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Abstract Expressions similar to “that which is to come” (Mosiah 3:1) refer specifically to Christ. Numerous prophets prophesy of Christ and the good news of his atoning influence in our lives.

NOTES AND COMMUNICATIONS

“That Which Is to Come”

John A. Tvedtnes

And again my brethren, I would call your attention, for I have somewhat more to speak unto you; for behold, I have things to tell you concerning that which is to come. (Mosiah 3:1)

With these words, King Benjamin introduced the expression that came to denote Jesus Christ among the Nephites. The words *that which is to come* refer specifically to Christ and not to future events in general. This becomes clear as we read the rest of Mosiah 3, which is devoted to a message delivered to Benjamin by an angel. The entire message concerns the coming of Jesus Christ. The angel said that the good news of salvation had been declared in advance by prophets “that thereby whosoever should believe that Christ should come, the same might receive remission of their sins, and rejoice with exceedingly great joy, even as though he had already come among them” (Mosiah 3:13). He stressed that it was essential that the people “believe that salvation was, and is, and is to come, in and through the atoning blood of Christ, the Lord Omnipotent” (Mosiah 3:18).

The Nephites received the angelic message with joy “because of the exceeding faith which they had in Jesus Christ who should come, according to the words which king Benjamin had spoken unto them” (Mosiah 4:3). The king urged them to stand “steadfastly in the faith of that which is to come, which was spoken by the mouth of the angel” (Mosiah 4:11), to which the

people replied that they had received "the manifestations of his Spirit, have great views of that which is to come; and were it expedient, we could prophesy of all things" (Mosiah 5:3).

King Benjamin's words set the tone for Nephite leaders in subsequent generations. Helaman₂ told his sons:

O remember, remember, my sons, the words which king Benjamin spake unto his people; yea, remember that there is no other way nor means whereby man can be saved, only through the atoning blood of Jesus Christ, who shall come; yea, remember that he cometh to redeem the world. And remember also the words which Amulek spake unto Zeezrom, in the city of Ammonihah; for he said unto him that the Lord surely should come to redeem his people. (Helaman 5:9-10)

King Benjamin was not the first Nephite prophet to teach the advent of Christ. Lehi had spoken of "the Messiah who should come" (1 Nephi 10:11, 17). Nephi, too, spoke of the "Messiah to come" (2 Nephi 25:18; compare 26:3). When his brother Jacob spoke of "things to come," he had specific reference to the coming Messiah and the atonement he would bring (2 Nephi 9:4-6; compare Jacob 4:11-12). Jacob's son Enos, having learned that his sins were forgiven because of his faith in Christ (Enos 1:5-8), "went about among the people of Nephi, prophesying of things to come, and testifying of the things which [he] had heard and seen" (Enos 1:19). His son Jarom noted that "the prophets, and the priests, and the teachers, did labor diligently, exhorting with all long-suffering the people to diligence; teaching the law of Moses, and the intent for which it was given; persuading them to look forward unto the Messiah, and believe in him to come as though he already was" (Jarom 1:11). From the beginning, the central religious theme among the Nephites was the coming of Christ to atone for the sins of mankind (see Alma 46:15).

Throughout their history, the Nephite faithful looked forward to the coming of Christ. Alma spoke of "that which was to come," meaning the atonement of Christ (Mosiah 18:2). Indeed, the advent of Christ became his principal message whenever he preached. He told the people of Zarahemla of Christ "who should come to redeem his people from their sins" (Alma 5:21, 27, 44,

48). He used the same terminology when speaking to the people of the city of Gideon (Alma 6:8). In that discourse, Alma spoke of the atonement "which is to come" (Alma 7:6) in terms that stressed the importance he placed on the coming of Christ: "For behold, I say unto you there be many things to come; and behold, there is one thing which is of more importance than they all—for behold, the time is not far distant that the Redeemer liveth and cometh among his people" (Alma 7:7; see also 7:8). He used similar terminology in other discourses (Alma 9:20, 26; 33:22; 39:15–16), as did his missionary companion, Amulek (Alma 10:12; 11:35, 40; 34:8–9).

Samuel the Lamanite followed the same pattern. He told the Nephites in the city of Zarahemla that nothing could save them "save it be repentance and faith on the Lord Jesus Christ, who surely shall come into the world" (Helaman 13:6). "Five years more cometh," he declared, "and behold, then cometh the Son of God" (Helaman 14:2). He then enumerated the signs of Christ's birth and death. Meanwhile, the prophet Nephi was "working miracles among the people, that they might know that the Christ must shortly come—Telling them of things which must shortly come, that they might know and remember at the time of their coming that they had been made known unto them beforehand" (Helaman 16:4–5).

The importance of looking forward to Christ's coming is further strengthened by the fact that the major problem with Nephite dissenters was that they did not believe that anyone could know in advance of "things to come," and they therefore rejected Christ.¹ Sherem disputed with Jacob the validity of believing in "a being which ye say shall come many hundred years hence," saying that no one can "tell of things to come" (Jacob 7:7). Jacob responded by asking, "Deniest thou the Christ who shall come?" (Jacob 7:9) and testified to him "that Christ shall come" (Jacob 7:14).

Zeezrom employed a similar tactic against Alma and Amulek (see Alma 11:35) and was refuted by Amulek (see Alma 11:40). Similarly, the antichrist Korihor accused Alma and his people of

¹ According to Helaman 8:22–23, Lehi had been driven from Jerusalem because he testified of the coming of Christ (compare Helaman 8:20). It is ironic, then, that some of his posterity rejected these prophecies.

being "bound down under a foolish and a vain hope, why do ye yoke yourselves with such foolish things? Why do ye look for a Christ? For no man can know of anything which is to come" (Alma 30:13). Unbelievers slew the prophet Abinadi because he "prophesied of many things which are to come, yea, even the coming of Christ" (Mosiah 7:26-28). In speaking of Christ, he had testified of "things to come" (Mosiah 16:6) and noted, in reference to the law of Moses and its fulfillment in Christ, "that all these things were types of things to come" (Mosiah 13:31-32; 16:14-15).²

Some apostates from the Nephite faith, such as the Zoramites and the Amalekites, made it a point of doctrine that there would be no Christ. In their weekly prayers, the Zoramites thanked God "that he did not lead them away after the tradition of their brethren, and that their hearts were not stolen away to believe in things to come, which they knew nothing about" (Alma 31:22). An unbelieving Amalekite declared to Mosiah's missionary son Aaron,

We do not believe that thou knowest any such thing.
We do not believe in these foolish traditions. We do not believe that thou knowest of things to come, neither do we believe that thy fathers and also that our fathers did know concerning the things which they spake, of that which is to come. (Alma 21:8; see also 21:7)

Even after the signs of Christ's imminent birth began to appear, some continued to doubt, believing that the fulfillment of prophecy was coincidental (Helaman 16:16). Satan sought to "harden the hearts of the people against that which was good and against that which should come" (Helaman 16:22). The unbelievers considered the doctrine of Christ's coming to be

a wicked tradition, which has been handed down unto us by our fathers, to cause us that we should believe in some great and marvelous thing which should come to pass, but not among us, but in a land which is far

² One wonders if Abinadi's death may have also been a foreshadowing of the death of Christ, for the prophet declared, "what you do with me, after this, shall be as a type and a shadow of things which are to come" (Mosiah 13:10; Alma 25:10). In making this statement, I am not ignorant of the subsequent burning of king Noah (Mosiah 19:20; see also Alma 25:9-12).

distant, a land which we know not; therefore they can keep us in ignorance, for we cannot witness with our own eyes that they are true. (Helaman 16:20)

It was precisely this latter point that differentiated the Nephite believers from the unbelievers. The faithful went beyond merely accepting the witness of their fathers and sought for personal testimony of "Christ . . . who should come according to the spirit of prophecy" (Alma 4:13; compare 4:20). Thus Alma declared,

I am commanded to stand and testify unto this people the things which have been spoken by our fathers concerning the things which are to come. . . . I know of myself that whatsoever I shall say unto you, concerning that which is to come, is true. . . . I know that Jesus Christ shall come, yea, the Son, the Only Begotten of the Father, full of grace, and mercy, and truth. And behold, it is he that cometh to take away the sins of the world, yea, the sins of every man who steadfastly believeth on his name. (Alma 5:44, 48)

Note mention of the "spirit of revelation" and the "spirit of prophecy" in Alma 4:13 and 5:46-47 and compare Christ's coming in Alma 5:50 (see also Alma 34:8). Of Alma's testimony to the people in Gideon, to which we referred above, we read that he spoke "according to the revelation of the truth of the word which had been spoken by his fathers, and according to the spirit of prophecy which was in him, according to the testimony of Jesus Christ, the Son of God, who should come to redeem his people from their sins" (Alma 6:8).

This passage reflects one of Joseph Smith's favorite sayings,³ from Revelation 19:10, that "the testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy" (compare Mosiah 8:17). It is a frequent theme in the Book of Mormon as well, where the "prophecies concerning that which was to come" (Helaman 6:14) refer primarily to Christ (see Helaman 8:20). Alma and Amulek testified "of the things which were to come, according to the spirit of prophecy which was in them" (Alma 10:12). The Lamanite converts of the sons of

³ See Joseph Fielding Smith, *Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1979), 119, 160, 265, 269, 300, 312, 315.

Mosiah "did not suppose that salvation came by the law of Moses; but the law of Moses did serve to strengthen their faith in Christ; and thus they did retain a hope through faith, unto eternal salvation, relying upon the spirit of prophecy, which spake of those things to come" (Alma 25:16). Similarly, the sons of their converts, who fought in the great war under the prophet Helaman, had strong faith "in the prophecies concerning that which is to come" (Alma 58:40). Even Jacob had written, "we also had many revelations, and the spirit of much prophecy; wherefore, we knew of Christ and his kingdom, which should come" (Jacob 1:6). Passages such as these remind us that King Benjamin's people, too, had received the Spirit, coming to believe in "that which is to come" and declaring that they could "prophecy of all things" (Mosiah 5:3).

What differentiated between the righteous and the unrighteous in the Book of Mormon was faith in Christ to come, and the righteous were rewarded with witnessing "he, of whom it was written by the prophets, that should come" (3 Nephi 11:15). The same situation prevails in our day. Those who look forward with an eye of faith to Christ's second coming and keep his commandments will be found worthy when he returns. Mormon wrote that the coming forth of his abridgment of the Nephite records would be a sign that the prophecies concerning the last days were soon to be fulfilled and that "ye need not say that the Lord delays his coming" (3 Nephi 29:1-2). Indeed, the major purpose of the Book of Mormon is, according to its title page, to convince us "that Jesus is the Christ," and to prepare us to "be found spotless at the judgment-seat of Christ." In his final exhortation to us, the future readers of his work, Mormon wrote, "Believe in Jesus Christ, that he is the Son of God . . . and [that] he bringeth to pass the resurrection of the dead, whereby man must be raised to stand before his judgment-seat" (Mormon 7:5-6). Moroni, also addressing our day, writes,

And now, I would commend you to seek this Jesus of whom the prophets and apostles have written, that the grace of God the Father, and also the Lord Jesus Christ, and the Holy Ghost, which beareth record of them, may be and abide in you forever. Amen. (Ether 12:41)