

Lesson Three: Prophets in America

A. We read in Lesson One that Jewish authorities claim the Old Testament was divided into three basic divisions. They were thrilled to find that the Dead Sea Scrolls had these same divisions. We find that 300 years before these scrolls were written, the same classification was identified in the Book of Mormon.

	<u>The Bible</u>	<u>Book of Mormon</u>	<u>How Identified?</u>
1.	The Torah	1 Nephi 1:159	_____
2.	The Prophets	1 Nephi 1: 162	_____
3.	The Writings	1 Nephi 1: 161	_____

B. Of course, since the **Torah** was written by Moses, we would not expect it to be in the Book of Mormon. However, the other two divisions of the Bible, the **Prophets** and the **Writings** are found in the Book of Mormon. We are going to study an important prophecy written about 2,500 years ago by a young man named Nephi.

	<u>Location</u>	<u>Subject</u>	<u>Fulfilled</u>	<u>Evidence?</u>
1.	1 Ne 3:100-114 _____		_____	_____
	(Hand out Appendage #1 with excerpts about Christ in America.)			
2.	1 Ne 3:146-147 _____		_____	_____
	(Hand out Appendage #2 with excerpts about Columbus.)			
3.	1 Ne 3:148,151 _____		_____	_____
	(Hand out Appendage #3 with outline about Tisquantum.)			
4.	1 Ne 3:152-156 _____		_____	_____
	(Hand out Appendage #4 regarding early American attitude.)			
5.	1 Ne 3:157-169 _____		_____	_____
	(Hand out Appendage #5 re missing books and changes in the Bible.)			
6.	1 Ne 3:190-192 _____		_____	_____
	(Have pupils read 3 Nephi 9:85-87 [below] and tell of Wheaton's first trip.)			
7.	3 Ne 9:85-_____		_____	_____
8.	1 Ne 3:219-229 _____		_____	_____
9.	1 Ne 3:237 _____		_____	_____
10.	2 Ne 2:44-49 _____		_____	_____
11.	2 Ne 7:13-15 _____		_____	_____
12.	Ether 1:31-35 _____		_____	_____

Appendage No. One

The historian, K. S. Latourette, wrote, ***“Jesus is the most influential life ever lived on this planet.”*** It is true that the world has been changed completely by His presence. In this same manner, if Christ appeared here in the Americas, we should expect to encounter His influence among the nations of the Native Americans. And so we do; the anthropologist, Laurette Sejourné, calls the White God of the Native Americans, ***“...the greatest figure in the history of the New World.”***

Beginning with the prophecy of His birth, the anthropologist, Karena Shields, writes of the tradition of the Maya: ***“We are the Maya. We came from the east, we came out of the morning... Hunab Ku, the All-God, was the only one who knew. He saw, and sent Itzamná his son to earth to teach man... Itzamná was made into child and then man, with a hand that blessed, and in turn the earth blessed him.”***

The anthropologist, L. Taylor Hansen, writes of a tradition of the indigenous people of the state of Oklahoma. The God of the Americas ***“...told them that He was born across the ocean, in a land where all men were bearded. In this land He was born of a virgin on a night when a bright star came out of the heavens and stood over His city. Here, too, the heavens opened and down came winged beings singing chants of exquisite beauty.”***

Rudolfo Anaya, a professor at the University of New Mexico, wrote of the traditions of the God of his ancestors in old Mexico. ***“He knew he would be tempted many times while he lived in the body of a man. He knew the path he followed in the heavens, far away from the realm of man. He had come to Tollán to understand the flesh.”***

All the great tribes of Central America and South America have their traditions which tell of the God of miracles who walked among the inhabitants of the land. The Maya say that there were presented before Itzamná ***“...the sick, the halt, and the dead, and he healed and restored them all to life by the touch of his hand...”***

In the traditions of ancient Mexico, we read about the time when their God was about to depart: ***“The ultimate signs of His departure began to crowd upon them. He had chosen one of the Priesthood (from the favored Twelve who were always around Him) to be His successor.”***

During the Conquest of Mexico the Bishop of Chiapas, in the land of the Maya, wrote of their tradition: ***“About the Son, they say he was killed and lashed and a crown of thorns put on him, and that he was placed on a timber with his arms stretched out. They did not understand that he was nailed, but rather they thought that he had been tied, and there he died. And he was dead for three days, and on the third day he came to life and went up to heaven, and that he is there with his father.”***

Appendage No. 2

Critics could proclaim that Joseph Smith certainly knew about the discovery of America by Columbus, and they would be correct. However, it has not been written in our histories that he was a man inspired by the Holy Spirit in his quest as the prophet had stated. Now comes a chronicle written by Columbus himself: ***“It was the Lord who put into my mind (I could feel his hand upon me) the fact that it would be possible to sail from here to the Indies. There is no question that the inspiration was from the Holy Spirit...”*** Do the biographers of Columbus indicate that he was a man who would be apt to receive inspiration from the Almighty? Let’s examine the literature:

- a. ***“He looked upon himself as in the hand of God, chosen from among men for the accomplishment of his high purpose. He supposed that he saw foretold in the Holy Writ his contemplated discovery, shadowed forth in the revelations of the prophets.”***
- b. ***“In the end he looked past the geographers, astronomers and philosophers and sought interlocutors among the prophets. The Bible came to his aid.”***

Appendage No. 3

The history of America is rooted in this beautiful prophecy of Nephi. ***“And I beheld the Spirit of the Lord, that it was upon the Gentiles; that they did prosper, and obtain the land for their inheritance;”*** (1 Nephi 3:151) Anyone seeing the little band of Pilgrims referred to in this prophecy would laugh at the prospect of their prosperity. The spring of 1621 found only five men left alive, strong enough to work and defend the little colony. Almost half the original colonists had died, leaving but five of the original eighteen wives among the living. One day a lone Indian, named Tisquantum, entered the compound. Who was he, why was he here and from where had he come?

He arrived in the camp by way of a tortuous journey. Twice kidnapped and carried to Europe; once to be sold on the auction block of slavery, he spent more than fourteen years away from America while in England and Spain. When finally returned home by Captain John Smith, he found himself the lone survivor of his people, who probably had been exterminated by some white man’s disease. Like young Joseph so long before, in his sufferings he was a special man prepared by God for His purposes.

Tisquantum, an English speaking Christian, now showed the men of this starving colony how to fish for eels for an immediate food supply, how to plant and fertilize corn for next winter’s food and how to trap beaver for a future commodity of sale; in short, how to prosper in this new land to which God had led them. One year later, while on a trip with Governor Bradford, Tisquantum became ill and died. He was prepared and present in that moment necessary to fulfill prophecy.

Appendage No. 4

In his beautiful prophecy about America, Nephi was caused to know that these colonists God had brought to this new land would be delivered out of captivity because they **“...did humble themselves before the Lord, and the power of the Lord was with them;”** (1 Nephi 3:152). The pages of history record the truth of this prophecy:

1. The governor of Connecticut Colony declared April 19, 1775 to be a day of prayer and fasting. He asked that:

“God would graciously pour out His Holy Spirit on us to bring us to a thorough Repentance and effectual Reformation that our iniquities may not be our ruin...”

2. In May of 1775 the president of Harvard University, Samuel Langdon, spoke to the Provincial Congress of Massachusetts. His speech was printed and spread across the countryside. Among other things, he urged his countrymen:

“My brethren, let us repent and implore the divine mercy. Let us amend our ways and our doings, reform everything that has been provoking the Most High...”

3. John Hancock, President of the Provincial Congress, declared to them,

“We think it is incumbent upon this people to humble themselves before God on account of their sins, for He hath been pleased in His righteous judgment to suffer a great calamity to befall us.... And also to implore the Divine Blessing upon us, that by the assistance of His grace, we may be enabled to reform whatever is amiss among us”

Appendage No. 5

1. First of all, did you know that there are books that should be in the Bible that are not to be found? Let's read 1 Chronicles 29:29; 2 Chronicles 9:29 and Colossians 4:16.

2. ***“Still we fail to understand our Bible of today if we do not take full account of the many passages where, in spite of all the care of the scribes – rather, should we say, occasionally because of such care? – changes did find their way into the text. For the astonishing fact is that in some cases deliberately and with full knowledge they altered the text they had received.”*** Prof. I. M. Price, *The History of our Bible*, p. 21.

3. ***“In the late first and early second century, the oral traditions and the written word existed side by side with equal status – especially with respect to the material of the Gospels. Often, the text was changed by scribes attempting to conform the written message to the oral tradition.... Other scribes, however, felt free to make ‘improvements’ in the text – either in the interest of doctrine or harmonization or due to the influence of a competitive oral tradition.”*** Prof. Phillip Comfort, *The Origin of The Bible*, pp. 184-185.