

September 7-13, 2020

3 Nephi 1–7

“LIFT UP YOUR HEAD AND BE OF GOOD CHEER”

Summary: *Nephi, the son of Helaman, departs out of the land, and his son Nephi keeps the records—Though signs and wonders abound, the wicked plan to slay the righteous—The night of Christ’s birth arrives—The sign is given, and a new star arises—Lyings and deceivings increase, and the Gadianton robbers slaughter many. [About A.D. 1–4.]*

Wickedness and abominations increase among the people—The Nephites and Lamanites unite to defend themselves against the Gadianton robbers—Converted Lamanites become white and are called Nephites. [About A.D. 5–16.]

Giddianhi, the Gadianton leader, demands that Lachoneus and the Nephites surrender themselves and their lands—Lachoneus appoints Gidgiddoni as chief captain of the armies—The Nephites assemble in Zarahemla and Bountiful to defend themselves. [About A.D. 16–18.]

The Nephite armies defeat the Gadianton robbers—Giddianhi is slain, and his successor, Zemnarihah, is hanged—The Nephites praise the Lord for their victories. [About A.D. 19–22.]

The Nephites repent and forsake their sins—Mormon writes the history of his people and declares the everlasting word to them—Israel will be gathered in from her long dispersion. [About A.D. 22–26.]

The Nephites prosper—Pride, wealth, and class distinctions arise—The Church is rent with dissensions—Satan leads the people in open rebellion—Many prophets cry repentance and are slain—Their murderers conspire to take over the government. [About A.D. 26–30.]

The chief judge is murdered, the government is destroyed, and the people divide into tribes—Jacob, an anti-Christ, becomes king of a secret combination—Nephi preaches repentance and faith in Christ—Angels minister to him daily, and he raises his brother from the dead—Many repent and are baptized. [About A.D. 30–33.]

Supplemental Jewish and Holy Land Insights

What three prophets specifically foretold the Lord’s imminent first coming?

All True prophets testify of

the Lord. There are three prophets in this particular time frame of the Book of Mormon who prophesied about the Lord’s imminent coming. These three also seemed to

“disappear,” or in other words, were not heard of again. Each one, as prophets, exercised the redemptive power that God had given them.

This “disappearance” into obscurity refers to an Alma, Samuel the Lamanite and a Nephi. Alma and Nephi were Nephites with a light skin and Samuel the Lamanite likely had a darker skin.

“And when Alma had done this he departed out of the land of Zarahemla, as if to go into the land of Melek. And it came to pass that he was

In the middle East, Christians have a tradition of three wise men or Magi that come from the East bearing gifts for a newborn King. Obviously, the scriptures give us an account of

never heard of more; as to his death or burial we know not of.” (Alma 45:18) “And as they went forth to lay their hands on him, behold, he did cast himself down from the wall, and did flee out of their lands, yea, even unto his own country, and began to preach and to prophesy among his own people. And behold, he was never heard of more among the Nephites; . . .” (Helaman 16:7-8) “Then he departed out of the land, and whither he went, no man knoweth; and his son Nephi did keep the records in his stead, yea, the record of this people.” (3 Nephi 1:3) “And Nephi, who was the father of Nephi, who had the charge of the records, did not return to the land of Zarahemla, and could nowhere be found in all the land.” (3 Nephi 2:9)

What is the tradition of how the three wise men looked like?

Herod the Great receiving visitors and requesting that they return with news of “King of The Jews” whereabouts. When they did not return, Herod ordered all the children killed in

the Bethlehem area who were two-years old and under, (Matthew 2:1-16). Somehow, many nativity sets carved from olive wood have the wise men appearing at the birth even though the scriptures indicate a time frame of about two years later. Additionally, the Christian tradition depicts the wise men as two light-skinned men accompanying another dark-skinned person. For the Middle Easterners, it has a pleasant symbolism about it in any case, dark skinned and light skinned - worshipping the Messiah of all mankind.

What is the more probable description of the wise men?

“Matthew's account of ‘wise men from the east’ coming to Jerusalem and Bethlehem in search of the Christ Child is sometimes recited as a visit of three Magi. (Matt. 2.) Actually there is no historical basis for the prevailing legend that they were from the apostate Persian cult or that they were three in number. It is much more probable that they were devout men who knew of our Lord's coming advent, including the promise that a new star would arise, and that they came as prophets of any age would have done to worship their King. It is clear that they were in tune with the Lord and were receiving revelation from him, for they were ‘warned of God in a dream that they should not return to Herod.’ (Matt. 2:12.)” (Bruce R. McConkie, **Mormon Doctrine, p.462**) “Our Lord's birth into mortality was accompanied by the appearance of a new star in the heavens. One of Samuel the Lamanite's Messianic prophecies foretold this heavenly sign (Hela. 14:5), and the Nephites

knew of the promised birth because they saw the new star that arose according to Samuel's word. (3 Ne. 1:21.)” (Bruce R. McConkie, **Mormon Doctrine, p.765**)

What was the duty of the wise men?

“In contrast to the lowly shepherds and to the devout Simeon and Anna, who had become witnesses of our Lord, divine providence now provided witnesses from the great and mighty of the earth, witnesses who could bring gifts of gold and frankincense and myrrh, witnesses who could command audience with kings and who could boldly inquire: ‘Where is he that is born King of the Jews?’ So there came from unnamed eastern lands -- perhaps, Persia, Arabia, Mesopotamia, perhaps elsewhere -- an unspecified number of wise men. Whether they were two, three, or twenty in number is a matter of pure speculation.” (Bruce R. McConkie, **Doctrinal New Testament Commentary, Vol.1, p.102 - p.103**)

What is the Jewish tradition of wise men preceding the Messiah's coming?

In Jewish custom, there prevails an expectation of “wise men” coming from obscurity before the coming of the Messiah. As touched on in previous lesson materials, many Jews anticipate a Joseph of latter-days as well as a David of latter-days. To the Jews, these individuals will appear out of obscurity with redemptive powers. One or the other will become either the Messiah or they will be forebearers of the Messiah in the last days.