

ZARAHEMLA RECORD



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God's Definition of Righteousness

by Raymond C. Treat

Nephi, in his famous psalm (2 Nephi 3:56 [4:33]) exclaimed: "O Lord, wilt thou encircle me around in the robe of thy righteousness?" We learn from this verse that righteousness comes from the Lord and that it is viewed as a robe.

It is important to realize that Nephi is referring to the ancient Hebrew custom of making a covenant. The first step in making this covenant involved the exchange of robes. The physical steps for making a covenant were given by the Lord as types to help us understand what happens spiritually when we make our covenant with him. The exchange of robes symbolized that each party made everything they had available to the other. In making our covenant we give our "robe," our total self, to the Lord. Isaiah calls our robe filthy rags in Isaiah 64:6. King Lamoni's father said it well in his prayer, "I will give away all my sins to know thee . . ." (Alma 13:53 [22:18]). Isaiah, in referring to the Lord's robe, said "he hath covered me with the robe of righteousness . . ." (Isaiah 61:10).

One of the original meanings from the Greek of the word righteousness is "right relationship." To be righteous therefore means that we are in right relationship or right standing with the Lord. From the

above we can see that this right relationship is a covenant relationship. When we make a covenant with the Lord, he covers us with his robe, his righteousness, so that he views us as righteous.

We know that a covenant relationship with God requires total commitment on our part. When we break our covenant through the sin of commission or omission, he provides a way to restore us into a right relationship with him again:

If we confess our sins, he is faithful
and just to forgive us our sins and
to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. 1 John 1:9

God's definition of righteousness is clearly demonstrated in the parable of the prodigal son. The prodigal son rebelled against his father, took his inheritance and left home. After squandering his inheritance he ended up feeding the swine. The prodigal son finally came to himself, repented and returned to his father. His father was watching for him. He ran to the prodigal son and commanded that the best robe be put on him. That was symbolic of the robe of righteousness. The prodigal son was restored to a right relationship with his father. When we, like the prodigal son, repent, we too are

restored to a right relationship with our Heavenly Father.

The key to our righteousness, after we have made our covenant with the Lord, is to be in constant repentance before him. This is exemplified in the scripture by the life of King David, an adulterer and murderer. God could view him as "a man after his own heart" because he was quick to repent when his sins were pointed out.

We do not have to wait, as some suppose, until the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper to become clean before the Lord. We can call upon him at any moment of the day or night and he will hear and forgive.

One of Satan's great deceptions is to convince us that we must earn our righteousness or right standing with God. Many people think we become righteous only as a result of our good works. Under this false definition of righteousness none of us could ever say that we are righteous. This places a barrier between us and the Lord. We feel guilty for never measuring up. This in turn can lead to discouragement and depression.

The truth is, we become righteous by exercising faith in Jesus Christ:

For he [God] hath made him [Jesus Christ] to be sin for us, who knew no sin,

Wycliffe Translators

Prepare the Way for the Fulfillment of Lehi's Covenant

by Mary Lee Treat

In 1967 Ray was working on a Master's degree in anthropology/archaeology at the University of the Americas in Mexico City. When spring break came he had an opportunity to work for 10 days on an archaeological excavation at the site of Mirador in the state of Chiapas in southern Mexico. The excavation was under the direction of Pierre Agrinier for the New World Archaeological Foundation. Along with two other students, Ray and baby Mya and I were housed with the Agrinier's in the nearby town of Cintalapa.

At the end of the 10 days Ray and I decided to do some sightseeing further south in the town of San Cristobal de las Casas. This town had been the capital of Guatemala in colonial times and is a tourist attraction today because the Indians still wear their colorful native dress when they come to town for market. We wanted to visit the home and library of a well-known archaeologist, Frans Blom, who had done work with the Lacandon Indians of Chiapas. His widow, a professional photographer, kept the library open to the public.

As we were walking toward the Blom's house on the narrow cobblestone streets we noticed other "gringos" heading to the same location. After our tour of the library and home, some of the Americans invited us to join them for lunch at the modest hotel on the square. In the process of the conversation we learned that the four or five couples were all members of the Wycliffe Bible Translators and had just finished their jungle-camp training nearby. They had been "in the bush" for about three months where they learned the basics of jungle living—how to construct a jungle home, sanitation system, cooking facilities, etc., from scratch. Only mothers with babies were allowed to bring powdered milk with them. All the other foodstuffs were created and cooked from local means.

As we visited further during lunch we learned that the couples at our table were graduates of Wheaton College (Illinois) with Ph.D.'s in linguistics. They had just returned the day before from their primitive living conditions and listening to them exclaim over running water, tablecloths, "real food," beds with mattresses, etc., renewed an appreciation within us for the things we take for granted on a daily basis. But more importantly, we

were struck with the spiritual commitment we saw in these Christians. While most people would look for a lucrative position after years of schooling, they were embarking on missions that would take a minimum of 10 years with a remote tribe in a primitive environment for the purpose of learning a language and putting it into written form for the first time. Then they would translate the New Testament into that language and teach the people to read their own language. Their objective was to enable small language groups to read and write the word of God in their own tongue.

Earlier that year Ray had brought a book home from the university library for me to read, *Two Thousand Tongues To Go*. It told the story of the founding of the Wycliffe Bible Translators by William Cameron Townsend. I learned that he had been a Bible salesman in Guatemala in 1917 when he discovered that the people he was supposed to sell the Spanish Bibles to did not speak Spanish. The time he spent with the Indians soon caused him to want to help these people in physical and spiritual affairs. He also wanted to help the Indians become literate so they could have a better life. He opened his first school among the Cakchiquel Indians in Guatemala. He learned their language, translated the New Testament into Cakchiquel and taught the Indians to read their own language. "God speaks our language!" was their excited response.

This birthed the vision in his spirit that all men everywhere needed to hear the gospel in their own tongue. He knew he could not possibly accomplish such a task by himself so the idea of a summer linguistic training school grew inside him. The first summer he had three students in a house in Oklahoma that he rented for \$5 a month. The second summer, six students. From this humble beginning has grown a world-wide organization with over 2,000 linguists in the field today.

One of the first students in this summer school of linguistics was named Kenneth Pike. He went on to become one of the most gifted linguists in the discipline. He was working with the Mixtec language people in Oaxaca when he finally realized that sometimes their words changed meaning depending upon the pitch of

certain syllables. In other words, they spoke a tonal language. Because of his great concern for getting the gospel to the indigenous people, the Lord gave him the concept of how to analyze and notate tonal languages. This was a breakthrough and made history in linguistic circles.

Townsend first thought there were 4,000 language groups in the world that needed to be written. However, that number has grown to nearly 6,000. The Wycliffe translators have now written, published and taught nearly 3,000 languages from New Testaments or portions of New Testaments since their humble beginning in the early 1920's in Guatemala.

Book of Mormon believers should find it significant that the first language written and translated, Cakchiquel, was a Mayan language. (We believe that the Maya are descendants of the Nephites/Lamanites and Mulekites.)

When Townsend completed his work in Guatemala, the country of Mexico invited the translators to come as linguists, not missionaries, to help the Indians in that country. Of course the government knew they would use the New Testament for the reading primer. So the Wycliffe Bible Translators spent the next 20 or so years in Mexico, making thousands of new readers and believers among the Indian population.

Cameron Townsend had wanted to go to the Amazon after Guatemala but all doors closed and remained that way for over 25 years. Instead, the Lord opened the door to Mexico and that is why nearly all of the Book of Mormon-related tribes now have had their language reduced to writing and a portion of the New Testament translated and available to them. Surely this timing was directed by the Lord and we are on the brink of the fulfillment of the covenant the Lord made to Lehi regarding his seed having the record of their fathers.

Some people may question why these native peoples need to read the word of God in their own language. They may reason that during the time of endowment all people will hear the gospel in their own tongue just as the 3,000 did at the day of Pentecost. While that is definitely true, after one has heard the gospel and been baptized, personal growth and development in the daily walk with God is based on the principles found in the written word.

As I read the story of the Wycliffe Translators, I was convinced that God had his hand in bringing this organization into existence and that he is using it as a tool to help bring to pass the words of the Lord to Joseph of Egypt in 2 Nephi 2:17-18 [3:11]:

“But a seer will I raise up out of the fruit of thy loins;
And unto him will I give power to bring forth my word
unto the seed of thy loins;
And not to the bringing forth my word only, saith the Lord,
but to the convincing them of my word *which shall have
already gone forth among them.*” [emphasis added]

In other words, the Gentiles would first take the Bible to Lehi's seed and then the Book of Mormon would follow. This sequence of the Bible going to Lehi's seed and then the Book of Mormon following is confirmed by Mormon in Mormon 3:30-31 [7:8-9]:

Therefore, repent and be baptized in the name of Jesus;
And lay hold upon the gospel of Christ which shall be set
before you, not only in this record [Book of Mormon],
but also in the record which shall come unto the Gentiles
from the Jews,
Which record shall come *from the Gentiles unto you.*

For behold, this [Book of Mormon] is writtten for the intent
that ye may believe that [Bible];
And if ye believe that [Bible], ye will believe this [Book of
Mormon] also [emphasis added]

These two verses are just prior to Mormon's final words in verse 33 [10] and he specifically addresses his words to “the remnant” (verse 24 [2]) of Lehi's seed that will someday have his words. He tells the descendents of Lehi that after they receive the gospel as presented in the Bible via the Gentiles, then they will receive the Book of Mormon from the Gentiles also. The message of the two books will confirm each other.

I believe the Wycliffe Bible Translators are being used of God to prepare the hearts and minds of the people of the seed of Lehi to receive the gospel in their own language and then to receive the knowledge of the record of their ancestors, the Book of Mormon. This book will tell them they are a remnant of the house of Israel through Joseph of Egypt and Lehi.

The title page of the Book of Mormon, written by Moroni, indicates that the Book of Mormon would come forth through the Gentiles. Mormon also tells us in the scripture above that the Book of Mormon would come to his people through the Gentiles. Now, more than at any time since 1830, the people of Lehi's seed are prepared to receive the second witness.

The primary purpose of the Restoration movement is to take the book to Lehi's seed and thus fulfill the words of the prophets in the New World. May we all respond as Isaiah, “Here am I Lord, send me!” ZRF

ADDITIONAL READING

In Other Words, a paper published six times a year by Wycliffe Bible Translators, is available upon request.

Uncle Cam by James & Marti Hefley tells the story of William Cameron Townsend, founder of the Wycliffe Bible Translators.

Numerous other books, videos and tapes available.
Request a catalog from:
Wycliffe Bible Translators
PO Box 2727, Huntington Beach, CA 92647.

That we might be made the righteousness of God in him.

2 Corinthians 5:21

We need to realize, however, that in order to exercise faith we must take action. To exercise faith is to believe (Alma 16:151 [32:27]), "and if you believe . . . you will repent of all your sins" (Helaman 5:67 [14:13]). This includes not only turning *from* sin but turning *toward* Jesus Christ and the word of God. By turning to Jesus Christ you "enter into a covenant with him to keep his commandments" (Alma 5:27 [7:15], see also 3 Nephi 12:32-34 [27:19-21]). If you do this you will receive all the direction you need (2 Nephi 14:4 [32:3]). You will also receive all the resources you need to carry out those directions (1 Nephi 1:65 [3:7]). We are not excused from doing good works, but they come *after* we are declared righteous or in right standing through our faith in Jesus Christ, not before.

If we start viewing righteousness according to God's definition we will be free to accomplish more of what God wants us to do, not as a chore that can never be done properly, but as a joy and a privilege to serve the living God. ZRF

What's In a Logo?

From time to time we receive inquiries about Zarahemla's logo and its significance. In 1975 when ZRF was incorporated we needed a logo to accompany the name of the Foundation. The name "Zarahemla Research Foundation" had been selected to show a Book of Mormon connection to all the research which would be conducted in the future. We decided a logo symbolic of archaeology and the Book of Mormon would be appropriate. The Maya head was selected because it symbolizes the Nephites, Lamanites and Mulekites.

The particular Maya head selected for the logo is from Stela 11 at Yaxchilan, Mexico.

Barry Heyl of McAllen, Texas drew our rendition of the head from Gordon R. Willey's book, *An Introduction to American Archaeology*, volume 1, page 131.

The site of this stela, Yaxchilan, is on the Usumacinta River which forms the border between Mexico and Guatemala. We believe the Usumacinta is the river Sidon in the Book of Mormon.

Some also believe the site of Yaxchilan may be the city of Zarahemla in the Book of Mormon.

So ZRF's logo is symbolic of the people (Nephite, Lamanites, Mulekites) and the place (Zarahemla) of the Book of Mormon. ZRF

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