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Title Types of Literature in the Book of Mormon: “The American Gospel”

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Abstract The American Gospel, found in 3 Nephi, differs from the Gospels of the New Testament in that Jesus is teaching as a resurrected, glorified, and exalted person. It includes details of the cataclysmic events at the time of the crucifixion and of the multiple appearances of the Savior to the Nephites. Jesus delivers sermons to the Nephites in general and also to the Nephite twelve. He heals the sick and institutes the sacrament. The depiction of prayer is perhaps the most powerful in all scripture. The Savior quotes the prophecies of Isaiah and Micah with regard to the New Jerusalem and the Gentiles. He emphasizes the importance of record keeping for the church, which should be called in his name.

Types of Literature in the Book of Mormon

“The American Gospel”

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Very little work has been done hitherto toward discovering, describing, and appraising the various types of literature found in the Book of Mormon. Let us turn now to this new and fascinating approach to the study of the Book of Mormon.

The Gospels as Literature

The most outstanding selection of literature in the Book of Mormon is what I have denominated the American Gospel. It comprises 3 Nephi 1:4–21; 8–28. The gospel is a distinct and

This originally appeared as chapter 8 on pages 83–101 of Our Book of Mormon.

well-recognized type of religious literature; the four Gospels in the New Testament are, of course, the great examples. A gospel is not intended to be a life of Jesus, but "good news," "tidings of great joy" about him. Gospels differ, oftentimes greatly, in style, selection of materials, and emphasis; but each attempts in its own way to portray the "good news" to men that Jesus, the Christ, came into the world with the true way of life and salvation. Each attests his final triumph over death through the resurrection.

The American Gospel

The American Gospel differs in an obvious way from the four biblical Gospels in that it deals with Jesus' ministry among the Nephites as a resurrected, glorified, and exalted personage rather than as a mortal being. True, each of the four Gospels tells us something about the Savior after his resurrection, but the space devoted to it is small in comparison to the size of the record. The gospel in 3 Nephi reveals clearly that Jesus taught the Nephites many of the same principles that he proclaimed in the flesh in Palestine; he did it, however, as a being risen from the dead. His repetition here of the Sermon on the Mount is a good example (3 Nephi 12-14; cf. Matthew 5-7).

I include 3 Nephi 1:4-21 as part of the American Gospel because it deals with the birth of Christ. It differs very markedly from the accounts in the Gospels of Matthew and Luke, in that a prophet by the name of Nephi receives assurances from the heavens that Jesus was to be born on the morrow:

And it came to pass that he [Nephi] cried mightily unto the Lord all that day; and behold, the voice of the Lord came unto him, saying:

Lift up your head and be of good cheer; for behold, the time is at hand, and on this night shall the sign be given, and on the morrow come I into the world, to show unto the world that I will fulfil all that which I have caused to be spoken by the mouth of my holy prophets.

Behold, I come unto my own, to fulfil all things which I have made known unto the children of men from the foundation of the world, and to do the will,

both of the Father and of the Son—of the Father because of me, and of the Son because of my flesh. And behold, the time is at hand, and this night shall the sign be given. (3 Nephi 1:12–15)

The “sign” spoken of in this scripture was that predicted by Samuel the Lamanite five years before the event. This prophet foretold that when Jesus was born there should be no darkness for a “day and a night and a day, as if it were one day and there were no night.” He also said that a new star should arise as an additional sign (see Helaman 14:2–7). These prophecies of Samuel the Lamanite all came to pass, including the appearance of a new star (3 Nephi 1:15–21). The latter parallels the star episode mentioned only in Matthew 2:1–10.

Chronologically, most all of the events narrated in the four Gospels take place after the signs mentioned by Samuel the Lamanite were given and before those mentioned in the first chapter of the next section of the American Gospel, namely, 3 Nephi 8. In a word: from the standpoint of time the events mentioned in the New Testament Gospels may be placed between those mentioned in 3 Nephi 1 and 3 Nephi 8.

Mormon’s Purpose in Writing 3 Nephi

The bulk of the American Gospel consists, as the reader has discovered, of 3 Nephi 8–28; a total of twenty-one chapters. The form and content of this material is due to Mormon, the abridger or editor, acting under the Savior’s direction. Inasmuch as Mormon tells of his intent in writing this Gospel and adds other comments of interest, it will be well to quote his own words:

And now there cannot be written in this book even a hundredth part of the things which Jesus did truly teach unto the people;

But behold the plates of Nephi [large plates] do contain the more part of the things which he taught the people. And these things have I written, which are a lesser part of the things which he taught the people; *and I have written them to the intent that they may be*

brought again unto this people, from the Gentiles, according to the words which Jesus hath spoken.

And when they shall have received this, which is expedient that they should have first, to try their faith, and if it shall so be that they shall believe these things then shall the greater things be made manifest unto them.

And if it so be that they will not believe these things, then shall the greater things be withheld from them, unto their condemnation.

Behold, I was about to write them, all which were engraven upon the plates of Nephi, but the Lord forbade it, saying: I will try the faith of my people.

Therefore I, Mormon, do write the things which have been commanded me of the Lord. (3 Nephi 26:6–12)

Cataclysmic Events Prior to Christ's Appearance

Third Nephi 8–10 form a natural division of the American Gospel. They deal with the events which were preliminary to the dramatic appearance of the resurrected Savior recorded in 3 Nephi 11. Third Nephi 8 records the cataclysmic events—tempests, earthquakes, whirlwinds, and fires—that took place at the time of the crucifixion of the Savior. Great cities were destroyed with their inhabitants, and thick darkness reigned for the space of three days. All these events had been predicted as a sign of the crucifixion by Samuel the Lamanite (Helaman 14:20–27). Third Nephi 9 and 10 tell how the awe-inspiring voice of the Savior was heard over the face of the land by the inhabitants who had been spared. The Savior explained the widespread disasters; he also emphasized that the law of Moses was fulfilled in him and that only a broken and contrite heart was acceptable to God. Third Nephi 10 records how, after a number of hours of silence, the voice of Jesus was heard again in the land, and he instructed the inhabitants in words reminiscent of Matthew 23:37–38 and Luke 13:34:

O ye house of Israel whom I have spared, how oft will I gather you as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, if ye will repent and return unto me with full purpose of heart.

But if not, O house of Israel, the places of your dwellings shall become desolate until the time of the fulfilling of the covenant to your fathers. (3 Nephi 10:6-7; see also 3 Nephi 10:4-5)

The Savior's Visit to the American Continent

Third Nephi 11 begins a section—the largest in the Gospel—which properly ends with 3 Nephi 26. I say “properly ends with 3 Nephi 26,” because this chapter concludes the account of three continuous days of teaching and instruction on the part of the Savior from the time of his first personal appearance to the Nephite people. Mormon records the following:

Therefore, I would that ye should behold that the Lord truly did teach the people, for the space of three days; and after that he did show himself unto them oft, and did break bread oft, and bless it, and give it unto them. (3 Nephi 26:13)

The drama unfolded in 3 Nephi 11 is rivaled in the Book of Mormon only by 3 Nephi 17, in which the Savior is portrayed in a touching scene as healing the sick and blessing little children, and by 3 Nephi 19, in which the baptism of the Nephite twelve, the visitation of the Holy Ghost, and an ineffable outpouring of prayer are recorded. In this chapter the first appearance of the redeemed Savior to a multitude of Nephites near the temple in the land Bountiful is graphically described:

And it came to pass, as they understood they cast their eyes up again towards heaven; and behold, they saw a Man descending out of heaven; and he was clothed in a white robe; and he came down and stood in the midst of them; and the eyes of the whole multitude were turned upon him, and they durst not open their mouths, even one to another, and wist not what it

meant, for they thought it was an angel that had appeared unto them.

And it came to pass that he stretched forth his hand and spake unto the people, saying:

Behold, I am Jesus Christ, whom the prophets testified shall come into the world.

And behold, I am the light and life of the world; and I have drunk out of that bitter cup which the Father hath given me, and have glorified the Father in taking upon me the sins of the world, in the which I have suffered the will of the Father in all things from the beginning.

And it came to pass that when Jesus had spoken these words the whole multitude fell to the earth; for they remembered that it had been prophesied among them that Christ should show himself unto them after his ascension into heaven.

And it came to pass that the Lord spake unto them saying:

Arise and come forth unto me, that ye may thrust your hands into my side, and also that ye may feel the prints of the nails in my hands and in my feet, that ye may know that I am the God of Israel, and the God of the whole earth, and have been slain for the sins of the world.

And it came to pass that the multitude went forth, and thrust their hands into his side, and did feel the prints of the nails in his hands and in his feet; and this they did do, going forth one by one until they had all gone forth, and did see with their eyes and did feel with their hands, and did know of a surety and did bear record, that it was he, of whom it was written by the prophets, that should come.

And when they had all gone forth and had witnessed for themselves, they did cry out with one accord, saying:

Hosanna! Blessed be the name of the Most High God! And they did fall down at the feet of Jesus, and did worship him. (3 Nephi 11:8-17)

The doctrines of baptism and repentance are then explained, and the Savior emphasizes their importance in the following words, which parallel Matthew 7:24; 16:18:

Verily, verily, I say unto you, that this is my doctrine, and whoso buildeth upon this buildeth upon my rock, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against them.

And whoso shall declare more or less than this, and establish it for my doctrine, the same cometh of evil, and is not built upon my rock; but he buildeth upon a sandy foundation, and the gates of hell stand open to receive such when the floods come and the winds beat upon them. (3 Nephi 11:39-40)

At this point it may be well to observe that Elder Parley P. Pratt wrote a poem of sixteen verses dealing with Christ's appearance on this continent and the great destruction prior to it. Brother George Careless set it to music.

The Solid Rocks Were Rent in Twain

The solid rocks were rent in twain,
When Christ, the Lamb of God, was slain,
The sun in darkness veiled his face,
The mountains moved, and left their place.

The whole creation groaned in pain,
Till the Messiah rose again,
Then nature ceased her dreadful groan,
The sun unveiled his face and shone.

The righteous Nephites him receive,
With joy and wonder they believe,
And soon in love did they convene,
Conversing on the things they'd seen,

Which had been given for a sign,
When lo! there came a voice divine,
And as the heavenly words they heard,
The Lord of glory soon appeared.

With joy and wonder, all amazed,
 The righteous Nephites on him gazed,
 And wist not what the vision meant,
 But thought it was an angel sent.

While in their midst he smiling stood,
 Proclaimed himself the Son of God,
 And said, "Come forth and feel and see,
 That you may witness bear of Me."

And when they all had felt and seen
 Where once the nails and spear had been,
 Hosanna! rose with loud acclaim,
 They blessed and praised his holy name.¹

It will be seen that 3 Nephi 11 is logically a little unit by itself in the large section (3 Nephi 11–26) of the American Gospel which we are considering. The next three chapters are a compact unit in and of themselves, containing the Nephite version of the Sermon on the Mount. Here again the American Gospel parallels the Gospel of Matthew (see Matthew 5–7).

The Book of Mormon Sermon on the Mount

The appearance of the Sermon on the Mount in the Book of Mormon is noteworthy in that its importance as a fundamental guide to the good life is emphasized anew. We shall say no more about it here, since it forms a distinct literary problem which is discussed in chapter 15.² In 3 Nephi 15–16—a self-contained unit—several interesting miscellaneous teachings of Jesus are found. The first of these consists of the Savior's pronouncements on the law of Moses. He points out that the law given to Moses is fulfilled, that he it was who gave the law and covenanted with his people Israel (cf. 1 Corinthians 10:4). He concludes:

Behold, I am the law, and the light. Look unto me,
 and endure to the end, and ye shall live; for unto him

¹ Hymn 331, in *Hymns of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints* (1940 ed.).

² See pages 153–65 of this issue.

that endureth to the end will I give eternal life.
(3 Nephi 15:9)

The second teaching, spoken to the twelve only, gives a clear and unequivocal explanation of the statement quoted in John 10:16:

And other sheep I have, which are not of this fold:
them also must I bring, and they shall hear my voice;
and there shall be one fold, and one shepherd. (cf.
3 Nephi 15:17, 21; Isaiah 56:8; Matthew 15:24)

Scholars have given various interpretations to this statement of Jesus; perhaps one of the most common is that the Gentiles are the "other sheep" spoken of. Indeed, the Savior pointed out that his disciples in Jerusalem had that very concept:

And they [the disciples in Jerusalem] understood me not, for they supposed it had been the Gentiles; for they understood not that the Gentiles should be converted through their preaching. (3 Nephi 15:22)

Jesus explained, however, that the Nephites to whom he was ministering were the "other sheep" to which he had reference, and that the Palestinian disciples had not understood his word "because of stiffneckedness and unbelief" (3 Nephi 15:18, 21). The Nephite twelve were then informed of the existence of yet another body of Israelites whom the Father had commanded him to visit:

And verily, verily, I say unto you that I have other sheep, which are not of this land, neither of the land of Jerusalem, neither in any parts of that land round about whither I have been to minister.

For they of whom I speak are they who have not as yet heard my voice; neither have I at any time manifested myself unto them.

But I have received a commandment of the Father that I shall go unto them, and that they shall hear my voice, and shall be numbered among my sheep, that

there may be one fold and one shepherd; therefore I go to show myself unto them. (3 Nephi 16:1-3)

That these "other sheep" are the Ten Tribes so long lost to man there can be little doubt (see 3 Nephi 17:4).

In still other instructions, Jesus informed his disciples of the gathering of Israel in the latter days and of the blessings to be showered upon the believing Gentiles. The Savior then declared that the words of Isaiah 52:8-10 would be fulfilled at that time (3 Nephi 16:17-20).

Third Nephi 17-23 may be classified roughly as a literary unit, though there may be those who would include 3 Nephi 15 and 16 with them. The incidents and teachings described in this unit seem to be brought together in no special order. They may possibly be listed in chronological order with respect to each other, though many important events took place which Mormon was forbidden to describe (3 Nephi 26:8, 11-12).

As was pointed out before, 3 Nephi 17 is one of the most dramatic chapters in the Book of Mormon. Jesus healed the sick and those among the multitude afflicted with bodily infirmities and prayed in a marvelous manner. But the episode describing his blessing of the little children will be found the most touching of all:

And when he had said these words, he wept, and the multitude bare record of it, and he took their little children, one by one, and blessed them, and prayed unto the Father for them.

And when he had done this he wept again;

And he spake unto the multitude, and said unto them: Behold your little ones.

And as they looked to behold they cast their eyes towards heaven, and they saw the heavens open, and they saw angels descending out of heaven as it were in the midst of fire; and they came down and encircled those little ones about, and they were encircled about with fire; and the angels did minister unto them.

And the multitude did see and hear and bear record; and they know that their record is true for they all of them did see and hear, every man for himself; and

they were in number about two thousand and five hundred souls; and they did consist of men, women, and children. (3 Nephi 17:21–25)

Third Nephi 18 is important in regard to the discussion of the sacrament of the bread and wine which Jesus proceeded to institute among the Nephites. His discussion of prayer and the delegation to the disciples of power to confer the Holy Ghost are notable. It is interesting that Jesus gave the disciples power to confer the Holy Ghost before they were baptized (cf. 3 Nephi 18:37; 19:13).

Third Nephi 19 begins the account of the Savior's second appearance to the Nephites; that is to say, it deals with the events of the second day of his ministry. The first appearance of Jesus had been noised abroad, and the morrow saw an even greater multitude gathered to behold and listen to the Master. An interesting human touch is revealed:

Yea, and even all the night it was noised abroad concerning Jesus; and insomuch did they send forth unto the people that there were many, yea, an exceedingly great number, did labor exceedingly all that night, that they might be on the morrow in the place where Jesus should show himself unto the multitude. (3 Nephi 19:3)

The Nephite Twelve

This chapter is notable, among other things, for the fact that it gives us the names of the Nephite twelve previously chosen by Jesus to be leaders among the people. It seems probable that they had been chosen early on the first day of the Savior's appearance (3 Nephi 11:22; cf. 12:1; Moroni 2:2). The names of the disciples, as they were usually called, are Nephi, Timothy, Jonas, Mathoni, Mathonihah, Kumen, Kumenonhi, Jeremiah, Shemnon, Jonas, Zedekiah, and Isaiah.

The names *Timothy* and *Jonas* deserve a little special comment. Timothy is distinctly a Greek name. The name *Jonas* would seem to be a hellenized form of the Hebrew *Jonah* (cf. Matthew 12:39–40). These names indicate the presence of Greek influence

in Palestine before the Nephites left there in 600 B.C. Apparently the names, either Greek originally or formed under Greek influence, were preserved on the brass plates and commonly used among the Nephites. That Greek influence was not unknown in Palestine prior to 600 B.C. is attested by modern archaeological discovery.

The very interesting question arises: Were the Nephite twelve ordained apostles under the hands of Christ, or were they simply presiding high priests called in to administer to the people as need dictated? In a strict theological sense the Church of Christ can have but one Quorum of the Twelve Apostles at a time upon the earth. That consideration might at first seem to weigh against the Nephite twelve being apostles. However, it must be remembered that the Nephites were unknown to the Palestinian twelve. Moreover, the people of this continent had just as much right to have apostles minister to them as did those of the Mediterranean world. And, furthermore, the Nephite twelve were very decidedly special witnesses of Jesus Christ. We may well argue, therefore, that even though the apostles in Palestine constituted the Quorum of the Twelve, there is no good reason for not believing that the Nephite twelve constituted a quorum of twelve apostles to administer to the needs of the Church on this continent. That the Nephites "disciples" were apostles seems most positively attested in Moroni:

The words of Christ, which he spake unto his disciples, the twelve whom he had chosen, as he laid his hands upon them—

And he called them by name, saying: Ye shall call on the Father in my name, in mighty prayer; and after ye have done this ye shall have power that to him upon whom ye shall lay your hands, ye shall give the Holy Ghost; and in my name shall ye give it, *for thus do mine apostles.* (Moroni 2:1-2)³

³ Joseph Smith said: "This book [the Book of Mormon] also tells us that our Savior made His appearance upon this continent after His resurrection; that He planted the Gospel here in all its fullness, and richness, and power, and blessing; that they had Apostles, Prophets, Pastors, Teachers, and Evangelists" (DHC 4:538).

This chapter also describes how the twelve, in a very impressive service, were baptized in water and, further, how they were baptized with fire from heaven and with the Holy Ghost. Angels also ministered to them. Even more impressive in this chapter is the description given of an ineffable outpouring of prayer (3 Nephi 19:16–35). In all scripture there can be found no description of a prayer service so powerful and marvelous as this. Only men with a high degree of spirituality can begin to comprehend and appreciate it. Near the end of the service Jesus said to his disciples:

So great faith have I never seen among all the Jews; wherefore I could not show unto them so great miracles, because of their unbelief.

Verily I say unto you, there are none of them that have seen so great things as ye have seen; neither have they heard so great things as ye have heard. (3 Nephi 19:35–36)

On account of its drama, loveliness, and high spirituality, I rank this chapter as one of the three greatest in the Book of Mormon.

Teachings in 3 Nephi

Third Nephi 20 relates that Jesus again administered bread and wine, miraculously provided, to his disciples, who in turn gave to the multitude. Then he gave all present instructions concerning the day when the Father would fulfill the covenant made with Israel and gather her sons from the four quarters of the earth. If the Gentiles did not repent after receiving great blessings, said he, they should come under the power of Israel as Micah the prophet had foreseen (3 Nephi 20:16–19; cf. Micah 4:12–13; 5:8–9). Jesus emphasized that the sword of God's justice would hang over the Gentiles in that day; on the other hand he would establish his people Israel in this land, which should be a New Jerusalem to them (3 Nephi 20:21–22). He cited a number of prophecies from Isaiah (52:1–3, 6–7, 9–15) and told the Nephites that they would be fulfilled at that future time. The emphasis placed by the Savior upon Israel's gathering and future glory is notable in this part of the American Gospel. There is no mistaking the fact that Jesus

instructed Mormon to put in this Gospel those teachings of practical and vital importance to us of this generation.

Jesus continues, in 3 Nephi 21, his discussion of the Father's work in the last days. He mentions the gathering of Israel again, and points out that a free people will be set up on this land, in order that the instructions and information in the Book of Mormon may be brought to the remnants of Israel by them. Those persons who will not receive the gospel shall be cut off from among the Lord's covenant people. The Savior then points out anew that Israel will have power over the unrepentant Gentiles and quotes Micah 5:8-15 to that effect. Jesus gives the promise, however, that if the Gentiles will hearken to his words and join themselves to the people of the covenant, they shall be given the privilege of helping to build the city of the New Jerusalem on this land. Their future will be glorious in assisting the Father to gather the dispersed of Israel from among all nations to this choice inheritance. The Master's discussion cannot fail to give the thoughtful reader a thrill as he contemplates it in connection with the great future of America if she chooses the course prescribed by him.

Third Nephi 22 is almost entirely a quotation from Isaiah. The superscription of it reads simply: "And then shall that which is written come to pass." This is, of course, an allusion by the Savior to the teachings of 3 Nephi 21.

After quoting Isaiah 54, the Lord paid tribute to the prophet:

And now, behold, I say unto you, that ye ought to search these things. Yea, a commandment I give unto you that ye search these things diligently; for great are the words of Isaiah.

For surely he spake as touching all things concerning my people which are of the house of Israel; therefore it must needs be that he must speak also to the Gentiles.

And all things that he spake have been and shall be, even according to the words which he spake. (3 Nephi 23:1-3)

The remainder of 3 Nephi 23 is of special interest to New Testament scholars. After expounding the scriptures to which the

Nephites had access, Jesus told the people that he had other scriptures which they should write down. He directed Nephi to bring the record which had been kept. Casting his eyes upon it, the Lord noticed that the fulfillment of some predictions of Samuel the Lamanite (Helaman 14:25–26) had not been recorded. Following the command of Jesus these omissions in the record were rectified. The lesson which this act of our Lord should bring home to Latter-day Saint scholarship is this: The Savior seems to have been very anxious that proper records, especially Church records, should be kept. That he would be any more anxious for Nephite history to be kept than that of the Church in Palestine and surrounding territory seems highly improbable to us. Yet numerous scholars insist that Jesus had little or nothing written; some insist that even the four Gospels were not written down until fifty years or more after his death. Many maintain that Jesus never organized a church; consequently there would be no point in insisting on “Church” records during his lifetime. Teachings such as those found in the Sermon on the Mount are often assumed to be collections of oral instructions which were long kept in the memories of the people and finally committed to writing. The American Gospel in the Book of Mormon demonstrates how unlikely some of these suppositions are. The fact that Jesus gave the Sermon on the Mount to the Nephites substantially as it appears in Matthew 5–7, that he organized the Church, and, further, the fact that he insisted on keeping careful records, should all put us on our guard against accepting too easily certain current theories respecting the Palestinian Church and its written history. Third Nephi 23 should be read and reread and pondered over by every scholar in the Church. Our Lord next proceeded to quote Malachi 3–4 and expounded those chapters to the Nephites. These two chapters are given in 3 Nephi 24–25 substantially as we find them in the King James Version. Then follow the comments of Mormon:

And now it came to pass that when Jesus had told these things he expounded them unto the multitude; and he did expound all things unto them, both great and small.

And he saith: These scriptures, which ye had not with you, the Father commanded that I should give

unto you; for it was wisdom in him that they should be given unto future generations. (3 Nephi 26:1-2)

Why were these chapters from Malachi, so important to Latter-day Saints, inserted in 3 Nephi without someone telling us how the Savior explained them? The answer, it seems to me, is relatively simple. Mormon quoted the two chapters in full for the purpose of emphasizing their importance. However, the Savior forbade him to insert his exposition of them because they deal with matters pertaining to the latter days, which it was the prerogative of the Prophet Joseph Smith to reveal. The second advent of the Savior, the purification of the sons of Levi, the keys of the sealing powers, temple work, and the mission of Elijah were matters dealt with by Malachi. The details concerning these important subjects were to be revealed by Joseph Smith at a proper time and place as the Church grew from its organization in 1830.

In 3 Nephi 26 Mormon further tells us that the Savior expounded all things to the Nephites, from the beginning until he should come in his glory, yea, and even until the earth should pass away and all peoples stand before God to be judged. Mormon then explains that he was permitted to write only a few of the lesser things which Jesus taught the Nephites. We are disappointed in that he relates only one incident concerning what Jesus did on the third successive day of his ministry. It concerns unusual powers given to children:

Behold, it came to pass on the morrow that the multitude gathered themselves together, and they both saw and heard these children; yea, even babes did open their mouths and utter marvelous things; and the things which they did utter were forbidden that there should not any man write them. (3 Nephi 26:16; cf. 14)

This chapter, as we have said, ends another logical unit in the American Gospel.

Mormon concludes the unit by pointing out that the Nephite Twelve went forth to teach and baptize the people; great and marvelous things were revealed to many. Moreover, he records:

And they taught, and did minister one to another; and they had all things common among them, every man dealing justly, one with another.

And it came to pass that they did do all things even as Jesus had commanded them.

And they who were baptized in the name of Jesus were called the church of Christ. (3 Nephi 26:19–21)

Instructions to the Disciples

Third Nephi 27–28 form the last unit of the American Gospel. In them are set down the events that transpired in the last recorded meeting of Jesus with the Nephite Twelve. Our Lord taught his disciples that the Church should be called after his name, for there had been disputations concerning the matter. He also emphasized certain fundamentals of the Gospel such as repentance and baptism; no unclean thing should be permitted to enter God's kingdom. Moreover, the disciples were to be judges of the Nephites according to the manner specified by Jesus (3 Nephi 27:27). The Savior impressed upon them again that they should write the things they had seen and heard, for out of the books the people should be judged (3 Nephi 27:23–26). Third Nephi 28 deals almost entirely with promises Jesus made to the Twelve, and more especially with three of their number who were given the assurance that they should live to bring souls to him and behold all of the doings of the Father unto the children of men until Christ should come in his glory. Nine of the twelve were promised that they should come into his kingdom after they were seventy-two years old. The remaining three were promised, however, that they should have the same blessing as that granted to John the Beloved on the Eastern continent (3 Nephi 28:6; cf. John 21:22–23; D&C 7).

Mormon tells at considerable length how the Three Nephites were caught up into heaven and saw and heard unspeakable things, how they ministered to the Nephites, and how they were cast twice into a den of wild beasts and were delivered. Prisons could not hold them. Mormon was forbidden to write their names, but he writes that he had seen them and they had ministered unto him. In the wisdom of God they should minister to the Gentiles,

the Jews, the scattered tribes of Israel, and to all nations. A change was wrought on their bodies so that they could not die; in this state they were to remain until the judgment day of Christ, at which time they were to undergo a greater change and be received into the kingdom of the Father. The Evil One, Mormon points out, was to have no power over them whatever, and the powers of the earth could not hold them.

Mormon's Editorial concerning 3 Nephi

Thus ends the American Gospel with 3 Nephi 28. The remainder of 3 Nephi, 29–30, is not included in it, because these chapters deal with editorial remarks and warnings from Mormon. Looking back over this Gospel, one sees that it is, in effect, a great spiritual drama with the gentle and compassionate but powerful figure of the resurrected Savior dominating it. It is the heart and core of the Book of Mormon. In its intent, method, and content it will probably remind the reader most of the Gospel of Matthew, but occasionally he will notice a touch of the Gospel of John. Nevertheless, it has a high originality and interest all its own. The love of God for man permeates every page of it.

In his editorial in 3 Nephi 29 Mormon makes the following remarks, which should be taken to heart by this generation:

And now behold, I say unto you that when the Lord shall see fit, in his wisdom, that these sayings shall come unto the Gentiles according to his word, then ye may know that the covenant which the Father hath made with the children of Israel, concerning their restoration to the lands of their inheritance, is already beginning to be fulfilled.

And ye may know that the words of the Lord, which have been spoken by the holy prophets, shall all be fulfilled; and ye need not say that the Lord delays his coming unto the children of Israel.

And ye need not imagine in your hearts that the words which have been spoken are vain, for behold, the Lord will remember his covenant which he hath made unto his people of the house of Israel.

And when ye shall see these sayings coming forth among you, then ye need not any longer spurn at the doings of the Lord, for the sword of his justice is in his right hand; and behold, at that day, if ye shall spurn at his doings he will cause that it shall soon overtake you. (3 Nephi 29:1-4)

Analysis of 3 Nephi

The following is a plan or analysis of the American Gospel:

I. Signs of Christ's birth. Advent of the Messiah in accordance with prediction (3 Nephi 1:4-21).

II. Signs of crucifixion and death of Christ. Great tempests, earthquakes, whirlwinds, and fires as predicted by Samuel the Lamanite. Voice of Christ heard over the land (3 Nephi 8-10).

III. Three-day ministry of resurrected Savior among Nephites (3 Nephi 11-26).

A. Dramatic personal appearance of Jesus to Nephites near temple in the land Bountiful. He teaches doctrines of repentance and of baptism by water and Holy Ghost (3 Nephi 11).

B. Twelve disciples called and given authority to baptize. Jesus teaches same principles laid down in the Sermon on the Mount; ethical principles governing the good life (3 Nephi 12-14).

C. Some miscellaneous teachings of the Savior (3 Nephi 15-16).

1. Law given Moses fulfilled. Jesus henceforth the law and the light (3 Nephi 15:1-10).

2. Jesus teaches the Twelve that Nephites are the sheep of another fold of which he spoke in Palestine; also that he was yet to visit other sheep (3 Nephi 15:11-16:4).

3. Blessings upon believing Gentiles of latter days. Isaiah 52:8-10 to be fulfilled at that time (3 Nephi 16:5-20).

D. The Savior heals the sick; prays to Father in marvelous manner; blesses little children (3 Nephi 17).

E. Jesus institutes sacrament of bread and wine. Teaches necessity of prayer. Disciples given power to confer Holy Ghost (3 Nephi 18).

F. Nephite Twelve baptized with water and Holy Ghost. Savior appears. Ineffable outpouring of prayer (3 Nephi 19).

G. Sacrament administered under miraculous circumstances. Gathering of remnants of Israel in latter days. According to prophet Micah, who is cited by Jesus, Israel to have power over the Gentiles. Savior the prophet like unto Moses. The Lord to remember covenant made with his people and cites prophet Isaiah to that effect (3 Nephi 20).

H. Gathering of Israel sign of the Father's work in latter days. Glorious destiny predicted for repentant Gentiles. As predicted by prophet Micah, remnant of Jacob to have power over unrepentant Gentiles. New Jerusalem to be built on the land (3 Nephi 21).

I. Savior cites Isaiah 54 as having its fulfillment in latter days (3 Nephi 22).

J. Jesus attests importance of Isaiah's prophecies; also stresses importance of keeping Church records by commanding that omissions be supplied (3 Nephi 23).

K. Savior quotes Malachi 3-4 to Nephites (3 Nephi 24-25).

L. Jesus expounds words of Malachi and all things from beginning until he comes in glory. Children speak many marvelous things. Disciples teach and baptize among people (3 Nephi 26).

IV. Jesus' last recorded appearance to his disciples, giving sundry items of instruction and blessing (3 Nephi 27-28).

A. Church to be named after Christ (3 Nephi 27:1-12).

B. Jesus sent into world to draw all men unto him upon conditions of faith, repentance, and baptism (3 Nephi 27:13-22).

C. Men to be judged out of things written in sacred books (3 Nephi 27:23-27).

D. Disciples to ask Father in Jesus' name for things they desire. Nephites of that generation to be saved, but most of the fourth generation to be lost (3 Nephi 27:28-33).

E. Jesus grants each of the Twelve his heart's desire; three elect to remain upon earth until Lord's coming in glory; they are caught up into heaven and see and hear unspeakable things (3 Nephi 28:1-13).

F. Mormon relates at length the history and state of the three disciples (3 Nephi 28:14–40).