

“Behold, I Am Jesus Christ”

The Setting and Location of the Savior's Visit to the People of Nephi in the Land of Bountiful

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“He stretched forth his hand ... saying: Behold, I am Jesus Christ, whom the prophets testified shall come into the world.” (3 Nephi 11:9–10)

A New Approach to Book of Mormon Geography

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Research Articles

This article is one of a series of research topics on Book of Mormon geography. See our website.

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Cover: Statue of Jesus Christ at San Borja Mission, Baja California. (Photo by James S. Rosenvall)

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Mormon, in his abridgment of the Book of Mormon record, begins his account of the visit of the Savior to the people of Nephi with this statement:

Jesus Christ did show himself unto the people of Nephi, as the multitude were gathered together in the land Bountiful, and did minister unto them; and on this wise did he show himself unto them. (Mormon’s preface to 3 Ne. 11–30)

To set the scene of this singular event, we suggest pondering Mormon’s account of the Father’s voice from the heavens introducing his beloved son, Jesus Christ.

And now it came to pass that there were a great multitude gathered together, of the people of Nephi, **round about the temple which was in the land Bountiful**; and 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.

And it came to pass that while they were thus conversing one with another, **they heard a voice as if it came out of heaven**; and they cast their eyes round about, for they understood not the voice which they heard; and it was not a harsh voice, neither was it a loud voice; nevertheless, and notwithstanding it being a small voice it did pierce them that did hear to the center, insomuch



“He stretched forth his hand ... saying: Behold, I am Jesus Christ, whom the prophets testified shall come into the world.” (3 Nephi 11:9–10)

that there was no part of their frame that it did not cause to quake; yea, it did pierce them to the very soul, and did cause their hearts to burn.

And it came to pass that **again they heard the voice**, and they understood it not.

And again the third time they did hear the voice, and did open their ears to hear it; and their eyes were towards the sound thereof; and they did look steadfastly towards heaven, from whence the sound came.

And behold, the third time they did understand the voice which they heard; and it said unto them:

Behold my Beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased, in whom I have glorified my name—hear ye him.

And it came to pass, as they understood they cast their eyes up again towards heaven; and behold, they saw a Man descending out of heaven; **and he was clothed in a white robe**; and he came down and stood in the midst of them; and the eyes of the whole multitude were turned upon him, and they durst not open their mouths, even one to another, and wist not what it meant, for they thought it was an angel that had appeared unto them.

And it came to pass that he stretched forth his hand and spake unto the people, saying:

Behold, I am Jesus Christ, whom the prophets testified shall come into the world.

And behold, I am the light and the life of the world; and I have drunk out of that bitter cup which the Father hath given me, and have glorified the Father in taking upon me the sins of the world, in the which I have suffered the will of the Father in all things from the beginning.

And it came to pass that when Jesus had spoken these words the whole multitude fell to the earth; for they remembered that it had been prophesied among them that Christ should show himself unto them after his ascension into heaven. (3 Ne. 11:1–12)

[We have boldfaced words here and in other quotations.]

The intent of this article is to analyze Mormon's account of the Savior's visits over multiple days to the people of Nephi, including the setting for these events, and then to suggest a location for the city of Bountiful and a rationale for why this city was the appointed site. The following is our attempt to present background information and insights on these topics, as gleaned from our work with the text of the Book of Mormon and the geography of Baja California.

The First Day of the Savior’s Visit

The record of the first day of the Savior’s visit is found in Third Nephi 11:1 to 19:3. These eight chapters include a detailed account of that event-filled day.

How many people saw the Savior and heard his teachings?

The Book of Mormon text in numerous places refers to the audience who heard the Savior, as a “multitude.” In older English the term “multitude” meant “the amount or number of something (whether large or small).” Thus the term “multitude” by itself does not provide any help as to actual numbers. Mormon, however, provides the approximate number in attendance by the end of the first day.

And the multitude did see and hear and bear record; and they know that their record is true for they all of them did see and hear, every man for himself; and **they were in number about two thousand and five hundred souls; and they did consist of men, women, and children.** (3 Ne. 17:25)



The verdant and fertile valley of San Borja in central Baja California—a plausible location for the Book of Mormon city of Bountiful in the southern half of “the narrow neck of land.”

We note that among the 2,500 were men, women and children. The initial group that gathered about the temple in the land Bountiful is described as a “great multitude.”

And now it came to pass that there were **a great multitude gathered together**, of the people of Nephi, round about the temple which was in the land Bountiful; and they were marveling and wondering one with another, and were showing one to another the great and marvelous change which had taken place. (3 Ne. 11:1)

In older English the word “great,” when referring to people or places, had a meaning of “eminent,” “significant” or “prominent,” and not necessarily the superlative sense of being large in size. Thus this is a common meaning of “great” when used throughout the Book of Mormon text. As noted above, the term “multitude” can refer to even small numbers. The text gives no reason why this group was gathered other than they were engaged in conversation about the “change which had taken place” and “conversing about this Jesus Christ, of whom the sign had been given concerning his death” (3 Ne. 11:1–2). The text provides no details on the nature of the “change,” but it may have been physical changes to the terrain from earthquakes, such as fissures and landslides, at the time of the Savior’s crucifixion.

Some Book of Mormon scholars have suggested the purpose for the gathering of the people of Nephi around the temple in Bountiful was the observance of the law of Moses celebration of Shavuot (also known as Feast of Weeks or Pentecost) which annually occurred some seven weeks after Passover (the time of the Savior’s crucifixion). (See, Ex. 34:22; Lev. 23:15–21) There is nothing in Mormon’s account to directly support this view, but the required timing of Shavuot closely matches our proposed time of the Savior’s visit (see section later in the article, “What was the time of the year when the Savior visited the people of Nephi?”).

Based on a close reading of the full account of the Savior’s visit, we suggest this was a

Two Research Principles

Our research and writings on Book of Mormon topics embrace two principles: (1) to closely adhere to the text of this “most correct” book without succumbing to the temptation to wander down paths beyond the record; and (2) to take into consideration the meaning of words in the Book of Mormon record as they were used in older English and not the meanings as they may be currently defined. Our research and the research of others confirm the Book of Mormon is translated into the English language of the 1500s and 1600s (see text box, *Older English Words in the Book of Mormon Text*, near the end of this article). Numerous words in the Book of Mormon text have meanings which have changed or become obsolete over the last four-hundred years, including many within Mormon’s account of the Savior’s visit to the people of Nephi.

somewhat smaller group of people around the temple and not the full complement of 2,500 men, women and children who gathered by the end of the first day. This smaller group seemed surprised when he appeared, but “remembered that it had been prophesied among them that Christ should show himself unto them after his ascension into heaven” (3 Ne. 11:12; see also, Alma 16:20).

Mormon’s account describes the never-to-be-forgotten events that followed, including the piercing voice of God the Father which “came out of heaven,” and caused their “frame” to quake and “did pierce them to the very soul, and did cause their hearts to burn.” We suggest this piercing voice would have been heard and felt by others in the vicinity and not just the group assembled around the temple. We note also, that the sound of the voice was repeated three times, possibly to arouse their attention, and appropriately spaced in time to allow people in the area to scurry towards the cause of this quaking, piercing and burning experience.

The third time the voice was heard from the heavens, the multitude was able to understand the words of God the Father introducing his Son and inviting the people to “hear ye him.” The next recorded event was the Savior descending out of heaven, wearing a “white robe,” and standing in their midst. All of these events, unhurriedly happening in the heavens, could have been felt, heard or seen by others in the vicinity causing them to quickly run to the converging and increasing multitude. As part of the gathering process, we would expect the incredible news to be spread to family members, friends or anyone else in the area. Understandably, this was far from a regular, every-day event.

Mormon, at this point in his narrative, calls the gathered multitude the “whole multitude” (3 Ne. 11:8, 12). The term “whole” means “full, complete, total.” We suggest that by using the phrase, “whole multitude,” Mormon is referring to the total number who had gathered from the time the penetrating voice was first felt and heard, and repeated three times, until the time the Savior appeared in their midst, and not just the smaller group that had been “conversing” at the temple. This “whole multitude” would be the total of 2,500 men, women and children (3 Ne. 17:25). We suggest 2,500 may have been close to the total number residing in the immediate area, since one could assume that all who heard the penetrating voice from heaven or the obvious commotion of people quickly gathering would have joined the assembled group. Collectively the assembled group is called the “people of Nephi,” but was composed of both Lamanites and Nephites who had survived the cataclysmic destruction at the time of the Savior’s crucifixion (3 Ne. 10:12, 18; for a

fuller account on the status of the Lamanites at this time, see also, Hel. 6:1; 11:21; 4 Ne. 1:20).

Significant events during the first day

All feel the nail prints in the Savior's hands and feet and thrust their hands into his side

The record states that “all” the multitude went forth “one by one” and “did see with their eyes and did feel with their hands” and “witnessed for themselves” that this was the Savior who had been prophesied to come.

And it came to pass that the Lord spake unto them saying:

Arise and come forth unto me, that ye may thrust your hands into my side, and also that ye may feel the prints of the nails in my hands and in my feet, that ye may know that I am the God of Israel, and the God of the whole earth, and have been slain for the sins of the world.

And it came to pass that the multitude went forth, and thrust their hands into his side, and did feel the prints of the nails in his hands and in his feet; and this they did do, going forth one by one until they had all gone forth, and did see with their eyes and did feel with their hands, and did know of a surety and did bear record, that it was he, of whom it was written by the prophets, that should come.

And when they had all gone forth and had witnessed for themselves, they did cry out with one accord, saying:

Hosanna! Blessed be the name of the Most High God! And they did fall down at the feet of Jesus, and did worship him. (3 Ne. 11:13–17)

How long would it have taken 2,500 people—one by one—to touch the Savior and feel the identifying marks for themselves? If we assume a mere two seconds per person, it would take about one hour and 20 minutes. Five seconds per person (still a relative short time) would consume over three hours.

The twelve disciples are called

During the first day, the Savior called Nephi and eleven others and gave them power to baptize the people. This authority appears to have been bestowed verbally and not by ordination (3 Ne. 11:18–41; 12:1). These are the names of the twelve disciples who were chosen and called: “Nephi and his brother whom he had raised from the dead, whose name was Timothy, and also his son, whose name was Jonas, and also Mathoni, and Mathonihah, his brother, and Kumen, and Kumenonhi, and Jeremiah, and Shemnon, and Jonas, and Zedekiah, and Isaiah” (3 Ne. 19:4).

The Savior instructs his twelve disciples and teaches the multitude

During the first day, the Savior taught the people of Nephi doctrine similar to the Sermon on the Mount as found in *The Gospel of Matthew* in the New Testament—including the Beatitudes. In contrast to Matthew’s account, the Book of Mormon record clearly indicates the Savior broke the continuity of his message five times by turning to his twelve disciples to give them specific instructions that were not directed to the rest of the multitude. After each instance, the Savior returned to the multitude to give them general teachings that applied to all. Being cognizant of this switching between the two dissimilar audiences and the changing intent of the messages is crucial to an understanding of the Savior’s teachings to the people of Nephi. Here is a listing of the key references and the sequencing in the text where the targeted audience changes.

Speaking to the multitude.....	3 Ne. 11:9–17
Speaking to the twelve disciples	3 Ne. 11:18–41
Speaking to the multitude	3 Ne. 12:1 to 13:24
Speaking to the twelve disciples	3 Ne. 13:25–34
Speaking to the multitude	3 Ne. 14:1 to 15:10
Speaking to the twelve disciples	3 Ne. 15:11 to 16:20
Speaking to the multitude.....	3 Ne. 17:1–25
Speaking to the twelve disciples	3 Ne. 18:1–16
Speaking to the multitude.....	3 Ne. 18:17–25
Speaking to the twelve disciples	3 Ne. 18:26–37

The switching back and forth between these two groups is no small thing. For example, the Savior tells his twelve disciples to,

Take therefore no thought for the morrow, for the morrow shall take thought for the things of itself. Sufficient is the day unto the evil thereof. (3 Ne. 13:34)

This command of taking “no thought for the morrow” could be considered an irresponsible act if directed to the multitude but an essential practice for the twelve disciples who were to leave their employment and even their families and go among the people to teach and baptize.

If one follows the parallel references and switching outlined above as a guide, this changing of audiences between the twelve apostles and the multitude is also apparent in Matthew’s account of the Sermon on the Mount (see Matt. 5:1 – 8:1). It is helpful to note the small but significant changes made to Matthew’s record in the Joseph Smith Translation (JST).

In the spirit of inquiry, we have attempted to determine how long the Savior spoke to the multitude on the first day, that is, the length of his message as recorded in *Third Nephi*. We should, however, temper and qualify such an exercise by first quoting from Mormon.

And now there cannot be written in this book even a hundredth part of the things which Jesus did truly teach unto the people;

But behold the plates of Nephi do contain the more part of the things which he taught the people.

And these things have I written, which are a lesser part of the things which he taught the people; and I have written them to the intent that they may be brought again unto this people, from the Gentiles, according to the words which Jesus hath spoken.

...

Therefore, I would that ye should behold that the Lord truly did teach the people, for the space of three days; and after that he did show himself unto them oft, and did break bread oft, and bless it, and give it unto them. (3 Ne. 26:6–8, 13)

As stated by Mormon, we have in his record only a “hundredth part of the things which Jesus” taught the people. Does this mean only a “hundredth part” of what was taught the first day? Or is Mormon referring to the total teachings of the Savior over three days plus the succeeding days when he “did show himself unto them oft”? Or is our record of the first day a more complete account than our record of the Savior’s subsequent visits?

Nonetheless, if we count the number of words the Savior actually spoke on the first day as recorded in Third Nephi, chapters 11 to 18, the count tallies about 6,300 words. Then by calculating the time to speak these same words, using the rate of spoken speech of the voice reading the *LDS Internet Scriptures*, this

Title change to Third and Fourth Nephi

In the 1879 edition of the Book of Mormon, the titles, “Third Nephi” and “Fourth Nephi” were added to the books now bearing these names. When the Book of Mormon was first published in 1830, their original title, “The Book of Nephi,” was identical for both books, causing confusion between the two and with two other books, the First Book of Nephi and the Second Book of Nephi. The original titles now serve as part of the subtitles for the two modified books.

amounts to a total time of some 54 minutes or nearly an hour. Again we caution: Based on Mormon's statement, we have only part of the Savior's message to the people of Nephi.

The Savior expounds on his Father's covenant with the house of Israel

The Savior revealed to the multitude that his Father had commanded him to teach concerning the scattering and gathering of the house of Israel, including the prophecies of Isaiah (3 Ne. 15:11 to 16:20). It should be noted that on the second day the Savior mentions his Father had commanded him to continue this same sermon on the covenant with the house of Israel. The continued sermon on the second day extends through some four chapters, from Third Nephi 20:10 to 23:5.

The sick and afflicted are healed

The Savior asked that their sick, blind, deaf and others with afflictions be brought forth so he could heal them.

And it came to pass that when Jesus had thus spoken, he cast his eyes round about again on the multitude, and beheld **they were in tears, and did look steadfastly upon him as if they would ask him to tarry a little longer with them.**

And he said unto them:

Behold, my bowels are filled with compassion towards you.

Have ye any that are sick among you? Bring them hither. Have ye any that are lame, or blind, or halt, or maimed, or leprous, or that are withered, or that are deaf, or that are afflicted in any manner? Bring them hither and I will heal them, for I have compassion upon you; my bowels are filled with mercy.

For I perceive that ye desire that I should show unto you what I have done unto your brethren at Jerusalem, for I see that your faith is sufficient that I should heal you.

And it came to pass that when he had thus spoken, all the multitude, with one accord, did go forth with their sick and their afflicted, and their lame, and with their blind, and with their dumb, and with all them that were afflicted in any manner; and he did heal them every one as they were brought forth unto him.

And they did all, both they who had been healed and they who were whole, bow down at his feet, and did worship him; and as many as could come for the multitude did kiss his feet, insomuch that they did bathe his feet with their tears. (3 Ne. 17:5–10)

If there were, say, 50 "affected" or "sick" among them whom they brought forth, how long would these healing blessings have taken? At 30 seconds per person, the total would be about 25 minutes.

The children are blessed

The Savior then requested that the children come forth so he could bless them “one by one” and pray to the Father in their behalf. In response, angels descended out of heaven and ministered to the children.

And it came to pass that **he commanded that their little children should be brought.**

So they brought their little children and set them down upon the ground round about him, and Jesus stood in the midst; and the multitude gave way till they had all been brought unto him.

And it came to pass that when they had all been brought, and Jesus stood in the midst, he commanded the multitude that they should kneel down upon the ground.

...

And it came to pass that Jesus spake unto them, and bade them arise.

And they arose from the earth, and he said unto them:

Blessed are ye because of your faith. And now behold, my joy is full.

And when he had said these words, he wept, and the multitude bare record of it, **and he took their little children, one by one, and blessed them, and prayed unto the Father for them.**

And when he had done this he wept again; And he spake unto the multitude, and said unto them:

Behold your little ones.

And as they looked to behold they cast their eyes towards heaven, and they saw the heavens open, and they saw angels descending out of heaven as it were in the midst of fire; and they came down and encircled those little ones about, and they were encircled about with fire; **and the angels did minister unto them.**

And the multitude did see and hear and bear record; and they know that their record is true for they all of them did see and hear, every man for himself; **and they were in number about two thousand and five hundred souls; and they did consist of men, women, and children.** (3 Ne. 17:11–13, 19–25)



Jesus wept and “took their little children, one by one, and blessed them.” (3 Nephi 17:21)

Depending on their ages, there could have been 500 or more children who were blessed “one by one” by the Savior. How long would that remarkable event have taken? If each blessing required 10 seconds, the total time would have been some two hours.

All partake of the sacrament

The Savior himself blessed the sacramental emblems after commanding his disciples to “bring forth some bread and wine.” This was the first time the people of Nephi would have participated in the ordinance of the sacrament. The Savior earlier declared that the sacrificial requirements of the law of Moses had been given by him, and he had “come to fulfil the law; therefore it hath an end” (3 Ne. 15:2–8; see also, 2 Ne. 25:24–30; 26:1; Alma 25:15–16; 3 Ne. 1:24–25; 9:17–20; 4 Ne. 1:10–12; Gal. 3:24–25). Understandably, the “ending” of the requirements and practices of the law of Moses had far-reaching implications to the people of Nephi and also the early Church in New Testament times.

And it came to pass that **Jesus commanded his disciples that they should bring forth some bread and wine unto him.**

And while they were gone for bread and wine, he commanded the multitude that they should sit themselves down upon the earth.

And when the disciples had come with bread and wine, he took of the bread and brake and blessed it; and he gave unto the disciples and commanded that they should eat.

And when they had eaten and were filled, he commanded that they should give unto the multitude.

...

And it came to pass ..., **he commanded his disciples that they should take of the wine of the cup and drink of it, and that they should also give unto the multitude that they might drink of it.**

And it came to pass that they did so, and did drink of it and were filled; and they gave unto the multitude, and they did drink, and they were filled. (3 Ne. 18:1–4, 8–9)

Assuming all 2,500 in attendance partook of the sacrament of bread and wine, how long would this event have taken? The record states that the twelve disciples were the ones who gave the emblems of the sacrament to the multitude. At three to five seconds per person and with twelve disciples distributing the bread and wine, the service would have taken some 15 to 20 minutes for each emblem or 30 to 40 minutes in total.

How long was the Savior’s visit the first day?

As we have noted, there are several clues in the Book of Mormon account that may throw some light on the extent of the Savior’s visit the first day. A rough merging of the length of the spoken word and the practicable time for 2,500 people to individually approach and touch the Savior, the sick and afflicted to be healed, the children to be blessed and the whole multitude to partake of the sacrament calculates to a range of some four to seven hours. As we have cautioned, unknown factors could greatly alter this time.

The record supports a day-time visit by the Savior. Before the descending of the Savior from the heavens, the account states that the people were “showing” one to another the “change which had taken place” (3 Ne. 11:1). It would be difficult to “show” change to others if it were not during daylight hours. Somewhat later, at the end of the Savior’s first-day visit, the record states.

And it came to pass that when Jesus had touched them all, **there came a cloud and overshadowed the multitude that they could not see Jesus.**

And while they were overshadowed he departed from them, and ascended into heaven. And the disciples saw and did bear record that he ascended again into heaven. (3 Ne. 18:38–39)

A cloud could not “overshadow” if it were not daytime. We suggest the Savior on the first day *descended* in daylight and *ascended* in daylight. The record states that the people began to spread the news of the Savior’s first-day visit to others, “before it was yet dark” (3 Ne. 19:1–3). The Savior asked the multitude to return the following day on “the morrow” (3 Ne. 17:3; 19:2–4; see also, 26:16). In the Hebrew (Nephite) calendar, “the morrow,” commonly referred to the “morning,” the time between the first appearance of light and sunrise, a variable period of dawn lasting about an hour.

At the close of his visit the first day, the Savior gave these instructions to the multitude.

I perceive that ye are weak, that ye cannot understand all my words which I am commanded of the Father to speak unto you at this time.

Therefore, go ye unto your homes, and ponder upon the things which I have said, and ask of the Father, in my name, that ye may understand, and prepare your minds for the morrow, and I come unto you again. (3 Ne. 17:2–3)

The Second Day of the Savior's Visit

The account of the Savior's visit on the second day is found in Third Nephi 19:4 to 26:15. These eight chapters cover fewer verses of text (178) compared to the account of the Savior's visit the first day (237 verses). On the second day the original multitude returned and the number in attendance increased as others from greater distances arrived to see and hear the Savior. The record explains the reason for the increase.

And now it came to pass that when Jesus had ascended into heaven, **the multitude did disperse**, and every man did take his wife and his children and did return to his own home.

And it was noised abroad among the people immediately, before it was yet dark, that the multitude had seen Jesus, and that he had ministered unto them, and that he would also show himself on the morrow unto the multitude.

Yea, and even all the night it was noised abroad concerning Jesus; and insomuch did they send forth unto the people that there were many, yea, an exceedingly great number, did labor exceedingly all that night, that they might be on the morrow in the place where Jesus should show himself unto the multitude. (3 Ne. 19:1–3)

The words, “noised abroad,” is an older English phrase meaning, “announced loudly or resoundingly over a broad or wide area.” The word “resounding” meant, even “loud enough to echo.” Understandably, those in attendance the first day would want others to know the Savior had appeared and to prepare for his coming on the second day. This “noised abroad” communication effort even continued during the night. How far afield could the “good news” be carried under the conditions mentioned? If we assume this exercise of spreading the word began at, say, 5:00 in the afternoon and continued all night until 6:00 in the morning, this would be a total time of 12 to 14 hours. Any messengers sent with the “good news,” however, could only travel outward for half the time, some six to seven hours before they and those they talked to would need to quickly return to the central location where the Savior was to reappear. Both the journey “out” and the journey “back” would take about the same amount of time. Because of mainly nighttime travel and a wilderness terrain, we would suggest a travel time of some two to three miles per hour. This would yield a radius of “noised abroad” communication of about 15 miles. Those living in distant locations had to be far enough away that they could not hear, see or feel that something was happening, otherwise they could have scurried to the scene the first day, even if they arrived late.

The Book of Mormon account does not mention how many more arrived on the second day, but states that “an exceedingly great number, did labor exceedingly all that night, that they might be on the morrow in the place where Jesus should show himself unto the multitude” (3 Ne. 19:3). In older English, the term, “exceedingly,” (used many times in the Book of Mormon text) meant “of surpassing excellence” or “overstepping the limits of propriety or custom; going to extremes.” Given the sparseness of settlements in the land of Bountiful mentioned in the text, we suggest that the attendance on the second day may have only doubled, for a combined total of some 5,000, or possibly even less (see section, “Geographical Location and Setting of the Land of Bountiful,” later in the article).

Significant events during the second day

The twelve disciples prepare for the Savior’s second visit

Early in the morning, the twelve disciples who were called to their assignment the previous day, divided the people into “twelve bodies” because the “multitude was so great” (3 Ne. 19:5). The twelve taught the people and caused them to kneel down and “pray unto the Father in the name of Jesus” (3 Ne. 19:6). The disciples also prayed to the Father. The disciples then ministered to the multitude, and they all prayed again. To “minister” in older English meant “to communicate or make known,” or in other words, “to teach.” In this case, the disciples ministered by making known “the same words” that Jesus had taught on the first day (3 Ne. 19:8). Many, of course, would not have heard the Savior’s teachings on the first day because they were not in attendance.

The twelve disciples are baptized

The twelve disciples then went to the “water’s edge” to be baptized (rebaptized?), and the multitude followed (3 Ne. 19:10). The text does not indicate the nature or location of the “water’s edge.” It could have been a river’s edge (a bank) or the edge of a sea (a seashore) or even the edge of a lagoon or any pool or collection of spring water. The word “water’s” does not appear elsewhere in the Book of Mormon record, but “waters” (without the apostrophe) in older English was a common expression for bodies of water and occurs numerous times. We note that in none of the descriptions of the Book of Mormon lands is the word “lake” used to describe a body of water. In Baja California, and especially in the central area of the peninsula where we place the land of Bountiful, the main source of water is springs, not the typical system of tributaries with rivers and lakes found in more humid lands (see text box, “*The Water’s Edge*”). Here at the “water’s edge” Nephi was baptized. There is no mention of who baptized Nephi. All of the twelve disciples received

the power to baptize directly from the Savior the previous day. Then Nephi himself baptized the other eleven disciples. The baptisms of the twelve disciples by Nephi would not have required a large body of water. The record states:

And it came to pass that **Nephi went down into the water and was baptized.**

And he came up out of the water and began to baptize. And he baptized all those whom Jesus had chosen.

And it came to pass when **they were all baptized and had come up out of the water,** ... (3 Ne. 19:11–13)

Note that Nephi “went down into the water and was baptized” and “came up out of the water,” possibly implying that the baptismal site was specially configured with steps for entry. Elsewhere in the Book of Mormon record those being baptized “go forth into the water,” for example into the waters of Mormon where Alma baptized some 204 people (Mosiah 18:15–18; see also, 1 Ne. 11:27; Mosiah 25:18).

Baptism was not a new ordinance among the people of Nephi, but had been practiced throughout their history (see, for example, 2 Ne. 31:4–12; Mosiah 18:10–17; 25:17–18; 3 Ne. 7:24–26). Therefore there could have existed at this time a prepared baptismal site within the city of Bountiful. Next, the Holy Ghost “did fall upon” the twelve disciples and “they were filled with the Holy Ghost and with fire” (3 Ne. 19:13). The multitude witnessed

“The Water’s Edge”

Smaller bodies of water are called “waters” or “fountains” in the Book of Mormon record. This may help in understanding the meaning of the phrase, “water’s edge” in 3 Ne. 19:10. For example, the waters of Mormon where Alma baptized in the land of Nephi are described as a “fountain of pure water” (Mosiah 18:5–30). In older English, a “fountain” is a container or reservoir of water or other liquids, such as the small reservoir in a fountain pen—the place where ink is held. A baptismal font is a fountain containing water. The word font is the same as a fountain in this context. The word font in relationship to fountain is the same as the word mount is to mountain. Font can also be spelled fount. This definition of the word “fountain”—a source, container or smaller body of water—may help in understanding its connotation in the Book of Mormon account, not only in parsing the phrases, “water’s edge,” “head of Sidon” and “fountain of pure water,” describing the waters of Mormon, but possibly its meaning in the phrase, “fountain of the Red Sea,” mentioned by Nephi (1 Ne. 2:9), and also the phrases “fountain of living waters” and “fountain of filthy water” in the vision of the tree of life recorded by Lehi and Nephi (1 Ne. 8:20, 32; 11:25; 12:16; see also, Morm. 6:4; Ether 8:26; 12:28; Moro. 7:11). Today, “fountains” are designated by such terms as lagoons, pools, springs, fountainheads, gulfs or estuaries. The Book of Mormon record does not equate a “fountain” of water with the phrase, “many waters,” which, as we have noted elsewhere, refers to seas (1 Ne. 17:5). We emphasize again that in none of the descriptions of the Book of Mormon lands is the word “lake” used to describe a body of water.

this event and “angels did come down out of heaven and did minister [teach] unto them” (3 Ne. 19:14). Note that *no others* within the multitude were baptized at that time nor at any time on the second or even the first day. It is not until the third and subsequent days that others are baptized.



The remains of a stone structure containing a natural hot spring at the site of the San Borja Mission—a plausible location for the Book of Mormon city of Bountiful.

The Savior appears and prays three times

At this point in Mormon’s narrative the Savior “came and stood in the midst and ministered [taught] unto them” (3 Ne. 19:15). It appears the Savior did not descend out of heaven, as he did the first day, but merely “came” and “stood in the midst” of them. The Savior commanded the twelve disciples and the multitude to kneel on the earth. He next commanded the twelve disciples to pray unto him. Later the Savior mentions that they prayed unto him (and not the Father) because he was there among them (3 Ne. 19:22).

The Savior then departed out of their midst, “a little way off,” which in older English meant “a little distance away.”

The Savior then offered a prayer to the Father and returned to where the twelve disciples were still praying words that were “given them” (3 Ne. 19:24). The countenances of the twelve were white like the Savior’s. The Savior commanded them to continue praying. He departed “a little way off” again and prayed to the Father the second time for his disciples and all who believed on “them.” He returned and blessed the multitude and “his countenance did shine upon them.” The whiteness of his countenance and his garments “did exceed all the whiteness, yea, even there could be nothing upon earth so white as the whiteness thereof” (3 Ne. 19:25). The Savior then departed again “a little way off” and prayed the third time to the Father. The account states the multitude did not hear the words of this third prayer (3 Ne. 19:33–34). The record, however, does not indicate if the multitude heard the words of the Savior’s previous two prayers.

The Savior returned to the assembled multitude and lauded their faith and said they had *seen* and *heard* great things—more than others have seen and heard. He then commanded the multitude and the disciples to cease praying. The text seems to imply that one of the twelve disciples had prayed as the “voice” of the people. In other words, the multitude were not all verbally praying simultaneously. The Savior then commanded all of them to arise. They had been kneeling from the time the Savior first departed “a little way off” to pray (3 Ne. 19:16 – 20:2).

The ordinance of Sacrament observed

The people again partook of the sacrament, as they had the previous day. We note the Savior is the one who performed the *blessing*, the *breaking* and the *giving* of the emblematic bread to the twelve disciples. The Savior then commanded the twelve to break and give the bread to the multitude. The Savior provided wine to the twelve disciples and commanded them to give wine to the multitude. We note the source of the bread and wine is not stated, but the record indicates “there had been no bread, neither wine, brought by the disciples, neither by the multitude” (3 Ne. 20:6). Because the Savior’s visit had been “noised” abroad between the first and second days, potentially there would have been more people participating in this sacrament service than on the first day when some 2,500 were in attendance. The multitude was filled by the spirit and gave glory to the Savior for what they both saw and heard (3 Ne. 20:3–9).

The Savior continues his sermon on the house of Israel and the words of Isaiah

On the second day, the Father commanded the Savior to recommence the sermon on the house of Israel he had begun the first day (3 Ne. 15:11 to 16:20). The record of the Savior's continuation of this sermon extends through some four chapters, from Third Nephi 20:10 to 23:5. The Savior noted he had ended this sermon on the first day by quoting the words of Isaiah (3 Ne. 16:17–20). He then continued to expound on the prophecies of Isaiah and encouraged his listeners to search the words of this prophet (3 Ne. 20:11). In this lengthy sermon, which addresses the doctrine surrounding the scattering and gathering of the house of Israel, the Savior intersperses the prophecies of Isaiah with his own words and the words of his Father. In total, this doctrinally laden sermon extends through six chapters and is best read as a single discourse.

The Savior asks for Nephi's records

The Savior commanded Nephi to bring forth his records (3 Ne. 23:7–13). It would appear the records were located close by. These records would have been the ones currently being kept by Nephi which became part of the large plates of Nephi comprising the major Nephite history. In other words, Nephi is only commanded to “bring forth the record which [he had] kept,” not the complete Nephite record contained on the much larger plates of Nephi and other records he had inherited from his father and handed down from generation to generation (Alma 63:10–13; Hel. 3:13–16; 3 Ne. 1:1–3). We suggest this larger trove of records would have been brought from the city of Zarahemla when Nephi and many of his followers moved to the city of Bountiful not many months before (see section below, “Why was the frontier land of Bountiful the site for the Savior's visit?”). The Savior then reprimanded Nephi for not including in his record an account of the coming forth of many out of their graves at the time of the Savior's resurrection, and their appearing to many and ministering to them (3 Ne. 23:9). We note these remarkable resurrection events would have taken place only a few weeks before the Savior's visit (see section below, “What was the time of the year when the Savior visited the people of Nephi?”). The Savior reminded his listeners that the resurrection of their people had been prophesied by Samuel the Lamanite (Hel. 14:25).

The Savior expounds the scriptures

The Savior then expounded all scriptures in one. Expounds means “to give significance” and “in one” means to do it in a unified manner. The Savior asked that “they should teach the things which he had expounded unto them” (3 Ne. 23:14).

The Savior provides the words of Malachi

Through some unstated means, the Savior brought forth the words of his Father to the prophet Malachi, as found in the last two chapters of the last book of the *King James* version of the Old Testament. Malachi lived sometime after Lehi's family left Jerusalem, therefore these prophecies would not have been engraved on the brass plates the Nephites brought to their new land. The words the Father gave to Malachi, and in turn to the people of Nephi, are found in Third Nephi 24:1–18 and 25:1–6.

The Savior ministers to the children

The Savior did not forget the children within the multitude. He taught and ministered unto them and “and he did loose their tongues, and they did speak unto their fathers great and marvelous things, even greater than he had revealed unto the people; and he loosed their tongues that they could utter” (3 Ne. 26:14).

The Savior ascends into heaven

At the close of his visit on the second day, the Savior “ascended into heaven,” even though it seems he had not descended earlier that day when he appeared “in the midst” of the multitude. Mormon at this point lists a number of events which occurred while the Savior was among them.

And it came to pass that after he had ascended into heaven—the second time that he showed himself unto them, and had gone unto the Father, **after having healed all their sick, and their lame, and opened the eyes of their blind and unstopped the ears of the deaf, and even had done all manner of cures among them, and raised a man from the dead,** and had shown forth his power unto them, and had ascended unto the Father. (3 Ne. 26:15)

The record does not include sufficient information to approximate the length of the Savior's visit on the second day. The events of that day, like the first day, consisted of preaching, praying, administering the sacrament by the twelve disciples, commenting on the scriptures and expounding doctrine. The visit on the first day, however, included several “one on one” events between the Savior and those in attendance, such as touching each person, blessing each of the children and healing the sick and afflicted—all of which, as we have noted, could have taken considerable time.

The Events of the Third Day

In contrast to the more complete accounts of the first and second days, the record of the third day consists of only three verses.

Behold, it came to pass **on the morrow** that the multitude gathered themselves together, and they both saw and heard these children; yea, even babes did open their mouths and utter marvelous things; and the things which they did utter were forbidden that there should not any man write them.

And it came to pass that **the disciples whom Jesus had chosen began from that time forth to baptize and to teach as many as did come unto them**; and as many as were baptized in the name of Jesus were filled with the Holy Ghost.

And many of them saw and heard unspeakable things, which are not lawful to be written.

(3 Ne. 26:16–18)

On this third day, the multitude came once more “on the morrow.” We note the Book of Mormon account does not directly state the Savior visited the multitude on the third day, however, Mormon later indicates the Savior taught “the people, for the space of three days” (3 Ne. 26:13).

On this third day, children, “yea, even babes did open their mouths and utter marvelous things; and the things which they did utter were forbidden that there should not any man write them” (3 Ne. 26:16). The record indicates the twelve disciples “began from that time forth to baptize” (3 Ne. 26:17; see also 3 Ne. 27:1; 4 Ne. 1:1). As noted above, prior to this time *only* the twelve disciples were baptized, an event which took place on the second day.

The Savior's Visits on Subsequent Days

Mormon states the Savior visited the people of Nephi several times after the first three days.

Therefore, I would that ye should behold that **the Lord truly did teach the people, for the space of three days; and after that he did show himself unto them oft**, and did break bread oft, and bless it, and give it unto them (3 Ne. 26:13).

The word “oft” in older English meant “many a time” or “at frequent intervals of space.” In current English it has been replaced by the word, “often.” We do not know how “often” the Savior met with the people at these later times, but a subsequent visit to the twelve disciples while they were journeying, preaching and baptizing was recorded by Mormon (3 Ne. 27:1 – 28:12). The twelve disciples were “united in mighty prayer and fasting” when the Savior appeared to them (3 Ne 27:1–2). The disciples asked the Savior what they should name their church, and he replied: “ye shall call the church in my name” (3 Ne. 27:7). The Savior then commanded them “to write the works of this people,” for “out of the books which have been written, and which shall be written, shall this people be judged, for by them shall their works be known unto men” (3 Ne. 27:2–33).

Three of the twelve disciples asked the Savior if they could live longer and not taste of death. Their request was granted (3 Ne. 28:1–11). After this visit, the Savior departed from their presence, and the three disciples who were to tarry “were caught up into heaven, and saw and heard unspeakable things” (3 Ne. 28:12–13). Mormon explains the role and status of these three disciples at some length (3 Ne. 28:12–40). The record does not indicate whether the three disciples are Nephites or Lamanites or descendants of the other five branches of father Lehi’s family represented among the people of Nephi at that time (Jacob 1:12–14; Alma 47:35; 4 Ne. 1:36–38; Morm. 1:8–9; D&C 3:16–20). They are commonly referred to as the “Three Nephites,” a designation without an explicit scriptural foundation (see 4 Ne. 1:2, 14, 36–37; Morm. 8:10–11).

Mormon concludes his record of the Savior’s several visits to the people of Nephi by providing doctrine on the covenants of the Father with the children of Israel (3 Ne. 29). Mormon states that these covenants will begin to be fulfilled when the Book of Mormon comes forth in our day—the latter days. The last chapter of Mormon’s account includes words of warning to the Gentiles as provided by the Savior (3 Ne. 30:1–2).

Geographical Setting of the Land of Bountiful

As we have noted, the several visits of the Savior to the people of Nephi took place in the land of Bountiful. With the exception of the land of Zarahemla, there is more information in the Book of Mormon record concerning the land of Bountiful than any other land. The following are geographical observations gleaned from the text.

The meaning of the word “Bountiful” in the Book of Mormon record

In the toponymy of the Book of Mormon lands, some cities and places carry names descriptive of their location such as “Bountiful” and “Desolation.” Pleasant Grove, Salt Lake City and Woodland are examples of cities with descriptive names in Utah. The Book of

Mormon people named two widely separated locations with the designation of “Bountiful.” One was on the eastern coast of Arabia after an eight-year land journey from Jerusalem, the other in their new homeland —the location where the Savior visited the people of Nephi after his resurrection.

When describing a place, the term “Bountiful” in older English meant: “characterized by *bounty*, abundantly yielding; also, ample, abundant, plenteous.” The term,

understandably, is based on the word “bounty” which meant in older English: possessing a “good quality or property.” These older definitions should not be confused with contemporary meanings and images that may be conjured up in one’s mind when encountering the name “Bountiful.”

What was the “good quality or property” that existed on the shores of Arabia where Lehi’s family camped for “the space of many days” that would justify calling the location “Bountiful”? The record provides an answer.



Xerophytic and succulent vegetation in the area surrounding San Borja, in central Baja California (land of Bountiful). This assemblage of giant and prolific boojums, white elephant trees, datilillos, organ pipe and cardon cacti is unrivaled in the world.

And we did come to **the land which we called Bountiful, because of its much fruit and also wild honey**; and all these things were prepared of the Lord that we might not perish. (1 Ne. 17:5; see also, verse 6)

Thus the “good quality or property” was the “much fruit and also wild honey.” In older English, the term “fruit” meant fruit as we use the word today, but also included vegetables and nuts.

In contrast, what was the “good quality or property” that existed in the land of Bountiful within the narrow neck of land, north of the land of Zarahemla? The Book of Mormon record again provides an answer.

Thus the land on the northward [of the narrow neck of land] was called Desolation, **and the land on the southward was called Bountiful, it being the wilderness which is filled with all manner of wild animals of every kind, a part of which had come from the land northward for food.** (Alma 22:31)

The “good quality or property” of the land of Bountiful in their new land was its “wilderness which [was] filled with all manner of wild animals of every kind,” including some animals who “had come from the land northward for food”—possibly seasonally or in times of environmental stress on the natural vegetation. The term “wilderness” in older English meant “a land inhabited by wild animals.” The “wild” in the word wilderness refers to wild animals.



Bighorn sheep in the wilderness area surrounding San Borja, in central Baja California (land of Bountiful).

The Jaredites went into this same land of Bountiful, “to hunt food for the people of the land, for the land was covered with animals of the forest,” and “they did preserve [this] land ... for a wilderness, to get game” (Ether 10:19, 21). Today, the area of Baja California where we place the land of Bountiful continues to be a highly favorable wilderness habitat for wild game, such as deer, pronghorns, wild goats, bighorn sheep, game birds

and rabbits, and for fish of the sea. The area has a variety of environments: a “sea east” and a “sea west”; patches of land for growing crops; flat coastal areas favored by pronghorns; hill country inhabited by deer and rugged, high mountainous terrain (up to 5,000 feet) for bighorn sheep and other animals.

The two locations—the “Bountiful” along the coast of Arabia and the “land of Bountiful” in their new land—are thus named “Bountiful” for similar reasons, even though they were located in two rather different landscapes. It was the food producing “qualities and properties” contained within the two areas that warranted calling them “Bountiful.”

Where was the land of Bountiful relative to other Book of Mormon lands?

According to Mormon’s descriptions of the Book of Mormon lands, the land of Bountiful was north of the land of Zarahemla and south of the land of Desolation (Alma 22:29–33). The land of Zarahemla was possessed by the Nephites “on the north, even until they came to the land which they called Bountiful” (Alma 22:29). The land of Bountiful is described as being “inhabited” by the Nephites, “even from the east unto the west sea” (Alma 22:33). A west to east fortified defense line separated the lands of Bountiful and Desolation and created a major “northward” and “southward” division of the Book of Mormon lands.

Thus the land on the northward was called Desolation, and the land on the southward was called Bountiful, it being the wilderness which is filled with all manner of wild animals of every kind, a part of which had come from the land northward for food.

And now, it was only the distance of a day and a half’s journey for a Nephite, on the line Bountiful and



The land of Bountiful between land of Zarahemla and land of Desolation.

the land Desolation, from the east to the west sea; there being a small neck of land between the land northward and the land southward. (Alma 22:31–32; see also, Hel. 11:20)

And there they did fortify against the Lamanites, from the west sea, even unto the east; it being a day's journey for a Nephite, on the line which they had fortified and stationed their armies to defend their north country. (Hel. 4:7)

These references indicate the fortified defense line extended from the “sea west” to the “sea east,” and suggest the Nephites used their two constricted or narrow sea coast boundaries (a journey of about a day apart) to shorten this defense line which was designed to stop the Lamanites who were trying to extend their territory into the frontier areas of the “land northward” (Alma 22: 32–34).

And it came to pass that the Nephites had inhabited the land Bountiful, even from the east unto the west sea, and thus the **Nephites** in their wisdom, with their guards and their armies, **had hemmed in the Lamanites on the south, that thereby they should have no more possession on the north,** that they might not overrun the land northward. (Alma 22:33)

Thus the land of Bountiful adjoined the land of Desolation to the north, which also extended from the “sea west” to the “sea east.” The fortified line between the land of Desolation on the north and the land of Bountiful on the south also extended between these two seas. These are the same two seas, the “sea west” and the “sea east,” that bordered all the lands to the south—the land of Zarahemla, the narrow strip of wilderness, the land of Nephi and the land of first inheritance where Lehi's family landed. (See our article, *“From the Sea West to the Sea East”: The Orientation of the Book of Mormon Lands to the Sea*)

There are three references to a “narrow neck of land” or “small neck of land,” located in the area where the land of Desolation and the land of Bountiful were contiguous (Alma 22:32, Alma 63:5, Ether 10:20).

And now, it was only the distance of a day and a half's journey for a Nephite, on the line Bountiful and the land Desolation, from the east to the west sea; and thus the land of Nephi and the land of Zarahemla were nearly surrounded by water, **there being a small neck of land between the land northward and the land southward.** (Alma 22:32; see also, Hel. 4:7)

The “narrow neck of land” was also bordered by a sea on the east and a sea on the west. Its narrow “neck” was the result of the constriction of the land between the two seas at

that location. (See “Distinctive Features of the Narrow Neck of Land” in our article, *The Narrow Neck of Land: A Touchstone of Book of Mormon Geography*)

In Mormon’s account, the sea to the west of the land of Bountiful by the “narrow neck of land” was the location where Hagoth, a “curious [older English for skilled] man,” launched forth his “large ship.”

And it came to pass that **Hagoth**, he being an exceedingly curious man, therefore he went forth and **built him an exceedingly large ship, on the borders of the land Bountiful, by the land Desolation, and launched it forth into the west sea, by the narrow neck** which led into the land northward. (Alma 63:5; see also, Alma 63:7–8, 10; Hel. 3:10, 14)

According to this description of Hagoth’s launching location, the “land Bountiful,” the “land Desolation” and the “narrow neck” of land all shared the same sea on the west.

Where was the location within the land Bountiful where the Savior visited?

The text states the Savior appeared to the people of Nephi in the land of Bountiful but curiously does not mention the city of Bountiful as the location of the temple and the gathered multitude. It is common in the Book of Mormon record, however, to interchange “city” and “land” when referring to the location of major cities (see, for example, Alma 53:3). Nonetheless, the city of Bountiful is noted numerous places in the text, but more importantly, *it is the only city* mentioned as being within the land Bountiful, even though “the Nephites had inhabited the land Bountiful, even from the east unto the west sea” (Alma 22:33). For these reasons, we suggest the temple was located at the city of Bountiful.

The land of Bountiful, because of its wilderness setting and its location on the northern frontier of the more sparsely settled Nephite lands, would not have had towns and villages of some size. But there could have been small agricultural areas in places of water, such as springs, hence the text uses the word “inhabited” to describe the settlement patterns (Alma 22:33). In contrast, the Book of Mormon record mentions numerous towns and cities by name for the major lands of Zarahemla, Nephi and Desolation. Similar to the land of Bountiful, the extensive 200-mile narrow strip of wilderness south of the land of Zarahemla had only two small settlements—Helam and Amulon. Today these two major wilderness areas in Baja California—the narrow strip of wilderness and the land of Bountiful—display this same sparsely settled pattern with only a few small settlements and no major towns or cities.

Land of Nephi	Narrow Strip of Wilderness	Land of Zarahemla	Land of Bountiful	Land of Desolation
Aaron Ani-Anti Ishmael Jerusalem Lehi-Nephi Lemuel Middoni Midian Mormon Nephi Sebus Shemlon Shilom Shimnilom	Amulon Helam	Ammonihah Amnihu Angola Antionum Antiparah Antipas Cumeni Gid Gideon Hermounts Jershon Lehi Manti Melek Minon Morianton Moroni Mulek Nephiahah Noah Omner Onidah Riplah Sidom Sidon Siron Zarahemla	Bountiful	Ablom Agosh Antum Comnor Cumorah Desolation Ephraim Gilgal Heshlon Heth Jashon Moron Ogath Ramah Shim Shurr Teancum Zerim

Cities and place names associated with the major Book of Mormon lands. Note the scarcity of place names in “the narrow strip of wilderness” and “the land of Bountiful.”

We suggest an inland location for the city of Bountiful. Our studies have shown that covenant-keeping Book of Mormon people were seldom located at seashore locations but in inland settings, for example, the major cities of Nephi, Zarahemla and Manti. The only exceptions were small fortified defense towns at strategic coastal locations that only lasted for a few decades. This was the same pattern among the faithful in Biblical times, for example, the major inland cities of Jerusalem, Shechem, Bethel, Nazareth and many others. A prime reason for favoring inland locations was the law of Moses which forbid the eating of many sea-based animal species in coastal locations by those who observed the food avoidance statutes of this divine law.

All the Book of Mormon references for the city of Bountiful match or point to San Borja (Misión San Francisco de Borja Adac), an intriguing and historic inland location within where we place the land of Bountiful in Baja California. This is also verified by our fieldwork in the area. The Mission location contains hot and cold springs and in the past supported the most productive agriculture in that part of the peninsula. The rugged terrain

surrounding the Mission setting provides numerous habitats for wild game. Stone walls still encircle the site, corresponding to the defensive barrier erected by the Book of Mormon people (Alma 53:3–5). There is no other location within the area where we place the land of Bountiful that matches the environmental advantages of San Borja. In 1762 this location became the site of a Jesuit Catholic mission serving some 1,700 Adac Indians. In less than six decades nearly all died from European diseases, and today only one Adac family remains as caretakers of what remains of the Mission. Even before the arrival of the Jesuits, and later the Franciscan and Dominican missionaries, the Adac Indians favored this location as a major place of settlement. (See the section, “History of the San Borja Mission,” at the end of this article)

What was the physical environment of the city and land of Bountiful?

The Savior in his teachings to the people of Nephi in the land of Bountiful mentioned many physical and environmental items that would likely have been part of their culture. Here is an example: “Do men gather grapes of thorns, or figs of thistles?” (3 Ne. 14:16). He also declared: “Consider the lilies of the field how they grow; they toil not, neither do they spin” (3 Ne. 13:28). We anticipate the Lord would not mention grapes, thorns, figs, thistles or lilies if the people had not been acquainted with these plants, or if they were not part of their environment and culture. There are several more items mentioned in the Savior’s teachings to the people of Nephi. We list them here in the order they first appear in the Book of Mormon record. Some items are from the prophecies in the books of *Isaiah* and *Malachi*, as quoted by the Savior.



Cirio tree in the area of San Borja (land of Bountiful). This exotic tree is endemic to Baja California.

Physical and Environmental Items Mentioned in the Savior's Teachings

Salt (3 Ne. 12:13; 16:15)	Thorns (14:16)	Groves (21:18)
Synagogues (13:2, 5; 18:32)	Fruit (14:16)	Tents (22:2)
Moth (13:19–20)	Figs (14:16)	Cities (22:3)
Fowls of air (13:26)	Thistles (14:16)	Hills (22:10)
Lilies (13:28–29)	Tree (14:17–19)	Sapphires (22:11)
Grass of field (13:30)	Rain (14:25–27)	Agate (22:12–13)
Dogs (14:6)	Floods (14:25, 27)	Carbuncle (22:12–13)
Pearls (14:6)	Wine (18:1–3, 7–9; 20:5)	Coals in fire (22:16)
Swine (14:6)	Wheat (18:18)	Smith (Black) (22:16)
Bread (14:9; 18:1–3; 20:3–4; 26:13)	Fire (19:14)	Temple (24:1)
Fish (14:10)	Lion (20:16; 21:12)	Storehouse (24:10)
Serpent (14:10)	Sheaves (20:18)	House (24:10)
Sheep (14:15; 15:17, 21, 24; 16:1, 3; 20:16; 21:12)	Iron (20:19)	Fruit of ground (24:11)
Wolves (14:15)	Brass (20:19)	Vine (24:11)
Grapes (14:16)	Mountains (20:40; 22:10)	Field (24:11)
	Forest (21:12)	Calves in stall (25:2)
	Horses (21:14)	Silver (27:32)
	Chariots (21:14)	Gold (27:32)

As we have illustrated in several articles, all these animals, crops, minerals and features are present or can exist within the environment of Baja California and more specifically the land of Bountiful—even silver and gold and crops with limited growing habitats such as grapes and figs. (See our article, *Environmental Evidences: Confirming “Fingerprints” for Locating Book of Mormon Lands*)

Why was the frontier land of Bountiful the site for the Savior's visit?

The Book of Mormon record is silent on this subject, but background information in the text provides a plausible answer. During the three hours of destruction at the time of the Savior's crucifixion many cities were destroyed by earthquakes, fires and other natural disasters. The Savior at that time, by voice from heaven, named the 16 cities that were destroyed and the inhabitants perished (3 Ne. 9:1–15). The city of Bountiful is *not on this list*, but most likely would not have completely escaped the physical devastation. To this day, the rugged terrain immediately around the San Borja Mission (the city of Bountiful) conspicuously shows the effects of earthquakes, such as fissures and landslides.

At a time just prior to the Savior’s crucifixion, it appears the prophet Nephi and hundreds more moved to the frontier land of Bountiful to reach a place of refuge. Most tellingly, the Book of Mormon account mentions Nephi was still ministering to the people in the city of Zarahemla only one year before the crucifixion—A.D. 33 (see 3 Ne. 7:23; and also, 7:15–26). The city of Zarahemla had been the headquarters of church leaders, including Nephi and his father, Nephi, and their ancestors for some two hundred years, from the time of the first Mosiah, the father of king Benjamin. We suggest Nephi and others who followed the Lord’s admonition by relocating to the land of Bountiful were able to escape the wickedness in the land of Zarahemla and physically save their lives, if not their spiritual lives. Because of evil doings, the people who remained in Zarahemla at the time of the Savior’s crucifixion were destroyed by fire which came “down out of heaven” (Hel. 13:13). The Lord declared: “that great city Zarahemla have I burned with fire, and the inhabitants thereof” (3 Ne. 9:3). Zarahemla was not rebuilt until many years later (4 Ne. 1:8).



Large stone walls, a mile and a half in length, still encircle San Borja (the city of Bountiful). Several long stone walls have been found in the surrounding wilderness area.

The city of Bountiful, originally built for military defense purposes, was fortified with extensive walls constructed by Lamanite prisoners some 100 years earlier in 65 B.C. (Alma 52:15–27; 53:3–5; 55:26; Hel. 1:23; 5:14). In the Book of Mormon account there is no mention of the city of Bountiful before that date.

And it came to pass that after the Lamanites had finished burying their dead and also the dead of the Nephites, they were marched back into the land Bountiful; and Teancum, by the orders of Moroni, caused that they should commence laboring in **digging a ditch round about the land, or the city, Bountiful.**

And he caused that they should build **a breastwork of timbers upon the inner bank of the ditch; and they cast up dirt out of the ditch against the breastwork of timbers; and thus they did cause the Lamanites to labor until they had encircled the city of Bountiful round about with a strong wall of timbers and earth, to an exceeding height.**

And this city became an exceeding stronghold ever after; and in this city they did guard the prisoners of the Lamanites; yea, **even within a wall which they had caused them to build with their own hands.** Now Moroni was compelled to cause the Lamanites to labor, because it was easy to guard them while at their labor; and he desired all his forces when he should make an attack upon the Lamanites. (Alma 53:3–5; see also, Alma 55:26 and the section, “History of the San Borja Mission,” at the end of this article)

In addition to “throwing up banks of earth” and constructing breastworks of timbers, Moroni also caused “walls of stone” to be built “round about” their lands to “enclose his armies” (Alma 48:8).

At the time when Helaman’s son Shiblon was the record keeper (55 B.C.), thousands of Nephites and Lamanites migrated out of the land of Zarahemla to the land northward—the land north of the land Bountiful (Alma 53:4–10). The record states there were people of Nephi residing in the city of Bountiful in 30 B.C. (Hel. 5:13–15). Moreover, in A.D. 17 Lachoneus, the chief judge and governor over the land of Zarahemla, declared “the land which was between the land Zarahemla and the land Bountiful, yea, to the line which was between the land Bountiful and the land Desolation” as a protected gathering location for their people, food supplies, as well as flocks and herds (3 Ne. 3: 23). This was part of a seven-year strategy by the people of Nephi to defeat the more numerous Gadianton robbers and murderers who harassed and preyed upon them from “strongholds” and “secret places” within nearby wilderness areas (3 Ne. 3:1–26; 4:1–33). And only a few years before the Savior’s crucifixion many in the land of Zarahemla had broken into tribes because of contentions and wickedness and took “flight into the northernmost part of the land” (3 Ne. 7:1–14). Thus the protection of a remote wilderness location on the northern edge of the contiguous Nephite lands and a preexisting defense and support system may have been the prime reasons for Nephi and his followers to select the frontier land of Bountiful as their refuge. It is not clear how long the temple had existed at this northern location, nor its size, but its mere presence is evidence of the importance of the city of Bountiful to the people of Nephi (see Hel. 3:14–15).

What was the time of the year when the Savior visited the people of Nephi?

We suggest the Savior’s initial visit to the people of Nephi occurred during the period from late May to early June. This determination requires a full analysis of several scriptures, but is based on two of Mormon’s statements in Third Nephi 10:18–19, coupled with our work on Book of Mormon geography and the meaning of older English words. An understanding of the seasons and calendar cycles of the Hebrew year is also helpful.

Here are the two timing statements in Third Nephi 10:18–19.

And it came to pass that in the **ending of the thirty and fourth year**, behold, I will show unto you that the people of Nephi who were spared, and also those who had been called Lamanites, who had been 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—**

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; the phrase, “insomuch that” meant “to such an extent that” in older English)



Six cold and two hot water springs naturally flow at the San Borja Mission location (city of Bountiful).

We note these statements are in the last two verses of Chapter 10 and are not part of the next 20 chapters of *Third Nephi* (chapters 11–30) which comprise Mormon’s separate account of the Savior’s ministry among the people of Nephi.

As noted by some Book of Mormon readers, there appears to be a timing conflict in these verses. Mormon’s first statement includes the phrase, “in the ending of the thirty and fourth year.” This phrase has been interpreted by some to mean that the Savior’s visit, near the end of “the thirty and fourth” Nephite (Hebrew) year, would have occurred just before the

time of the next spring equinox, some ten months after his “ascension.” In what appears to be a contradiction, Mormon also indicates in these same two verses that, “soon after the ascension of Christ into heaven he did truly manifest himself unto them” (3 Ne. 10:18; see also, 3 Ne. 11:12). The ascension of Christ took place on the Mount of Olives 40 days after his resurrection (Acts 1:1–12; see also, Mark 16:19; Luke 24:51; John 6:62). The resurrection occurred at the time of Passover which annually takes place near the spring equinox in late March or early April. The ascension 40 days later would have happened in about late May, and the Savior’s visit to the Book of Mormon people would have occurred “soon after” this event.

Some have attempted to determine which of Mormon’s two seemingly conflicting timing statements is correct or at least to set forth a cogent explanation for bridging the substantial time gap which seems to be implied by these statements. We suggest this timing dilemma can best be resolved by consulting the older English definitions of “soon” and “ending.” In the unabridged *Oxford English Dictionary*, an older meaning of “soon” is “without delay, forthwith, straightway.” Thus it appears the Savior visited the Book of Mormon people within a very short time after his ascension, possibly within days. This older meaning of “soon” is helpful, but the key to solving the timing conflict appears to be an older English meaning of “ending” in Mormon’s statement. Here is an analysis of the word “ending.”

- The word “ending” is the action of the *verb*, “end,” and does not have the same meaning as the *noun*, “end.”
- The term “ending” is a *gerund* in English grammar, and a gerund is “a form that is derived from a verb that functions as a noun.”
- In English, gerunds are action words that end with *-ing*.

Therefore, in the context of Mormon’s statement, the term “ending” expresses the action of “carrying out” or completion of some activity over a period of time. The *Oxford Dictionary* gives a former or older meaning of “ending” as “a space of time.” Thus Mormon appears to be saying that the several events he is recording—the later visits and ministry of the Savior when “he did show himself unto them oft”—occurred in the “space of time” of the thirty and fourth year, that is, at various times within that year. Conversely, he is not saying that he is recording just the events of a three-day period which occurred near the “end” of the thirty and fourth year, which one could draw as a conclusion by misinterpreting the

meaning of the word, “ending.” Common expressions of “ending” might include: “In the ending of the book [or movie or year] ... ,” when referring to the last part, not to the very end of the book. This would be in contrast to the phrase: “At the end of the book” When reporting activities within a given Nephite year, the word “ending” is found in two other places in the Book of Mormon text: Alma 52:14 and Helaman 3:1. The context of these two verses appears to support the definition of “ending” as outlined above.

In summary: The resurrection occurred at the time of Passover which annually takes place near the spring equinox in late March or early April. The ascension 40 days later would have happened in about late May, and the Savior’s three-day visit to the people of Nephi would have occurred “soon after” this event, that is, late May or early June. The Savior’s subsequent visits took place at various times during the 34th year, but before the “ending” of that year (3 Ne. 10:17–18). We suggest there is no conflict between Mormon’s two timing statements.

Older English Words in the Book of Mormon Text

Our research and the research of others confirm the Book of Mormon is translated into the English language of the 1500s and 1600s, and in our studies of the Book of Mormon text we have found it helpful to search for word definitions that were acceptable and appropriate long before the Book of Mormon was first printed in 1830. These older definitions from the 1500s and 1600s (classified as Early Modern English) have been selected from the unabridged *Oxford English Dictionary*, the accepted authority on the evolution of the English language over the last millennium. We have found these older definitions often parallel the pattern of word usage in the *King James* translation of the Bible, begun in 1604 and completed in 1611, but based on English translations published as early as 1526. Current definitions frequently obscure the original meanings of scripture text. Thus, where appropriate, these older definitions are provided in our published work on Book of Mormon topics. Examples: barges, borders, by times, chariots, curious, dearth, destructions, flatter, fevers, flocks, fountains, fruit, great (cities), highways, isle, machinery, marvelous, measure, mighty (cities), mists, morrow month, reckon, sakes, serpents, signs, silks, sojourn, tarry, thrash, timber, towers, vapors, waters, wilderness and wonders. See our articles in *A New Approach to Book of Mormon Geography* (www.achoiceiland.com). See also, Royal Skousen, *The Archaic Vocabulary of the Book of Mormon*, Maxwell Institute, Brigham Young University; and *The History of the Text of the Book of Mormon: Part One and Part Two* (with collaboration of Stanford Carmack), The Foundation For Ancient Research and Mormon Studies, and Brigham Young University Studies, Provo, Utah, 2016; and proceedings of the conference, *2015 Exploring the Complexities in the English Language of the Book of Mormon*, 14 March 2015, Brigham Young University. For a historical account of the translation process of the Book of Mormon text, see Chapter 3, “Translation: 1827–30,” in Richard Lyman Bushman, *Joseph Smith: Rough Stone Rolling*, Alfred A. Knopf, New York, 2006, pp. 57–83.

Baja California as the Setting for the Savior’s Visit

We are currently involved in a comprehensive study of the geography of the Book of Mormon that asserts Lehi’s family came from the land of Jerusalem in 600 B.C. to the peninsula of Baja California and there established their culture upon the land for some 1,000 years. The family’s first settlement was near the southern end, but over the course of their tenure on the land they migrated to the northern areas of the peninsula in several stages before being “swept” off the land after a horrendous and devastating war.

The Book of Mormon is a history of the record keepers—Nephi, Alma, Mormon, Ether and others—and not a history of their descendants or even their cousins. Thus the Book of Mormon text describes only the lands where these record keepers lived—including the land of Bountiful which was the setting for the visit of the Savior to the people of Nephi. After the last battles of the Nephites and Lamanites some 350 years later, the survivors were swept off these lands by divine decree and scattered to distant locations throughout the Americas. This fundamental truth is often overlooked in the search for Book of Mormon lands.

We should not expect the present-day locations of the descendants of these scattered survivors to be the original lands of the record keepers, even though these progeny may possess cultural traits of their forefathers. Today we can find descendants of Biblical Jews in New York City, Europe and Russia, but it does not follow that these scattered locations are the homelands of the ancient Jewish



One of the many varieties of Boojum trees in the area of San Borja (land of Bountiful) in Baja California.

record keepers. (See our article, *Prophesied Cursing and Blessing of Book of Mormon Lands*)

We have published numerous articles on the people and lands of the Book of Mormon. All these articles provide background information on the land of Bountiful, especially our work on the “environment” and “climate” of the lands occupied by the record keepers and the “structures” and other items their people built. The land of Bountiful was located at the southern extent of the “narrow neck of land,” and we have published articles on this significant land feature and the seas that surround it—the “sea west” and the “sea east.” We have also published an analysis of the three hours of destruction and the three days of darkness that preceded by only a few weeks the Savior’s visit to the land Bountiful. All of our work is published on our website: <http://www.achoiceiland.com>



Sunrise at Bahía de los Ángeles on the coast of the Sea of Cortéz in central Baja California (the sea east in the land of Bountiful).

History of the San Borja Mission

The historic San Borja Mission occupies the location where we place the Book of Mormon city of Bountiful (latitude: 28° 44' 40" N; longitude: 113° 45' 15" W). The Mission site is situated at the confluence of two extended arroyos, surrounded by imposing mesas and high mountain ranges in an alluring semi-desert setting. Misión San Francisco de Borja Adac (its official name) was the sixteenth of 17 missions founded on the peninsula of Baja California by the Jesuit padres beginning in 1683. The mission site was established in 1762 by the Bohemian Jesuit Wenceslao Linck who named the location San Francisco de Borja (Saint Francis Borgia) in honor of the sixteenth-century Spanish priest and cofounder of the Society of Jesus (the Jesuits). A Spanish noblewoman Doña María de Borja, duchess of Bejar and Gandía, funded the Mission in honor of her ancestor, San Francisco de Borja. Operating for 56 years, the San Borja Mission served some 1,700 Adac (Cochimí) Indians in the surrounding area and became one of the largest mission settlements on the peninsula, even though only 30 to 40 families actually lived at the site. The name Adac means “freshwater spring,” in reference to the all-important warm and cold water springs at that location. Unfortunately, the Adac Indians fell victim to European diseases, especially smallpox, and all but a few died before 1818. A single cross reverently



The San Borja Mission site in Baja California. The Jesuits founded the mission in 1762 to serve the Adac (Cochimí) Indians in the area. This structure was completed by the Dominicans, but abandoned before 1818.

marks the burial ground adjacent to the Mission. Before they encountered Christianity, the Adac Indians had one of the most basic cultures of any group on the face of the earth. Many did not build houses, and they eked out the barest forms of existence. The Adacs possessed little in the way of material culture and stated the extensive and ancient petroglyphs and cave painting sites (over 800) in Baja California were produced by the earlier race of more cultured people (see Harry Crosby, *The Cave Paintings of Baja California: Discovering the Great Murals of an Unknown People*, Sunbelt Publications, 1997).

The Jesuits built the original adobe buildings beginning in 1762. Only a few crumbling walls still remain. In 1768 the Jesuits were banned from the peninsula over disagreements with the Spanish crown, but the work of constructing adobe buildings was continued by the Franciscans under Junípero Serra. The Dominicans took over from the Franciscans in 1773 and in 1801 completed the large stone chapel which still stands on the site. Sometime before 1818—after the Adac Indians had nearly all perished—the Dominicans abandoned the Mission, and the site was almost forgotten for over 100 years. The art pieces from the Mission and the original bells were stolen. Only a wooden statue of San Francisco Borja, the patron saint, survived. Today Don José Angel Gerardo Monteón and his family are the caretakers of the Mission and the sole residents. They tend the gardens, work on the restoration of the deteriorating buildings and serve as guides for the few who visit this remote historic location. Don José is a part descendant of the vanished Adac Indians. The Mexican National Institute of Anthropology and History (INAH) sponsors the restoration work.

The Mission gardens produce olives, grapes, pomegranates, pears, plums, oranges, limes, apples, intermingled with stately palms. Unlike other mission sites on the peninsula, old stone walls, some six to eight feet high and up to ten feet thick, form the mile and a half perimeter of the Mission compound and adjacent fields. We suggest these walls are evidence that an earlier people had occupied the site. There would have been no protective need for the



From 1683 to 1768, adventurous and devoted Jesuit padres founded 17 missions in Baja California.

Catholic padres to build such immense defensive walls, nor did they claim to do so. The valiant Catholic missionaries at San Borja, numbering one or two at a time, did not have sufficient resources to carry out such an extensive construction project when their labors and that of their reluctant and scattered Adac converts were directed almost solely towards survival and the daunting chore of building a few basic adobe structures and a stone chapel. Moreover, during one-third of the full span of the San Borja Mission's official



A portion of the long stone walls surrounding the San Borja Mission site (city of Bountiful in the narrow neck of land). The walls are six to eight feet high and up to ten feet thick.

existence (56 years) there were no missionaries stationed at the site. (For a history of all 27 Jesuit, Franciscan and Dominican missions, see David Kier, *Baja California: Land of Missions*, M & E Books, 2016)

Ancient rock art abounds in the nearby hills and mountains, the work of an earlier group of people the Adacs claimed were on the land before their arrival. The surrounding area boasts an exotic collection of xerophytic and succulent vegetation—a vast forest of giant and prolific boojums, white elephant trees, datilillos, organ pipe and cardon cacti. This cacti assemblage is unrivaled in the world. When it was founded, the Mission claimed to be the most isolated colonized location on the planet. Even today, the Mission can only be reached by two rough dirt roads, each winding through 22 miles of undulating but scenic terrain.

Who Carved this Sculpture of Jesus Christ?

Long after we determined the San Borja Mission site was the location of the city of Bountiful, we stumbled upon a Google Earth picture of a stone sculpture of what appeared to be the Savior. Two cacti and a palm tree, plants native to Baja California, were prominently featured on the statue, but most strikingly, the statue was in the same location where we place the city of Bountiful. The sculpture was like no other we had seen anywhere in Baja California in print or in our field work. It depicted the resurrected Christ with welcoming arms and showing the outstretched palms of his hands and his feet. The bas-relief figure was covered by a robe and a sash. Bas-relief is a form of carving or sculpture in which the figures are raised a few inches from a flat background to give a three-dimensional effect. The sculptor's portrayal of the Christ reminded us of Mormon's description of the Savior when he visited the people of Nephi at this same location in the land of Bountiful some 2,000 years ago (3 Ne. 11:1–17). We were struck by the similarities.

“He stretched forth his hand ... saying: Behold, I am Jesus Christ, whom the prophets testified shall come into the world.” (3 Nephi 11:9–10)



Bas-relief of the Savior found near the San Borja Mission (city of Bountiful). The depiction has curious similarity to visitation description within the Book of Mormon.

In 2013 members of our research team (John Livingstone, Jim Rosenvall and Zac Nelson) visited the sculpture at the San Borja Mission. In February 2016 four others of our team (David Rosenvall, Kevin Bradburn, Paul Newell and Joe Riggs) also inspected the statue, and in August 2016, we and ten others traveled to the site to gather more information and investigate the surrounding

region. Curiously, the life-size statue is carved on the side of a large stone located in a remote location two-thirds of a mile from the Mission buildings and somewhat hidden by entangled vegetation. Don José Angel Gerardo Monteón, the caretaker and current restorer of the Mission, showed our research groups the stone sculpture only after they requested to see it. He did not volunteer to take them to the location, and it appears almost no one makes such a request. Don José himself is a part descendant of the Adac Indians (Cochimí) who were nearly decimated by European diseases at this mission location before 1818, especially smallpox. Don José and his family are not Catholic but serve as caretakers of the disintegrating San Borja Mission site. They toil under the auspices of the Mexican government to restore the stone work and deteriorating parts of the buildings. They also watch over the Mission burial site of some 1,500 Adac ancestors who died in the San Borja area.

We have scoured the Internet and the numerous printed articles and books published on the history or current status of the San Borja Mission and have not discovered a single picture or even a mention of the statue's existence. Even Internet blogs and photo collections of tourist pictures and adventure accounts show no pictures or even mention the statue. All we have found is the original picture on Google Earth and one YouTube video filmed in 2013 showing two Catholic priests leading a group of parishioners from the Mission chapel to the statue site. The procession was in honor of San Francisco de Borja of Spain, for whom the Mission is named, and not the Savior.

Local residents offer conflicting accounts of the sculpture's origin, but the statue appears to be contemporary, meaning it dates since the Dominicans—the last Catholic padres at San Borja—abandoned the area in 1818. There is no evidence it was commissioned by the Jesuits, Franciscans or Dominicans during the mission era in San Borja (1762 to 1818), nor created by the Adac Indians at a time before the first Catholic padres—the Jesuits—came to San Borja in 1762, or even by an earlier group of people the Adacs claimed were on the land before their arrival on the peninsula.

There is some circumstantial evidence that the statue may have been carved under the direction of Mario Menghini Pecci, a Catholic priest of the Comboni Order based in Italy. Padre Pecci labored on the Baja California peninsula for some 65 years to restore numerous deteriorating mission sites. He died in 2013. From 1988 to 2000 he was stationed in nearby Guerrero Negro and labored during that period to raise funds and direct the work of restoring the mission buildings in Santa Gertrudis and San Borja. Santa

Gertrudis is 70 miles south of San Borja and 50 miles south and east of Guerrero Negro. A recent account indicates five stone cutters located large stones in the mountains behind the Santa Gertrudis mission and rolled them down the hill where they shaped and carved them as part of the restoration process. (See “A Monument of Faith in an Unforgiving Land,” *Wall Street Journal*, 26 December 1997; and Pecci’s obituary, “Semblanza misionera del padre Mario Menghini Pecci,” <http://bioeticacotidiana.blogspot.ca/2013/09/semblanza-misionera-del-padre-mario.html>) At the Santa Gertrudis mission there is a three-foot-high stone sculpture in bas-relief depicting a Catholic priest carrying a small cross and a shovel and a similar sculpture showing a Cochimí mother and her two daughters. These statues are contemporary and appear to have been created during the restoration process. After the restoration work in Santa Gertrudis was completed in November 1996, Padre Pecci directed his labors to the work of cutting stone and restoring the San Borja mission buildings. We suggest these stone cutters could have been the ones who carved the statue of Christ at San Borja. On the left side of the statue is engraved the words: “Los Misioneros Combonianos, 1988 – 2000.” On the bottom left corner on the front is engraved in Spanish the text of Hebrews 13:8: “Jesus Christ the same yesterday, and to day, and for ever.”

Nonetheless, the statue remains somewhat an enigma. We have not been able to determine definite answers as to its origin date nor the names of the sculptor(s) or even a reason for its existence. Moreover, the design of the statue does not match the images of Christ commissioned by the Catholic missionaries for the San Borja Mission or mission sites elsewhere on the peninsula, which typically depict the agony of the Savior on a crucifixion cross and not the joyful image of a resurrected Christ. Regardless of origin, the sculpture is a fitting tribute to the Savior Jesus Christ and his visit at that very location to the people of Nephi in the land of Bountiful.

The Lord's Final Words

We conclude our analysis by quoting the Lord's reproof words, recorded by Mormon at the end of his account of the Savior's visit to the people of Nephi in the land of Bountiful.

Hearken, O ye Gentiles, and hear the words of Jesus Christ, the Son of the living God, which he hath commanded me that I should speak concerning you, for, behold he commandeth me that I should write, saying:

Turn, all ye Gentiles, from your wicked ways; and repent of your evil doings, of your lyings and deceivings, and of your whoredoms, and of your secret abominations, and your idolatries, and of your murders, and your priestcrafts, and your envyings, and your strifes, and from all your wickedness and abominations, and come unto me, and be baptized in my name, that ye may receive a remission of your sins, and be filled with the Holy Ghost, that ye may be numbered with my people who are of the house of Israel. (3 Ne. 30:1–2)

These words of Jesus Christ, the Son of the living God, are a voice of warning to our generation and an invitation to come unto him and receive the blessings of the gospel.

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Tijuana Mexico Temple in northern Baja California. The temple district includes 11 stakes on the peninsula of Baja California. Dedicated 13 December 2015.