

MORONI'S INTERPRETATION OF THE PROPHECY OF JOSEPH OF EGYPT

Lehi quoted a prophecy of Joseph of Egypt while instructing his youngest son, whose name was also Joseph. According to Moroni, none of the Restoration groups properly understand it. In addition to Joseph of Egypt and Lehi's son, Joseph, Moroni said that the portion of the Book of Mormon containing the prophecy foretells three other men whose name is Joseph.

The first of these three Joseph's is foretold in these words:

"Yea, Joseph truly said, Thus saith the Lord 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, which shall be of great worth unto them, even to the bringing of them to the knowledge of the covenants which I have made with thy fathers. And I will give unto him a commandment, that 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 he shall be great like unto Moses, whom I have said I would raise up unto you, to deliver my people, O house of Israel" (2N 2:11-15).

Moroni said that this choice seer was Joseph Smith, Jr. This part of the prophecy specified at least four of his attributes, all of which apply to the Palmyra Seer:

- 1) He was a descendant of Joseph of Egypt;
- 2) He would be greatly esteemed by descendants of Joseph of Egypt;
- 3) He would reveal the covenants that the Lord had made with their progenitors;
- 4) He will be like Moses.

The Book of Mormon is the ensign for the first invitation. That work commenced in 1830. It reveals the covenants that the Lord made with Abraham, Isaac and Jacob and their descendants. It also shows how those promises are secured by the atonement of God's only Son. The book plainly states the gospel of Jesus Christ and profoundly explains both the fall of mankind and the redemption that the Savior wrought on the cross. It invites Joseph of Egypt's descendants to participate in the fulfillment of those covenants. They include salvation from sin and its bondage through the mercy and merits of Jesus' atoning crucifixion, which most Christians embrace. That salvation is also corporate. In the last days, the Lord will gather all the repentant and fitly frame them into a spiritual house (Eph 2: 19-22,) a holy kingdom, where Jesus will appear in their midst and which kingdom will fill the earth. Joseph Smith translated the book containing these covenants and is the seer described in these verses.

Lehi continues with Joseph's prophecy. It contains an second description of a seer.

"But a seer will I raise up out of the fruit of thy loins; and unto him will I give power to bring forth my word unto the seed of thy loins; and not to the bringing forth my word only, saith the Lord, but to the convincing them of my word, which shall have already gone forth among them. Wherefore, the fruit of thy loins shall write; and the fruit of the loins of Judah shall write; and that which shall be written by the fruit of thy loins, and also that which shall be written by the fruit of the loins of Judah, 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 the knowledge of their fathers in the latter days; and also to the knowledge of my covenants, saith the Lord. And out of weakness he shall be made strong, in that day when my work shall commence among all my people, unto the restoring thee, O house of Israel, saith the Lord. And thus prophesied Joseph, saying: Behold, that seer will the Lord bless; and they that seek to destroy him, shall be confounded: for this promise, of which I have obtained of the Lord, of the fruit of thy loins, shall be fulfilled. Behold, I am sure of the fulfilling of this promise. And his name shall be called after me; and it shall be after the name of his father. And he shall be like unto me; for the thing which the Lord shall bring forth by his hand, by the power of the Lord shall bring my people unto salvation” (2N 2:17-30).

While most people believe that this portrayal further describes Joseph Smith, Jr., it contains aspects that do not apply to him:

- 1) He would not only bring forth the Lord’s word, but also convince them of the word that had already been given to them;
- 2) He is blessed by the Lord so that those who try to destroy him are confounded;
- 3) His name will be Joseph, the same as his father;
- 4) What he brings will extend peace and salvation to the Lord’s people.

While Joseph Smith, Jr. revealed the word of the Lord, both in the Book of Mormon and the in latter-day revelations, he did not not convince any of the words that the Lord had already given them. No revelation had proceeded him, except perhaps the Bible, which those to whom he came already believed. Neither were the enemies of Joseph Smith, Jr. confounded so that that did not destroy him. His enemies murdered him. Joseph Smith, Jr. did not bring peace to his followers. Instead, they were expelled from the land of Zion and driven from city to city.

On the other hand, Joseph Smith III, the son of Joseph Smith, Jr. and designate of his father as his successor, met all four characteristics. He gathered many faithful believers who had been misled by ambitions and aspiring leaders and had lost their faith in the latter-day message during the dark and cloudy day. He convinced them of the truthfulness of the work that his father began, more by his conduct than his instruction. He also brought new revelation, properly interpreted those received by his father, especially ones defining the duties and functions of quorums, and published the Inspired Version of the Bible, a correction that His father had compiled.

The Lord also blessed Joseph III with an honest and humble demeanor. Even his opponents confessed that he returned virtue and integrity to Mormonism. His steady, pragmatic leadership brought peace and salvation to the members of the church that he led and won the respect of many opponents of the angel message. No one sought his life and when he died at age 86, thousands of saints who had safely returned to the lands from which the original church had been forcibly removed a generation before celebrated his accomplishments. He had restored dignity to his father’s name, which name he also carried. Moroni declared that this second seer is Joseph III.

Joseph’s prophecy also foretold the role of Moses, who led the Hebrews from Egyptian captivity. According to the Inspired Version, Joseph’s revelation not only identified Moses’ work, but it named his spokesman, who was Aaron (Gen 50:34-35 IV). Lehi does not quote that portion of Joseph’s prophecy, but in its place repeats the promises that the Lord had made to him: “*Yea, thus prophesied Joseph, I am sure of this thing, even as I*

am sure of the promise of Moses: for the Lord hath said unto me, I will preserve thy seed for ever" (2N 2:31). The promises that the Lord made with Lehi are an application and extension of Joseph's prophecy about Moses. They describe a different Moses and his spokesman with much more detail than what Joseph revealed about the first Moses.

"The Lord hath said, I will raise up a Moses; and I will give power unto him in a rod; and I will give judgment unto him in writing. Yet I will not loose his tongue, that he shall speak much: for I will not make him mighty in speaking. But I will write unto him my law, by the finger of mine own hand; and I will make a spokesman for him. And the Lord said unto me also, I will raise up unto the fruit of thy loins: and I will make for him a spokesman. And I, behold, 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" (2N 2:32-40).

The assumption has been that the person who is identified as "a Moses" refers to the first seer in this prophecy. Joseph of Egypt said, "He shall be great like unto Moses" (2N 2:15-3). Since Joseph Smith is that first seer, this assumption implies that the Palmyra Seer had a spokesman. That spokesman is generally considered to be Sidney Rigdon. Sidney Rigdon was a far more eloquent speaker than Joseph Smith, but the historical record does not support the inference that Joseph was a poor speaker. In fact, the assumption that this Moses is a poor speaker and his spokesman a gifted one may be errant. It is equally possible that the former cannot speak the language of the people to whom the spokesman is sent.

The prophecy does not specify the lineage of the Moses to whom Lehi referred, but it states that his spokesman is "of thy loins." Was Lehi referring to his loins or Joseph's loins? Was his use of that phrase the continuation of the wording that Joseph of Egypt used or was it the wording in God's promise to Lehi? Either way, the spokesman to whom Lehi referred could not be Aaron. Aaron was a descendant of Levi, not Joseph. Since the spokesman in Lehi's prophecy must be a different person than Aaron, the Moses for whom he speaks must be different, too.

Moroni taught that the spokesman is a third Joseph who is a descendant of Joseph Smith, Jr., the person who opened the fulness of time and was the father of the Restoration. The words of the prophecy do not demand that conclusion. Its actual wording by itself is too ambiguous to determine the specific group of descendants from whom the spokesman would arise and also the particular group to whom the words would be written by this Moses. That is why the angel had to reveal it. He went on to say that this Joseph is Joseph F. Smith, the great-grandson of Joseph Smith, Jr. According to Moroni, he is the person who declares glad tidings to the descendants of his forefathers, who are bound by the divisions and contentions that have confused and immobilized the saints in America. This spokesman's testimony about this Moses and the writings that he brings forth as he translates part of the sealed portion will reclaim Joseph's descendants who remain perplexed almost 200 years after the Restoration broke forth.

Those who receive the spokesman's declarations concerning the writings from the translator of part of the sealed portion, the part that Lehi said would be expedient in the

Lord's wisdom to come forth through him, will rejoice. They will turn from their bewildered and debilitated state, become unified as the Lord pours His righteousness on them, and build the house of the Lord, not only the spiritual house, the holy city, which we call Zion, but the physical House of the Lord, as appointed by Joseph Smith, Jr., on the spot that he consecrated. When that Temple is completed, Jesus will appear in the midst of His people, open the rest of the sealed portion, and read it to them in His House.