

## TEACHINGS OF THE BOOK OF MORMON

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Semester 4, Lecture 91

3 Nephi 9–10

The Early Christians

The Five Gospels

Brother Clayton, the whole Book of Mormon is centered on one focal point, isn't it? It's like a burning glass centered with ferocious concentration on one single point. What is there in chapters 9 and 10 of 3 Nephi that points that out? One little word keeps hammering away, repeating and repeating. What is that, Brother Clayton? The whole Book of Mormon is just centered on one person, isn't it? And who is that?

"Christ."

Yes, and what brings that out very clearly, with great power in chapters 9 and 10 when the Lord is announcing himself?

"He is saying he is the one who has caused the destruction."

He keeps repeating that word over and over and over again. Remember, the ninth chapter is divided evenly into ten verses in which he says I did all these awful things, and then he turns around and says I give you all these blessings. This is what I'm going to give you. I'm going to give you eternal life. You belong to my family; you belong to me. I don't want to have to throw you out, you see. Now those people who perished, have they lost their salvation forever? No, not at all. We'll [discuss] the message which they wouldn't accept here. First Peter [mentions] those spirits who were disobedient at the time of Noah. The Lord went down and preached to them and he sent the apostles to preach to them. That's what you get out of this literature we're going to talk about today.

This repeated *I* tells us that one person has been commissioned to do everything. Is that selfish? All those *I*'s sound very selfish and egotistical. Sister Cox, that sounds awfully egotistical—I did all this, I destroyed these things, and I and I alone will save you and bring you back and you can live with me. I am one of the same type of person as you are. I belong to your universe of discourse and everything. I can give you all these blessings. Does that sound very egotistical to you?

"It does."

It certainly does. The only time I ever went to BYU [as a student], I went to a summer school many years ago up at Aspen Grove. They were very flattered to have this Rabbi Cohen there; he was talking. We were being very liberal in our ideas in those days. Rabbi Cohen said, "Wouldn't I be a conceited ass if I were to say 'Come unto me, all ye who are weary and heavy laden, and I will give you rest?'" Well, what's the answer to that, Sister Cox?

"Yes."

Yes, you would be a conceited ass if you said it. You don't have to say it, either, to be one. It came out all over the place, you see. Would I be a conceited ass if I said I invented the sewing machine? I'm a conceited ass if I go around boasting of that, because I didn't. It doesn't happen to be true. But if it's true, if I did invent the sewing machine, I'm not necessarily a conceited ass to say, "Yes, I invented it." So the Lord can say this, but others can't. God is permitted to do things that men can't do. What are some of the things? Well, all this destruction, etc. Now what

do we have here? What was I going to say, anyway? The Lord's speaking to them about the resurrection, and he tells them all these things that he has done. And they're true when he says them.

What about his actual coming though? This is a very important thing. Is the story true? The whole thing hangs around this—if this is true, if he is really the Redeemer. Or did he really say it, or really come at all? Do we have any evidence? Right off hand can you tell me the evidence for such a person coming among the Indian tribes of America? I don't think there's a single tribe that doesn't have that legend, and what is it? [answer inaudible]

And what is the legend called? The legend of the white god. These go by various names like Quetzalcoatl. You name it what you will. There have been a number of collections of writings about that. These legends are found everywhere, and of course they're all mixed up. They're all mixed and mangled and everything else, but you always get that main theme. How would all these people know about it? Remember, Cortez had an easy time because they thought he was the white god who had come back. He had the beard and all the rest of it. Were they ever wrong! He, Pizarro, and the others took advantage of that and exploited it. All the tribes have that legend. The variations show the usual signs of invention, contamination, and elaboration. But Christians don't want to accept the story of the Lord coming back after the crucifixion. This is an important thing, isn't it? They don't like it at all. I think the best thing would be to just briefly go through the account of it in the New Testament. Let's do that. This is what happened. Now, did the resurrection really take place?

Well, first I guess we should mention this. There are 17 [verses] in the Book of Mormon that repeat the teachings of Christ—the same that you find in the New Testament. Well, is that necessary, if you have it four times? Brother Frost, is it necessary after having four gospels to repeat the same thing word for word all over again? Is this repetition necessary?

“What he said here they didn't know about in the Old World, or they didn't have record of it.”

Oh, he added something to it. But remember, 17 of these verses are almost word for word out of the New Testament. Why is that necessary? Somebody might make fun of that. But, what is the first question that comes to mind? How many Gospels are there? How many accounts are there in the New Testament?

“There are four Gospels.”

Four Gospels. It's told four times in the New Testament. Well, was that necessary? Now, you're right, you see. Why four?

“They had different views.”

They did have different views, and especially on what subject? Where do they differ most widely? Where do they have different views and different reports? Some say they're very confusing. They're not confusing if you consider they came from different people and their impressions. Nevertheless, when you get to the story of the resurrection, they all go off in different directions. So, we need a fifth Gospel. There's nothing wrong with a fifth Gospel, because we know that he preached the fifth Gospel, as we're going to talk about. That's the one he talked about during the forty days, for example, when he came back and taught them. So this repetition is necessary here. This has fortified people's doubts, that the Gospels disagree. This is one of the main arguments against [the Bible]. They say, “Well, it's a fiction.” The standard accepted doctrine today of the return of Christ is that the Christians were so dedicated and so full of the spirit and remembered him so vividly with wishful thinking that they incorporated him into a cult. They built a cult around his memory and his thought. In that spiritual sense he would appear, and that's the sense

in which the Christian world accepts his coming back again, and that only. You may think that's an exaggeration. I think I'll have to read something else then. See, I brought the whole library along.

The earliest and greatest of the Christian theologians was Origen of Alexandria. He grew up at the University of Alexandria, so he had a lot of fancy ideas. He came very early, and he influenced the others like nobody else. You say, well, isn't St. Augustine greater? St. Augustine is simply a paraphrase of Origen. And so this is what we have when these men speak. This was Origen's reaction. Well, first of all [we'll discuss] the Apostolic Fathers. The first writers after the apostles, after the New Testament, were the Apostolic Fathers. There were seven of them, beginning with Clement, Ignatius of Antioch, Polycarp. They [gave us the] first writings after the New Testament, and the earliest of those are Clement and Ignatius. Now, they were writing in the first century, between A.D. 85 and 115. And this is what they were talking about. Ignatius was going to Rome to be martyred at that time. There were two charges constantly brought against the church members by the Apostolic Fathers; all of them charged the church members with this. They said, they're ashamed of the crucifixion and they deny the resurrection. Well, would you think Christians in the first century would start denying the resurrection as soon as they got it?

"I know that Christ had a body after the resurrection," said Ignatius writing to the Smyrnaeans, "and I believe that he still has."<sup>1</sup> There's no thought of a mystic body here, you'll notice. Ignatius pleads with the Trallians (he wrote seven letters, including one to the Trallians, too) to believe that Christ really and truly was born, that he ate and drank, that he was really and actually sentenced under Pontius Pilate and was actually crucified and died, and that he really and truly was raised from the dead. "But if as certain atheists, that is nonbelievers, say, he only appeared to have suffered, . . . why am I going to fight beasts?" In the longer version Ignatius rebukes those who don't believe in the resurrection; "others that say God cannot be known [now, this is what the church was preaching already in the time of the apostles. See, Ignatius was boasting that he was the last to see John, and Polycarp was contemporary. They had seen an apostle]; others that think Christ was unbegotten, others who claim that the Holy Ghost is not a reality, and others who say that the Father, Son, and the Holy Ghost are the same." They (the Apostolic Fathers) were very much alarmed about it.

Then came the great Origen, who was going to explain it all, you see. He joined the church, and he was the great philosopher. He was going to explain the gospel to his friends. He wrote a refutation of Celsus who had written a document against the church way back in 180. [Origen] said, "We are stunned with the greatest amazement that this, the most eminent of all natures [that's Christ], putting off its state of majesty, should become a man. . . . It is utterly beyond human comprehension that the Word of the Father . . . should be thought of as confined within that man who appeared in Judea [in the Book of Mormon he appears as just a man and mingles among them]. But that the Wisdom of God should have entered the womb of a woman, and been born a baby, and cried and wailed just like other crying babies [and had to have diapers changed, etc.], and then suffered death and said that his soul was sorrowful unto death, and been led off to the most undignified of all deaths. . . . Seeing such things the human intellect is stopped in its tracks, so stunned with amazement that it knows not where to turn. . . . It is far beyond our powers to explain. I suppose it even goes beyond the capacity of the holy Apostles; nay, it is quite possible that the explanation of this sacrament is beyond the powers of all the celestial beings." The angels and God can't explain it, because it shouldn't happen, you see. God is bodiless. He must be without any material contamination—that's a thing you had to accept. That's why he doesn't know what to *think* about the Lord, so he gives his suspicions.

We'll cite St. Augustine here. I like St. Augustine. According to St. Augustine, the resurrection of the flesh is the one thing the pagans cannot take, the one thing with which the philosophers have no patience, and above all, the one thing that distinguishes a Christian from a non-Christian. Since that's the one doctrine that makes Christians Christian, it is alarming to learn from

Augustine what *his* idea of the resurrection is. Quoting Augustine here: “In nothing is there so much conflict and controversy among Christians themselves as on the subject of resurrection of the flesh.” See, the Christians themselves were fighting about it—the one thing they could not agree on was that. “On no other matter,” he says, “do they disagree so vehemently, so obstinately, so resolutely, or so contentiously as on the subject of the resurrection of the flesh. For as far as the immortality of the soul is concerned,” he says, “many a pagan philosopher too has argued about that and bequeathed us vast heaps of writings to the effect that the soul is immortal. But when it comes to resurrection of the flesh, they won’t argue, but dismiss it out of hand as impossible, and that on the grounds that it is impossible for this earthly flesh to aspire to heaven.”

And so we go on with the various [ideas]. I like the explanation that St. Jerome gives to this. Maybe we can find Jerome here. He says the resurrection is at the heart of Christian teaching. Commenting on this, St. Jerome (talking about Origen) wrote a century and a half later, “If all things, as this order of reasoning compels us to believe, shall live without a body [hereafter], the whole universe of corporeal things shall be consumed and return again to that nothing out of which it was created.” Now, that’s St. Jerome who gave us the Latin Bible, the official Catholic Bible, the Vulgate. He believes everything is going to return [to nothing]. Oh, he says we’ll have to be resurrected in the flesh because the scriptures say we will have to be, but the moment we are resurrected, then we’ll start dissolving. And very presently we’ll be dissolved into the “nothing from which we came.” Like the Buddhists, we’re just a drop of water in the great ocean of being and return to nothing.

But this [in 3 Nephi] is a very different story. This is so literal. Let’s look at some of these. I’m so bowled over by these. Look what happens in Matthew 28:1–2. It was very early on the Sabbath, when it was still dark. Mary Magdalene and the other Mary came to look at the tomb (notice the Book of Mormon at the time of the crucifixion), and there was a tremendous earthquake as they went. Earthquakes are very common in that part of the country; that’s right on a very active earthquake belt. It’s the *jauf*, the great depression sunk in there. That’s the great rift that runs through Africa and right up through Palestine there. There was a terrific earthquake [Matthew 28:2], and an angel of the Lord came down and rolled the stone away from in front of the tomb. And then what happened? They saw him. People rationalize and say, “Well, obviously it was the earthquake that rolled the stone away.” But no, they said they saw him, [verse 3] “And his countenance was like lightning, and his raiment white as snow.” They always talk about the garments white as snow. That’s uniform. That is the basic white that’s worn in the celestial kingdom.

Those who were there to perform the ordinances were scared to death, and they shook like the earth and fell down as if they were dead. [This refers to] those who were sent to watch the tomb, to carry out the necessary protection of the tomb—probably the Roman soldiers. It doesn’t say they were the Roman soldiers, but they passed out and fell as if dead at the sight of the angel. They couldn’t take it.

Verse 5: “And the angel answered and said unto the women, Fear not ye.” See, the angel always says, “Don’t be afraid.” There’s the cultural shock. He says, don’t be afraid of me at all for I know that it is Jesus who was crucified whom you’re looking for. You won’t find him here. He’s risen and gone just as he said he would.<sup>2</sup> Come on and look if you don’t believe me. They’re always being asked to look and test and see with their eyes, etc. Come here and look. This is the place where they laid him. See, he isn’t there, immediately having risen up. After they have seen it, then he says, now you hurry off as fast as you can and tell what you’ve seen to the disciples, that he has risen from the dead. And then that he would meet them in Galilee.

Now, you see, this was just an angel, but they were absolutely overwhelmed at what had happened, naturally. And he was to meet them there. And they left the tomb with fear and rejoicing. They were frightened. They were overawed and very happy at the same time, with great

fear and rejoicing. They ran away as fast as they could and announced it to the apostles that Jesus had actually risen. And “behold, Jesus met them.” He was standing right smack in front of them and met them face to face saying, good morning, how are you this morning? The word was *chaire*. It means cheer. Our word *cheer* comes from that. And when they saw him they grabbed him by the feet so he couldn’t go any farther, and Jesus said, “Don’t be afraid”—again, you see. You go and tell what you’ve seen to my brethren, and tell them that they should go to Galilee and meet with me. They’ll have a chance to see me there.

Notice, there are appointments and goings and comings here. It seems like regular, everyday affairs. And they [the philosophers] say Christ’s spirit came into their hearts and he was everywhere, etc. Nothing could be more down to earth, and all the Gospels keep rubbing it in, all the time. This is not the way you think it was, but you have this other idea. And then they themselves went, and behold (it uses the Roman word *custodian* here) came into the city and announced to the high priest. Then [it tells] how they plotted it, etc. Well, we have to be getting along here because there are some better passages than that. Notice verse 16: The eleven disciples did go to Galilee and met him. As soon as he met them there, he told them to go forth and teach and baptize. Go teach all people and baptize them. That’s what he does right off, in all the Gospels. Almost as soon as he sees the apostles, he says, this is my Father’s gospel; go and baptize—exactly as he does in the Book of Mormon. He doesn’t wait to tell them that part.

Now Mark 16:5 has a nice touch here, when they went and looked in the tomb. See, this one says they saw the angel outside, and he told them to look in the tomb. The angel was brilliant, etc. In this one they look in the tomb and they just see a *neanaiskon* there, which is “a nice young man.” It’s a term of endearment, a caritative, a diminutive. In Mark 16:5 when they looked in the tomb, what did they see? You’ll notice it’s always defined in all the Gospels, not just Luke, with clinical accuracy. They want to make sure that you know exactly what happened.

There was a terrible fear among them, and it was the first day of the Sabbath they went just before sunrise. They said to each other, “Who has moved the stone?” And then going up to the tomb, they saw a *neanaiskon*, a young man, a youth, a pleasant one. Notice, *iskos* is a term of endearment; a nice young fellow was sitting there. That’s all it was, you see. He wasn’t flaming or blazing like the other angel was. Then notice how accurate they want us to get it. He was sitting on the right hand, and he was clothed in a white robe, a *stolēn*, after the manner of a Roman robe, an ordinary white robe. He wasn’t a terrifying sight at all; he was just a young fellow sitting there. He was sitting on the right side of the place where [Jesus] had been buried. They were absolutely amazed—*exethambēthēsan*. That’s as strong as you can make it. But he said to them the usual thing: Don’t be surprised that I should be here (they always have to be reassured). Jesus, whom you are looking for, Jesus the Nazarene (Nazarene doesn’t mean of the town of Nazareth; it means of the church, Nazarene), the crucified one—he is risen, and he is not here. This is the place where they laid him, but he’s not here anymore. But you go and tell the apostles. Tell Peter, who is in charge of them, that they shall all go and meet him in Galilee, and then they’ll have a chance to see him there. So that’s the same part of the story. They all had a hard time believing all of these things, until they saw them. Even then they were amazed and had to be pacified, because it was both ordinary and very extraordinary—to have it happening just so casually and matter of fact. The angels came around and mingled with men in this manner.

Luke’s report is the fullest, of course. In his Gospel he starts out [by saying], I want you to get this straight. Everybody gets it all mixed up, and there are all sorts of reports going around now. And, you see, there were. They should not discredit it, but he says, I’m going to tell you how it really happened. So in this account when they go to the tomb, what do they see? Luke 24:4. It’s not a *neanaiskon* this time. Verse 4 says they didn’t find the body of the Lord Jesus. When they started talking about this, then behold there were two men standing there who appeared to them, and they were clothed in garments like lightning. Now it was two men at the tomb, and they were

standing, not sitting. But it gives us some more clinical detail. [Translating again:] And they were terrified of the object, and they hid their faces right down to the ground. They put their heads on the ground. And the two said to them, “Why are you looking for the living among the dead?” This is a tomb. He’s not here. You don’t look for the living here. “He isn’t here, but he’s risen.” You remember how he spoke to you concerning the times in Galilee. They have to go there and meet him. And then they remembered his words, and they turned away and they left the tomb and told all these things to the eleven apostles. They were Mary Magdalene, and Joanna and Mary [the mother of James], and there were some others with them. They weren’t alone when they went there; the others were with them.

They went and told the apostles of it. What did the apostles say? You wonder why Christians don’t believe it today. They wouldn’t believe it then. His apostles told them “you’re crazy” when they told them the story—notice verse 11. It appeared to the eleven that the women were simply speaking a lot of nonsense, out of their heads. They refused to believe them. So Jesus’ own disciples, whom he told he would rise from the dead, wouldn’t believe it when they [the women] said it was so. See how hard this is to take? They couldn’t take it. The Christian fathers couldn’t take it. Churches don’t take it today.

Then there’s the story of the two of them going along the road to Emmaus, talking to each other all about the things that had happened. Verse 15: While they were talking there came and appeared to them somebody walking beside them along the road quite close. Somebody keeping pace with them came closer to them and walked along with them. And then they suddenly recognized who it was. It says their eyes were overcome so that they didn’t recognize who it was. How would their eyes be overcome so they couldn’t recognize him? And he said to them, you were having an argument as you walked along. What were you talking about? And then they stood stark still, very much upset, almost angry. *Skuthrōpoi* means “angry, upset, taken aback.” They stopped as they were walking down the road—a dramatic scene—when one of them answered, who was named Cleopas. He said to him, you alone are the only person who has been to Jerusalem and hasn’t heard about it. So they talk about the crucifixion, etc.

Verse 22: But certain women from us came very early to the tomb to find his body, and they said they saw an angel with their own eyes; an angel became visible to them. But the women reported they saw the angels there, but they didn’t see him. And he appeared unto them and said, Oh, you stupid [*anoētoi* is still the modern Greek word for *stupid, dumb*] and slow-witted people, not to believe all things that were spoken by the holy prophets. And then beginning with Moses and the prophets, he explained to them all that had happened. It was only then that they began to understand what was happening. The Lord was with them, as in the Book of Mormon. He opened the scriptures, beginning with Moses, and explained to them all the things that were to happen. He had to do that before their eyes were open. Verse 31: “And then their eyes were open.” They recognized him, and in a moment, instantly, he vanished from them. So this would keep you off balance all the time. They said, “We should have known all along. Didn’t our hearts burn within us as he met us on the road there and started explaining the scriptures to us?” And then, after, he was seen of others.

This is what happened after that. He found the eleven when they were met together, and those that were with the eleven. They said that really the Lord has arisen from the dead and had appeared to Simon. Notice all these different reports going around. And those that met him on their own recognized him when he ate bread with them. When he broke bread with them, then they knew who it was. And while they were speaking and talking about these things among themselves, then he appeared among them again, in the midst of them while they were talking about these things. And they were all struck dumb. The conversation stopped instantly, and they were afraid. They thought they had seen a ghost, a spirit. Now this is what the Christian world says

it was: Well, of course, it was the Christ's spirit who returned to them in their fond memories. They built the cult around it, etc.

And he said to them, "Why are you so upset, and why do you argue about these things? Why do these things enter into your heart? Behold, these are my hands and these are my feet, and they will prove to you that I am I. [Remember, he does that to the Nephites, too; he introduces himself that way.] Behold, these are my hands and these are my feet, showing that it is really me. Come and feel me and see, and you will see that a spirit does not have flesh and bone as you see for yourself that I have." He's doing everything he can to prove that he is not a spirit. The Gospels all emphasize that, so what does the Christian world say? He was a spirit, of course. It was the Christ's spirit that came to them. But I am not a spirit, he said. But, he saw that they still wouldn't believe him. Why? That explains why, you see. It was too good to be true, because of their joy and amazement. These things just don't happen, you see. Because of their joy and amazement they wouldn't accept it. So he said, all right, you need some more proof. You still won't believe it, he said. Do you have any food in the house? They brought out to him a piece of broiled fish. He took that in their presence and he ate part of it. Then he said, these things I spoke to you while I was still with you, that the words of Moses would have to be fulfilled. But he called for the fish and the honeycomb and ate before them. In John he really goes into it, calls for the honeycomb, etc.

Do we have anything else here? Well, we see from Luke here that there's something different about him. It says here in [Luke 24:35] that it was the eating that convinced them. Was he a ghost? They doubt, but he has a body. This is what he tells the Nephites in verse 44—this is the thing which I taught the Jews at Jerusalem. This is what my gospel has been all along. He explains the scriptures in verse 45. Then he says their minds were opened and they began to understand the scriptures. So he taught them and preached to them, but we don't have the sermon that he gave to them. This is important here.

But let's get on to John. We find in John 20 that Mary [Magdalene] is on the spot. How is her experience described here? Again, in meticulous detail. It was early dawn of the Sabbath, the beginning of the Sabbath, when Mary Magdalene went in the first light (when it was still more dark than light) to the tomb. She saw that the stone had been removed from the tomb, and she ran and told Simon Peter about it (that's another account). And she told it to the other disciple, the one that Jesus loved. (Modest John isn't mentioning his own name here.) And she said to them, the Lord has risen from the tomb. He's left the tomb, and we don't know where they've put him. She's very much worried about this, because she wants to perform the rites for the dead—not the Roman ones. Peter and the other disciples went out to see if that was really true, and they went to the tomb. The two of them walked along together, and the other disciple, the second one, ran faster than Peter did. He got to the tomb first, and he bent over and looked in, and he saw (now notice how clinically exact he is) the sash, the *othonion*, a sort of sash or towel. He saw the garments there, but he didn't go in. So Simon Peter caught up with him. He went right into the tomb, and he saw the white garments (it's linen, actually) lying there, He saw the *sudarion*. That's the Roman word for *towel*, the cloth around the head. He saw the *sudarion* lying there which had been on his head. There they were, neatly folded, lying there.

It's all too physical for words—no wonder the fathers couldn't take it. Notice he wants to make particular note of it. *Sudarion* is the Roman word; that's a sweatband. The *sudarion* wasn't with the other clothes, but it was in a separate place. Then when the other one went in (both of the disciples are now in the tomb) he saw, and he believed what he had seen. Up to that time, they hadn't understood the scriptures, that he really would be resurrected. Now John is beginning to understand [that he would] arise from the dead. So they went back and told the other disciples.

But Mary stayed there near the tomb, and she was crying. She thought it was all over. While she was crying, she leaned over, too, and looked into the tomb. She saw there two white angels (this is a different account; well, the others saw two men, too; they were angels—an angel is just a

messenger) in white garments sitting there. The others were standing there. Well, I guess they got tired of standing, I don't know. But when Mary went there, they were sitting, one at the head and one at the foot of where the body of Jesus had lain. And they said to her, "Woman, why are you crying?" And she said to them, "Because they took the Lord away, and I don't know where they put him." And when she said these things, she turned and looked behind her. She saw Jesus standing there, but she didn't recognize who he was. See, he doesn't come in glory now; it's as an ordinary human being. He's got to let us know that until he has finished his mission here, he is just one of us.

And Jesus said to her, "Woman, why are you crying? Whom are you looking for?" And she thought it was the gardener. So you can see that early in the morning when it was still dark, he obviously wasn't an overpowering presence or anything. She thought it was the gardener, who came up to hoe around the garden. It's the Garden Tomb, I suppose. She thought it was the gardener, and she said to him, "Sir, if you have taken him, could you please tell me where you took him, and I'll come and get him."

And Jesus said to her, "Mary, don't you recognize me?" And she whirled around and she said, in Hebrew, "Rabboni," meaning *Lord*. So she recognized him, and he said, "Don't touch me. I'm going to my Father later and then we can get together." So we have these different stories.

Then this very same day, which was the Sabbath, the doors being still closed, the disciples were met together. They were scared to death, right after the crucifixion. They had locked the doors because of fear of the Jews, and Jesus came and stood right in the middle of them. And he said to them, "*Shalom 'aleikhem*," which is literally "peace be with you." And when he said this, notice, he showed them the tokens, because they are the apostles. He showed them the signs in his hands and in his side [John] said. And they were utterly rejoicing when they saw that, when they saw it was the Lord. He said to them, again, "Peace be unto you: as my Father hath sent me, even so send I you" (John 20:21). Then he immediately told them to go out and baptize and started talking about baptism. Remember, the first thing he says in the Book of Mormon: This is my gospel, that the Father calls upon all men everywhere to repent. [He tells them] to go out and preach repentance and receive the Holy Ghost. He breathed on them and said to them that they should receive the Holy Ghost. Thomas doubted, as you know, because he wasn't there when Jesus was there. He had to see, but the others saw, too. Don't blame Thomas for doubting; they would have doubted, too. When the women told them about it, they doubted. So don't blame Thomas, because after what he saw in two seconds, he said, "My Lord, my God," just like that. But he didn't get to see [the Lord] until a week later.

And then [John] said in verse 30 there were many other signs he did in the presence of the apostles. But they are not written down in this book. But what is written down is written so that you may know that Jesus is the Christ. This is the purpose of the Book of Mormon. This is why they write the gospel. John said, "But these are written, that ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing ye might have life thorough his name" (John 20:31). So it's very important to write these things down. If it happened to the Nephites, they have to write it, too, in this fifth gospel. They are not going to leave things out there, even where he tells the same things. But some things are different here.

We have this in John, but this is only part of the story—[the Savior] did much else. But Luke was the one who wanted to go into particulars. Luke was the physician; he was not a Jew, you notice. As he introduces his gospel, he wants to take particular care that people get this right. He's going to describe everything exactly as it is. Then in the first verse of his Gospel he says people are all getting mixed up about this. He wrote Acts, too, and that's why he wrote the Acts. We already mentioned Luke. We could talk about the forty days. Well, the reason I mention Luke again is that he starts the Acts of the Apostles by saying that things had happened through the Holy Spirit,

but everybody was getting mixed up. Then we get to verse 3: “To whom he showed himself living after he had suffered death, by many signs and wonders.” Through forty days they were in his presence and saw him—not just three times. Well, back in Matthew he comes back, and they see him for three days, and in the Book of Mormon. But this is for forty days he comes back. He visits them, and the word [Luke] uses is *sumalizomenos*, [which means] “he came and camped with us.” He paid visits to us like a person camping with somebody. He came and camped with us off and on for a period of forty days. Well, that would give them plenty of time to become familiar with him. It wouldn’t have been a miracle or a terrifying thing anymore. That’s the way you find it in the Book of Mormon.

The Gospels labor to make us see Christ not as a myth or a mystery. His public appearances continue after his death. Remember, John then writes a letter. In verse 1 of 1 John, he says, this is all something we saw with our eyes, heard, and felt with our hands. They [the philosophers] say, oh, John is so spiritual—there’s nothing but spirit here. And he says, how can I make it clearer? We saw with our eyes and we felt with our hands. But no, they won’t take that at all. He says they [the disciples] were frightened, taken aback, puzzled by the unexpected, but plainly, it’s not on our level that he [the Savior] condescends to show that he is of our nature and that he belongs to the family. He uses all the familiar words and the family words in the Bible—father and son. Those are only used in connection with familiar relationships, yet the Lord tells him in the Lord’s Prayer they are to address God, his Father, as “our Father.” Well, that sounds like a father, if you ask me. Can’t they use a better word if he’s not a father? They said that’s the last thing in the world he really was. The [Apostolic Fathers] of the church complained of that.

So we have this one focal point, then. In 3 Nephi we get the same thing just briefly here. Jesus came to them. How did he come to them? As a man in a white robe (3 Nephi 11:8). He didn’t come in overpowering glory. They didn’t know who it was; they thought it was an angel, we’re told in [verse 8]. And he introduced himself simply and directly. He said, “Behold, I am Jesus Christ,” just like that. After all this build-up, you expect Lucas and the special-effects people to go all out for confrontations of the second sort, or something like that. Then he established his identity by signs and tokens in verse 15. That’s the purpose of signs and tokens; a mutual recognition is the purpose. And there was an exchange of greetings. He not only circulated freely—it said he ministered (it uses the word *ministered*), circulated among them freely, and had a personal interview with every individual (3 Nephi 17:21, 25). One by one he introduced himself to them, called them by name, and showed them the signs and the tokens. He took them one by one, including the little children, 17:11 and 17:21. He took the children aside and blessed them and taught them one by one. So it’s a personal relationship here. Remember, it tells us in 2 Nephi 9:41, “And the keeper of the gate is the Holy One of Israel; and he employeth no servant there.” When you finally go to the veil and meet the Lord, there will not be a substitute. He will know you, and you will know him. Notice, if it took all day [he greeted them], and then he came again and again.

If you met a General Authority at Conference and you met him the second day after, you’d know him pretty well. The third day you’d say, “Hello, Brother So-and-So,” and you’d be old friends by then. And then it says, as [during] the forty days, he came often to them after that and ate with them, as he did in the New Testament. Whenever you come together and make a party, what do you do? In the Near East or anywhere else, you eat, of course. You never have somebody visit you without having something to eat, so he ate with them. So the New Testament confirms this account.

Now we go to the Book of Mormon account. We don’t want to hang up on it, but we must know these things are real. This is the thing that people can’t get into their heads. If they are [real] that changes the picture for us. We have nothing to worry about.

1. See Hugh Nibley, *The World and the Prophets*, vol. 3 in *The Collected Works of Hugh Nibley* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book and FARMS, 1987), 157.
2. Dr. Nibley is translating from the old Nestle edition of the Bible. He said, “It has thirty different texts with all the variant readings. You can see if somebody disagrees with somebody else because no two are alike.”