

# A Call to Repentance

by Mary Lee Treat

In July, 1984, Ray and I were given permission by the head of the national anthropology museum in Guatemala City to study several ceramic collections that were housed in the basement of the museum. The purpose of our study was to compare ceramics from sites in Guatemala with similar ceramics Ray had excavated in southern Mexico. The basement was full of all types of artifacts from the major Mayan sites of Guatemala, the heartland of The Book of Mormon. It was a thrill to see those treasures. As we arrived the third day to resume our work, I glanced around the room in anticipation of another enjoyable day. Suddenly an ominous heaviness settled in my spirit and these words ran sharply across my mind like a message that moves across the bottom of a television screen: *"This is all that remains of a people who willfully rejected me."* The impact of this message, as I stood in the midst of that beautiful sculpture, pottery, remnants of architecture, etc. is difficult to communicate.

I recently reread the Book of Ether in preparation for teaching a Survey of The Book of Mormon class. The presence of the Holy Spirit witnessed to me in a powerful way of the truthfulness of this record. I was especially struck by Moroni's restatement of the covenant regarding this land and his warning to the Gentiles who would occupy it:

...That whoso should possess this land of promise from that time henceforth and forever, should serve Him, the true and only God, or they should be swept off when the fullness of his wrath should come upon them.

And this cometh unto you, O ye Gentiles, that ye may know the decrees of God, that ye may repent and not continue in your iniquities until the fullness be come, that ye may not bring down the fullness of the wrath of God upon you as the inhabitants of the land have hitherto done.

Ether 1:30, 34

As I read these verses I received a fresh awareness that Moroni's work of abridging this record was for our benefit today. At the time he wrote these words the Nephite nation had just been decimated by the Lamanites; the Jaredites had been extinct for more than 600 years. Moroni abridged the account from the Jaredite 24 plates of gold so that we "Gentiles" could have the important message contained in them.

A few days after this rereading, I was awakened in the night with an urgency to pray for our nation. This was very unusual for me so I asked the Lord what I should specifically pray for. The reply was swift: *"Repentance!"* And then I realized that before I could pray for the nation to repent, I, too, needed to repent.

The message of The Book of Mormon is needed as never before in the history of this nation. Contained within the book we have the testimony of two great nations that once existed upon this land. Both rejected God. Both are now extinct. The Lord said that he establishes the truth of his word in the mouth of two or three witnesses (Matthew 18:16). The Nephites and the Jaredites are two witnesses that those who occupy this land must obey God or be destroyed. Must we become the third witness? Some who are fatalistic predict this is the case. Once again, principles from The Book of Mormon give an answer.

Both the Nephites and Jaredites repented at crucial points in their history and enjoyed a "golden age" of righteousness. However, in their final days of existence, both refused to repent. The Lord extended to both nations the opportunity to repent, even after the peoples' hearts were hardened beyond repentance. These examples should encourage us that it is not too late for us or our nation to repent.

We who profess to believe The Book of Mormon have an urgent message of our Book of Mormon have an urgent message for those around us. Let us begin by repenting of our own lack of interest in this record provided for our benefit. Let us repent by believing the word of God. Let us repent by studying the word of God and applying the principles found therein. Let us repent by sharing the message of the book with anyone who will hear. If we do, it is not too late. There is yet time.

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