Lesson 15
Mosiah 1–3

Mosiah 1

Verse 2: Notice that once again a Book of Mormon writer mentions a father teaching his children in “all the language of his fathers.” The theme is a relatively important one. What might it mean to us?

Verse 3: The phrase “he also taught them” indicates that the language and prophecies the writer has in mind in verse 2 may be the language and prophecies of the Book of Mormon writers who preceded him. If so, it may indicate that teaching them about the language of the brass plates was an additional thing he did. Thus, “The language of their fathers was the language of the brass plates rather than the language they spoke” may not be a sufficient answer to the questions above. What else could language mean here?

Without the scriptures we cannot know the mysteries of God. What is a mystery? If we can assume that the scriptures contain those mysteries, what are they?

Verse 5: Verse 4 identified the scriptures with Lehi’s memory: without them he couldn’t have remembered, so they functioned as his memory. Here we see that without that memory his people would have “dwindled,” and we see the
implication that the problem of the Lamanites was a loss of memory. Instead of memory they had the “traditions of their fathers.” As many scriptures indicate, remembering—the Lord remembering us and we remembering our sins and remembering him—is an important theme of the scriptures, especially the Book of Mormon. The word remember originally meant something like “call to mind again,” but it may also have to do with re-memorializing and even re-membering (putting back together, making whole again). How do we remember the Lord? Do we use the scriptures and scripture study to remember?

Verse 6: These sayings and records are true. Is this claim a rejoinder to the Lamanite claims about the records?

What does it mean for something to be true? The most obvious answer is something like “it corresponds to reality,” but that meaning is too narrow for the ways we use true. It doesn’t, for example, explain what it means to say that the Church is true. There are, however, other significant meanings of true. Here, for example, we see the word surety used as a synonym for true: “trustworthiness” and “security,” as well as “certainty.” Other meanings include “honest” and “without deviation,” and even “revealed,” “disclosed,” or “re-membered.” Do these other possible meanings of true add insight to our understanding of what it means to say that the Book of Mormon (or the Church or something else) is true?

Verses 7–12: King Benjamin says that he wants to do two things: give the people a ruler and give them a name. Since he is about to die, it is fairly clear why he wants to do the
former, but why would he want to do the latter? What is the significance?

How does his sermon about Christ and the Atonement, the central part of his message, fit with his desires to give the people a ruler and a name? Why doesn’t he mention that as one of his desires?

**Verse 16:** Why does King Benjamin give his son the sword of Laban and the Liahona? Of what might they be symbolic?

---

**Mosiah 2**

**Verses 3–4:** It has been more than four hundred years since Lehi left Jerusalem. That is like going to the temple to offer thanks now for something that happened in 1600. Why do the people come to the temple to offer thanks for that?

**Verses 5–6:** Why does the writer give us such detailed information about how the people pitched their tents? It must be important—after all, the original writer thought it important enough to engrave it on gold plates, and Mormon thought it important enough to include it in his abridgment when he could easily have left it out. Why do you think it was given to us?

**Verse 9:** Benjamin says he didn’t have his people come so they could trifle with his words. What does that mean? Do we have that attitude when we listen to someone? Have you ever trifled with a talk? On the other side of the coin, when we speak, do we trifle with those who’ve come to hear us? Or when we call a meeting, do we trifle with the time of those who come?
Benjamin says he has had them come so they can hear and understand, so they can learn the mysteries. Can you make a list of the mysteries that he teaches?

**Verse 11:** Why does Benjamin remind them that he too suffers infirmities of body and mind?

Why does he rehearse how he came to be king?

**Verses 12–15:** Why do the things Benjamin lists allow him to have a clear conscience? What do they show?

**Verse 17:** This verse contains one of the most popular quotations from the Book of Mormon, but it contains a linguistic oddity: Why does it say that “when ye are in the service of your fellow beings ye are only in the service of your God”? What does that word only mean here?

**Verses 17–19:** Notice how Benjamin shifts from his service to thanks to God by focusing on service and kingship: If you owe me thanks for the service I’ve wrought as king, just think of the thanks you owe the Heavenly King.

**Verses 20–21:** Notice the things we might do for God and what God might do for us:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>What he gives</th>
<th>What we might return</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>creation</td>
<td>thanks with our whole soul</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>keeping</td>
<td>praise with our whole soul</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>preservation</td>
<td>service with our whole soul</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>rejoicing</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>peace</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>the loan of breath</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>life</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>movement</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>agency</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>continual</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>support</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>life</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>movement</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>agency</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>continual</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>support</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Even if we return everything we can, it is obvious that we will continue to be indebted. As Benjamin says, we will remain unprofitable servants.

What does it mean to say that the Father has kept us? That he has preserved us? How has he caused us to rejoice?

Why is peace a gift from God? (Does that mean, then, that we should expect not to have continual peace?)

Why does Benjamin say that the Father lends us breath? What does it mean that he supports us from moment to moment?

What is a profitable employee (servant)? What does it mean to say that we are unprofitable servants even when we do everything in our power to thank and praise and serve God?

**Verse 22:** Notice that obedience is what he requires in return for what he gives, not what he requires in order for us to get what he gives. Benjamin is not teaching that we earn what the Lord gives, but he is also not teaching that we don’t have to do anything. How can obedience be our response to the Lord’s gift?

**Verse 23:** We owe him our lives. Is this a repetition of what Benjamin said in verses 20 and 21?

**Verse 24:** Here Benjamin repeats verse 22, with an addition: We are required to be obedient, and if we are, we are immediately blessed and so are still in debt. What do you make of that addition?

Benjamin speaks of the Lord blessing us, and he also says the Lord pays us, but blessings and payments aren’t the
same, since the former is something given and the latter is something owed. Why does he mix the language this way? Are we blessed or paid for our obedience?

For another good discussion of the impossibility of boasting, see Romans 3 and 4. In fact, King Benjamin’s sermon and Romans are good scriptural texts to read side by side, each one illuminating the other. They are an excellent example of how the Book of Mormon helps us read and understand the Bible, and vice versa.

Verse 25: In what sense do our bodies belong to the Creator? What does that mean to us?

Verse 28: In Mosiah 1:11, Benjamin said that his people had been diligent in keeping the commandments. Now he says he must rid his garments of their blood before he dies. Why is that necessary if they have been good people?

Verses 32–33: I suspect the contentions Benjamin has in mind are like the contentions between the Lamanites and Nephites. But how might this verse apply to us? What kinds of contentions are we susceptible to?

Verses 34–35: They have been taught about the results of contention and that they are indebted to Heavenly Father and must give him everything they have and everything they are. They have also been taught the contents of the brass plates and the teachings of the Nephite prophets. Why does Benjamin mention these particular things? The first is relatively apparent; contention is an obvious problem for the Book of Mormon people. But why does Benjamin remind them that they have been taught the contents of the plates and the teachings of their prophets? And why
does he remind them that they have been taught that they owe everything to God?

What does it mean to give God everything we are?

**Verses 36–41:** Why does Benjamin remind them of what happens to those who rebel as well as what happens to those who are faithful?

**Mosiah 3**

**Verse 1:** What do you think moves Benjamin to make the transition to the topic of this chapter, Christ’s coming in the flesh? Is there something in what he has just been discussing that points in that direction? In other words, what’s the connection?

**Verse 3:** In what other incident does an angel speak of his message as “glad tidings of great joy” or something similar? Are there any parallels between the other case and this one?

**Verse 4:** What do you suppose Benjamin had been praying for in order to receive this answer?

**Verse 5:** Consider the name of the Lord used here: “The Lord Omnipotent who reigneth, who was, and is from all eternity to all eternity.” First, why does the angel use such a long name? Why not just say “the Lord”? Second, what is the significance of that name? How is it related to the Lord’s coming to dwell in a tabernacle of clay?

**Verses 5–6:** Look at the list of activities described, and then think about the Gospels, particularly the synoptic Gospels (Matthew, Mark, and Luke). Why is there such an emphasis on these miracles?
Verse 7: What is the significance of this list of the things Christ suffered? What does it tell us?

Verse 8: Notice again a contrast that Benjamin makes, the contrast between another lengthy name of the Lord and the name of His mother. What might the purpose of this contrast be?

Verse 9: What does “he cometh unto his own” mean? What salvation is Benjamin speaking of? Salvation from what?

Rather than attach some of the mysterious connotations to faith that are sometimes attached and that, as a result, often leave us thinking that we don’t know what faith is or that we don’t have it, it might be helpful to remember that the word faith means, more than perhaps anything else, “trust.” Why is it that salvation comes through trusting the Savior? To what is Benjamin referring when he says “even after all this”?

Verse 10: To what is he referring when he says “all these things”? How do those things make a righteous judgment?

Verse 12: Why does Benjamin say that salvation comes only to those who repent and have faith? Since they are necessary, why doesn’t he mention works or ordinances?

Verse 14: What does it mean to be stiff-necked? What does it mean to say that the law of Moses was given because the people were stiff-necked? What is it about the law of Moses that makes it appropriate for such a people?

Verse 15: Benjamin says that the Lord showed the Israelites many signs, wonders, types, and shadows. What are each of these, particularly types and shadows?
Verse 16: Why does Benjamin introduce the discussion of little children here?

Verse 17: Is there any significance to the name of the Lord used here? Does it relate to the content of the verse in some way?

Verse 18: Notice the contrast between little children and adults. Does that help explain verse 16? Given what has been said about little children in the previous verses, what does it mean to become as a little child? Notice again Benjamin’s emphasis on belief. We usually emphasize actions. Why doesn’t he?

Verse 19: There is sometimes a lot of discussion of the phrase “natural man.” It is used outside latter-day scripture only once, in 1 Corinthians 2:14. In latter-day scripture it is used only three other times, and it isn’t clear that it means the same thing each time: Alma 26:21; D&C 67:12; and Moses 1:14.

In 1 Corinthians, where it is used in a way similar to its use here, it could also be translated “unspiritual man.” The word translated “natural” or “unspiritual” describes the life of this world. Does the 1 Corinthians use of the term help us understand the meaning here?

Notice the verb yields and the noun enticings. Benjamin describes the Holy Ghost’s entreaties as if we have to resist them in order to not receive them. We often think of sin as easy and life by the Spirit as difficult, but Benjamin’s language says something quite different. How can that be? How do we put off the natural man?
Notice the comparison to children again. It is fairly obvious what it means to be submissive to the Lord, to be humble, and to be full of love, but what does it mean to be meek—gentle—in relation to him? What about patient? How could we be anything but patient with the Lord? Can you think of specific ways in which one might not be meek with him, or ways in which one might not be patient?

Why does the list begin and end with submission? Why the repetition? This verse uses *saint* in the singular, the only time in scripture it is so used. It is plural every other time. Why is it plural except here? Why is it singular here? How does one become a saint?

**Verse 21:** How do you understand the word *only* here? Does it mean “except,” as in some older usages?

**Verses 24–27:** This is the first time Benjamin has mentioned works in this sermon. How do they fit in? What is the relation between belief and faith on the one hand and works on the other?