

KING BENJAMIN'S MESSAGE AND ITS RELEVANCE TODAY

Recently I spent some time trying to understand exactly what King Benjamin meant when he told his people about the only way man can be saved. (Mosiah 2:8-12) He is referring, I think, to achieving celestial glory. As I thought about this passage, I discovered the essential part of his statement comes first. He was speaking to his people who had just received the endowment. (Mosiah 2:1-5 and 3:1-6) In verse 8 he begins to reiterate their experience:

“For, behold, if the *knowledge of the goodness of God at this time has awakened you to a sense of your nothingness, and your worthless and fallen state; I say to you, if you have come to a knowledge of the goodness of God, and his matchless power, and his wisdom, and his patience, and his long-suffering toward the children of men, and also, the atonement which has been prepared from the foundation of the world* that thereby salvation might come to him that should put his trust in the Lord, and should be diligent in keeping his commandments, and continue in faith even to the end of his life—I say that this is the man who will receive salvation through the atonement which was prepared from the foundation of the world for all mankind, which ever were, ever since the fall of Adam, or who are or who ever shall be, even to the end of the world; and this is the means whereby salvation comes. And there is no other salvation, save this which has been spoken of; neither are there any conditions whereby man can be saved except the conditions which I have told you.” (Mosiah 2:8-12)

King Benjamin is stating that it was the great and powerful experience with God's Spirit, the Holy Spirit of promise, that showed to the people His goodness, and their own nothingness, God's matchless power, wisdom, patience and Jesus' atonement that brought about the endowment to the people, as they responded with faith, trust and diligence in keeping the commandments.”

Even before 1830, God revealed the pattern for establishing Zion. Doctrine and Covenants 6, 10, 11 and 12 all begin alike:

“A great and marvelous work is about to come forth unto the children of men: behold, I am God, and give heed unto my word, which is quick and powerful, sharper than a two-edged sword, to the dividing asunder of both joints and marrow: therefore, give heed unto my words. Behold, the field is white already to harvest, therefore, whoso desireth to reap, let him thrust in his sickle with his might, and reap while the day lasts, that he may treasure up for his soul everlasting salvation in the kingdom of God; yea, whosoever will thrust in his sickle and reap, the same is called of God; therefore, if you will ask of me you shall receive, if you will knock it shall be opened unto you. Now, as you have asked, behold, I say unto you, keep my commandments, and seek to bring forth and establish the cause of Zion.”

From this we learn (1) the kingdom of God which is necessary for the gathering is about to come to earth, (II Nephi 12, 42-43); (2) The time has come for Zion (“the field is white”) and (3) The way is revealed (“give heed to my word, keep the commandments and ask and knock”).

When we spend “enough” time each day in prayer and study of God’s word, and keep the commandments, we are “coming to Christ” as the Father teaches us (John 6:44-45 I.V.) by the Holy Ghost’s enlightening our minds and filling us with joy. We are spiritually alive because we are thus connected to the “True Vine” by the Holy Spirit, (John 15:1-10 I.V.) and we are therefore continually learning by God’s Spirit. This is the means in the law of Christ, or law of faith, for increasing our faith. Jesus speaks of receiving the testimony, which is the testimony of Jesus, by the Holy Spirit such as King Benjamin’s people received when the king delivered to them the angel’s message. (Mosiah 1:92-130) When such experiences build up our faith so we have faith as great as Abraham’s, the Lord will count it for righteousness, and give us the promise of the endowment and Zion. (Romans, chapter 4)

The Lord has made it possible under celestial law or the law of faith for an entire people to rise to the required level of faith that they might receive the endowment through prayer, study, fasting, keeping the commandments, asking, knocking, etc. We recognize from the account of King Benjamin’s people and his sermon that a powerful experience is also necessary to build up our faith in Jesus Christ to the level of Abraham’s. This can come about by means of vision or by beholding with our understanding Jesus Christ and His redemption. Providing us this great experience that will “put us over the top” and bring the endowment is a function of the mysteries of the kingdom. The Melchisedec Priesthood hold the keys (or authority) to bring these to the membership. When Zeezrom asked Alma to explain the resurrection and eternal judgment to him, Alma responded by talking about the mysteries. (Alma 9:13-32; see also D.C. 85:4a-b) The words of Ephesians 4:12-13 speak of the role of the Priesthood in “. . . the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ; Till we, in the unity of faith, all come to the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ. . .”

Three scriptures would seem to apply here: “For we labor diligently to write, to persuade our children, and also our brethren, to believe in Christ, and to be reconciled to God; for we know that it is by grace that we are saved, after all we can do.” (Because of Jesus’ supreme sacrifice, we are able to receive the Holy Spirit of promise—His grace—to change our nature into a nature like His, because of our great faith). Also, “But to him that seeketh not to be justified by the law of works, but believeth on him who justifieth not the ungodly, his faith is counted for righteousness.” (Romans 4:5 Inspired Version) (If a “godly” person receives the endowment, which is the purpose of justification, he is not so likely to later fall away as an ungodly person might be. Hebrews 6:4-6 states there is no repentance available for such a

person. That God justifies not the ungodly is a protection for us). And another reason for keeping the commandments is given in D.C.63:7b: “. . . but unto him that keepeth my commandments, I will give the mysteries of my kingdom, and the same shall be in him a well of living water, springing up unto everlasting life.” Our works, including keeping the commandments, cannot save us, but they are still essential to our becoming “godly” individuals, that we may be justified by faith in Jesus Christ as we are taught by the Father and receive that life-changing experience by the Holy Spirit that shows us what Jesus’ redemption will do for us. This is God’s perfect plan for bringing man back into His presence in the fullness of His glory, which is God’s rest.