



BOOK OF MORMON CENTRAL

<http://bookofmormoncentral.com/>

The Gospel in the Patriarchal and Prophetic Ages

Author(s): B.H. Roberts

Source: *The Truth, The Way, The Life: An Elementary Treatise on Theology (2nd Edition)*

Editor(s): John W. Welch

Published: Provo, UT: BYU Studies, 1996

Page(s): 367–374



BYU Studies is collaborating with Book of Mormon Central to preserve and extend access to BYU Studies and to scholarly research on The Book of Mormon. Archived by permission of BYU Studies.

<http://byustudies.byu.edu/>

The Gospel in the Patriarchal and Prophetic Ages

The line of righteous patriarchs. This dispensation of the gospel opening with the experiences and revelations imparted to Adam, and the events proceeding from such introduction, was continued through a line of ten patriarchs down to and including Noah in whose days came the flood. These patriarchs were in their order: Adam, Seth, Enos, Cainan, Mahalaleel, Jared, Enoch, Methuselah, Lamech, Noah. Lamech the father of Noah, according to the Ussher *Bible* chronology, was fifty-six years of age when Adam died at nine hundred and thirty years of age. So that nine of these patriarchs were all living in the earth together. And according to the book of Moses, "They were preachers of righteousness, and spake and prophesied, and called upon all men, everywhere, to repent; and faith was taught unto the children of men" (Moses 6:23). Also in tracing this genealogy in the book of Moses, it is run through from Enoch back to Adam, "who was the son of God, with whom God, himself, conversed" (Moses 6:22).

Dispensation of Enoch. In tracing the dispensations after Adam, we will begin with the patriarch Enoch, since Adam's life overlapped into the life of Enoch, Adam's dispensation would be joined to that of Enoch's. Enoch is represented in the Mosaic fragment of revelation (book of Moses) as both a prophet and a seer; for "he beheld the spirits that God had created; and he beheld also things which were not visible to the natural eye; and from thenceforth came the saying abroad in the land: A seer hath the Lord raised up unto his people" (Moses 6:36). In the course of his preaching, Enoch recapitulates much that had been revealed unto Adam, also his vision extended into the future, even forward to the time when the purposes of God would culminate in the salvation of men and the complete redemption of the earth. The writer of the book of Jude bears witness to some of this, for in describing some of evil mind who would follow in the way of Cain,

become as “wandering stars, to whom is reserved the blackness of darkness for ever,” he says: “Enoch also, the seventh from Adam, prophesied of these, saying, Behold, the Lord cometh with ten thousands of his saints, To execute judgment upon all, and to convince all that are ungodly among them of all their ungodly deeds” (Jude 1:13-15). All of which has reference to the glorious coming of the Lord Jesus in the clouds of heaven and in great glory in the commencement of that righteous reign on earth that is testified of in the scriptures as “the Millennium”—the thousand-year reign of righteousness.

Enoch and his city “Zion.” Enoch made a special gathering together of the people whom he converted ~~of~~ **to** his doctrines and established them in a city, and they were called “the people of Zion, because they were of one heart and one mind, and dwelt in righteousness; and there \langle were \rangle [was] no poor among them,” also this city was called “the City of Holiness, even Zion” (cf. Moses 7:18-19). “And lo, Zion, in process of time, was taken up into heaven” (that is to say, it was translated), together with the inhabitants thereof, including Enoch (Moses 7:21). These translated persons, as we have before seen, were preserved for special work *and missions*, which the Lord had in mind.

The dispensation of Noah. Noah was the next prominent member of this patriarchal group. In his day came the flood, which cataclysm emptied the earth of its inhabitants, only Noah and his family being preserved to perpetuate inhabitants in the earth under the commandment of God. This commandment was given to him as it had previously been given to Adam—“multiply and replenish the earth” (Gen. 9:1), so that Noah may be regarded as a “second Adam,” from whom a new “beginning” of things started. It should be remembered that with Noah in the postdiluvian world, all the traditions received from Adam and succeeding patriarchs, and a knowledge of all the dispensations of the gospel were retained and taught to the new generations of men following the flood.

Cause of the flood. Much speculation has been indulged **in** with reference to the cause of the flood, which resulted in the destruction of the antique world, excepting Noah and his family. It is represented in Genesis (authorized version), that it was occasioned by the utter wickedness of man in the earth, and “every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually”; and so great was this wickedness and so universal, that “it repented the Lord that he had made man on the earth, and it grieved him at his heart” (Gen. 6:5-6).

This would lead one to believe that the great wickedness in Noah's period had quite surprised God, and was not present to his foreknowledge of things. It is certainly unthinkable that God would repent of having made man; *as surely nothing had happened up to this time that God had not foreseen.* The rendering of the text in the book of Moses is, "And it repented Noah, and his heart was pained that the Lord had made man on the earth, and it grieved him at ⟨his⟩ [the] heart" (Moses 8:25). This rendering is certainly more in conformity with reason than the rendering of the authorized version.

The "sons of God" and the "daughters of men." It is also written in Genesis "That the sons of God saw the daughters of men that they were fair; and they took them wives of all which they chose. And the Lord said, My spirit shall not always strive with man, for that he also is flesh" (Gen. 6:2-3). That is to say, perishable; and so he shortened the years of man's life, evidently to curtail wickedness. "Also after that, when the sons of God came in unto the daughters of men, and they bear children to them, the same became mighty men which were of old, men of renown" (Gen. 6:4). Then follows the declaration of the races' universal wickedness, Noah's regret that God had made man, and the decree of God is entered for their destruction.

These paragraphs, Genesis 6:1-7, have perplexed the commentators and a number of solutions for the difficulties they present have been discussed,^a among them that we have here a trace of the stories of unions between deities and the women of earth which resulted in gigantic, monstrous, and cursed races. Others have suggested that the "sons of God" were evidently the angels, and that they had *carnal* union with the women of earth. None of these suggested explanations, however, is the truth. Running parallel with the descendants of Adam—through Seth—in the earth, was also the race of Cain, and they were known as the "sons of men," in contradistinction to the descendants of Adam, and the succeeding patriarchs of that line, who were called "the sons of God."^b The descendants of Adam were forbidden to intermarry

^aRoberts offers a more complete discussion and documentation of this issue in *Seventy's Course in Theology* 4:79-80. The articles "Noah" in Smith's *Dictionary of the Bible* and Kitto's *Cyclopaedia of Biblical Literature*, review the various interpretations of the "sons of men" and the "daughters of men." For a discussion of this issue, see page 659 below.

^bThe identification of the "sons of God" with the descendants of Seth and the "daughters of men" as the descendants of Cain is found in Smith's *Dictionary of the Bible* in the article entitled "Noah" as well as in the *Commentary* by Jamieson, Faussett, and Brown, 21. See the introductory material.

with the descendants of Cain, the “sons of men”; and the violation of this commandment by which a mongrel race^c was being produced by the intermarriage of descendants of Cain and the “sons of God,” was part of the wickedness which prepared the antediluvian world for its destruction.

Earth life: A sphere of rewards for conduct in previous states of existence. Reference to our chapter dealing with the “War in Heaven” (chapter 29) will recall the fact that Lucifer in that controversy drew away with him one-third of the hosts of heaven, and that they with him became the “fallen angels,” and by their rebellion forfeited their right of participation in the earth-planned life of man. They kept not their first estate—their spirit life estate (see Abr. 3:26–28). And of those who remained and were not cast out, there were doubtless among them a great variety of degrees as to greatness of soul, nobility of character and moral value. God himself showed unto Abraham such distinctions among the intelligences that were to inhabit the earth.

The Lord had shown unto me, Abraham, the intelligences that were organized before the world was; and among all these there were many of the noble and great ones; And God saw these souls that they were good, and he stood in the midst of them, and he said: These I will make my rulers. (Abr. 3:22–23)

If there were such outstanding intelligences as these among those destined for habitancy of the earth, then by plain implication there were many who possessed the qualities of greatness, nobility, and of goodness in less varying degrees than these whom God declared he would make his “rulers.” And doubtless this all but infinite variety of intelligence, greatness and goodness would lead to a corresponding variety in faith and action in the “war in heaven,” calling again for corresponding variety ***of capacity for service, as also*** of rights and opportunities granted in earth life as rewards for ~~capacity~~, faith, ~~action~~, and demonstrated loyalty in the spirit life. Hence the endless variety of opportunity and apparent privileges granted to some races, tribes,

^cRoberts may have taken the term “mongrel race” from a passage he cited in *Seventy’s Course in Theology* 1:166, from the book *The Color Line: A Brief in Behalf of the Unborn*, in which the author argues against social relations between blacks and whites because such relations would eventually lead to intermarriage and what the author called the “mongrelization of the Southern people.” William Benjamin Smith, *The Color Line: A Brief in Behalf of the Unborn* (New York: McClure, Phillips, 1905), 12. See pages 658–60 for further discussion.

families and individuals in [the] earth process of events and changes making up the earth life of man.

The limitations of certain races. One of these distinctions in the earth life of man is to be observed in this marked difference between Cain and his descendants and the descendants of Adam through Seth, and the distinguished line of patriarchs to Noah: the “sons of men,” and the “sons of God.” The distinction rests primarily upon the difference in the intrinsic nature ~~or soul value~~ of the ***eternal, uncreated*** intelligences themselves, who were begotten ~~men~~ ***spirits***; and ***then*** what their faith and actions were ***as spirits*** in the preexistent spirit life. Evidently there were some who so demonstrated their worthiness in that ***life—pre-earth life—in*** greatness, nobility, and goodness, that God could entrust them with his power to act for him as his representatives and agents; and in this special way and sense become his “sons ***of God***” by holding appointed power from him—his priesthood, which is God’s authority in man.

And now among the hosts of the spirit world destined for earth ***life*** ~~the world~~ were ~~doubtless~~ many who would be unworthy of the distinction of holding this power from God—“the priesthood”—and yet had not so far transgressed as to have forfeited all right to an earth life, albeit under limitations, one of which might well be the right to hold power from God, to represent God and act in his name. These, the less “noble,” and “great” and “good,” whom God would not, and could not, in justice, make his rulers, hence their limitations in this respect in the earth life.^d

The progenitor of the less noble. Yet they are worthy, under such limitations as God’s justice may provide, to participate in earth life. Through what lineage shall they come? Obviously through those worthy only to be the progenitors of such classes as these less noble ones: Hence Cain, Lamech, Ham—this the line of progenitors whose progeny are worthy only to be called “the sons of men”; while those whom God has decreed he would make his “rulers” come of a line of progenitors, worthy only to be accounted in a special sense the “sons of God.” Hence Cain, jealous, evil-minded, covetous, murderous, loving Satan more than God—perhaps closely and dangerously allied with Lucifer in that “War in Heaven”—became the earth progenitor of those least

^dRoberts’s explanation of the denial of priesthood to Cain’s seed as a result of unworthiness in the preexistence was a common explanation among Latter-day Saints before the revelation in Official Declaration—2.

noble and valiant spirits who were permitted to come to earth, but under very serious and painful limitations, denial of right to the priesthood being among them; they are to be known merely as the sons of men.¹

It was doubtless to check this mingling of races between the descendants of Cain—the “sons of men,” and the race descending from the line of Seth to Noah—men of racial and character fitness to receive the priesthood—having right in this special way to be “sons of God,” that the flood was sent to cut off a growing mongrel race, unsuited to the purpose of God.

The descendants of Cain preserved through the flood. It will be of interest to note in what way provision was made to carry someone through the flood by whom fit ancestry could be provided for the less noble spirits of the spirit world. This was through Ham, the least noble of the sons of Noah. And now, after the flood, the numerical adjustment was so made that there would never be likelihood of the descendants of a forbidden race menacing the existence of the race competent to perpetuate those among them who could become, in the special way pointed out, the “sons of God.”

Of the low character of Ham we have the evidence in the unfortunate circumstance of his father Noah’s drunkenness after the flood, and Ham’s exposure of both his father’s weakness and his shamefulness to his brother’s nakedness,^c but which the nobler sons of Noah, Shem and Japheth, covered *and* with becoming delicacy. And when the patriarch of the two worlds—antediluvian and postdiluvian—awoke from his drunken sleep, and learned what shame his youngest son had put upon him, he cursed the posterity of Ham through Ham’s son, declaring an inferiority for him, saying: “Cursed be Canaan; a servant of servants shall he be unto his brethren. And he *said*, Blessed *be* the Lord God of Shem; and Canaan shall be his servant. God shall enlarge Japheth, and he shall dwell in the tents of Shem; and Canaan shall be his servant” (Gen. 9:25-27).

¹For these distinctions see and cf. D&C 76:50-60, where those who receive the priesthood “after the order of the son of God” (the Melchizedek Priesthood), are declared to be “the sons of God”; Moses 6:67-68, account of Adam’s becoming a son of God (cf. D&C 84:6, 7, 17; 107:39-53); Adam referred to with other patriarch’s as “high priests.” Also Moses 8:13-15, where Noah and his sons are called “the sons of God,” and the daughters of these “sons of God” are reproved for having sold themselves to “the sons of men.” See also Moses 5:51-53, where descendants of Cain through Lamech are “the sons of men” and cursed of God—*i.e., deservedly limited in opportunities granted to others.* See also Abraham 3.

^cGenesis 9 discusses Noah’s nakedness, not Ham’s brothers’ nakedness.

In addition to his low character exhibited in the shameful exposure of his father's plight during his intemperance, Ham had also married into the forbidden race of Cain. The name of his wife was "Egyptus," which interpreted means "forbidden" (see Abr. 1:23), evidence of the race whence she came—the forbidden race of Cain. And thus was the race of Cain perpetuated in the earth after the flood. The descendants of Ham were settled in Egypt by his daughter, also named "Egyptus" after her mother; and who named the land in which she settled her sons *in* Egypt, either in honor of herself or of her mother. "And thus," says the authority I am following, "from Ham, sprang that race which preserved the curse in the land" (Abr. 1:24).

Our authority, however, speaks well of the *eldest* son of Egyptus, daughter of Ham, who founded the first government in the land. This *government was* patriarchal in form and character, "imitating" the order of the patriarchal forms of his forefathers, including Noah; who, we are informed, "blessed him with the blessings of the earth, and with the blessings of wisdom, but cursed him as pertaining to the Priesthood" (Abr. 1:26).

Enoch, the patriarch seventh from Adam, and preeminently a seer, in the pre-vision God gave him of things to happen in generations future from his time, throws much light upon what would be the status of this Canaanitish race in the world.

The Lord said to this seer, "Look, and I will show unto thee the world for the space of many generations" (Moses 7:4). And among the things fore-visions to him were the movements and some of the wars waged by the Canaanites:

And the people of Canaan shall divide themselves in the land, and the land shall be barren and unfruitful, and none other people shall dwell there but the people of Canaan; For behold, the Lord shall curse the land with much heat, and the barrenness thereof shall go forth forever; and there was a blackness came upon all the children of Canaan, that they were despised among all people. (Moses 7:7-8)²

And here we may leave that "forbidden race"—forbidden to intermarry with those races whence may arise those who are not cursed by denial of the priesthood to them, but from whose midst may arise those who in a special way, may become the sons of God through receiving the priesthood—the power of God—by which they may be accounted sons of, or multiples of, God.

²The land occupied by descendants of Cain was northern Africa, and the barren land referred to as cursed with excessive heat was, doubtless, the desert of Sahara.

Other limitations. Among other limitations to the descendants of Ham, and to some other races might be named the tardy appearance of civilized enlightenment and knowledge of truth among them, because of their incapacity for, and their unworthiness of these things; and so they live their earth lives under necessary and deserved limitations. And yet this present earth life will and does hold high values for them, in that it affords them the necessary union of spirit and element essential to such “joy” as they may be capable of; and they shall be heirs, too, of salvation; for it is made known in our modern revelations that the inhabitants of the higher kingdoms of glory shall minister to the kingdoms of lower degrees of glory; and speaking of the angels who in the hereafter shall minister to those of “the telestial glory”—the very lowest of the kingdom—whose inhabitants come not forth until “the last resurrection”—even these shall be “heirs of salvation” (D&C 76:88). And of the heathen nations—“they that knew no law,” it is written: “The heathen nations shall be redeemed, and they that knew no law shall have part in the first resurrection; and it shall be tolerable for them” (cf. D&C 45:54).

Further references recommended by Roberts for this lesson: Gen. 4-10; D&C 76; Moses 5-8; Abr. 1-3.