)]

So in Isaiah, the phrase “good tidings” is used to describe God coming to earth, reigning among men, and bringing liberty, salvation and freedom with him. So that is what “glad tidings of great joy” means, it’s what the shepherds would have instantly understood outside of Bethlehem, and it’s what King Mosiah would have understood. “You’re bringing me glad tidings about God reigning, that we are going to behold him.”

## What are the glad tidings?

What are the glad tidings? Incidentally, our word “gospel”. If you’ve ever wondered, “What *is* the Gospel of Jesus Christ? What does that mean?” Well the word “gospel” was brought into English, and it was coined specifically to contain the meaning of “good tidings” from the Old Testament. “Godspell” means, in Old English “good” and messenger “news”. So “good news” is the gospel, and if you want to know what the gospel is, you will not find anywhere in scripture a better explanation of it, than here in Mosiah chapter 3, verse 4 through 11.

You can read those verses, but it’s basically talking about Jesus Christ being willing to leave behind his throne in heaven, and being the Lord God Omnipotent. God himself will come down among the children of men, he will suffer and die for our sins, and be resurrected, and then bring us all along with him. That is the “good tidings”, that is the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

It is so clearly explained here, that these verses alone would make all of Joseph Smith’s sacrifices worth it, just to bring these few verses to us, to have this clarity on the mission of Jesus Christ, and have it be undisputable.

## Anti-Christs and the law of Moses

All right, moving on. So that is Mosiah’s introduction into his vision, with this angel. But the angel continues talking. And again, we talked about the law of Moses is important to these anti-Christs. ‘”We want to keep the law of Moses. Stop telling us about this future Saviour who is going to come down and require some sort of internal obedience. The law of Moses is a law of outward ordinances, and we know that it is enough.”

And incidentally, we going to read soon about some more anti-Christs. The priests of King Noah, who also say the same thing. Abinadi is standing before them – and I don’t want to give away too much – but Abinadi is standing before them, and he says, “What do you think? Does salvation come from the law of Moses?” and they say, “Oh, yeah, yeah. It does. We believe that it does come from the law of Moses.”

## “It availeth nothing, save it were through the atonement of his blood.”

So as wicked as they were, they were wiling to give their approval to the law of Moses. And that’s when Abinadi says now, “Guess what? The law of Moses,” – so here in Mosiah 3, we learn the truth about the law of Moses – “The law of Moses availeth nothing, save it were through the atonement of his blood.” [[Mosiah 3:14-15](https://www.churchofjesuschrist.org/study/scriptures/bofm/mosiah/3?lang=eng&id=14-15#p14)]

The people listening would have recently witnessed this “lamb without blemish” giving his blood, and the High Priest taking this blood and carrying it into the Temple as an atonement for all of their sins. This would have been such a clear metaphor to them, because they’re now being taught the meaning of it, if they didn’t already know it. They’ve been taught it their whole lives, and now they’re being taught it even more clearly.

And Mosiah makes clear the role of the law of Moses, “It availeth nothing, save it were through the atonement of his blood.”

So, an anti-Christ would say the law of Moses is a *means* of salvation. But what Mosiah clarifies is that the law of Moses is a *path* to salvation. Very different concepts.

## Salvation through the name of Christ

And later on, in verse 17, [Mosiah 3:17](https://www.churchofjesuschrist.org/study/scriptures/bofm/mosiah/3?lang=eng&id=17#p17), “Jesus Christ’s name, his is the only name whereby salvation can come.” Meaning, there simply is no other behaviour, there is no other path, there is no other person, there is no other belief, that will lead to eternal life.

The exclusivity of salvation through Christ is the important definition of belief in Christ.

Why is that? That’s a very powerful statement that I’ve just made, by the way. Why is it so important? Because if you were a prophet, and God revealed himself to you, and said “Look, you’ve got a pit, you’ve got a pothole in the road coming up, and you’re going to fall into it, and I’m going to help you get out of it.” If God also said, “But, you can either fall into the pit, and have me help you get out of it, or, you can just drive around it,” you would be a totally immoral prophet if you didn’t say to people, “Here is the easiest way for you to get to eternal life. From where you are now, to where you want to be eternally, I’m going to tell you the easiest way.”

Let me put it in other terms, and see if it makes more sense. If Jesus Christ had some brother named Malfeous, who was also one of the begotten sons – and I just made that name up – one of the begotten sons of God, and you could either be saved by obedience to the laws of Jesus Christ, or you could follow Malfeous, who also has a gospel, but his is a little bit easier. You would be a terrible person, if you preached to people “Believe in Jesus Christ, and don’t believe in Malfeous,” because Malfeous would have a better chance of getting you to heaven.

If there were some easier way, you would have to teach that way, because any other course would, of necessity, leave some people out. Those people who didn’t quite make it because it was a little bit harder.

And so therefore, this is such an important doctrine, that Jesus Christ is the only way. If you believe in Jesus Christ, you must believe that he is the only way to salvation. Otherwise, why would you go through what you go through, to believe in Jesus Christ? You have to sacrifice all things. You have to sacrifice your own pride, you have to sacrifice your sins, and you have to be willing to follow God, as Mosiah says, and we’ll talk about next week, “You have to watch yourself and your thoughts and your words and your deeds, even from now until the end of your life.” That is a big sacrifice.

And if it weren’t necessary to do all those things to be saved, you would be a terrible person for teaching them. And so, that’s what Mosiah is saying here. There is no other way. It really is necessary to do all these things. And, it is so important, because, here’s the pit that you have facing you, here’s the pothole in the road – is that one day you are going to be brought to a bright recollection of all of your guilt.

And it’s going to be so terrible, it’s going to be so unbearable to you, that you will shrink from the presence of God forever. You will not be able to endure being anywhere near God, because of your unworthiness, and because of his faithfulness. Those two states are absolutely incompatible.

And so there is some beacon of hope. And guess what? God is just, and what could be more just than that we are confronted with our own choices, and their consequences? And that we would have a recollection of our own guilt, and that recollection would last? That is perfectly in line with the justice of God.

Nevertheless, what could be more merciful than there is a way out of that? That there would be provided some means for our escape from the guilt that would otherwise plague us forever? And if there is a name that provides us that mercy, then what else could be more important for us to speak of, than that name, than that means, than that belief?

So, to say that the name of Jesus Christ is the only name that whereby salvation can come, is *the* important declaration of belief in Christ. And that is why saying that “I believe in Christians having some of the truth, I believe that it is fine to be Christian, it’s also fine to be this, it is fine to be that,” – well, the mercy of Christ may extend to some people who don’t believe in him, but it can’t extend in the same way. They cannot receive all of the blessings of belief, if they simply will not believe.

They may receive some of the blessings of the atonement of Christ, most notable everyone will receive the blessing of resurrection, but there will undoubtably be some blessings that are extended to those who believe that cannot be extended to those who are not willing to believe, and change their behaviour accordingly.

And it is therefore a great manifestation of love, to say to someone – now I’m not saying we say this without tact – but it is a great manifestation of love to say to somebody “Christ is your Saviour.” Because there are genuine blessings that flow from believing in Christ, that simply cannot flow in any other way.

## The natural man is an enemy to God,

And that is the merciful message of King Benjamin. And we’ll finish our lesson today by talking about the natural man being an enemy to God.

So, again, this contrast between God, and what we are without his saving grace that is acting upon us. This is all leading up to what we will talk about next week, which is this idea of being reborn. So natural man, the man before being reborn, the unworthy man, he is an enemy to God, he has been and he will be. There is a change he can undergo. He can put off the natural man, and he can become as a child, submissive and meek.

## Another vivid description of hell: fire is the recollection of our guilt

However, if he won’t do that, then he has to be an enemy to God forever. And he again, at the end of this chapter, he talks about the hell, so two chapters in a row end with a vivid, vivid description of hell, in one case being a lake of fire and brimstone. Now a lake, if you were out swimming in the middle of a lake, you probably won’t make it to shore before you would drown, depending on the size of the lake. That’s kind of the ideal of a lake of fire and brimstone – you can’t ever escape it. You’re stuck there. You’re going to sink into it, and be there forever. [[Mosiah 3:27](https://www.churchofjesuschrist.org/study/scriptures/bofm/mosiah/3?lang=eng&id=27#p27)]

And the lake is the recollection of your guilt. So it’s not an actual fire, it’s not God giving you physical torment because you haven’t been righteous enough, it’s God bringing upon you the totally natural consequences of your own actions, and here you get to remember them. And now you get to compare what you have done, versus the kind of holiness you need to have to live in God’s presence, and the inevitable consequence that you will shrink from his presence. [[Mosiah 3:24-25](https://www.churchofjesuschrist.org/study/scriptures/bofm/mosiah/3?lang=eng&id=24-25#p24)]

Or, or, you could have the marvellous benefit of submitting to the will of Christ, letting him forgive your sins, as it says in Jeremiah 31, and then being allowed to forget that horrible guilt. “How would that be? What a wonderful blessing that would be! How can I get that? Wow, I’ll do anything for that!” This is how the people felt as they hear this.

In verse 20, he’s practically quoting from Jeremiah 31, when in [Mosiah 3:20](https://www.churchofjesuschrist.org/study/scriptures/bofm/mosiah/3?lang=eng&id=20#p20):

“20 And 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.”

I’m going to read you these verses, from Jeremiah 31, and you tell me if you can hear the similarities. This is [Jeremiah 31:34](https://www.churchofjesuschrist.org/study/scriptures/ot/jer/31?lang=eng&id=34#p34):

“34 And they shall teach no more every man his neighbour, and every man his brother, saying, Know the Lord: for they shall all know me, from the least of them unto the greatest of them, saith the Lord: for I will forgive their iniquity, and I will remember their sin no more.”

So, as you read this address of King Benjamin, just read once, then keep in your mind Jeremiah chapter 31, verses 31 through 34. And remember that God had prophesied this to the Nephites, and they would have had this prophesy in mind, and they see themselves as the fulfilment of this prophesy, which is that God, one day, will do a better job than he did with the Israelites. He’s going to write it on their hearts.

And here is Benjamin saying to all of them, “We are living in this time. We are the tree that has been transplanted. We are the olive branch that is going to yield to God the fruit that is delicious, and even we are totally unworthy before him, unless we rely upon the merits of the Saviour, and that is the Gospel. In the name of Jesus Christ, amen.