

THE CHOICE LAND AND THE RESTORATION

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We consider that the men of the Revolution were inspired by the Almighty, to throw off the shackles of the mother government, with her established religion. For this cause were Adams, Jefferson, Franklin, Washington, and a host of others inspired to deeds of resistance to the acts of the King of Great Britain, who might also have been led to those aggressive acts, for aught we know, to bring to pass the purposes of God in this establishing a new government upon a principle of greater freedom, a basis of self-government allowing the free exercise of religious worship.¹

—Brigham Young

In 1 Nephi 13, the prophet Nephi learned from the Lord how the restoration of Israel would be accomplished. This spiritual and temporal restoration would include his future posterity, and the posterity of others who had come across the seas with Lehi. Nephi discovered, then taught, the reader about the power of Satan and the formation of his great and abominable church. In contrast, the church of God would also be restored on the earth and Nephi learned of the prophetic preparations for the essential restoration and establishment of Zion amidst the powers and policies of spiritual Babylon. This work of restoration was to begin on the land of promise and would be initiated by the Gentiles who would come out of captivity for religious freedom. And by so doing, they would establish a ‘Gentile nation’ necessary for the restoration of the plain and precious truths of scripture, the gospel, and the establishment of Zion. Nephi recorded for us the beginning of this migratory process of the Gentiles:

And it came to pass that I looked and beheld many waters; and they divided the Gentiles from the seed of my brethren.

And I looked and beheld a man among the Gentiles, who was separated from the seed of my brethren by the many waters; and I beheld the Spirit of God, that it came down and wrought upon the man; and he went forth upon the many waters, even unto the seed of my brethren, who were in the promised land. (1 Nephi 13:10, 12)

A Man among the Gentiles

The process began in the age of discovery as a man among the Gentiles, separated from the promised land, was inspired to go “forth upon the many waters” until he arrived at the land where the descendants of Lehi lived. Who is the “man among the Gentiles” that was inspired to cross the many waters? The answer is not given in the scriptures; however, it has often been interpolated by reading between the lines of the printed word.

¹ *Journal of Discourses* 2:170–72.

In 1492 Columbus found himself first in the islands of Bermuda off the coast of Florida. Under the flag of Spain, Columbus began a financial conquest that led to the discovery of what would later be called the West Indies and Central America. With a few privileges and titles promised to Columbus, the lands and financial discoveries he made would ultimately belong to the Spanish crown. Unlike the financial conquest of Spain, four years later in 1496 another “man among the Gentiles” named John Cabot (the anglicized Giovanni Caboto) sailed from England on a dispatch of discovery. Cabot’s voyage is said to have actually discovered the continent of North America, landing in New Finland and Maine. On 5 March 1496, King Henry VII of England gave Cabot letters of “patent” with the following religious charge:

...free authority, faculty and power to sail to all parts, regions and coasts of the eastern, western and northern sea, under our banners, flags and ensigns, with five ships or vessels of whatsoever burden and quality they may be, and with so many and with such mariners and men as they may wish to take with them in the said ships, at their own proper costs and charges, to find, discover and investigate whatsoever islands, countries, regions or provinces of heathens and infidels, in whatsoever part of the world placed, which before this time were unknown to all Christians.²

A century later, Samuel de Champlain, another “man among the Gentiles” who “came to the seed of my brethren” (1 Nephi 13:12) sought specifically to teach Christianity to the Algonquin-based natives, and viewed these natives as equals. He came to the New World and explored the regions of the St. Lawrence Seaway and the eastern Great Lakes, surveying the Finger Lake regions of modern-day New York before the Puritans and Pilgrims arrived on the east coast.

Whoever the “man among the Gentiles” might have been, and for whatever reasons the discovery was initiated, it opened the door for the following events that would lead to the establishment of a free nation. This was accomplished by Gentiles who followed divine inspiration, seeking for a land of promise—for their faith and religion, their freedom and peace, and for their wives and children.

Out of Captivity

Nephi recorded the prophetic movements of the Gentiles from the powers of religious control, stating, “I beheld *the Spirit of God, that it wrought upon other Gentiles; and they went forth out of captivity, upon the many waters*” (1 Nephi 13:13). This is a direct reference to the Puritans and Pilgrims who left Europe and the captivity of religious control, seeking a safe place to worship after the dictates of their own wills. These religious groups led this Gentile charge to the so-called New World, becoming the “founding fathers” of the great Gentile nation spoken of in the Book of Mormon and recorded in the history of the United States. The quest of the Puritans was to search for a land that would ensure them a title to liberty. To stress again, these Gentiles who came out of captivity came to the *same* land of promise that Lehi received for an inheritance, as the Lord has revealed:

...that *the Gentiles who have gone forth out of captivity...upon the face of the land which is choice above all other lands, which is the land that the Lord God hath covenanted with thy father that his seed should have for the land of their inheritance...*
(1 Nephi 13:30)

² National Archives PRO, Treaty Roll 178, member. 8., Department of Historical Studies, University of Bristol. The full text can be read at:<http://www.bris.ac.uk/Depts/History/Maritime/Sources/1496cabotpatent.htm>

This same land given to the prophet Lehi for the “inheritance of his seed” became as well a promised land for the Gentiles, as Jacob was promised by the Lord:

But behold, *this land*, said God, *shall be a land of thine inheritance, and the Gentiles shall be blessed upon the land.*

And *this land shall be a land of liberty unto the Gentiles, and there shall be no kings upon the land, who shall raise up unto the Gentiles.*

And *I will fortify this land against all other nations.* (2 Nephi 10:10–12)

This land the “Gentiles shall be blessed upon” will be a “land of liberty” to those who dwell there. There will be “no kings” *upon* the land of promise, yet the Lord will protect the Gentiles and “fortify this land against all other nations” that might come against it. Christ taught the Nephites that the Gentiles “*should be established in this land, and be set up as a free people by the power of the Father, that these things might come forth from them unto a remnant of your seed*” (3 Nephi 21:4).

While teaching Joseph Smith about this promise, the Savior rehearsed the prayers of the Book of Mormon prophets about the Gentiles who will come to the land in the last days, saying, “...they did leave a *blessing upon this land in their prayers...that it might be free unto all of whatsoever nation, kindred, tongue, or people they may be*” (D&C 10:50–51).

The Gentiles, having arrived on the promised land, sought the freedoms denied in Europe and began the process of independence and autonomy. They sought freedom from political leaders who did not live on the land, or have concern for the best interests of those who lived there. The Book of Mormon contains both a prophecy for the Nephites and a history for latter-day readers, and explains about the Gentiles who came out of captivity, that “...their mother Gentiles were gathered together upon the waters, and upon the land also, to battle against them” (1 Nephi 13:17). This, of course, is a prophecy of the Revolutionary War—or the War of Independence—between the “mother Gentiles” (England) and the founding Gentiles who had come out of captivity. By the protection previously promised by God (2 Nephi 10:2) the text, in prophetic tense, stated “...that *the power of God was with them*, and also that *the wrath of God was upon all those that were gathered together against them to battle.*” Nephi continued as he “...beheld that *the Gentiles that had gone out of captivity were delivered by the power of God out of the hands of all other nations*” (1 Nephi 13:18–19; see also 1 Nephi 13:30).

The Gentile Inheritance

The prophet Nephi learned early in his ministry that the Gentiles who were to be led to the land of his inheritance would also receive an inheritance in that same land. As he was taught, Nephi too explained that “I beheld *the Spirit of the Lord, that it was upon the Gentiles*, and they did prosper and obtain the land for their inheritance...” (1 Nephi 13:15). These Gentiles who have “come forth upon the face of this land” (3 Nephi 16:8) were “established in this land” and were “set up as a free people” for a specific purpose (3 Nephi 21:4), as the land would become a ‘land of inheritance’ for the Gentiles. The prophet Mormon, referring to the Nephites, declared the “*Lord hath reserved their blessings, which they might have received in the land, for the Gentiles who shall possess the land*” (Mormon 5:19).

Revelation links Joseph Smith and the early church leaders of this dispensation to the Gentiles prophesied to be led to the land of inheritance that once belonged to Lehi and his descendants. Doctrine and Covenants 109 records this connection as the Prophet Joseph prayed, “O Lord, we

have spoken before thee, concerning the revelations and commandments which thou hast given *unto us, who are identified with the Gentiles*” (D&C 109:60). The blessing of this Gentile inheritance is also seen in the Doctrine and Covenants as the Lord again declared to the ‘Gentile’ members of the early church:

And I hold forth and deign to give unto you greater riches, even a land of promise, a land flowing with milk and honey, upon which there shall be no curse when the Lord cometh;

And I will give it unto you for the land of your inheritance, if you seek it with all your hearts.

And this shall be my covenant with you, ye shall have it for the land of your inheritance, and for the inheritance of your children forever, while the earth shall stand, and ye shall possess it again in eternity, no more to pass away. (D&C 38:18–20)

The Gentile saints of the early church are promised that they will have this “land of promise” for their inheritance and also the “inheritance of their children” yet to be born. This is the same promise given to Lehi centuries before, and same promise reserved for the Gentiles as described in the Book of Mormon. Connected to this promise of a land of inheritance for the Gentiles is also a prophecy of prosperity.

Gentiles to be Blessed and Prosper on the Land

The blessing of prosperity that the Gentiles would attain is connected to their faithfulness in obtaining the land for their inheritance (see 1 Nephi 13:15). These were the same conditions as given to the Nephites before them. Jacob, the brother of Nephi, also declared that “this land, said God, shall be a land of thine inheritance, and the Gentiles shall be blessed upon the land” (2 Nephi 10:10). Nephi also saw in the visions of the Gentiles, that “...*they did prosper in the land;* and I beheld a book, and it was carried forth among them” (1 Nephi 13:20). Of course the ‘book’ that was brought to this land by those Gentiles who came out of captivity was the Bible and is described as “the book of the Lamb of God, which had proceeded froth from the mouth of the Jew, that it came forth from the Gentiles unto the remnant of the seed of my brethren” (1 Nephi 13:38).

Freedom, blessings, and prosperity from the hand of the Lord can only be realized, by taking responsibility. Again, the vision of Nephi instructed every age and dispensation of the blessings promised to the faithful inhabitants.

And it shall come to pass, that if the Gentiles shall hearken unto the Lamb of God in that day that he shall manifest himself unto them in word, and also in power, in very deed, unto the taking away of their stumbling blocks—

And harden not their hearts against the Lamb of God, they shall be numbered among the seed of thy father; yea, they shall be numbered among the house of Israel; and they shall be a blessed people upon the promised land forever; they shall be no more brought down into captivity; and the house of Israel shall no more be confounded. (1 Nephi 14:1–2)

Just as the nations of Assyria, Babylon, and Persia were used by the Lord to instruct and chastise Israel, so also shall the Gentiles be used to chastise the rebellious seed of Lehi. However, the Gentiles—if righteous—will be blessed and receive that inheritance promised in scripture. The Lord taught Jacob that “I will afflict thy seed by the hand of the Gentiles; nevertheless, I will

soften the hearts of the Gentiles, that they shall be like unto a father to them; *wherefore, the Gentiles shall be blessed and numbered among the house of Israel*” (2 Nephi 10:18).

A Mighty Nation

The Book of Mormon describes a prophetic and future promise preserved for the Gentiles and the land of their inheritance, which is the blessing of becoming a mighty nation. The Gentiles “who have gone forth out of captivity, and have been *lifted up by the power of God above all other nations*” (1 Nephi 13:30) will be identified as a “nation” upon the promised land. Speaking of Isaiah’s prophecies, Nephi explained about the scattering and gathering of Israel in the old and new worlds. He wrote, “...after all the house of Israel have been scattered and confounded, that the Lord God will *raise up a mighty nation among the Gentiles, yea, even upon the face of this land; and by them shall our seed be scattered*” (1 Nephi 22:7). As soon as the word “nation” is used, the interpretation can no longer be general in terms of a geographical setting. “Nation” cannot mean hemisphere, nor can it mean continent, if there are more than one nation existing there. The word “nation” includes boundaries and borders to identify something that might be considered a specific “nation,” in a specific geographical setting, which will have specific blessings and restrictions promised to the inhabitants of that specific land. This great and “mighty nation” that will be established by the Gentiles is described by Christ “...unto the pouring out of the Holy Ghost through me *upon the Gentiles, which blessing upon the Gentiles shall make them mighty above all...*” (3 Nephi 20:27). There exists a spiritual blessing reserved for the Gentile nation that, by divine blessing and purpose, is established as a free land, a free people, and a free nation.

The Lord’s Servant among the Gentiles

The Book of Mormon speaks of a “servant” of the Lord that will do a great work in the last days. Christ personally gives insights about this servant and the work that he will do for the spiritual restoration of all Israel:

For in that day, for my sake shall the Father work a work, which shall be a great and a marvelous work among them; and there shall be among them those who will not believe it, although a man shall declare it unto them.

But behold, the life of my servant shall be in my hand; therefore they shall not hurt him, although he shall be marred because of them. Yet I will heal him, for I will show unto them that my wisdom is greater than the cunning of the devil.

Therefore it shall come to pass that whosoever will not believe in my words, who am Jesus Christ, *which the Father shall cause him to bring forth unto the Gentiles, and shall give unto him power that he shall bring them forth unto the Gentiles,* (it shall be done even as Moses said) they shall be cut off from among my people who are of the covenant. (3 Nephi 21:9–11)

Joseph Smith is the “servant” who, at the restoration, was called to translate a book. This book was described by the same prophet Moroni who hid up the record as “written upon gold plates, giving an account of the former inhabitants of *this continent*, and the source from whence they sprang. He also said *that the fulness of the everlasting Gospel was contained in it, as delivered by the Savior to the ancient inhabitants*” (JS–History 1:34). Moroni stated the record would “come forth in due time *by way of the Gentile*—The interpretation thereof by the gift of God” (Title Page). Joseph Smith identified himself with the “Gentiles” (D&C 109:60) and recognized his

responsibility as the Gentile translator of the Book of Mormon, as Moroni indicated in the title page.

Joseph who was sold into Egypt “*obtained a promise of the Lord, that out of the fruit of my loins, the Lord God will raise up a righteous branch out of my loins...*” (JST Genesis 50:24; 2 Nephi 3:11). Joseph is told that his posterity (the patriarchal line) would prove to be instruments in the Lord’s hands in the latter-days, for the salvation of all Israel. This “righteous branch” of Joseph—in other words, his descendants—“*shall be broken off, and shall be carried into a far country; nevertheless they shall be remembered in the covenants of the Lord, when the Messiah cometh; for he shall be made manifest unto them in the latter days, in the Spirit of power; and shall bring them out of darkness into light; out of hidden darkness, and out of captivity unto freedom*” (JST Genesis 50:25). Seeing a *future history* of this branch of his posterity (Manasseh and Ephraim), Joseph saw that the Messiah would minister “in the Spirit of power” to his posterity in a distant land. The “servant” from the loins of Joseph is described by Joseph as a:

...seer shall the Lord my God raise up, who shall be a choice seer unto the fruit of my loins.

Thus saith the Lord God of my fathers unto me, *A choice seer will I raise up out of the fruit of thy loins, and he shall be esteemed highly among the fruit of thy loins; and unto him will I give commandment that he shall do a work for the fruit of thy loins, his brethren.*

And he shall bring them to the knowledge of the covenants which I have made with thy fathers; and he shall do whatsoever work I shall command him.

And I will make him great in mine eyes, for he shall do my work; (JST Genesis 50:26–29; see also 2 Nephi 3:12–14)

The work required of this servant and seer lies beyond the abilities of mortal man, and can only be accomplished through a bestowal of divine power. Joseph is told by the Lord that “*unto him will I give power to bring forth my word unto the seed of thy loins; and not to the bringing forth of my word only, saith the Lord, but to the convincing them of my word, which shall have already gone forth among them in the last days*” (JST Genesis 50:30). The seer will translate the record of Joseph and assist in proving the record of Judah true, which record the remnant will already have. Nephi wrote about the restorative power of the Nephite record:

And the angel spake unto me, saying: These last records, which thou hast seen among the Gentiles, shall establish the truth of the first, which are of the twelve apostles of the Lamb, and shall make known the plain and precious things which have been taken away from them; and shall make known to all kindreds, tongues, and people, that the Lamb of God is the Son of the Eternal Father, and the Savior of the world; and that all men must come unto him, or they cannot be saved. (1 Nephi 13:40)

Each testament of Christ, that of Judah and Joseph, “shall grow together unto the confounding of false doctrines, and laying down of contentions, and establishing peace among the fruit of thy loins, and bringing them *to a knowledge of their fathers in the latter days; and also to the knowledge of my covenants, saith the Lord*” (JST Genesis 50:31).

The Prophet Joseph Smith was seen by his progenitor Joseph. The birthright son of Israel declared:

And out of weakness shall *he be made strong*, in that day when my work shall go forth among all my people, which shall restore them, who are of the house of Israel, in the last days.

And that seer will I bless, and they that seek to destroy him shall be confounded; for this promise I give unto you; for I will remember you from generation to generation; and his name shall be called Joseph, and it shall be after the name of his father; and he shall be like unto you; for the thing which the Lord shall bring forth by his hand shall bring my people unto salvation. (JST Genesis 50:32–33)

The work of the Lord will be accomplished by the servant, seer, and prophet Joseph Smith as “he shall do none other work, save the work which I shall command him. And I will make him great in mine eyes; for he shall do my work...and unto him will I give power to bring forth my word unto the seed of thy loins...” (2 Nephi 3:8, 11). Lehi, knowing of the prophecies of his progenitor Joseph, rehearsed these words to his son about the events of the restoration and future salvation to their posterity. Lehi described the work of Joseph Smith in bringing forth the record of the Nephites:

...I will give unto him that he shall write the writing of the fruit of thy loins, unto the fruit of thy loins; and the spokesman of thy loins shall declare it.

And the words which he shall write shall be the words which are expedient in my wisdom should go forth unto the fruit of thy loins. And it shall be as if the fruit of thy loins had cried unto them from the dust; for I know their faith.

And they shall cry from the dust; yea, even repentance unto their brethren, even after many generations have gone by them. And it shall come to pass that their cry shall go, even according to the simpleness of their words. (2 Nephi 3:18–20)

This great and marvelous work called the Book of Mormon has come forth from the hands of a young prophet, whose work has set at naught the powers of Babylon. Joseph Smith began a work that will fill the whole earth and eventually allow the establishment of Zion. The greatest need for the restoration to take place was a land that could be founded on the principles of freedom and, in particular, a freedom of religion. The Gentile ‘nation’ founded on this freedom was just one significant step in providing a safe haven for the coming forth of the Book of Mormon that would restore the plain and precious truths taken out of the record of Judah. The restoration not only required a land of freedom and constitutional law and rights that protected that freedom, but it also required the Lord to work through the hands of a mighty servant, seer, and prophet. The provenance of a land of freedom and a prophet of God was required for the restoration. This was accomplished through the power of God manifesting itself through the Founding Fathers of this great Gentile nation and Joseph Smith—a direct descendent of Joseph of old—all of whom were chosen and prepared for these callings in the councils of heaven before their births.