

Book of Mormon Study- Enos

Online zoom Sunday School, 12 Apr 2020

Intro

Behold, it came to pass that I, Enos, knowing my father that he was a just man—for he taught me in his language, and also in the nurture and admonition of the Lord—and blessed be the name of my God for it- (v 1)

Compare with 1 Ne 1:1

Nephi draws attention to "afflictions" first, then to having been "highly favored". In contrast, Enos draws attention first to "nurture," and second to "admonition".

Enos, 2 generations from Lehi. It has taken only six generations for the spiritual strength of this family line to have failed by the time we get to Abinadom, son of Chemish, Omni 1:11 "I know of no revelation"

Wrestle

2 And I will tell you of the wrestle which I had before God, before I received a remission of my sins.

3 Behold, I went to hunt beasts in the forests; and the words which I had often heard my father speak concerning eternal life, and the joy of the saints, sunk deep into my heart.

4 And my soul hungered; and I kneeled down before my Maker, and I cried unto him in mighty prayer and supplication for mine own soul; and all the day long did I cry unto him; yea, and when the night came I did still raise my voice high that it reached the heavens.

5 And there came a voice unto me, saying: Enos, thy sins are forgiven thee, and thou shalt be blessed.

In a place apart

Our reaching up to connect with God is a personal journey which each must take for themselves. It cannot be shared. You must approach God's throne yourself. Joseph was alone when he met the Father and Son. Moses was alone when he ascended the Mount to meet the Lord. Enoch was alone when he was caught up to heaven. Elijah was alone on the mountain when the whirlwind, lightning and earthquake preceded the Lord's own voice. Daniel alone saw the vision of the Lord. Paul alone saw the light. Nephi alone saw his father's vision. Enos was alone in the wilderness in his encounter with God. Abraham was alone when the Lord spoke to him. Jacob slept alone when the ladder to heaven descended for him. You will also be alone should the Lord come to visit you. This cannot be borrowed from another.

16 Sep 2019, Mon, 5:42am

Marcus,

This week's lesson covers material from the book of Enos. We typically gloss over Enos, throwing him into a category of repentance and forgiveness.

Enos was dealing with limited space on plates, so he has taken pains to condense his words in the most valuable way possible to communicate significant things.

Enos may very well be one of the most intelligent composers of scripture in history. He certainly stands out in the Book of Mormon. His life brought him into contact with God, and his book makes careful use of symbols to communicate to the latter-day readers about these sacred events.

Behold, I went to hunt beasts in the forests; and the words which I had often heard my father speak concerning eternal life, and the joy of the saints, sunk deep into my heart. And my soul hungered; and I kneeled down before my Maker, and I cried unto him in mighty prayer and supplication for mine own soul; and all the day long did I cry unto him; yea, and when the night came I did still raise my voice high that it reached the heavens. (Enos 1:3-5)

He places his story in the forest; a place apart. He describes his activities as “prayer and supplication” which lasts through the day into the night. His description of the event concludes by describing contact between himself and God. Through that contact, he receives a remission of his sins.

There is another description of a “wrestle” between man and God analogous to Enos’. In the other account the setting is also a lone place apart. Jacob’s encounter also lasts into the night, and similarly includes contact between the man and God. Jacob’s wrestle is recorded in these terms:

And Jacob was left alone; and there wrestled a man with him until the breaking of the day. And when he saw that he prevailed not against him, he touched the hollow of his thigh; and the hollow of Jacob's thigh was out of joint, as he wrestled with him. And he said, Let me go, for the day breaketh. And he said, I will not let thee go, except thou bless me. And he said unto him, What is thy name? And he said, Jacob. And he said, Thy name shall be called no more Jacob, but Israel: for as a prince hast thou power with God and with men, and hast prevailed. And Jacob asked him, and said, Tell me, I pray thee, thy name. And he said, Wherefore is it that thou dost ask after my name? And he blessed him there. And Jacob called the name of the place Peniel: for I have seen God face to face, and my life is preserved. (Gen 32:24-30.)

We must conclude Enos intended to write these similarities into his record. These are deliberate parallels. Beyond the parallels, however, there are elements which anyone familiar with the fullness of the Gospel will recognize. Jacob weaves into his account the following list:

- Solitary setting
- Contact with Deity
- An embrace between God and man

- Reference to his sinews and loins
- Bestowal of a new name

The implications are clear. Jacob's narrative is deliberately including ritual symbols involved in Temple rites. Some things are sacred and cannot be spoken directly. But symbols which remind us of the sacred are entirely appropriate. Symbols are used in the Genesis account of creation to both conceal and reveal at the same moment. Christ would remind those He taught they needed to have "eyes to see" if they were to understand His teachings. He taught at different levels. Those who could not grasp the depth of His stories were left unaccountable for hidden knowledge. But those who could "see" the underlying truths of His teachings were able to be informed without being forced to see. When ready, it stays veiled. In this respect Christ was a gifted and merciful teacher.

Joseph Smith taught the ordinances of the Gospel have always been the same. The Gospel has been the same since the beginning of time. Those who lived anciently were taught the same things as we are taught, including our most sacred ordinances. It should not surprise us that Enos was able to incorporate symbols in his narrative which tie to symbols we would recognize.

Just like Jacob, Enos also demonstrates a similar capacity to employ sophisticated symbolism woven into his narrative to capture hidden meanings. He weaves into his account the following list:

- Solitary setting in the forest (suggesting Eden)
- Contact between him and Deity
- A conversation between God and man
- Reference to animal sacrifice
- A reminder of eternal life and the joy of the saints
- Bestowal of a new name

The implications are clear enough: Enos is serving us notice that his record is intended to be read as a hermetic text. (Hermetic texts use symbols to conceal full meanings from the uninitiated, but which fully inform the initiated). He is using symbols to communicate in few words a larger meaning. He expects us to employ these symbols and their meanings as readers of his account.

So we need to consider carefully his use of images. When he writes, "I went to hunt beasts in the forests" we should keep in mind what he tells us later about the herds of domesticated animals kept among his people. He explains in verse 21 that "the people of Nephi did till the land, and raise all manner of grain, and of fruit, and flocks of herds, and flocks of all manner of cattle of every kind, and goats, and wild goats, and also many horses." He did not need to "hunt" to have meat. Why mention this setting in the forest where he is engaged in hunting beasts in connection with his remembering "eternal life and the joy of the saints?"

Enos' father ministered in the Temple. As a result, Enos would have Temple knowledge passed to him directly from inside his family. His introduction included reference to his father being a just man who taught him. Here Enos elaborates that "the words which I had often heard my father speak concerning eternal life, and the joy of the saints, sunk deep into my heart." Note what Enos is meditating upon has nothing to do with guilt, remorse or regret. It is purely positive; purely the highest of aspirations found

in the Gospel. Enos is on a quest. He tells us what his quest involves. He is seeking after "eternal life, and the joy of the saints."

This is not a solitary hunting trip. Nor is this just a foray into the forest. He is writing something profound and sacred which includes symbolic allusion to Melchizedek Priestly rites and ordinances. His record is meant to be understood through "eyes which can see".

hermetic: sealed, mysterious, hidden

Enos, thy Sins are Forgiven Thee. (v 5)

Whenever you enter the presence of God, he forgives your sins.

Alma 45:16, "*for the Lord cannot look upon sin with the least degree of allowance.*" We should not expect to find Him visiting with someone whose sins are unforgiven.

Joseph Smith gave several different accounts of the First Vision. He includes the fact that his sins were forgiven as part of many of them. In his 1832 account he wrote: "I saw the Lord and he spake unto me saying 'Joseph, my son, thy sins are forgiven thee.'"

The Lord cannot "look upon sin." Therefore, He removes it by forgiving those who come into His presence.

Joseph Smith said, "*Our heavenly Father is more liberal in His views, and boundless in His mercies and blessings, than we are ready to believe or receive[.]*" (TPJS pg 256)

Many examples in D&C. (see D&C 25:3, 29:3, 31:5, 36:1, 50:36, 60:7, 61:2, 62:3, 64:3, 90:1, 90:6, 95:1)

It is an almost invariable occurrence when the Lord speaks directly to anyone that He forgives their sins. So it is with us. We are unworthy. We need fixing. He repairs us so as to make it possible for us to receive an audience with Him. Enos accurately describes the manner in which the Lord deals with us all as a part of his record of the Lord's encounter with him.

James 5:14-15 - the "prayer of faith" that will save the sick, "...and if he have committed sins, they shall be forgiven him." The reason why the sins are forgiven is because the act of healing, the process of healing by the "prayer of faith" invoking the power of the Holy Ghost, means that when the Holy Ghost comes upon the person, one of its acts is to purge from sin. The inner vessel is cleansed. The Holy Ghost cannot abide in an unclean vessel, and so the Holy Ghost cleanses the person, the inner vessel, before the healing takes place.

This is exactly like what happened when Christ healed in Matthew chapter 9. He begins by forgiving the sins of the lame person. That produced some criticism, and He asked which is easier, to say your sins are forgiven or, in verse 5, to say arise, take up your bed and walk? And then the person was healed, but he was healed and his sins were forgiven because the Holy Ghost is a purgative. That's why it's called "fire." Because fire is a purgative element.

If you want to sterilize a blade, you expose it to fire. Fire has a purgative effect that the Holy Ghost represents. In the process of receiving the gift of the Holy Ghost and the visitation of fire, it's not necessary that something dramatic happen. In 3 Nephi 9:20, it says because of the faith of the Lamanites they "were baptized with fire and with the Holy Ghost and they knew it not." Their sins got forgiven them. Their inner vessel got cleansed.

I knew God could not lie.

22 And it came to pass when I was come near to enter into Egypt, the Lord said unto me: Behold, Sarai, thy wife, is a very fair woman to look upon;

23 Therefore it shall come to pass, when the Egyptians shall see her, they will say— She is his wife; and they will kill you, but they will save her alive; therefore see that ye do on this wise:

24 Let her say unto the Egyptians, she is thy sister, and thy soul shall live.

25 And it came to pass that I, Abraham, told Sarai, my wife, all that the Lord had said unto me—Therefore say unto them, I pray thee, thou art my sister, that it may be well with me for thy sake, and my soul shall live because of thee. (Abr 2:22-25)

There are many commentaries attempting to sort out the familial relationship between Abraham and Sarai. It is not important to do so for our purposes. The issue is not whether we can justify the "sisterhood" of Sarai to Abraham. Rather, the issue is whether the Egyptians would be misled to believe Sarai was NOT Abraham's wife. The statement was intended to conceal the fact that Abraham was married to Sarai.

The idea of misleading the Egyptians was the Lord's. He was protecting the life of Abraham, and used a half-truth (Sarai was Abraham's sister) to conceal a greater, more relevant truth (Sarai was Abraham's wife). If incomplete, evasive answers designed to conceal something important from notice fall within the scope of the statement: "God cannot lie," then we have to be very careful about how we understand the statement. How can we ever have any confidence in the words God speaks to us if He can be so artful in parsing language? How can we know we are not being misled by part truths which conceal greater, more relevant truths?

Also look at the use of the words "endless" and "eternal" to describe damnation in D&C 19:4-12.

"And again, the idea that he is a God of truth and cannot lie is equally as necessary to the exercise of faith in him as the idea of his unchangeableness. For without the idea that he was a God of truth and could not lie, the confidence necessary to be placed in his word in order to the exercise of faith in him could not exist. But having the idea that he is not man that he can lie, it gives power to the minds of men to exercise faith in him." (LoF 3:22)

Enos is, in fact, writing about an altogether different kind of communication in which God cannot and does not lie or anything like it. He is writing about covenant-making. As to covenants God intends to be bound, is always interested in clarity, and will construe all terms in favorably for man's benefit. He makes it clear: "What I the Lord have spoken, I have spoken, and I excuse not myself; and though the

heavens and the earth pass away, my word shall not pass away, but shall all be fulfilled, whether by mine own voice or by the voice of my servants, it is the same." (D&C 1:38) Covenants "shall all be fulfilled" by the Lord. Even covenants made long ago, among people long since dead, whose meaning has become lost or obscure. The Lord will never offer an excuse, nor deviate in the smallest degree from what He covenants to do.

Faith

verse 7

And I said; Lord, how is it done.

This is an inspired question.

28 But no man is possessor of all things except he be purified and cleansed from all sin.

29 And if ye are purified and cleansed from all sin, ye shall ask whatsoever you will in the name of Jesus and it shall be done.

30 But know this, it shall be given you what you shall ask; and as ye are appointed to the head, the spirits shall be subject unto you. (D&C 50:28-30)

verse 8

And he said unto me: Because of thy faith in Christ, whom thou hast never before heard nor seen. And many years pass away before he shall manifest himself in the flesh; wherefore, go to, thy faith hath made thee whole.

The power to rend the veil comes through faith. Nephi quotes Christ in 2 Ne 27:23 saying: "*For behold, I am God; and I am a God of miracles; and I will show unto the world that I am the same yesterday, today, and forever; and I work not among the children of men save it be according to their faith.*"

"Because faith is wanting, the fruits are. No man since the world was had faith without having something along with it. The ancients quenched the violence of fire, escaped the edge of the sword, women received their dead, etc. By faith the worlds were made. A man who has none of the gifts has no faith; and he deceives himself, if he supposes he has. Faith has been wanting, not only among the heathen, but in professed Christendom also, so that tongues, healings, prophecy, and prophets and apostles, and all the gifts and blessings have been wanting" (Teaching of Prophet Joseph Smith, 270).

37 Behold I say unto you, Nay; for it is by faith that miracles are wrought; and it is by faith that angels appear and minister unto men; wherefore, if these things have ceased wo be unto the children of men, for it is because of unbelief, and all is vain.

38 For no man can be saved, according to the words of Christ, save they shall have faith in his name; wherefore, if these things have ceased, then has faith ceased also; and awful is the state of man, for they are as though there had been no redemption made. (Moroni 7:37-38)

verse 10

And while I was thus struggling in the spirit, behold, the voice of the Lord came into my mind again, saying:...

"All things whatsoever God in his infinite wisdom has seen fit and proper to reveal to us, while we are dwelling in mortality, in regard to our mortal bodies, are revealed to us in the abstract, and independent of affinity of this mortal tabernacle, but are revealed to our spirits precisely as though we had no bodies at all; and those revelations which will save our spirits will save our bodies." (TPJS pg 355)

Ask what you will

(Why does Enos seek for a promise from God that has already been made with his fathers?)

Enos could have asked for anything. It is all the more remarkable that Enos, when put to the test, decided to make a request for the benefit of his enemies, now his "brethren." The depth of Enos' humility is almost unfathomable. He asks nothing for himself; not wisdom, long life, a continuing mortal ministry, nor even to come speedily into the Lord's kingdom. Instead he asks the Lord to bless those who have rejected him, his people and his people's faith in Christ. We are reading a sacred account written by a man who followed Christ. We have surely come to holy ground as we are allowed this view into the relationship between Enos and his Lord...

Given that Nephi wrote these things on the same plates on which Enos was now writing, the question arises as to why Enos puts his wording so tentative. He does not come right out and repeat what Nephi had written. Instead he makes this future uncertain. He writes "[I]f it should so be, that my people, the Nephites, should fall into transgression, and by any means..." He knew this was going to happen. It is already prophesied in the very plates on which he was etching his own record. Given this, we should consider why he uses tentative language rather than definite language to describe this already known future. It was not because he was unaware of his people's fate. Nor was it due to a lack of faith on his part. Rather, since Enos would have been given the sealing power as a part of having his calling and election made sure, he would have been cautious about how he stated in his sacred writings his descendants' fate. Remember that once someone has been given the power to bind the Lord, the Lord has committed Himself to vindicate the words of such a servant. Enos' suse of tentative language on something which has already been prophesied by Nephi is one of the confirming evidences that Enos

has been given the sealing power (and correspondingly had his calling and election made sure). He did not want anything he said or wrote to bind the Lord to this unwanted outcome. Although he could accept this future and even call the enemy victors over his descendants his "brethren," he did not want to own any part of the responsibility for this fate.

Nothing short of crying repentance continually.

Letter to Marcus, 5 Jan 2020:

I can look on Facebook among my own friends and family and see an onslaught of accusation and contention going back and forth between various opinions on things that people are passionate about, and I wonder - are we any more noble and wise as humans in our day than were those living in the days of Enos or his son Jarom?

Note what Enos had to say about the people in his day:

And the people were a stiffnecked people, hard to understand. And there was nothing save it was exceeding harshness, preaching and prophesying of wars, and contentions, and destructions, and continually reminding them of death, and the duration of eternity, and the judgments and the power of God, and all these things— stirring them up continually to keep them in the fear of the Lord. I say there was nothing short of these things, and exceedingly great plainness of speech, would keep them from going down speedily to destruction. And after this manner do I write concerning them. Enos 1:22-23

And Jarom:

Wherefore, the prophets, and the priests, and the teachers, did labor diligently, exhorting with all long-suffering the people to diligence; teaching the law of Moses, and the intent for which it was given; persuading them to look forward unto the Messiah, and believe in him to come as though he already was. And after this manner did they teach them. And it came to pass that by so doing they kept them from being destroyed upon the face of the land; for they did prick their hearts with the word, continually stirring them up unto repentance. Jarom 1:11-12

Why does it seem that the majority of the preaching in our meetings and classes are sweet words of encouragement? Why does it appear the focus is on the positive side of everything and building up our self-esteem to the exclusion of crying repentance for fear of offending someone in our congregations? How much are talks filled with distracting inspirational stories, with flattering words that do not call us to repent, really helping us?

I'm reminded of the account in 3 Ne. 11:32-40 where Christ declared His Doctrine. His Doctrine came from His Father and mentions "baptism" four times. Only the first mention is positive, the three subsequent times it is negative. This is a 3 to 1 ratio of negative warning to positive promise. I do not

believe the Lord or His Father are negative. This approach is more a reflection on us than on Them. God is extraordinarily positive. But we need the clarity of being told the downside, and to be warned, because, unfortunately, a positive promise does not adequately motivate us.

Maybe the kind of teaching that stirs us up continually to repentance should be reserved to our personal scripture study. But when there is a lack of serious warnings over our pulpits it makes me wonder why that is so.

Rest

verse 26

And I saw that I must soon go down to my grave, having been wrought upon by the power of God that I must preach and prophesy unto this people, and declare the word according to the truth which is in Christ. And I have declared it in all my days, and have rejoiced in it above that of the world.

Reminds me of the hymn press forward saints, last verse, press on enduring in the ways of Christ, His name proclaim in days of mortal strife. This is on display with Enos, declaring God's word.

verse 27

And I soon go to the place of my rest, which is with my Redeemer; for I know that in him I shall rest. And I rejoice in the day when my mortal shall put on immortality, and shall stand before him; then shall I see his face with pleasure, and he will say unto me: Come unto me, ye blessed, there is a place prepared for you in the mansions of my Father. Amen.

Enos 1:27 - "rest", cf "which is the fullness of his glory" (D&C 84:24)