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S. Kent Brown and John A. Tvedtnes

When Did Jesus Appear to the Nephites in Bountiful?

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Summary:

Kent Brown and John Tvedtnes examine the question of when Christ appeared to the Nephites in Bountiful, offering different interpretations of 3 Nephi 10:18. Brown asserts that Jesus appeared near the end of the thirty-fourth year after Christ's birth, almost a full year after the crucifixion. Tvedtnes proposes an earlier date, possibly as early as the same day of or the day following Jesus' resurrection in Jerusalem.

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WHEN DID JESUS APPEAR TO THE NEPHITES IN BOUNTIFUL?

An Introduction to Papers by S. Kent Brown and John A. Tvedtnes

by John W. Welch

Attached are two papers discussing the question of when Jesus appeared to the Nephites after his resurrection. As these papers show, that question is not easily answered. Kent Brown presents evidence that Christ's appearance in Bountiful occurred almost a full year after the crucifixion: His coming was "only after a substantial period of time. That period must have assuredly extended into the latter half of the year" (pp. 76-77). John Tvedtnes questions this view and prefers an early date, "possibly as early as the same day or the next" after Jesus' resurrection in Jerusalem (p. 13). The issue between Brown and Tvedtnes reduces basically to the interpretation of three texts.

(1) 3 Nephi 10:18. The main text involved in this debate is 3 Nephi 10:18. It states:

> [I]n the ending of the thirty and fourth year, behold, I will show unto you that the people of Nephi who were 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 (3 Nephi 10:18).

This verse mentions "the ending of the thirty and fourth year." Unfortunately, it remains unclear what the phrase "the ending of the thirty and fourth year" describes. Does it indicate that Jesus appeared near the end of the 34th year after his birth and thus near the beginning of the 35th year? This interpretation is Brown's main point. Many of the rest of his arguments are

intended to show that the evidence does not weaken what he calls "the literal meaning of Mormon's statement" (p. 75). Or, as Tvedtnes argues, is "the ending of the thirty and fourth year" simply an editorial introduction to all the remaining events in 3 Nephi, all of which transpired in the 34th year? Tvedtnes argues that an examination of Mormon's methodology reveals that he repeatedly told his readers the year for which he was extracting "material from dated Nephite annals" (p. 4), even when he recorded no events for some of those years. Tvedtnes proposes that Mormon is telling his readers that he is about to record the events that occurred "through the end of the thirty-fourth year" rather than those that occurred solely at the end of the thirty-fourth year. He believes that this interpretation is in keeping with the likely Hebrew idiom behind the passage, which he proposes should be understood to mean "by the end of" or "before the end of" (p. 5). His argument is convincing enough to persuade me that the meaning of the phrase "in the ending of the thirty and fourth year" is not readily apparent.

From 3 Nephi 10:18 it is also known that Jesus appeared in Bountiful "soon after the ascension." It remains unclear, however, what period of time this describes. Book of Mormon passages use the word soon to cover a variety of time periods: for example, "it will soon become ripened" (Jacob 5:37, allegorically speaking), "the kingdom of heaven is soon at hand" (Alma 5:28, stated a century before Christ), and "we soon accomplished our desire" (Alma 57:8, speaking of a matter of days), etc. Benjamin, who saw that he must "very soon go the way

of all the earth" (Mosiah 1:9), still lived for another three years (Mosiah 6:5). Thus, "soon after the ascension" could describe either a short or a fairly long period of time, and Brown is correct that the phrase lacks sufficient precision on which to build a case either way.

While Tvedtnes suggests that "the ascension" could have reference to any "going up" of Christ from the day of his resurrection to his ascension in Acts 1:3-12 forty days later, Tvedtnes prefers the former. His reasons for rejecting the later date are not persuasive to me. He discounts Luke's historical accuracy too lightly, for Luke is often right on such details and he is not contradicted by the other gospel writers on this point. Moreover, evidences for a forty-day postresurrection ministry of Jesus, which Tvedtnes doubts occurred (pp. 2-3), are thoroughly documented from the Christian tradition by Hugh Nibley[1] and must be dealt with, not just ignored.

In favor of dating "the ascension" to 40 days after crucifixion is the fact that Jesus said to the Nephites that he taught them the things he had taught in Jerusalem before he "ascended to" the Father (3 Nephi 15:1). Tvedtnes discounts this reference because it does not expressly mention a forty-day postresurrection period (p. 3). But one must then ask why Jesus did not refer here to things he taught before his death. Instead, by mentioning his ascension, he seems to say there was

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1 See his "The Forty-day Mission of Christ," in The Collected Works of Hugh Nibley (Salt Lake City: Deseret and F.A.R.M.S., 1987), 4:10-44.

some significant period of instruction between his resurrection and the ascension, and traditionally the interval was forty days after the resurrection. Still, Tvedtnes gives us pause by cautioning that the meaning of the word ascension cannot be unequivocally ascertained.

(2) 4 Nephi 1. Tvedtnes is on yet weaker ground, it seems to me, when he argues that 4 Nephi 1 precludes an appearance at the end of the 34th year. He argues that all the traveling and preaching of the disciples reported in 3 Nephi 27 and 28 must have taken place during the 34th year, after the appearance of Christ, but before the beginning of the 35th year, which would mean that Christ could not have appeared very close to the end of the 34th year. The idea that the preaching of the disciples occurred entirely in the 34th year, however, is not required by the text. Tvedtnes argues that because 4 Nephi begins by reporting that "the thirty and fourth year passed away," everything mentioned in 3 Nephi must have occurred in the 34th year. Beside the fact that Mormon mentions a personal event in 3 Nephi 28:26 that occurred after the 34th year, 4 Nephi 1 must be examined. It reads: "And it came to pass that the thirty and fourth year passed away, and also the thirty and fifth, and behold the disciples of Jesus had formed a church of Christ in all the lands round about." Clearly, this activity took place either in both the 34th and 35th years or perhaps in the 35th year alone, but at a minimum one cannot conclude that all of the

activities mentioned in 3 Nephi must have occurred in the 34th year.[2]

(3) 3 Nephi 23:11. Tvedtnes honestly states that he finds 3 Nephi 23:11 a problem for his dating. He thinks one must allow enough time between the destructions at the time of the crucifixion and the appearance of Jesus at Bountiful for some record keeping to have occurred during the interval, since Jesus reviewed the Nephite records and asked Nephi why they had not recorded "that many saints did arise and appear unto many and did minister unto them" (3 Nephi 23:11). Tvedtnes finds no way to satisfactorily explain why "[Nephi] would have to 'remember' the thing had not been written if the event were only a day or so old" (p. 13). Indeed, when Jesus audited the records of the Nephites on his second day among them, he inspected everything down to that point in time, including the Nephite records regarding events at the time of the destruction. This would require that some record keeping must have taken place between the crucifixion and Christ's appearance.

Beyond the analysis of these three texts, both Brown and Tvedtnes also rely on other arguments. Brown makes some plausible points arguing that the Nephites were in a somewhat settled condition when Christ appeared to them. But this evidence is primarily circumstantial and, as Tvedtnes shows, the

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2 Moreover, it can be noted that events are not always reported in the Book of Mormon in strict chronological sequence.

circumstantial evidence is not conclusive. Tvedtnes makes some good points as well, especially regarding the irrelevancy to the date of Christ's appearance of Ether 12:7, where Moroni states that Christ showed himself unto the people only after they had faith.

In sum, the record leaves it unclear exactly when Jesus appeared at the temple in Bountiful. Neither Brown's arguments nor Tvedtnes' are conclusive. There are good reasons for thinking that Christ's appearance did not occur immediately after the resurrection, and yet there are ample reasons for thinking that it was not as late as the very end of the 34th year.

In light of this inconclusiveness, it may be better for researchers to consider a different approach to the problem. Instead of asking how long after the crucifixion Jesus appeared in Bountiful, perhaps one should focus more on the question of <u>what kind</u> of a gathering was involved when Jesus appeared? Had the great multitude gathered together simply for an emergency civilian meeting, or had they assembled for another purpose? Since the Nephites had "gathered together . . . round about the temple" (3 Nephi 11:1) with "men, women, and children" (3 Nephi 17:25), one is reminded of the covenant assembly called and conducted by King Benjamin, when all his people gathered "round about" the temple, every man with his family (Mosiah 2:5). Thus, it is possible that these people had come to the temple on a scheduled religious festival or day of worship. Indeed, the fact that women and children were present supports the idea that their meeting was not simply an emergency session of the city elders to

consider the need for construction repairs and debris removal. While Tvedtnes asserts that "the gathering of the people at the temple is not evidence that it was festival-time" (p. 11), his reasons for this are not clear to me,[3] and in the end Tvedtnes, along with Horowitz and Brown, all accept the likelihood that the festival of Passover was involved.

Traditionally, Israelites (and Nephites) gathered at the temple at appointed times each year for the feasts of Passover, Pentecost, and Tabernacles: "Three times in the year all thy males shall appear before the Lord God" (Exodus 23:17). "At the end of every seven years . . . in the feast of tabernacles . . . all Israel [must come] to appear before the Lord thy God" at the temple, "men, and women, and children" (Deuteronomy 31:11-12). Particularly important for the law of Moses and the covenant of Israel with the Lord their God were Shavuoth (Pentecost), which came fifty days after Passover, and Tabernacles, which followed closely after the Day of Atonement. Certainly the purposes and themes of these ritual days relate closely to the covenant-making, law-giving and prophetic instruction reported in 3 Nephi 11-26.

If the Nephites were assembled on one of these traditional holy days, they probably would have wondered what they should do

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3 He claims that the "multitude" did not gather until the word had gone out that Jesus would appear again on the morrow (3 Nephi 19:1), but the crowd is called "a great multitude" even on the first day (3 Nephi 11:1). It appears that those who came for the second day had to travel much of the night to be there (3 Nephi 19:3), so their absence the first day should not preclude it from being considered a festival day observed by all those in the temple-city of Bountiful.

next. The Nephites had observed the law of Moses until Jesus proclaimed its fulfillment (3 Nephi 1:24-25; 15:2-8). While Jesus' voice had announced to the Nephites the end of the Mosaic law at the time of his death (3 Nephi 9:17), no new instructions had yet been given. Moreover, Jesus reiterated the fact that the old law had been fulfilled when he spoke to them in person (3 Nephi 12:18; 15:4), but they were still confused about what Jesus meant by this (3 Nephi 15:2-3). Sooner or later, as they gathered at their temple, they would have wondered if their old ritual order was still appropriate. Since it seems unlikely that they would have gone 12 months without addressing the implications of Christ's death for the continuation of their public rites, this would argue that his appearance was probably not so long after his crucifixion.

We do not know, of course, how the Nephite ritual calendar in Bountiful related to the Israelite calendar in Jerusalem, for there had been no contact between the two for over 600 years. Thus, it is impossible to determine which traditional festivals would have been observed in Zarahemla in the months following Jesus' crucifixion. If one can assume that the two ritual calendars had not grown too far apart, the feast of Shavuoth would have been celebrated in Bountiful about two months after Jesus' crucifixion and shortly after the best known ascension of Jesus from Jerusalem, reported in Acts 1. Such a date would make good sense of the reference in 3 Nephi 10:18 to Christ's appearing in Bountiful "soon after" his ascension; plus, that date is not so long after the events of the destruction that the

people could still "marvel" and "wonder" about the whole situation as they conversed about Christ and the signs of his death (3 Nephi 11:1-2). Such a date accommodates all of Brown's points about the settled condition of the people, and it also solves Tvedtnes' major problem by allowing time for records to have been kept between the time of the crucifixion and the appearance in Bountiful. A literal reading of the phrase "in the ending of the thirty and fourth year" remains, however, a problem.

The hypothesis that Christ appeared at the feast of Shavuoth in Bountiful raises some interesting implications. No more relevant occasion than Shavuoth can be imagined for the day on which to explain the fulfillment of the old law and the issuance of the new. It was on the Feast of Shavuoth, according to recent scholarship,[4] that ancient Israelites celebrated the giving of the law, especially the revelation of the Ten Commandments on Mount Sinai. Given the obvious connections between materials in Matthew 5, 3 Nephi 12, and three of the Ten Commandments, it seems ideal that the day on which the Nephites would have traditionally celebrated the giving of the Ten Commandments should be the time when Jesus could teach the new understanding of those very commandments. In addition, Shavuoth was a day for remembering great spiritual experiences (cf. the Holy Ghost was

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4 Moshe Weinfeld, "The Decalogue: Its Significance, Uniqueness, and Place in Israel's Tradition," in Religion and Law: Biblical-Judaic and Islamic Perspectives, E. Firmage, B. Weiss, and J. Welch, eds. (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 1989), 38-47.

manifest as tongues of fire to the saints gathered for Pentecost that same year in Jerusalem, Acts 2:1-4). Shavuoth celebrated the day on which the Lord came down on Mount Sinai and appeared to Moses on behalf of the host of Israel. Now Jesus came down and appeared to all gathered in Bountiful. Indeed, the ancient model for Shavuoth was the three day ritual observed by the Israelites before the giving of the law at Sinai (see Exodus 19:15), and Jesus similarly appeared three days to the Nephites (3 Nephi 11:1; 19:1; 26:13). Thus, while the suggestion that Jesus appeared at Bountiful on Shavuoth remains tentative, the choice of Shavuoth could well be considered more deeply.

Other possibilities are also open. Given our lack of knowledge about the Nephite ritual calendar (or calendars), it is possible that other festivals were involved and that many other factors should be contemplated. Clearly, further reflection and examination of clues is in order. The question asked and explored by Brown, Tvedtnes, and others surely remains an intriguing point of inquiry.

JESUS AMONG THE NEPHITES: WHEN DID IT HAPPEN?

S. Kent Brown

Both in written reconstructions and in artistic representations, a question has persisted concerning the relative date of the visit of the risen Jesus to the Nephite people. One view holds that approximately one year had passed among the Nephites following the severe destruction that attended Jesus' death.[1] A second view suggests that the Savior's visit occurred in connection with or soon after his initial appearance to his disciples in Jerusalem following the Resurrection (see Luke 24:30-43; John 20:11-18). Milton R. Hunter, among others, implies that this was the case.[2] A third view, which stands between these two, observes that the Savior's manifestation may well have occurred only following his forty-day ministry (see Acts 1:3-4).[3]

Among those who either avoid the question or take an ambiguous stand are George Reynolds and Janne M. Sjodahl, who

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1 See Sidney B. Sperry, Book of Mormon Studies (Sunday School Gospel Doctrine Course, 1947), 101; Sidney B. Sperry, The Book of Mormon Testifies (Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1953), 294; Sidney B. Sperry, Book of Mormon Compendium (Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1968), 401; see also J. N. Washburn, Book of Mormon Lands and Times (Salt Lake City: Horizon Publishers, 1974), 186.

2 See Christ in Ancient America (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1959), 3:98.

3 See also Reid E. Bankhead and Glenn L. Pearson, The Word and the Witness: The Unique Mission of the Book of Mormon (Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1970), 34; James E. Talmage, Jesus the Christ, 3rd ed. (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1916), 724.

wrote, "Some time after the terrible events which denoted His death, exactly how long we know not, a multitude assembled near the temple, which was in the land Bountiful."[4] Daniel H. Ludlow did not attempt a solution but simply stated that he was aware of the three views.[5]

Among artistic representations that depict Jesus as arriving directly after the destruction of the Nephite cities and the subsequent period of total darkness is Arnold Friberg's well-known painting, now reproduced in virtually all paperback copies of the Book of Mormon and once featured on the cover of the Gospel Doctrine manual for 1967-68. The original painting was part of a series done during 1952-57, now hanging in the south end of the new Salt Lake Visitors' Center on Temple Square. We note especially the portrayal of recent destruction in the right foreground and the fallen posture of some of the people--as if they were struggling to their feet just after spending the three days in darkness (see 3 Nephi 8:23).

A painting by Ronald Crosby exhibits a similar posture toward the question whether a substantial period of time had elapsed. Crosby's painting of Jesus' visit to the Nephites has hung in the Joseph Smith Building on the Brigham Young University campus since 1967. In that painting Crosby has depicted recent destruction, particularly in the left background. In a telephone

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4 George Reynolds and Janne M. Sjodahl, Commentary on the Book of Mormon (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1961), 133.

5 See Daniel H. Ludlow, A Companion to Your Study of the Book of Mormon (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1976), 260.

conversation the artist said that he had tried to capture the scene of Jesus' appearing to the Nephites "as soon after" the destruction and darkness as possible.

In seeking a solution to the question, we must first review two passages in 3 Nephi that seem to chronicle the relative timing of Jesus' death and subsequent visit. The first passage informs us that "in the thirty and fourth year, in the first month, on the fourth day of the month, there arose a great storm" which brought the destruction and period of darkness (see 3 Nephi 8:5). We note particularly that it was at the beginning of the thirty-fourth year by Nephite calendrical reckoning that these events are said to have occurred.

The second key passage observes that "in the ending of the thirty and fourth year . . . soon after the ascension of Christ into heaven he did truly manifest himself unto them [the Nephites]--showing his body unto them, and ministering unto them" (3 Nephi 10:18-19). Here we note that it was apparently at the end of the same year, the thirty-fourth, that Jesus appeared to the Nephites assembled at the temple in the land of Bountiful (see 3 Nephi 11:1).

But much depends on how we understand the meaning of the phrase "the ending." The calendrical system that the Nephites used at Jesus' visit dated from the ninety-first year of the judges (see 3 Nephi 1:1; 2:8), the year of the appearance of the sign of Jesus' birth (see 3 Nephi 1:15-21). In this connection at least two problems of the Nephite calendar remain unsolved: (1) whether the Nephites employed a solar or a lunar calendar,

and (2) whether the new calendrical sequence dated from the very day and night during which the sign appeared, or whether the Nephites merely used the extant annual cycle, renumbering it from ninety-one to one. In any case, it is evident from 3 Nephi 2:4-8 that they may have used as many as three calendars concurrently during the years immediately following the sign of Jesus' birth.

Thus far, the chronology seems clear. According to the Book of Mormon, the destruction and associated darkness had occurred at the opening of the year, and the subsequent appearance of the risen Jesus came apparently at its closing. But as we mentioned above, this chronological sequence has not been accepted everywhere. To date, discussion has focused on two items--chronometrical notations and circumstantial evidences. Let us now examine these two matters.

Concerning the chronological notes, the first potential difficulty arises from the fact that the prophet Mormon, while abridging the record of 3 Nephi, interrupted his work for an indefinite period just before copying the report of Jesus' visit: "An account of his [Jesus'] ministry [among the Nephites] shall be given hereafter. Therefore for this time I make an end of my sayings" (3 Nephi 10:19). Although no one has dealt fully with this passage as a potential source of either the difficulty or its resolution, we must still ask whether the interruption of Mormon's work could have impaired his sense for the chronology of this most important moment for his people. Joseph Fielding Smith noted the interruption in Mormon's work in Answers to Gospel

Questions,[6] as did Sperry in Book of Mormon Testifies[7] and in Book of Mormon Compendium.[8]

It seems highly unlikely that Mormon became careless--even with the interruption in his editing--in handling an event that he chose to place at center stage in his abridgment. We have only to recall that Mormon's work exhibits throughout a thorough care in treating details of sequence and place.[9] In reviewing Mormon's huge effort represented in the Book of Mormon, we have to be impressed with his consistent attention to detail as he rewrote large segments of the material that came into his hands, particularly the large plates of Nephi. These sections have always exhibited a remarkable consistency. If we were to urge that Mormon erred in his chronological note in 3 Nephi 10:18, we would have to be prepared to argue that he committed a totally unexpected blunder while introducing the risen Jesus' ministry, the major event narrated in his literary work.

Consequently, since we can fault none of Mormon's efforts at chronological accuracy, there is no reasonable cause for

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6 Joseph Fielding Smith, Answers to Gospel Questions, 5 vols. (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1957-66), 4:27

7 Sperry, Book of Mormon Testifies, 295.

8 Sperry, Book of Mormon Compendium, 401.

9 See Eldin Ricks's summary of Mormon's literary work in Story of the Formation of the Book of Mormon Plates, 3rd ed. (Salt Lake City: Olympus Publishing, 1966).

questioning his remarks regarding the events associated with the beginning and the ending of the Nephites' thirty-fourth year.

The second chronometrical issue concerns Mormon's note that the Lord's special manifestation came "soon after the ascension of Christ into heaven" (3 Nephi 10:18). The Ascension itself has been understood variously as that which took place on the day of Jesus' resurrection or that which followed his forty-day ministry (see Acts 1:3).[10] Whichever the case, Mormon's notice that Jesus' manifestation fell "soon after the ascension" would seem to place the event earlier rather than later. The reply consists first in pointing to Mormon's single chronometrical observation--doubtless trustworthy, as noted above, and made in the same verse--that the visitation occurred at "the ending of the thirty and fourth year," that is, during its latter half. This position is the one taken by Elder Bruce R. McConkie in The Mortal Messiah: "Then 'in the ending' of that [thirty-fourth] year (3 Nephi 10:18-19), several months after the Ascension on Olivet, Jesus ministered personally among the Nephites for many hours on many days."[11] An earlier view expressed by Elder McConkie seems to indicate his belief that Jesus' visit to the Nephites occurred simultaneously with his forty-day ministry among his disciples in

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10 See also Ludlow, Companion to Your Study of the Book of Mormon, 260; Bankhead and Pearson, Word and the Witness, 34; Ora Pate Stewart, Branches over the Wall (Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1950), 129; and Talmage, Jesus the Christ, 724.

11 Bruce R. McConkie, The Mortal Messiah, 4 vols. (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1981), 4:307.

Palestine.[12] Additionally, the words "soon after," especially when compared to Mormon's rather clear chronological remark, may lack sufficient precision upon which to build a firm case one way or the other.

One further chronological notation to be considered in this context appears in a passage removed from the action of 3 Nephi. Its applicability was noticed almost incidentally, but its wording may shed little light on our topic. In a note made by Moroni several hundred years after the fact, while he was editing the book of Ether, we read: "Christ showed himself unto our fathers, after he had risen from the dead; and he showed not himself unto them until after they had faith in him" (Ether 12:7).[13] This passage seemingly points to a rather substantial period between the Savior's resurrection and appearance in America; but undue weight should not be placed upon this passage for our discussion. The primary purpose of Moroni's statement in Ether 12:7 was to illustrate his prior instruction to his readers: "Dispute not because ye see not, for ye receive no witness until after the trial of your faith. For it was by faith that Christ showed himself unto our fathers, after he had risen from the dead" (Ether 12:6-7).

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12 See Bruce R. McConkie, Mormon Doctrine (Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1958), 52.

13 See also Sperry, Book of Mormon Compendium, 401.

Thus far we have dealt with chronometrical statements in the Book of Mormon. Since nothing has impelled us to abandon the literal meaning of Mormon's statement concerning "the ending" of the thirty-fourth year, we turn now to evidence that is largely circumstantial in character. Such can be relied upon only to tell us whether the drift of our interpretation is in the proper direction.

In behalf of the view that Jesus came early to the Nephites, the most compelling observation is that the Savior would not have caused those faithful Nephites and Lamanites to wait an entire year for his appearance, especially because his instructions--momentously--brought the era of the law of Moses to a close.[14] This view possesses an interesting merit. Even the response that, given the Lord's time frame, one year does not represent much time remains a bit weak. We might suggest, however, the likelihood that the people, having just suffered through severe destruction and loss of loved ones, may not have been physically and emotionally able to receive the Savior. Is it not reasonable to suppose that the Lord knew the Nephites' spiritual and physical needs following such a calamity and thus delayed his visit so that their minds would be relatively free of pain and anxiety? Naturally, while we cannot speak with certainty, this seems to be a reasonable assumption.

The second view is less strong. It is apparently based on the remark that, just before the Savior appeared at the temple,

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14 Smith, Answers to Gospel Questions, 4:28-29.

the survivors "were marveling and wondering one with another and were showing one to another the great and marvelous change which had taken place" (3 Nephi 11:1). It may be natural to suppose that this verse described a scene not one year after the destruction, by which time the alterations in the landscape would have become somewhat familiar, but concerned a situation directly following the great catastrophe. The answer to this interpretation is rather straightforward. In the first place, the usual human response to catastrophe is not to gather quickly to discuss the changes resulting from the event. Instead, people are thrown immediately into deep mourning for the lost (cf. 3 Nephi 8:23-25; 10:8). Second, we must surmise, the able-bodied survivors went straight to work not only to rescue others buried in the debris of buildings but also to recover the bodies of loved ones in order to provide them with proper burial. Next must have come the tremendous efforts required to rebuild and refurbish, this to protect self and loved ones both from natural elements and from enemies. Such a process would slowly return life to a level of normalcy. It is difficult, therefore, to imagine people conversing in groups at the temple, as described in 3 Nephi 11:1, if the catastrophe had occurred but recently. Moreover, discussions concerning the changes in life and circumstance would have been fittingly natural--even if an entire year had passed since the destruction--simply because people, having had to respond to the tremendous human problems posed by the catastrophic events, would not likely have found prior opportunity to gather at the temple. This lack of opportunity

would have certainly been true if travel there involved significant distances for many. Consequently, when they finally did congregate, they had a lot to discuss. Thus it is reasonable to assume a lengthy period between the destruction and the gathering at the temple.

Buttressing the view that substantial time had passed and life had returned to some normalcy is the remark that, at the end of the Savior's first day among the Nephites, all the people went to their homes and were able to contact friends and discuss the day's events (see 3 Nephi 19:1-3). Such a "settled condition could scarcely have existed immediately following the great destruction at the time of the Savior's death."[15] But there is more. The evidence now takes the form of tiny points in the account of Jesus' appearance. We refer to several small but significant details of circumstance that help to demonstrate that a long time had passed before the Savior's manifestation.

The first two particulars form an integral part of Jesus' introduction of the sacrament of bread and wine. We note with considerable interest that, during the first day of his visit, "Jesus commanded his disciples that they should bring forth some bread and wine unto him" (3 Nephi 18:1). Later, after "the disciples had come with bread and wine" (3 Nephi 18:3), Jesus hosted a banquet in which those present were filled (see 3 Nephi 18:3-9)--all of this taking place on the same day. Where, we naturally ask, did the disciples obtain the bread and wine,

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15 Sperry, Book of Mormon Testifies, 294, note 4; repeated in Sperry, Book of Mormon Compendium, 401, note 4.

especially on such short notice? The answer, I suggest, bears directly on our question.

In the case of the wine, while it is possible that some jars and skins survived the three destructive hours described in 3 Nephi 8:5-19, it is more likely that virtually every storage facility and instrument suffered damage, if not total ruin, the desolation being very severe, according to the account.

While "there was a more great and terrible destruction in the land northward" (3 Nephi 8:12)--implying less severe damage in the south--and while "there were some cities which remained" (3 Nephi 8:15), even in the areas least affected "the damage thereof was exceeding great, and there were many of them who were slain" (3 Nephi 8:15). The catastrophe was so widespread that "the face of the whole earth became deformed" (3 Nephi 8:17). Moreover, assuming a recent collapse of buildings and homes, could anyone be expected to dig through tons of rubble in a matter of minutes in order to find sufficient uncontaminated, unspilled wine for a large crowd? One may urge that the wine stored in the temple in Bountiful miraculously escaped. But such a suggestion lacks substantiation from the text. Rather, we clearly sense in the passage that Jesus' request for wine was not extraordinary and did not require an extensive search for a cache preserved unexpectedly. This conclusion is strengthened by the simple observation that it was not until the second day of his visit that Jesus' own supernatural powers were called into play when he miraculously provided the wine and bread: "Now there had been no bread, neither wine, brought [on the second day] by the

disciples, neither by the multitude; but he truly gave unto them bread to eat, and also wine to drink" (3 Nephi 20:6-7). We are thus led to conclude that the circumstance of the ready accessibility of the wine on the first occasion points not to a moment almost directly after the destruction but rather to a time substantially later when the remaining vineyards could have been tended and harvested, with the accompanying refurbishing of the means to store the processed wine.

While the previous point is essentially circumstantial in character, the following tightens the knot. It concerns the bread and its ready availability on the first day. We note that the Nephites must have made bread daily, as did all known ancient cultures, because of the lack of preservatives. Consequently, the fact that bread was within reach on request illustrates the likelihood that on the day Jesus appeared to the Nephites, bread had been baked--unless it was the Sabbath. From all indications, that day began like any other day--without any special expectations on the part of those assembling at the temple. (The question has to be asked why the people gathered. Was it a festival? We can speculate that if the end of the thirty-fourth year had indeed come, then the occasion for assembling may have been the New Year festival. But we lack evidence from the text.)

If we were to insist, in this connection, that Jesus had come almost immediately after the destruction, we would need to explain how kilns and ovens used for baking escaped the terrible ruination that devastated the whole Nephite society. The answer, in our view, lies in a different direction. The bread blessed by

the risen Jesus and consumed during the ensuing meal had probably been prepared and baked in the early-morning hours of the first of Jesus' three-day ministry. Bread could not have been prepared from disrupted and contaminated water and flour supplies--if any survived--nor baked in crushed ovens. Once again, if we were to hold that Jesus' appearance followed almost directly after the wreckage, we would have to argue for a miraculous preservation of supplies of water and flour as well as kilns, in addition to an amazingly rapid return to normality in the daily routines of those who had suffered so severely.

A third passage sheds further light on the chronometric issue. When the risen Jesus turned to the matter of "other scriptures I would that ye should write, that ye have not" (3 Nephi 23:6), he specifically noted to his disciples an unrecorded prophecy of Samuel the Lamanite concerning "many saints who should arise from the dead" (3 Nephi 23:9). For our discussion, the following exchange between Jesus and his disciples is key: "And Jesus said unto them [the twelve]: How be it that ye have not written this thing? . . . And it came to pass that Jesus commanded that it should be written" (3 Nephi 23:11-13). In addition, the text affirms that "Nephi remembered" when Jesus recalled that many had arisen and had appeared "unto many and did minister unto them" (3 Nephi 23:10)--events which were obviously associated with Jesus' own resurrection and thus must have followed almost immediately after the lifting of the darkness (see 3 Nephi 10:9). (Could the ministering by the risen persons have taken the form of comforting those who had suffered

loss during the destruction?) Clearly, a good deal of time had passed; Nephi, the record keeper, had simply forgotten to include in his account this most notable of the earliest proofs of the resurrection. And Jesus reminded both him and the rest of the twelve that such an important feature was to be recorded. To summarize, the language of the passage plainly leads us to conclude that Jesus was referring to an unrecorded series of events in the reasonably distant past rather than to recent occurrences.

Finally, Daniel H. Ludlow has suggested two more convincing evidences for Jesus' appearance several months after his resurrection. When the Savior selected his twelve disciples on the first day, all twelve of them were present in the congregation of twenty-five hundred people. Such a circumstance would have been very unlikely unless the meeting were an important gathering of the Church, or at least a meeting of the faithful from throughout the whole land. Such a meeting could not have been called and held immediately after the great destruction. Further, when the Savior commanded the multitude to gather the remainder of the people together on the following day, his hearers knew exactly where to go--that is, they knew which cities had been destroyed--and the people were able to gather back the next day. Thus, the roads must have been repaired.[16]

In conclusion, the cumulative evidence weighs in the direction of the Savior's having come to the Nephites only after

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16 See Report of the Correlation Committee (5 April 1984), The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, Salt Lake City.

a substantial period of time. That period must have assuredly extended into the latter half of the year--presumably between October and April--if we trust Mormon's chronological notations concerning the timing of both the destruction (see 3 Nephi 8:5) and the manifestation of the Savior (see 3 Nephi 10:18). The only serious consideration that weighs in favor of a brief interlude is the supposition that the Lord would not have left his faithful followers so long without a personal visit. But it is at least as reasonable to hypothesize that, given the situation following the destruction, it was more timely that the Savior delay his visit. Moreover, in terms of the internal evidence from the text, the heft of the documentation suggests that life had returned to some normalcy. This conclusion derives from a series of notations in the text, including remarks that after the first day of the Lord's ministry, the people returned home and discussed the events of the day with friends (see 3 Nephi 19:1-3) and that bread and wine were readily available at Jesus' request (see 3 Nephi 18:1-3). Implied in the concept of a substantial period is the notion that enough time had probably passed to allow a new harvest, which would resupply stores both of grain and of produce from the vine lost in the catastrophe. Thus, Mormon's chronological note that the risen Jesus appeared "in the ending" of the thirty-fourth year is confirmed by particulars connected with Jesus' first day among the Nephites.

Religious Educators Symposium on the New Testament (Salt Lake City: Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 1984), 74-77.

The Timing of Christ's Appearance to the Nephites *

by John A. Tvedtnes

Most casual readers of the Book of Mormon probably conclude that Jesus Christ appeared to the Nephites immediately after the great cataclysm accompanying the crucifixion, when the thick vapor had dissipated. This is understandable in view of the fact that the appearance of Christ is discussed right after the description of the great destruction. So, too, in 1 Ne 12:4-8 and 2 Ne 26:1-9 one has the impression that Christ would appear right after the vapor of darkness dispersed from off the land. However, this latter passage describes a vision of Nephi which contains only highlights of the subsequent history of the Nephites.

The traditional view has been challenged by such scholars as Sidney Sperry,[1] S. Kent Brown[2] and Jerome Horowitz.[3] Two alternatives to an early appearance have, in fact, been proposed. The first is that Christ appeared soon after his ascension, following a forty-day ministry among his original twelve apostles in the Old World. The other is that he came to the Nephites at the end of the thirty-fourth year of the new Nephite calendar.[4] The passage on which these theories are based reads, in part:

> And it came to pass that in the ending of the thirty and fourth year, behold, I will show unto you that...soon after the ascension of Christ into heaven he did truly manifest himself unto them. (3 Ne 10:18)

Both Brown and Horowitz make a case for Jesus appearing to the Nephites toward the end of the 34th year of the Nephite calendar. Since the great destruction which accompanied the death of Christ took place "in the thirty and fourth year, in the first month, on the fourth day of the month" (3 Ne 8:5), this would be approximately a year later.

A reexamination of the evidences elicited by these scholars, however, considerably weakens their case. I find both misunderstanding of the Book of Mormon text and much unwarranted supposition. It is for this reason that each of these points of "evidence" are discussed below.

This paper was delivered at a symposium of the Society for Early Historical Archaeology in October 1988.

The "Ascension"

Ascension Day has long been a Christian holy day, celebrating Christ's return to his Father after a 40-day post-resurrection ministry among his twelve apostles. However, it plays a very minor, almost non-existent role in the New Testament. One is led to wonder how much Christ's "ascension" in the Old World could mean to Mormon (or to Nephi the disciple, whose record he abridged).

Luke is our principal source for the "ascension" of Christ. In Luke 24:50-52, he tells how Jesus led the eleven to Bethany, on the eastern spur of the Mount of Olives, and rose to heaven. There can be no doubt from the account that the event took place on the day of Christ's resurrection (cf. vss. 1, 13, 33, 36). Yet in Acts 1:3-12, also attributed to Luke, Christ is said to have risen from the Mount of Olives after spending some forty days with his disciples. (Are there, then, two "ascensions" from the Mount of Olives?)

Mark, after recounting the same basic story told in Luke 24 about the appearances of Jesus on the day of resurrection (Mark 16:9-14), recited Jesus' formal commission to the apostles (vss. 15-18), then noted that he was received into heaven (vs. 19). Consequently, his story supports the account in Luke 24, which has Christ ascending to heaven on the day of resurrection. Matthew, however, complicates matters by reciting the same commission noted in Mark, but said that it was given atop a mountain in Galilee (Matt. 28:16-20).[5] He makes no mention of an "ascension". Nor does John, whose account, being designed to show the divinity of Jesus, could have profited from an event.

In my opinion, Luke - our source for the formal "ascension" of Jesus - is the least trustworthy of the gospel writers.[6] He is also our only biblical source for the so-called "forty-day post-resurrection ministry". Mark implies (as did Luke in his earlier account) that Jesus rose to heaven from Jerusalem on the day of resurrection. Matthew has him later appearing to his disciples in Galilee, finding agreement in his fellow-disciple John.[7]

Returning to the original question, we must concern ourselves with what "ascension" meant to Nephi the disciple or to Mormon. The "ascension" of Christ was, in fact, an essential doctrine of the pre-Christian Nephites, as we note in Mosiah 15:9; 18:2 and Alma 40:20. All three of these passages refer to Christ's saving power (e.g., his role as intercessor before the throne of God), while two of them relate the ascension to his resurrection. This might imply that the event took place on the day of resurrection, as noted above.

Four centuries after Christ's visit to the New World, Moroni referred to the "ascension" of Christ (Moro 7:27). And, of course, we have several such references in the "Nephite Gospel", some of them dealing with his ascension from the city of Bountiful (3 Ne 11:21; 18:39; 19:1; 26:15). Of particular interest is the note that it had been prophesied that Christ would show himself to the Nephites after his ascension into heaven (3 Ne 11:12). Following his delivery of the "sermon on the mount", Christ said that the Nephites had heard the things which he had taught before he ascended to his Father (3 Ne 15:1). At no point did he mention anything about a 40-day ministry in the Old World preceding that ascension.

Horowitz may be correct in stating that Christ's "ascension" was a process, not an event, referring to his return to the presence of the Father after his sojourn on earth. I.e., he returned to the divine throne to become an intercessor and a mediator for mankind after having wrought the atonement, as a number of passages indicate. However, Mormon's reference to the appearance of the Savior to the Nephites "soon after the ascension of Christ" (3 Ne 10:18-19) implies that this "ascension" was a specific, earlier event. In this case, I propose that it is his return to the Father on the day of his resurrection, and not after some "forty-day" period. This would accord with his instructions (given on the day of resurrection) to Mary Magdalene to inform the apostles that he was ascending to his Father (John 19:17), followed by his appearance to them later that same day.

The "ending" of the year

If Jesus appeared immediately after the three days of darkness, this would have occurred in the first month of the thirty-fourty year, not at the end of that year. Is Mormon then incorrect in 3 Ne 10:18? This possibility has not been seriously considered, despite the fact that Mormon himself admitted that the records from which he made the abridgement may have been in error concerning the chronology:

> And now it came to pass that according to our record, and we know our record to be true, for behold, it was a just man who did keep the record... And now it came to pass, *if there was no mistake made by this man in the reckoning of our time*, the thirty and third year had passed away. (3 Ne 8:1-2)

While Mormon refused the possibility of error in the recording of events, he did imply that the "reckoning of our time" may be incorrect.

Brown, in citing the passage in 3 Ne 10:18, neglects to note some of the words from Mormon ("I will show unto you") and does not quote vs. 19, in which Mormon promised that he would give "an account" of the ministry of Christ "hereafter". The two verses should be read in context:

> And it came to pass that in the ending of the thirty and fourth year, behold, I will show unto you 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; and an account of his ministry shall be given hereafter. Therefore, for this time I make an end of my sayings. (3 Ne 10:18-19[8])

It is clear that Mormon was about to conclude his work for a time when he promised to show how Jesus appeared to the Nephites. Some have believed that this has a bearing on the promise to show "in the ending of the thirty and fourth year" the appearance of Christ. Horowitz has noted two ways in which people have read this passage. I.e., there are those who believe that Christ appeared in the New World "in the ending of the thirty and fourth year", while others see this timing as indicative of when the historical entry was made. Horowitz supports the first of these views. In response to the second, he wrote, "This part of the Book of Mormon is not the record written at the time or nearly a year later but is an abridgment written by Mormon centuries later."

But this is precisely the point! Had he further examined Mormon's methodology, he would have realized that Mormon took his material from *dated* Nephite annals. As evidence, note the following recitations of "years" for which he records *no events*:

> And it came to pass that the thirty and fourth year passed away, and also the thirty and fifth... (4 Ne 1)

> And thus did the thirty and eighth year pass away, and also the thirty and ninth, and forty and first, and the forty and second, yea, even until forty and nine years had passed away, and also the fifty and first, and the fifty and second; yea, and even until fifty and nine years had passed away. (4 Ne 6)

> And it came to pass that the seventy and first year passed away, and also the seventy and second year, yea, and in fine, till the seventy7 and ninth year had passed away; yea, even an hundred years had passed away... (4 Ne 14; cf. also Hel 3:2)

There is no logical reason for which Mormon would have listed year-numbers without recording events for them unless he were keeping a running tally of the annals which he had consulted. Therefore, I propose that 3 Ne 10:18-19 may be just such an entry, in which he tells his readers that he will be recording the events through the end of the thirty-fourth year.

There are only two other BoM passage in which the expression "in the ending of the year" occurs. One of these is Hel 3:1:[9]

> And now it came to pass in the forty and third year of the reign of the judges....which affairs were settled in the ending of the forty and third year.

I propose that the meaning of this passage is that the "affairs" were settled "before the end" or "by the end" of the forty-third year. (The same meaning could be given to Al 52:14.) I further propose that the Hebrew idiom behind the passage reads *bᵉ-sôp*, lit., "in the ending" (preposition *b* + infinitive of the root *swp*, "to come to an end"). It would then be akin to the passage found in 2 Kings 2:1, where we have *bᵉ-haᶜᵉlôt YHWH 'et 'ᵉlîyahû*, lit., "in the Lord's bringing up Elijah". Obviously, the events described after this verse did not take place "at the time" (or "when") Elijah was taken to heaven, but prior to that event. This led the KJV translators to render it "when the LORD would take up Elijah". But the text does not contain the imperfect one would expect in order to justify the modal translation; it has an infinitive. In view of the fact that the text then goes on to recount events which took place prior to his ascension, I suggest that 2 Kings 2:1 should correctly read, "by the time the Lord took Elijah up" or "before the time the Lord took Elijah up". By the same token, 3 Ne 10:18 would read "by the end of the thirty-fourth year" or "before the end of the thirty-fourth year".

The "Settled Condition" of the Nephites

Brown and Horowitz make some basic assumptions concerning the circumstances of Christ's appearance to the Nephites which are not wholly supported by the textual evidence. These are:

1. The extent of the destruction was such that the people would have spent many months cleaning up and burying the dead.

2. The necessity of rescuing people from the rubble of destroyed buildings would have made it unlikely that the survivors could have been visited by Christ immediately after the destruction.

3. After the destruction, bread and wine, used in the sacrament when Jesus appeared, would not have been available.

4. Ether 12:7 clearly states "that Christ showed himself" unto the people only "after they had faith in him." This requires a lapse of time after the destruction for faith to be established in the hearts of the people.

I view these matters in an entirely different light, as the following material will show.

Extent of the destruction

The great destructions in 3 Ne 8:12-18 occurred only in the "land northward", while those in vss. 8-11 were in the "land southward". Hence, Brown is wrong in associating the following items with all of the land occupied by the Nephites (and Lamanites):

> "...there were some cities which remained; but the damage thereof was exceedingly great, and there were many of them who were slain." (3 Ne 8:15)
>
> "And thus the face of the whole earth became deformed..." (3 Ne 8:17; this is the same statement made in vs. 12 in reference to the "land northward": "the whole face of the land was changed...")
>
> The highways were broken up (3 Ne 8:13).

Samuel the Lamanite had specifically named Zarahemla and Gideon as cities which would be destroyed unless the people repented (Hel 3:12-15), adding, "Yea, and wo be unto all the cities which are in the land round about, which are possessed by the **Nephites**, because of the wickedness and abominations which are in them." (vs. 16)

The voice announced the destruction of the cities of Zarahemla, Moroni, Moronihah, Gilgal, Onihah, Mocum, Jerusalem, Gadiandi, Gadiomnah, Jacob, Gimgimno, Jacobugath, Laman, Josh, Gad, and Kishkumen (3 Ne 9:1-12). Note that several of the destroyed cities have Jaredite-sounding names and are hence probably to be associated with the robbers of the Gadianton band (cf. Gadiandi, Gadiomnah),[10] whose first leader was, significantly, Kishkumen![11] Verse 9 specifically states that the city of Jacobugath had been settled by the secret combination headed by Jacob, who had sought to become king.[12]

The voice from heaven declared to the survivors that they were being spared because they were "more righteous than" the people in the cities which were destroyed (vs. 13). This is confirmed in other Book of Mormon passages. E.g., the Lord had told Nephi that he would no destroy those who believed in him, while the unbelievers would be destroyed by fire, tempest, earthquakes, etc., i.e., the very means by which people died at the time of Christ's crucifixion (2 Ne 6:14-15).

In 2 Ne 26:1-9, Nephi tied the appearance of Christ to the destructions which, from their description, are the very ones which later took place at the time of the crucifixion. He stressed that it was the wicked who perished in these cataclysms (vss. 4-6) because they had cast out the prophets and stoned and slain them (vs. 3) - which is precisely the reason Christ gave for the destruction of the wicked at the time of the crucifixion (3 Ne 9:5, 7-11). The righteous, on the other hand, would obey the prophets and look for the signs; Christ would appear to them and heal them (2 Ne 6:8-9).

> And it was the more righteous part of the people who were saved... And they were spared and were not sunk and buried up in the earth; and they were not drowned in the depths of the sea; and they were not burned by fire, neither were they fallen upon and crushed to death; and they were not carried away in the whirlwind; neither were they overpowered by the vapor of smoke and of darkness. (3 Ne 10:12-13)

Since the destruction did not occur throughout all of the Nephite lands, there would be no necessity of rebuilding the temple and houses, or of rescuing people from the rubble. Indeed, the idea of such rescue efforts seems to me to be a modern concept of earthquakes, in which four- and five-story buildings (and taller) collapse and trap people beneath tons of rubble. It is much more likely that the Nephites lived in small houses, built with materials convenient to the geographical location of the city. Rescue efforts would probably have been minimal.

Brown notes that the Nephites from Bountiful knew to which cities they should go to bring others back to see the risen Savior on the second day of his visit. This, he believes, is evidence that sufficient time had passed for them to learn which cities were destroyed and which survived. We need not so presume, however. The text makes it clear that the heavenly voice told them which cities had been destroyed and in what manner (3 Ne 19:1-3). Moreover, in the short time remaining before the visit of the next day, the people of Bountiful could only have gone to **nearby** towns or villages, where there was more likelihood that they had relatives and friends.

In connection with the messengers sent from Bountiful to other towns, Brown notes that "the roads must have been repaired." Assuming that there was extensive damage to the earth in the area of Bountiful, the roads could have been destroyed. But since automobiles were not in use by the Nephites and there is no evidence that they even used carts, we assume that it was likely that their principal mode of transportation was walking- which would not have been severely affected by damaged roads.[13]

Burying the Dead

To assume that there was mourning for the loss of "loved ones" after the disaster presumes that some of the inhabitants of Bountiful were killed, which is, of course, possible. But there is sufficient evidence that the Book of Mormon peoples had clan and tribal structures.[14] Hence, people from Bountiful would not have had relatives scattered throughout the various Nephite/Lamanite settlements. Moreover, the Book of Mormon specifically states that the people stopped mourning soon after the destruction.

Upon hearing the voice of Jesus speaking through the thick darkness, "so great was the astonishment of the people that they did **cease lamenting and howling for the loss of their kindred which had been slain...**" (3 Ne 10:2) After three days, the darkness and trembling and noises disappeared (3 Ne 9:9), and "**the mourning, and the weeping, and the wailing of the people who were spared alive did cease; and their mourning was turned into joy...**" (3 Ne 9:10)

Horowitz believes that the people could not have assembled at the temple until after a long period of burying the dead and mourning. In so stating, he overlooks some very important facts. First, the cities destroyed in the great cataclysm are mentioned by name (3 Ne 8:10, 24-25; 9:3-10), but Bountiful, where Jesus appeared, is not among them. Significantly, its temple was spared. When Mormon tells us that the "more righteous" were saved, he specifically notes that these were the people who were not buried in the earth, drowned in the sea or burned by fire (3 Ne 10:12-13). Since these are exactly what happened to the destroyed cities, the implication is that those cities were wicked, while the city of Bountiful and perhaps other places were righteous. I therefore presume that it was only the people living in Bountiful who were gathered on the day of Jesus' first visit, while others from nearby towns were invited to come the next day.

With this scenario in mind, it appears less and less likely that the people in Bountiful would be out burying the dead of other cities. I presume that clan or family members lived within close geographical proximity and therefore that the Nephites and Lamanites did not - as we Americans - have dead relatives to bury in various parts of the country. Moreover, if the cities listed were really swallowed up by the sea or the earth or destroyed by fire, there were perhaps no remains to be buried. Even so, there are other examples in the Book of Mormon where the Nephites did not take time to bury their dead because of the vast numbers slain in war (Al 16:11; 28:11). It seems unreasonable, therefore, to expect that they would do so in the face of an even greater catastrophe.

Availability of bread and wine.

Horowitz and Brown argue that bread and wine could not have been available for the sacrament immediately after the destruction. The wine containers would have been destroyed in the cataclysm, and no one would have had time to make bread which, in most cultures, is made daily. There are several reasons to refute these ideas. The bread, for example, need not have been fresh; it could have been three days old and used out of necessity.

Brown indicates that with "kilns and ovens" surely being destroyed by the earthquakes, it would not have been possible to have fresh bread immediately after the crucifixion. This, it seems to me, presumes that the Nephites made bread in loaves like we do. The evidence is quite to the contrary. The bread of the ancient Near East (as among the Bedouin today) is a flat round bread - often unleavened - which is not baked, but cooked atop a flat piece of metal placed on rocks over an open fire. Its Mesoamerican equivalent is the *tortilla*. No ovens are needed.

Even so, since there appears to have been less destruction in the city of Bountiful, we have no reason to believe that ovens and wine containers had been destroyed.

Appearance After the People had Faith

Citing Eth 12:7 as evidence that sufficient time to develop faith had passed between the crucifixion and Christ's appearance in Bountiful is unwarranted. The passage in question is part of a discussion of faith:

> For it was by faith that Christ showed himself unto our fathers, after he had risen from the dead; and he showed not himself unto them until after they had faith in him; wherefore, it **must needs be that some had faith in him**, for he showed himself not unto the world. (Eth 12:7)

Read in its entirety, the passage can be seen as evidence that some, indeed, had faith in Christ. The Lord had told Nephi that he would not destroy those who believed in him, in a passage clearly referring to the destruction which would occur at the time of the crucifixion (2 Ne 6:14-15). In another revelation, he noted that while the wicked would perish in the cataclysm, the righteous who obeyed the prophets would look for the signs and Christ would appear to them and heal them (1 Ne 26:1-9). From these, it is evident that the survivors in Bountiful already had faith in Christ and had no necessity to wait until the end of the year. This is further demonstrated by events leading up to the time of Christ's coming:

In year 16 of the new (Christian) era, the Gadianton leader demanded the surrender of the government. The Nephites assembled to Zarahemla and Bountiful to defend themselves (3 Ne 3). The Nephites defeated the Gadianton band (3 Ne 4) and acknowledged that their victory resulted from their **repentance and humility** (3 Ne 4:30-33). In the 22nd year, **all** of the people came to have **faith in Christ** and the prophets (3 Ne 5:1-3, 7). Four years later, all of the Nephites returned to their own lands with their families (3 Ne 6:1).

In the 29th year, divisions began among the people because of riches (3 Ne 6:10-13f). The next year, the Church was broken up in all the land except among a few Lamanites (3 Ne 6:14). Prophets were sent to testify of several things, including the resurrection of Christ (3 Ne 6:20). The judges secretly slew many of the prophets who testified of Christ (3 Ne 6:23; Christ mentions this as a reason for destroying the people caught in the cataclysm). The wicked judges' friends and kindreds gathered themselves together (3 Ne 6:27) and entered into the covenants of the secret combinations (3 Ne 6:28), wanting to establish a king over the land (3 Ne 6:30). The chief judge was murdered (3 Ne 7:1) and the people were divided into tribes by family, kindred and friends (3 Ne 7:2), each tribe appointing its own leaders (3 Ne 7:3, 14). Even the "more righteous part of the people had nearly all become wicked; year, there were **but few righteous** among them" (3 Ne 7:7). The secret combination named one Jacob as king, he having spoken against the prophets who testified of Jesus (3 Ne 7:9-10). They fled to "the northernmost part of the land" (3 Ne 7:12), which is the area most affected by the destruction at the time of the crucifixion.

In the 31st year, Nephi preached repentance and **faith on Jesus** Christ (3 Ne 7:16). **A few converted and believed in Jesus** (3 Ne 7:21). In the beginning of the 33rd year (vs. 23), **many were baptized** (3 Ne 7:26). It would appear, then, that by the time of the crucifixion, there was a new core of believers in Christ.

We conclude, therefore, that the "high spirituality" of the people (noted by Horowitz) does not necessarily imply that sufficient time for repentance had passed since the great cataclysm. After all, we read that only the more righteous had been spared (3 Ne 10:12-13). Moreover, it is generally accepted that in times of crisis people turn to God.[15]

Gathering at the Temple

All twelve of those chosen as disciples were present in Bountiful at the time Jesus first appeared. Horowitz and Brown see this as evidence that the people had gathered at the temple (e.g., for Passover) a year after the crucifixion.

Indeed, the fact that the multitude is said to have "gathered" in the land of Bountiful (3 Ne 11:1 & preface) implies that they had, in fact, assembled from nearby towns. But they could just as well have been celebrating the Passover of the time of Jesus' death when they were caught by the cataclysms of nature and were, after three days, visited by the Savior.

Though I believe that the Nephites were, indeed, assembled for Passover, the gathering of the people at the temple is not evidence that it was festival-time. The temple could have been a place of refuge from the storm. On the other hand, it is likely that only the truly righteous would be at the temple anyway. It is important to note that there were only 2,500 people at the temple on the first day of Jesus' visit (3 Ne 17:25). It was not until these people had spread the word to other towns that a "multitude" assembled (3 Ne 19:1-5). On the second day, they were so numerous that they had to be divided into twelve groups.

Samuel's Prophecy

Horowitz notes that Nephi had forgotten to add the fulfillment of the prophecy of Samuel the Lamanite concerning the resurrection of others at the time Christ rose from the dead. Though 3 Ne 23:7-13 clearly states that it was the *fulfillment* of Samuel's prophecy concerning the resurrection of the saints which had not been recorded by Nephi, the modern preface to Chap. 23 indicates that it was "the words of Samuel the Lamanite concerning the resurrection" which were added. This implies that

the words in Hel 14:25 reflect the portion Nephi added. Jerome's reading of the incident in 3 Ne 23 has been much more careful than that of official BoM publication committees.

Arguments for an Early Appearance

Among the evidences sometimes elicited to indicate an appearance immediately after the three days of darkness include the following statement:

> ...they were marveling and wondering one with another, and were showing one to another the great and marvelous change which had taken place. And they were also conversing about this Jesus Christ, of whom the sign had been given concerning his death. (3 Ne 11:2)

It can be argued that the people would not have been pointing out changes which had taken place a year before. The objection offered to this is that people had gathered from great distances for the first time in a year and hence the changes in the land of Bountiful were new to them. This is refuted by the fact that only 2,500 people were in Bountiful on the first day of Christ's appearance among them. Nor were people gathered in from "great distances" the next day, for it would have been impossible for them to have traveled so far overnight.

The "calm" which prevailed at the temple in Bountiful (referred to by Horowitz) is more likely attributable to the fact that this city did not suffer the fate of other wicked cities. (The very existence of the temple implies that the people were more righteous.) Changes in the land had been noted, to be sure. But here the text supports the view that the cataclysmic events had only recently taken place. Otherwise, why would the people be discussing a year-old event?

After Christ's appearances in Bountiful, he appeared once more to the disciples as they were traveling (3 Ne 27:1-28:17). They then went about preaching, during which time there were various attempts to imprison and slay them. But they were successful in establishing the Church. It is only after telling of these events that Mormon notes, "And it came to pass that the thirty and fourth year passed away, and also the thirty and fifth..." (4 Ne 1:1) Hence, Christ's appearance would seem to have not been in the "ending" of the thirty-fourth year, since there had been time for the disciples to begin their travels and preaching.

Conclusions

Viewed from this perspective, the possibility remains that Jesus appeared to the people in Bountiful "soon" after his resurrection, i.e., possibly as early as the same day or the next. In my view, there remains but one vestige of evidence for Jerome's suggestion that the event took place some time later. I refer to Jesus' instructions to Nephi to add details concerning the fulfillment of one of Samuel's prophecies to the record. I cannot satisfactorily explain why he would have to "remember" the thing had not been written if the event were only a day or so old. But then, perhaps the coming of Jesus really did occur as much as "forty" days later - or even fifty, if the assembly at the temple were for the feast of Shavuoth and not Passover.

NOTES:

1. Sidney B. Sperry, *The Book of Mormon Testifies*, p. 294, n. 4; repeated in his *Book of Mormon Compendium*, p. 401, n. 4.

2. "Jesus among the Nephites: When Did It Happen?" in Church Education System's *Religious Educators' Symposium on the New Testament* (15-17 August, 1984, BYU).

3. "Some Thoughts on 3 Nephi 10:18 Concerning the Time of Christ's Visit to the Nephites", a paper submitted to the Foundation for Ancient Research & Mormon Studies (FARMS).

4. The Nephites employed three different calendars during their history. The first counted years from Lehi's departure from Jerusalem. After the judgeship was instituted by King Mosiah, they reckoned time from that date. A new calendric system was instituted when the signs of Christ's birth were seen in the heavens. Hence, the crucifixion took place in the 34th year of the new calendar (3 Ne 8:2, 5).

5. This, of course, could not have taken place on the day of resurrection, when the apostles were in Jerusalem, not Galilee.

6. Though we cannot discuss here all of the evidences, it is important to note that Mark's gospel became one of the primary sources of information for both Luke and Matthew. Luke generally accepted Mark's version without question, though in some cases he added details not found in Mark. Matthew, on the other hand, corrected Mark at every turn, implying that he felt that Mark was in error. If we assume that the gospel of Matthew was really written by the apostle of that name, then we must accept his version as more authentic, for he was an eyewitness of most of the events he

recorded. Mark and Luke are, at best, second- or third-generation Christian (despite Christian traditions which attempt to identify Mark with the young man in Gethsemane who ran away naked, and Luke with one of the two disciples who met the resurrected Christ on the road to Emmaus).

When the gospels disagree, most Bible readers try to "wrest the scriptures" to bring them into "harmony" one with another. Others, noting that Mark and Luke generally agree in their mutual accounts, while Matthew differs, opt in favor of the majority. Two-to-one, Matthew, the only one to have known Jesus (!), loses. I prefer to treat Matthew as an almost first-hand account, while Mark and Luke are far from being primary sources.

7. This assumes that the gospel of John was written by the apostle of that name.

8. This verse is immediately followed by the preface to the Nephite "Gospel", which Mormon wrote when he took up the record again.

9. The other is in Al. 52:14.

10. There is evidence that the secret combinations continued from Jaredite times via the Mulekites, but the details are too lengthy to discuss in this paper.

11. The names Kishkumen, Gadianton, etc., are clearly Jaredite in form, as unpublished studies of Jaredite names has demonstrated.

12. Robert F. Smith has, in private communications, suggested that the name of the city is a combination of "Jacob" and the Jaredite place-name "Ogath". A tie to a Jaredite site implies that it was in the "land northward".

13. Only once in the Book of Mormon do we encounter a "chariot" - in the story of Ammon and Lamoni. There is no evidence in the text or in archaeology to indicate that there was widespread use of such vehicles, however. Kings may have been the only ones to possess them.

14. See my paper "Tribalism in the Book of Mormon".

15. During the 1973 Yom Kippur War, virtually all Israeli soldiers became "religious" overnight and there was a severe shortage of religious paraphernalia such as the *tallith*, *tefillin* and prayer books.