

“See Ye for the Kingdom of God”

Jacob 1-4

Lesson
12
Summary

Scripture Summary:	<i>Jacob and Joseph seek to persuade men to believe in Christ and keep his commandments—Nephi dies—Wickedness prevails among the Nephites.</i> <i>Jacob denounces the love of riches, pride, and unchastity – Men should seek riches to help their fellow men – Jacob condemns the unauthorized practice of plural marriage – The Lord delights in the chastity of women.</i> <i>The pure in heart receive the pleasing word of God—Lamanite righteousness exceeds that of Nephites – Jacob warns against fornication, lasciviousness, and every sin.</i> <i>All the prophets worshipped the Father in the name of Christ—Abraham’s offering of Isaac was in similitude of God and his Only Begotten – Men should reconcile themselves to God through the atonement—The Jews shall reject the foundation stone. [Between 544 and 421 B.C.]</i>
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Supplemental Holy Land and Jewish insights: **Scriptures Are Not Necessarily a Running History:** It can be understood that there were several records being kept by the people who left Jerusalem in 600 B.C. Although they were historical, we can see that Jacob was instructed by his father, Nephi, to keep a separate history that dealt more with sacred instructions. These instructions were to lead the people to their identity with their Lord. Jewish thought on history has some parallel.

“As early as biblical times (historical) records were kept but these have since been lost. The Bible itself is not a history although it contains a vast amount of historical information and is the major literary source for our knowledge of the biblical period.” “The study of Jewish history continues to grow and in many cases helps to deepen Jewish self-identification . . . Jewish nationality and achievement.” (*Encyclopaedia Judaica Jr.*)

Unhealthy Focus on Wealth: Jacob’s first recorded “sacred” teaching included a call to repent from focusing so much on wealth accompanied by immorality. These result in the abuse and even the abandonment of the family. This type of instruction is evident in Talmudic teachings. “The rabbis taught that a man is truly ‘rich’ when he is ‘happy with his portion’ --- when he recognizes and appreciates the good in his life. Ultimately, a man’s material poverty or wealth is irrelevant; what is really important is his spiritual worth.” (*Encyclopaedia Judaica Jr.*)

Unhealthy Focus on Sex: “Like other basic human desires, sex is regarded in a positive light in Jewish teaching, especially as it is the means of fulfilling the first biblical commandment: ‘Be fruitful and multiply.’ Judaism does not encourage the unbridled fulfillment of desire, however, but rather imposes restrictions which raise the act to the level of holiness.” “Detailed legislation concerning sexual behavior can be found in the Bible as well as in the Talmud and subsequent rabbinic literature. Celibacy (complete abstinence from all sexual activity) is discouraged as an unnatural state and detrimental to the human personality.” (*Encyclopaedia Judaica Jr.*)

Holiness and Respect in Marriage: “The primary restriction of sexual activity in Jewish law is that it should take place within marriage, as an expression of love between husband and wife as well as out of a desire to fulfill God’s commandments. An element of holiness is added by the laws of *niddah* (separation during the period of menstruation; which ensure that the couple does not indulge in sex on impulse but rather directs the act to holiness).” “In general, moderation and self-control in sexual activity are encouraged. Chastity, the goal to be aimed for, does not mean the avoidance of all sex but of illegal sex. This includes adultery, incest, sodomy, rape and seduction. Adultery is defined as sexual relations between a married woman and any man other than her husband.” (*Encyclopaedia Judaica Jr.*)

Chastity and Modesty: “Judaism encourages modesty as one of the means to chastity. Thus the Jewish woman is enjoined to dress and act modestly at all times. Furthermore, a man is forbidden to be alone with a woman with whom he is not permitted to have sexual relations from considerations of both chastity and modesty.” (*Encyclopaedia Judaica Jr.*)

Concern for Family Identity: The Book of Mormon teachings of Jacob reflect the repeated teachings to the Children of Israel which show concern for family identity and sacredness of marriage, marital companionship and the sanctity of children. “The mother . . . occupied a place of honor next to her spouse. At his death, if no sons were of age, she could become the legal head of the household. Concern for her welfare as a widow was considered the duty of a good society.” “The successful marriage in the eyes of the prophets and the rabbis was the most

perfect symbol of a meaningful and purposeful relationship and was taken by them as the closest approximation to the idealized relationship between God and Israel, and between Israel and the Torah.” (*Encyclopedia Judaica Jr.*)

Parenthood: “Lo, children are a heritage of the Lord; the fruit of the womb is a reward’ (Psalms 127:3). In Jewish tradition, the central purpose of marriage is to have children. Children are considered a great blessing; they are the hope and the promise of continuing life. The joys of parenthood bring also many responsibilities and it is the parents’ religious duty to fulfill them.” “As the children grow, they must be educated and trained for their future roles in Jewish life. The father’s duty is to provide for his children, to give them a proper education, to teach them a trade, and to prepare them for marriage.” (*Encyclopedia Judaica Jr.*)

Secular and Religious Education: “Great emphasis is placed on the importance of education and religious training, which should begin early in the home. The mother’s role is vital since she is the one who creates the home atmosphere in which basic values are fostered and transmitted. She trains her sons and daughters in *mitzvot* and prepares them for formal education. The rabbis advised parents to be loving but firm in the upbringing of their children, and warned against showing favoritism.” “In some communities it is customary for the father to bless his children on the Sabbath eve when he returns from the synagogue.” (*Encyclopedia Judaica Jr.*)

Parental Respect: “Children are obliged to treat their parents with honor and respect. Children must provide dependent parents with food, clothing and personal attention if it is necessary. This obligation is removed from a daughter when she marries.” “Children may not abuse their parents. According to the Bible, if a son is extremely rebellious and incorrigible and refuses to mend his ways . . . his parents may agree to bring him to the town elders for judgment and punishment, which could be death by stoning. However, there is no record of such punishment ever having been carried out.” (*Encyclopedia Judaica Jr.*)

Respect for Wives and Children: As Jacob rebuked the Nephite men for their mistreatment of their wives and children, so have other prophets given the same counsel. Jewish philosophy carries the same theme. “It is said that a man without a wife lives without joy, blessing and good, and that a man should love his wife as himself and respect her more than himself. Women have greater faith than men and greater powers of discernment. The Torah, the greatest joy of the rabbis, is frequently pictured as a woman and is represented as God’s daughter and Israel’s bride.” (*Encyclopedia Judaica Jr.*)

What Can We Learn from History? Mistreatment of anybody is simply ungodly. The Jews, as a people, have experienced mistreatment. That probably makes them more concerned about being kind and removing racial prejudice. Unfortunately, as Jacob taught, wealth leads to immorality. Immorality leads to family abandonment and that leads to discrimination and prejudice. In reflection of this lesson, the history (large plates) was not as important as the lessons of history (small plates). In his rather few verses, Jacob uses the repeated lessons of history as a guideline for finding the “Kingdom of God.”

(*Encyclopedia Judaica Jr.*)

Daniel Rona, born in Israel and living in Jerusalem has authored Old & New Testament and Book of Mormon Supplement Study Materials to be used in conjunction with the weekly LDS Gospel Doctrine Lesson study. NOTE: Three versions of the supplemental study materials are available *FREE* at www.HolyLandsRevealed.com. (Just click “LDS SUPPLEMENTS”)

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