

1 Nephi 6 – Nephi on Record Keeping

This chapter deals with the common Book of Mormon sub-theme of record keeping. At the end of the previous chapter Nephi has been discussing his father's prophecies about the brass plates which leads into this chapter, starting with a discussion of Nephi's genealogy. In verse 3 Nephi states that giving the genealogy isn't important because he “desire[s] the room that [he] may write of the things of God.”

For whatever reason, Nephi created these small plates as, well, small. There was something significant about the size, and it had to be used wisely. Reading a modern printed book may not preserve that impression, but space was at a premium in the small plates¹.

Verse 4, then, becomes a mission statement for the Book of Mormon. It is not primarily a history, nor even a diary.

For the fulness of mine intent is that I may persuade men to come unto the God of Abraham, and the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob, and be saved.

The Book of Mormon is about saving us. That is why it was preserved throughout ancient times, and brought forth miraculously in our day. It is also why we should share the book with our neighbors and friends. It is designed to bring us to God and salvation.

Verse 5 took on a special significance to me in my mission:

Wherefore, the things which are pleasing unto the world I do not write, but the things which are pleasing unto God and unto those who are not of the world.

The marginal note in my scriptures says

I can test my heart at any time to see whether the things written herein are pleasing to me; hence, whether I am of the Lord or of the world.

And I think that is another part of the treasure of the Book of Mormon. It really can help us tell how well we are doing in our standing before God.

Verse 6 is essentially a “Note to Self” for Nephi to remind his posterity

¹ Jarom 1:14; Omni 1:30

to keep this mission of the small plates pure.

And so I reflect on the fact of existence of the Book of Mormon, especially the small plates. They were not part of the primary history which Mormon used to write the book, he found them after searching among the records which had come to him. Late in his career as historian he found these plates and was pleased by them. They were added against the eventual loss of the 116 manuscript pages, but also because they contained valuable doctrines.

I have been more and less faithful throughout my life about writing about the dealings of the Lord in my existence. I have not taken the responsibility of writing the things that are pleasing to the Lord nearly as seriously as Nephi did. In fact, my history may not appear as interesting to me as Nephi's, but there are things I have learned in my life about becoming more like Christ, and obeying God's commands. So perhaps my journal is not very faithful, but these essays are part of my attempt to record what I have learned about being a disciple.