

THE BOOK OF MORMON IS ALSO THE KEYSTONE OF THE FREEDOM STRUGGLE

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President Ezra Taft Benson has solemnly declared that the children of Zion are under condemnation because of their neglect of the Book of Mormon. (*A Witness and a Warning*, 1988, pp. vii, viii.) Until they repent and use the Book of Mormon as the Lord has intended, that condemnation will not be lifted. (*Ibid.*) That condemnation is not just because of our neglect in heeding the religious doctrines, but it also rests upon our heads because our neglect of the political admonitions. In order to lift that condemnation, we must repent of our neglect of both the religious as well as the political teachings. Each individual in our generation will be judged according to his acceptance or rejection of the Book of Mormon. (2 Ne. 33:15; Moro. 10:27.) Hence, this matter is vital to people's salvation, especially members of the Church who have received greater light. (Alma 9:19-23.)

President Benson has referred to Doctrine and Covenants 84 as the scriptural basis for the condemnation of which he speaks. There, the reason the Lord cited that the children of Zion should heed the words of the Book of Mormon was "That they may bring forth fruit meet for their Father's kingdom." (84:58.)

The kingdom of God of which the Lord speaks is both religious and political. The purpose of earthly probation is to prove whether or not individuals qualify to become kings and queens, priests and priestesses in God's kingdom. (Rev. 1:6.) The first title, kings and queens, is a political one, while the latter, priests and priestesses, is religious. God's religion deals with the fostering of individuals in their personal pursuit of salvation and is rooted in the gospel of Jesus Christ. God's politics deal with the nurturing of nations in their collective quest to create an ideal society and is based on principles such as are embodied in the Constitution of the United States. (D&C 101:77-80.) Christ's advent in the meridian of times pertained to His religious role as the Savior of each and every person in the human family. (3 Ne. 21:26.) His role when He comes again in the latter days in great glory will be political, as He vanquishes all His foes and subdues the kingdoms of the world under His feet. (D&C 103:7.)

Therefore, as we contemplate our responsibility in building up the kingdom of God, we must seek diligently to understand and fulfil those tasks the Lord presents to us to build up both the religious and the political spheres of His kingdom. While each of us may have a specific foreordained load to carry, some responsibilities within each realm are relegated to all. Negligence of duty, especially if it is specific and foreordained, surely carries with it condemnation. (Hel. 14:19.)

The Lord has told us that the condemnation that rests upon the children of Zion will be lifted only when they repent and heed the teachings of the

Book of Mormon. (D&C 84:54-57.) This applies to the political aspects as well as it does to the religious, for the Book of Mormon is saturated with both.

The Book of Mormon instructs us in numerous ways about our political situation. It defines the foundation principles upon which a righteous government must be built. It describes the various forces that are inimical to freedom. It sets forth the proper course of action that we must take to facilitate the eventual triumph of God's kingdom. It describes the blessed condition that will be ours if we overcome.

The Book of Mormon teaches these principles through a variety of means: 1) direct teaching of general, enduring principles; 2) direct prophecy of latter-day situations; 3) lessons from its paralleling history, 4) principles of the gospel, inasmuch as they reflect temporal patterns, 5) subtle literary techniques such as chiasma, cross-referencing links, intentional repetition.

No other book in existence today can warn, instruct, and motivate us to do what must be done like the Book of Mormon can, with its clarity. We must make it central to our study in the freedom struggle.

The Bible stands along side the Book of Mormon in its value in this regard for the same reasons stated above for the Book of Mormon. These two volumes, along with modern scripture and the words of living prophets, were designed by the Lord to work together in a synergistic way, each complementing the other.

Those who will not heed these words will be cut off from among the covenant people of the Lord when He pours out his "scourge and judgment...upon the children of Zion." (D&C 84:58, 101:90; 103:11; 3 Ne. 16:15.) On the other hand, those "who now hear my words" will be forgiven of their sins -- if, as the Lord says, "you remain steadfast in your minds in solemnity and the spirit of prayer, in bearing testimony to all the world of those things which are communicated unto you." (D&C 84:60,61.)

If we do not heed the warnings from the Book of Mormon, then we will become like the Jaredite and the Nephite civilizations, which were utterly destroyed because of secret combinations. (Ether 8:21-23.) Moroni concluded one of his warnings to us about such secret combinations, stating that the reason the Lord commanded him to write these things was that "Satan may have no power upon the hearts of the children of men, but that they may be persuaded to do good continually, that they may come unto the fountain of all righteousness and be saved." (Ether 8:26.) That is our cause, and the Book of Mormon must be the keystone of that quest.

In closing, consider these words of our Prophet:

"This is a glorious hour in which to live. Generations past and future will mark well our response to our awesome duty. There is a reason why we have been born in this day. Ours is the task to try to live and perpetuate the principles of the Christ and the Constitution in the face of tremendous odds. May we, with God's help, have strength for the battle and fill our mission in honor for God, family, and country. That is my humble and constant prayer this day and always." (An Enemy Hath Done This, 1969, p. 62.)