

Greetings! In this edition I'll be looking at some "practical" behind-the-scenes aspects of Jesus' visit to the Nephites as found in 3 Nephi chapter 5.

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There are times when reading through the scriptures that you get the sense that there is "more to the story" than what is recorded. On a number of occasions - particularly in the books of the Book of Mormon - the recorder or abridger indicates that he was not able to transcribe even a hundredth part of what transpired or of what was recorded by the original writers.

Jacob 2:67 And a hundredth part of the proceedings of this people, which now began to be numerous, cannot be written upon these plates;

Words of Mormon 1:8 Wherefore, I chose these things to finish my record upon them, which remainder of my record I shall take from the plates of Nephi; and I cannot write the hundredth part of the things of my people.

Helaman 2:13 But behold, a hundredth part of the proceedings of this people, yea, the account of the Lamanites, and of the Nephites, and their wars, and contentions, and dissensions, and their preaching, and their prophecies, and their shipping, and their building of ships, and their building of temples, and of synagogues, and their sanctuaries, and their righteousness, and their wickedness, and their murders, and their robbing, and their plundering, and all manner of abominations and whoredoms cannot be contained in this work;

3 Nephi 2:92 Nevertheless, they cannot all be written in this book; yea, this book cannot contain even a hundredth part of what was done among so many people in the space of twenty and five years.

3 Nephi 12:1 And now, there cannot be written in this book even a hundredth part of the things which Jesus did truly teach unto the people; but behold, the plates of Nephi do contain the more part of the things which he taught the people;

Ether 6:108 And he went forth and beheld that the words of the Lord had all been fulfilled; and he finished his record (and the hundredth part I have not written); and he hid them in a manner that the people of Limhi did find them.

It is understable, really. While we, as reviewers of the work, can look backward and desire to have more information, it was very labor-intensive for them to put it down in writing. For example, I can copy/paste the scriptures listed above in about 2 seconds after doing a quick search using my computer, but this would have taken a lot longer to do by hand, not even considering the time it takes to think about how to phrase things and to confirm the information is accurately recorded.

The account recording Jesus' visit to the Nephites is a good example. In 3 Nephi chapter 5 we find the account given of Jesus descending from heaven, presenting the basic commandments and giving the equivalent of the sermon-on-the-mountain. When we consider the giving of this sermon and all the communications from Jesus as it is recorded, we could imagine this not taking more than maybe an hour or, at most, maybe 2 hours at the very longest, if he paused or spoke very slowly.

But it is evident that Jesus did a lot more than what is in the record we have been given. It is explicitly stated as such in the above-referenced 3 Nephi 12:1. Beyond the spoken word, we also know that Jesus blessed children, healed their sick, cast out devils (see 3 Nephi 8:9), and did...well, we really don't know what else he did. It seems to have taken the better part of a day though, because at the end we find at the end of the first day of his appearing to them in 3 Nephi 9:3 the following:

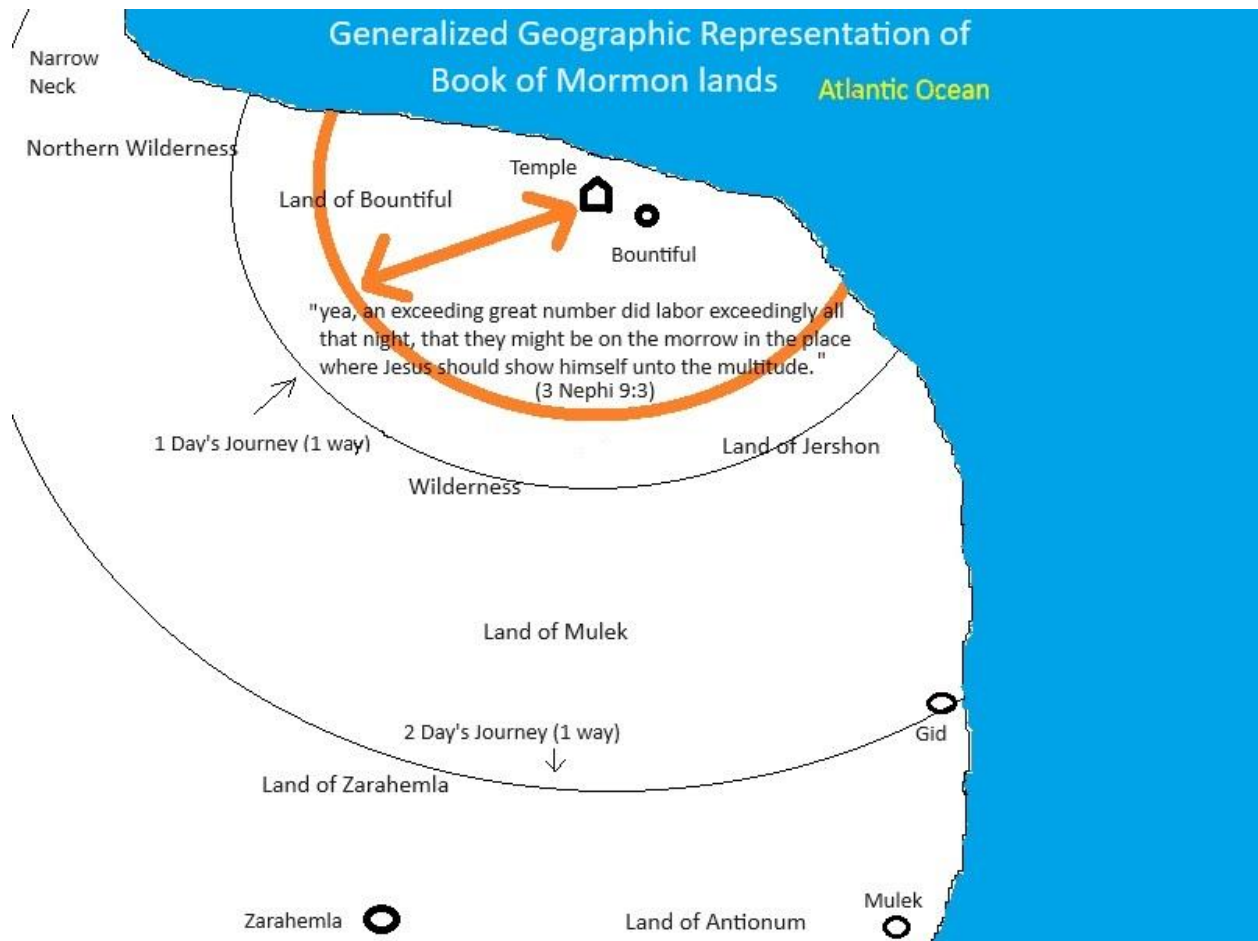
3 Nephi 9:3 Yea, and even all the night it was noised abroad concerning Jesus; and insomuch did they send forth unto the people, that there were many, yea, an exceeding great number did labor exceedingly all that night, that they might be on the morrow in the place where Jesus should show himself unto the multitude.

If we presume that Jesus first appeared to them around 9am (the 3rd hour of the day) for the sake of argument, then he departed just before sunset (because the people labored **exceedingly all that night**). The people then sent out messengers to let as many people as possible know that Jesus would be returning again the next morning.

The accompanying graphic is my depiction of the general geography of this quarter of the land, which includes the temple at Bountiful where Jesus appeared to the people on the first day.

The main point of reference is that the narrow neck of land (shown in the upper left corner of the graphic) was between 1 and 1.5 days' journey for a Nephite, of which I only show about half the width for the sake of brevity. (And in fairness we really don't know how far Bountiful was from the narrow neck, but there are really a lot of things we don't know).

If we assume the geography to be reasonably correct, then for the people to journey all night and be able to return the next morning to the temple at Bountiful for Jesus' next appearance, it really suggests that maybe - and this is a big if - they may not have been able to go more than 10 or 20 miles out before returning back in the same amount of time early enough to see Jesus' return. (Remember, they also had to talk to people to tell them what they had witnessed and what Jesus said about returning again the next day, and to get people to make the journey back with them.)



There were enough people on day 2 that they split them into 12 groups so that the disciples whom Jesus had chosen could teach all the newcomers the same exact things (nothing varying - 3 Nephi 9:10) that Jesus taught the day before.

This multitude on day 2 was much, much larger than the one on the 1st day, which had numbered 2,500 people (3 Nephi 8:27). In many cases of scripture they only record the number of men above 20 years old, but in this case this was an exact count of all men, women, and children regardless of age.

We should remember that the multitude of people on the first day consisted of people who were in the immediate vicinity of the temple in the city of Bountiful. This was likely because it was at least five months after the crucifixion and resurrection of Jesus (which took place on Passover, on or around the first week of April), and thus it was probable that the people were gathered there for one of the feast days, say, sometime in September or October.

Three days while Jesus was in the tomb -
 3 Nephi 4:6 And it came to pass **in the thirty and fourth year, in the first month, in the fourth day of the month**, there arose a great storm, such an one as never had been known in all the land;

Gathering at the end of the year:

3 Nephi 4:74 And it came to pass that **in the ending of the thirty and fourth year**, behold, I will show unto you that the people of Nephi who were spared, and also those who had been called Lamanites, who had been spared, did have great favors shown unto them and great blessings poured out upon their heads, insomuch that soon after the ascension of Christ into heaven, **he did truly manifest himself unto them, showing his body unto them, and ministering unto them.**

This might have been the feast of Trumpets, Atonement, or Tabernacles (booths), which all occur in the same month.

The "multitude" on days 2 and 3 are never given a number, but we can assume the 2,500 from the first day were again present on days 2 and 3. That suggests to me that the number could be in the range of tens of thousands.

Of that 2,500, let us do some calculation using extremely rough figures (really rough). Assuming each family had about 3 children, and assuming (yes, a lot of assuming here) that at least 2 of the children in each family was 8 or more years old, that suggests the possibility that the demographic of people present is like this:

500 adult men
500 adult women
1000 children 8 or older
500 children under 8.

On the first day, Jesus sent out the disciples to get bread and wine so they could partake of the Lord's supper. This would have needed to be enough for the roughly (very roughly) 2000 people who were old enough to partake of the emblems.

If we go into wild speculation and assume that on day 2 there were 50,000 additional people present, using the same kind of math, we might arrive at these figures:

10,000 adult men
10,000 adult women
20,000 children 8 or older
10,000 children under 8

This might suggest that there were an additional 40,000 men, women, and children at or over the age of 8, making in total on day 2 (including the 2,500 from day 1):

10,500 adult men
10,500 adult women
21,000 children 8 or older
10,500 children under 8

This is pretty wild speculation because we have really no idea how large the group of people was on day 2 or 3, and the demographic may have been different for the people on day 2 if the journey was too difficult to make with little children or if there were other matters to attend to.

We can understand, though, that there was a considerable population of Lamanites in the neighboring land (the land of Jershon) - the people of Ammon, also called Anti-Nephi-Lehi's. They would have been exceptionally interested in seeing Jesus.

The Anti-Nephi-Lehi's were placed in that quarter of the land by the Nephites as a defensive measure so that they would not have to fight against their brethren, the Lamanites, who frequently fought against the Nephites in fierce wars largely on the southern border - south of Zarahemla.

On day 2, they again had the Lord's supper, but this time the Lord provided it.

3 Nephi 9:43 Now **there had been no bread, neither wine, brought by the disciples, neither by the multitude;** but **he truly gave unto them bread to eat and also wine to drink;**

How this was done is not disclosed, but it is not too different in concept from the Israelites receiving manna six days of the week for forty years. The Lord provided. We can also recall how the Lord multiplied fishes and loaves for multitudes twice during his ministry in Jerusalem.

It is sufficient to say that there was enough provided for all, and thus we can see that it would have been a truly large amount of bread and wine.

The events on day 2 include Nephi baptizing the other 11 disciples

3 Nephi 9

11 And when they had thus prayed, they went down unto the water's edge, and the multitude followed them.

12 And it came to pass that **Nephi went down into the water and was baptized.**

13 And he came up out of the water and began to baptize. And **he baptized all those whom Jesus had chosen.**

14 And it came to pass when they were all baptized and had come up out of the water, the Holy Ghost did fall upon them, and they were filled with the Holy Ghost and with fire.

We note here that Nephi baptized the other 11 disciples. It is not recorded that the twelve disciples (Nephi included) began to baptize the people in the multitude until the 3rd day that Jesus visited them:

3 Nephi 12:10

8 **And it came to pass that after he had ascended into heaven the second time** that he showed himself unto them, and had gone unto the Father--after having healed all

their sick, and their lame, and opened the eyes of their blind, and unstopped the ears of the deaf, and even had done all manner of cures among them, and raised a man from the dead, and had shown forth his power unto them, and had ascended unto the Father-

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9 Behold, it came to pass on the morrow, that the multitude gathered themselves together; and they both saw and heard these children; yea, even babes did open their mouths and utter marvelous things; and the things which they did utter were forbidden that there should not any man write them.

10 And it came to pass that the disciples whom Jesus had chosen **began from that time forth to baptize** and to teach as many as did come unto them; and as many as were baptized in the name of Jesus were filled with the Holy Ghost.

We note here that ***there was no person present*** to baptize Nephi, which is in a similar manner as Alma, Sr.: he was baptized by the Holy Ghost directly.

Mosiah 9

45 And after Alma had said these words, **both Alma and Helam were buried in the water; and they arose and came forth out of the water rejoicing, being filled with the Spirit.**

46 And again, Alma took another, and went forth a second time into the water, and baptized him according to the first, **only he did not bury himself again in the water.**

There might be some who will say that this is indication enough that any believer may baptize, but that is not the case. In the case of Nephi being baptized, we note this:

3 Nephi 5

18 And it came to pass that he spake unto Nephi (for Nephi was among the multitude), and he commanded him that he should come forth.

19 And Nephi arose and went forth, and bowed himself before the Lord, and he did kiss his feet.

20 And the Lord commanded him that he should arise. And he arose and stood before him.

21 And the Lord said unto him, I give unto you power that ye shall baptize this people when I am again ascended into heaven.

22 And again, the Lord called others and said unto them likewise; and he gave unto them power to baptize.

3 Nephi 5

44 And it came to pass that when Jesus had spoken these words unto Nephi and to those who had been called (now the number of them who had been called and received power and authority to baptize was twelve),

45 Behold, he stretched forth his hand unto the multitude and cried unto them, saying, Blessed are ye if ye shall give heed unto the words of these twelve whom I have chosen from among you to minister unto you and to be your servants;

46 And unto them I have given power, that they may baptize you with water; and after

that ye are baptized with water, behold, I will baptize you with fire and with the Holy Ghost.

In the case of Alma, Sr., and Helam, we may easily note the following: "**both Alma and Helam were buried in the water**". It does not say that Alma buried Helam in the water along with himself, but that they ***were buried***, suggesting that the Spirit of the Lord performed this.

This also shows that where the occasion requires, the Lord can intervene to perform his own work.

The first baptism recorded in scripture illustrates, again, that the Lord is able to do his own work:

Genesis 6:67 (Inspired Version) And it came to pass when the Lord had spoken with Adam, our father, that Adam cried unto the Lord; **and he was caught away by the Spirit of the Lord, and was carried down into the water, and was laid under the water, and was brought forth out of the water; and thus he was baptized.**

In summary it seems that Jesus' "agenda" for those days among the Nephites included this:

Day 1

1. Jesus introduces himself
2. Selects twelve disciples, giving them power and authority to baptize
3. Gives commandments concerning baptism
4. Gives the "sermon on the mount"
5. Blesses children
6. Heals sick (etc.)
7. Casts out devils
8. Conducts the sacrament of the Lord's Supper
9. Ascends to heaven

Day 2

1. Nephi is baptized
2. Nephi baptizes the other 11 chosen disciples
3. Large prayer meeting
4. Jesus appears in their midst
5. Prays 3 times for the people
6. Recites scriptures for them from the prophet Isaiah
7. Corrects them for missing the fulfillment of a prophecy by Samuel the Lamanite
8. Expounds (explains) the scriptures.
9. Recites scriptures for them from the prophet Malachi
10. Expounds "all things, even from the beginning until the time that he should come in glory."
11. Jesus ascends to heaven the 2nd time.

Day 3

1. Nephi and the 11 disciples begin to baptize those in the multitude
2. Many in the multitude "saw and heard unspeakable things, which are not lawful to be written"

Day ??

1. Jesus appears to the disciples and instructs them concerning the church.
2. Jesus grants 9 of the 12 disciples according to their desires to minister until they should die at the age of men, and 3 disciples that they might minister until he comes in glory

It is clear that we are missing big chunks of the events of those days, but what we do have gives us a tantalizing view of what the Lord is capable of, and how quickly events can take place when the set time arrives.

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