

## **Chapter 18**

### **The Book of Mormon Condemns Polygamy (A Study of the “Righteous Seed” Theory)**

When many people first hear about the Book of Mormon, they assume that it is a history of Joseph Smith and that it teaches that polygamy is a doctrine of the Church. These are false assumptions, for the Book of Mormon is a history of God’s dealings with the people of Ancient America, and it condemns polygamy most severely.

If this is true, one may ask, How is it that the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints believes in polygamy? The answer is that the Mormon Church leaders of over a century ago practiced polygamy—but they did it in spite of the Book of Mormon’s warnings against it. They did this by misinterpreting one statement in the book. They taught that polygamy was wrong—unless God gave the command to practice it, and then it became mandatory and a cardinal doctrine of their faith. They then proceeded to practice polygamy, claiming that God had commanded Joseph Smith to practice it and teach others to do so.

#### **The Book of Mormon’s Condemnation of Polygamy**

There are a number of references in the Inspired Version of the Bible and the Doctrine and Covenants which condemn polygamy, and none which command it to be practiced—but the most scathing denunciation of polygamy in Joseph’s writings is found in the Book of Jacob in the Book of Mormon. There the Lord gives an inspired message through His Nephite prophet, Jacob, more than three pages in length, which definitely forbids

polygamy. It prophetically warns the Nephites that if they do not choose the Lord as their commander, they will choose to do *otherwise*—the *otherwise* being that they would degenerate into the sinful practice of polygamy.

It is important to review the circumstances under which the Prophet Jacob received this divine revelation forbidding polygamy. Years earlier, under God's direction, Jacob's older brother, Nephi, had directed the Nephites in building a temple. After Nephi's death, Jacob became the prophet-leader. The Lord commanded Jacob to go into the temple where the Nephites would be at worship, and bring to them a revelation condemning polygamy. In that revelation Jacob gave a stern condemnation of that dogma—and since Joseph Smith published the Book of Mormon and proclaimed that it contained the fullness of the gospel, the Lord's denouncement of polygamy through Jacob is also Joseph's testimony against that false doctrine. Jacob declared:

the people of Nephi . . . began to grow hard in their hearts, and indulge themselves somewhat in wicked practices, such as like unto David of old, desiring many wives and concubines, and also Solomon, his son. . . . Wherefore, I, Jacob, gave unto them these words as I taught them in the temple, having firstly obtained mine errand from the Lord. (RLDS Jacob 1:15–17; LDS Jacob 1:15–17)

Below is a condensed portion of the Prophet Jacob's inspired message to his people in which he so strongly condemned polygamy:

Now, my beloved brethren, I, Jacob, according to the responsibility which I am under to God . . . come up into the temple this day, that I might declare unto you the word of God. . . . [B]y the help of the all-powerful Creator of heaven and earth, I can tell you concerning your thoughts, how that ye are beginning to labor in sin, which sin appeareth very . . . abominable unto God. . . .

Wherefore, it burdeneth my soul, that I should be constrained because of the strict commandment which I have received from God, to admonish you, according to your crimes. (RLDS Jacob 2:2–9; LDS Jacob 2:2–9)

This rebuke concerning other sins was sharp; however, the Lord gave Jacob words which were even more harsh in condemning the sin of polygamy:

I must speak unto you concerning a *grosser crime*. . . . [T]he word of God burthens me because of your grosser crimes. For behold, thus saith the Lord, This people begin to wax in iniquity; they understand not the scriptures: for they seek to excuse themselves in committing whoredoms, because of the things which were written concerning David, and Solomon his son.

*Behold, David and Solomon truly had many wives, and concubines, which thing was abominable before me, saith the Lord, wherefore, thus saith the Lord, I have led this people forth out of the land of Jerusalem, by the power of mine arm, that I might raise up unto me a righteous branch from the fruit of the loins of Joseph. Wherefore, I, the Lord God, will not suffer that this people shall do like unto them of old.*

Wherefore, my brethren, hear me, and hearken to the word of the Lord: *For there shall not any man among you have save it be one wife; and concubines he shall have none: For I, the Lord God, delighteth in the chastity of women. . . .*

Wherefore, this people shall keep my commandments, saith the Lord of hosts, or cursed be the land for their sakes. For if I will, saith the Lord of hosts, raise up seed unto me, I will command my people: *otherwise*, they shall hearken unto these things.

For behold, I, the Lord, have seen the sorrow, and heard the mourning of the daughters of my people in the land of Jerusalem; yea, and in all the lands of my people, because of the wickedness and abominations of their husbands.

And I will not suffer, saith the Lord of hosts, that the cries of the fair daughters of this people, which I have led out of the land of Jerusalem, shall come up unto me, against the men of my people, saith the Lord of hosts; for they shall not lead away captive, the daughters of my people . . . save I shall visit them with a sore curse, even unto destruction; for they shall not commit whoredoms, like unto them of old [David, Solomon, and others], saith the Lord of hosts. . . . [T]hese commandments were given to our father Lehi; wherefore, ye have known them before; and ye have come unto great condemnation. . . . [Ye] have done greater iniquity than the

Lamanites, our brethren. Ye have broken the hearts of your tender wives, and lost the confidence of your children . . . and the sobbings of their hearts ascend up to God against you . . . .

[W]o, wo, unto you that are not pure in heart. . . . [E]xcept ye repent, the land is cursed for your sakes; and the Lamanites . . . shall scourge you even unto destruction. . . . [T]he Lamanites . . . are more righteous than you; for they have not forgotten the commandments of the Lord, which were given unto our fathers, that they should have, save it were one wife: and concubines they should have none. . . . [T]his commandment they observe to keep; wherefore because of this observance in keeping this commandment [of one wife each], the Lord God will not destroy them, but . . . they shall become a blessed people. (RLDS Jacob 2:30–56; LDS Jacob 2:22–35; 3:1–6; italics added)

### **Mormon Church Misinterprets the Prophet Jacob’s Statement**

At the time of Joseph Smith’s death, several of the apostles and other leaders (including some who had performed missionary work among the polygamous Cochranites in the state of Maine) were secretly involved in polygamy, as previously noted. During the last two years of Joseph’s life, he was continuously engaged in attempting to stamp out the practice of polygamy in the Church. In the spring of 1844 Joseph decided to expose the polygamists openly, in spite of the fact that a number of high Church officials were involved in that practice. Joseph sought out the Nauvoo Stake President, High Priest William Marks, and asked his help in expelling from the Church those in transgression. Within a few weeks Joseph and Hyrum were killed (see *True Latter Day Saints’ Herald* 1 [January 1860]: 26; RLDS *History of the Church* 2:733–734).

By June 27, 1844, the date of Joseph’s death, Brigham Young was married to four women—his legal wife, Mary Ann Angell Young, Mrs. William Seely (Lucy Ann Decker Seely Young), Mrs. Henry Cobb (Augusta Adams Cobb Young), and Mrs. Harriet Elizabeth Cook Campbell Young (see Kate B.

Carter, *Brigham Young—His Wives and Family*, 12–15; Stewart, *Brigham Young and His Wives*, 84–86; *Utah Genealogical Magazine* 11 [April 1920]: 52–54). (For confirmation of Lucy Ann Decker’s marriage to William Seely, see records of Isaac Perry Decker and Harriet Page Wheeler Decker in the Genealogical Society Library in Salt Lake City, Utah.)

On August 29, 1852, eight years after Joseph’s death, Brigham publicly proclaimed polygamy by introducing a polygamous document (now Section 132 in the LDS Doctrine and Covenants), and placed the responsibility for that practice on Joseph (LDS DC 132, Introduction; Supplement to *Millennial Star* 15 [1853]: 31; RLDS *History of the Church* 3:348–349).

In the years which followed introduction of the polygamy document in Utah in 1852, there was a tremendous effort made by LDS Church leaders to find support for their polygamy. Like the Nephites of old, they justified their polygamy because of what the Old Testament states about David and Solomon. They were commanded by Section 132 to do as David and Solomon had done (which is contrary to the Scriptures). Many statements appear in their early publications which demonstrate how their leaders twisted biblical passages to give credence to the doctrine of polygamy. A prime example of how far they went is found in “A Lecture by President Orson Hyde, delivered at the General Conference, in the Tabernacle, Great Salt Lake City, October 6, 1854.” The title of his lecture was “The Marriage Relations.” Hyde tried to justify Mormon polygamy by declaring that “Jesus was the bridegroom at the marriage of Cana of Galilee,” that Christ physically fathered children, that He was a polygamist, and that Mary Magdalene was one of His wives. Hyde also declared that when Mary Magdalene visited Christ’s tomb and found it empty, she began to weep, and when the gardener asked her why she was weeping, Mary Magdalene replied, “‘Because they have taken away my Lord,’ or husband” (*Journal of Discourses* 2 [1855]: 81–82).

Apostle Orson Pratt was another LDS Church leader who made a tremendous effort to support polygamy by wresting the Scriptures. He gave the initial sermon which announced polygamy as a doctrine, which he delivered in the Tabernacle, in Salt

Lake City, August 29, 1852, entitled “Celestial Marriage.” He argued that (1) God has a vast number of human spirits in Heaven who are to be sent to earth and given bodies, (2) that God wants the more intelligent portion of them to be born into Mormon homes, and (3) that polygamy is necessary in order to have them born into those homes. Orson declared:

among them are many spirits that are more noble, more intelligent than others, that were called the great and mighty ones, reserved until the dispensation of the fulness of times . . . . This is the reason why the Lord is sending them here, brethren and sisters; they are appointed to come and take their bodies here. . . . Then is it not reasonable, and consistent that the Lord should say unto His faithful and chosen servants . . . take unto yourselves more wives?” (*Journal of Discourses* 1 [1854]: 62–63)

The belief that God wants to use polygamy as a means to bring these souls into the world is a false doctrine, however, for the Lord has instructed that monogamy is to be used to “fill the measure of man.” The scripture states:

marriage is ordained of God unto man; wherefore it is lawful that he should have one wife, and they twain shall be one flesh, and all this that the earth might answer the end of its creation; and that it might be filled with the measure of man, according to his creation before the world was made. (RLDS DC 49:3a–c; LDS DC 49:15–17)

This scripture shows that a certain number of human spirits were created “before the world was made,” and that when they all have been born into the world, the earth shall have been “filled with the measure of man.” It is important to note that the Lord has declared that in order to do this, *each man is to have one wife*. Therefore, once again Mormon theology fails and polygamy is shown to be a false doctrine.

The speculation and unfounded interpretation of the Scriptures increased as the Mormon leaders, such as Hyde and Pratt, continued to justify polygamy and lay the blame for its entry into the Church upon the dead prophet, Joseph. In time the leaders of the Mormon Church tampered with the Doctrine and

Covenants by adding Section 132 in 1876, which commanded that polygamy must be practiced, as previously mentioned. They also deleted from their Doctrine and Covenants the section that is entitled “Marriage,” which forbids polygamy (see RLDS DC 111; 1835 Kirtland Edition, Section CI; 1844 Nauvoo Edition, Section CIX; and the 1866 Liverpool [England] Edition (published by Brigham Young, Jun.), Section CIX).

### **The Mormon Church Tried to Use the “Righteous Seed” Theory to Justify Polygamy**

The LDS Church also added an introduction to the second chapter of Jacob in the Book of Mormon which stated, “Plurality of wives forbidden because of iniquity” (LDS Jacob, chapter 2, heading). Joseph Smith did not place those words there. It was done after his death. A careful reading of the chapter reveals that the chapter heading which Mormon leaders added is a false statement, because the chapter does not say that God was withholding polygamy because the Saints were sinful. It says that polygamy was a “grosser” crime—worse than the other sins. The heading should read, “The people condemned for practicing polygamy and other sins.” Again, it must be noted that Joseph Smith did not place that heading at the beginning of the chapter. The original Book of Mormon had no titles at the heads of chapters. The LDS Book of Mormon, copyrighted in 1948, states on the copyright page, “First issued . . . with chapter headings . . . in 1920.”

During all of the theological struggles over the question of polygamy, Jacob’s stern denunciation of it in the Book of Mormon has stood like a fortress against polygamy. Somehow the LDS polygamists had to find a way to invalidate it. At last they found a way which would at least placate their followers. It was to misinterpret one sentence in the revelation which came through the Prophet Jacob. That passage was:

For if I will, saith the Lord of hosts, raise up seed unto me, I will command my people: otherwise, they shall hearken unto these things. (RLDS Jacob 2:39; LDS Jacob 2:30)

### The “Righteous Seed” Theory

The Mormon Church leaders and missionaries still use the above passage to claim that God commanded them to practice polygamy to “raise up a righteous seed”—with the theory that children born of polygamy are more righteous than children born of monogamy, and that when God decides to establish an especially righteous people, He will command that they must practice polygamy.

They interpret this passage:

For if I will, saith the Lord of hosts, raise up [righteous] seed [or people] unto me, I will command my people [to practice polygamy]: otherwise [if the Lord does not give the commandment to practice polygamy], they shall hearken unto these things [Jacob’s instruction to not practice it].

This interpretation makes this passage completely out of harmony with all the rest of Jacob’s revelation against polygamy, and all of Joseph Smith’s writings which were printed before his death.

The true interpretation of the passage shows that it is definitely monogamous, and that it is in harmony with all the rest of the revelation which the Lord gave through Jacob. The true interpretation is:

For if I will, saith the Lord of hosts, raise up [righteous] seed unto me, I will command my people [the Lord will be their commander—He will give them commandments to obey]: otherwise [if the Lord is not their commander; or they do not obey His commandments], they shall hearken unto these things [they shall practice the sins of polygamy].

This is the true meaning of this passage—and therefore it condemns polygamy, rather than justifying it as the Mormon Church leaders claim.

### God Always Uses Monogamy to “Raise Up a Righteous Seed”

Since there are two ways to interpret the meaning of this



passage, it is necessary to discover which method God uses to raise up a “righteous seed” or generation. The Mormon Church leaders have strongly emphasized the “righteous seed theory” to justify their practice of polygamy, but it actually destroys their theological basis—for God always uses monogamy, and not polygamy, when He starts a new nation or civilization. When God chose in various dispensations to “raise up a righteous seed,” in every instance He provided only one wife for one man.

*Adam and Eve—the first example.* When God and Christ created the first man, Adam, one woman (Eve) was created to be his wife. Centuries later God explained, “And did not he make one? . . . And wherefore one? *That he might seek a godly seed.* Therefore take heed to your spirit, and let none deal treacherously against the wife of his youth” (Malachi 2:15; italics added). Why then did God provide only one wife for Adam? *That he might raise up a righteous seed!* This is a most important point.

*Noah and his three sons.* During the days of Noah, wickedness abounded and the Lord destroyed all but eight people. Those eight were Noah, his three sons, and four women—one wife for each man. Now “Noah was a just man, and perfect in his generation; and he walked with God, and also his three sons, Shem, Ham, and Japheth” (Genesis 8:16, Inspired Version). If ever there was a time since Adam to “raise up a righteous seed,” it was after the flood. Yet God chose monogamy as the way.

*Lehi and his colony.* The story of Lehi and those who accompanied him to Joseph’s land, the Land of Promise, is another example of monogamy being God’s law. Lehi and his people were divinely led to the Western Hemisphere. God’s purpose in doing so was specifically to “*raise up unto me a righteous branch* from the fruit of the loins of Joseph [who was sold into Egypt]” (RLDS Jacob 2:34; LDS Jacob 2:25; italics added). Since that was the purpose, this would have been the perfect time for the Lord to have commanded the practice of polygamy, if the LDS theory were true. Yet, Lehi and all the males in his

group had only one wife, which was in keeping with the law that God had given to him (RLDS Jacob 2:44; LDS Jacob 2:34).

In Lehi's company there were four single adult sons and Zoram—and no single women. Nephi records that “the Lord spake unto him [Lehi] again, saying, that it was not meet for him, Lehi, that he should take his family into the wilderness alone; but that his sons should take daughters to wife, *that they might raise up seed unto the Lord* in the land of promise. And it came to pass that the Lord commanded him [Lehi] that I, Nephi, and my brethren, should again return unto the land of Jerusalem, and bring down Ishmael and his family.” There were five unmarried daughters in Ishmael's family. “And it came to pass that I, Nephi, took one of the daughters of Ishmael to wife; and also, my brethren took of the daughters of Ishmael to wife; and also, Zoram took the eldest daughter of Ishmael to wife” (RLDS 1 Nephi 2:7–8; 5:7–8; LDS 1 Nephi 7:1–2; 16:7–8; italics added).

*A modern-day example.* When God restored His Church to the earth for the last time through the Prophet Joseph Smith, He once again moved to establish a righteous people. The Lord spoke through Joseph in 1831, saying:

And that ye might escape the power of the enemy, and be gathered unto me *a righteous people*, without spot and blameless: wherefore, for this cause I gave unto you the commandment, that ye should go to the Ohio; and there I will give unto you my law. (RLDS DC 38:7; LDS DC 38:31–32; italics added)

The Saints gathered to Kirtland as a result of this revelation and were blessed with receiving the law of God—the revelation of February 9, 1831. And what was in the law concerning marriage which the Almighty gave the Saints when they arrived at Kirtland, that they might become *a righteous people* (branch or seed)? It was:

Thou shalt love thy wife with all thy heart, and shall cleave unto her and *none* else; and he that looketh upon a [another] woman to lust after her, shall deny the faith, and shall not have the Spirit; and if he repents not, he shall be cast

out. (RLDS DC 42:7d; LDS DC 42:22–23; italics added)

### Summary

Joseph Smith brought forth the Inspired Version of the Bible and the revelations in the Doctrine and Covenants. They too support the Book of Mormon's position condemning polygamy. In addition to these Three Standard Books, under Joseph's leadership the following periodicals were produced: the *Evening and the Morning Star*, the *Messenger and Advocate*, the *Elders' Journal*, and the *Times and Seasons*. A careful reading of these Church papers published during Joseph's lifetime shows that they all support the Book of Mormon's testimony against polygamy. There is not even a faint hint in any Church publication before Joseph's death on June 27, 1844, that polygamy could be right under any condition or circumstance.

God's use of monogamy in the days of Adam, Noah, Lehi, and Joseph Smith is proof that when God desires to raise up a righteous seed, He uses only monogamy to do so. It proves beyond all doubt that the LDS Church's "righteous seed" theory to justify polygamy is utterly false. God is the great Commander, and the people must follow His commands—otherwise they go against His law and fall into polygamy and similar sins, as Jacob warns.

It is time to put the words *otherwise* and *righteous seed*, as found in the Book of Jacob, into their proper context and proclaim that polygamy is a false doctrine, and that the Book of Mormon, brought forth through the Prophet Joseph Smith, is a conclusive witness against this false doctrine. Truly, the Book of Mormon condemns polygamy!

