

ENOS

FAITH: Mormonism | TEXT: Book of Mormon | VOLUME: 1830 | AUTHOR: Joseph Smith

OVERVIEW

The Book of Enos is a brief, single-chapter narrative within the Book of Mormon that serves as a bridge between the theological treatises of Nephi/Jacob and the historical chronicles that follow. It details the spiritual autobiography of Enos, son of Jacob. The narrative centers on Enos's 'wrestle... before God' in the wilderness. Prompted by the memory of his father's teachings concerning eternal life, Enos prays all day and into the night. He receives a subjective revelation—a voice to his mind—assuring him that his sins are forgiven due to his faith in Christ (notably, centuries before Christ's birth). Once his own guilt is swept away, his concern shifts outward. He prays first for the welfare of his people, the Nephites, and then for his enemies, the Lamanites. God covenants with Enos that if the Nephites are destroyed due to transgression, the records will be preserved to bring the Lamanites to salvation in a future day. The text concludes with descriptions of the degradation of the Lamanites (described as wild, ferocious, and eating raw meat) and the stiff-necked nature of the Nephites, who require harsh preaching to remain faithful. Enos ends with an eschatological hope of rest with his Redeemer.

KEY FIGURES

Enos, The Lord/God, Jacob (Enos's father), The Lamanites, The Nephites

DOCTRINES ANALYZED

1. PRE-INCARNATIONAL CHRISTIAN KNOWLEDGE

Assertion: Prophets in the Americas had explicit knowledge of the name 'Christ' and the specific mechanics of the atonement centuries before Jesus was born.

"Because of thy faith in Christ, whom thou hast not heard nor seen. (Enos 1:8)"

Evangelical Comparison: In Evangelical theology, Old Testament saints were saved by faith in God's future provision (Romans 4, Hebrews 11), but the 'mystery' of Christ was not fully revealed until the New Testament (Colossians 1:26). The Book of Enos asserts that Enos knew the specific title 'Christ' and the theology of remission of sins through Him in ~420 BC. This collapses the distinction between the Old and New Covenants, presenting a fully formed Christian theology in a pre-Christian era, which contradicts the biblical narrative of progressive revelation.

2. CONDITIONAL COVENANT OF THE LAND

Assertion: God's blessing and presence in the land are strictly conditional upon the people's diligence in keeping commandments.

"I will visit thy brethren, according to their diligence in keeping my commandments. (Enos 1:10)"

Evangelical Comparison: The text establishes a strict meritocracy regarding divine favor: 'according to their diligence.' In Evangelical soteriology, God's favor is unmerited grace (Sola Gratia). While sanctification involves effort, the basis of God's covenantal faithfulness in the New Testament is the obedience of Christ, not the diligence of the believer. Enos presents a hybrid where the land and the blessing are maintained only through strict adherence to law, reinforcing a works-righteousness paradigm.

3. SUBJECTIVE REVELATION AS AUTHORITY

Assertion: Divine truth and assurance of forgiveness are communicated via a voice speaking directly to the mind.

"The voice of the Lord came into my mind again, saying... (Enos 1:10)"

Evangelical Comparison: Enos validates his spiritual state and receives doctrinal instruction through a 'voice' in his mind. In Evangelicalism, while the Holy Spirit illuminates the believer, the objective standard for truth is the written Scripture (Sola Scriptura). Relying on internal voices for authoritative doctrine or assurance opens the door to subjectivism and contradicts the sufficiency of the closed canon of Scripture.

COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS

Divergence Status: Yes

Theological Gap: While Enos uses Christian terminology ('faith in Christ'), the underlying structure is distinct from Evangelicalism. First, the 'wrestle' for forgiveness implies that God is reluctant or that forgiveness requires a certain threshold of emotional labor, contrasting with the 'gift' of grace (Ephesians 2:8-9). Second, the covenant is maintained by 'diligence,' reintroducing a works-based security that the New Testament rejects (Galatians 3:1-3). Finally, the epistemology of 'voice in the mind' creates a subjective standard for truth that bypasses the objective testing of Scripture, a fundamental divergence from Sola Scriptura.

Shared Values:

Importance of prayer; Desire for forgiveness of sins; Responsibility of parents to teach children; Concern for the salvation of enemies

Friction Points:

1. [Critical] Sola Scriptura – Claims new, extra-biblical revelation and open canon.
2. [Major] Historical/Progressive Revelation – Claims explicit knowledge of New Testament theology and terminology (Christ, Jesus) in the Old Testament era.
3. [Major] Sola Gratia – Blessings and visitation are conditioned on 'diligence' rather than grace.

Semantic Warnings:

"Faith in Christ"

In Text: Belief in a future Messiah named Christ, revealed via direct revelation to Nephites.

Evangelical: Trust in the historical Jesus of Nazareth, the Incarnate Word.

Example: Enos claims 'faith in Christ' in 420 BC, using the Greek title 'Christos' in a supposedly Hebrew/Reformed Egyptian context.

"Wrestle"

In Text: A necessary spiritual struggle or labor required to obtain remission of sins.

Evangelical: Often refers to intercession or spiritual warfare, but never a requirement to earn justification.

Example: Enos had to 'wrestle' before God *before* he received remission; the Bible says we receive remission the moment we believe (Acts 10:43).

SOTERIOLOGY

Salvation Defined: Being 'whole,' having guilt 'swept away,' and eventually dwelling in the 'mansions of my Father'.

How Attained: Through 'mighty prayer,' 'wrestle,' and 'faith in Christ,' but maintained by 'diligence'.

Basis of Assurance: Subjective auditory/mental revelation ('voice... into my mind').

Comparison to Sola Fide: Enos 1:8 ('thy faith hath made thee whole') mimics Sola Fide, but the context of the 'wrestle' and the subsequent conditionality ('according to their diligence') introduces a works-righteousness framework absent in passages like Romans 4:5.

MANDATES & REQUIREMENTS

Explicit Commands:

1. Go to it (referring to faith)
2. Preach and prophesy unto this people

Implicit Obligations:

1. Engage in 'mighty prayer' and 'wrestle' before God for forgiveness
2. Keep records for future generations
3. Seek the welfare of enemies (Lamanites) through prayer
4. Use 'exceeding harshness' in preaching if the audience is stiff-necked

Ritual Requirements:

1. None explicitly detailed in this text, though 'remission of sins' implies a transactional spiritual event

EVANGELISM TOOLKIT

Discovery Questions:

1. Enos describes a 'wrestle' before God to get forgiveness. How does that compare to the invitation in Matthew 11:28 to find 'rest' in Christ?
2. If the Lamanites were 'wild' and 'ferocious' because of their nature, how does that fit with the biblical teaching that all have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God (Romans 3:23)?
3. Enos 1:10 says God visits people 'according to their diligence.' How do you know when you have been diligent enough to secure God's presence?

Redemptive Analogies:

1. Soul Hunger – This deep spiritual hunger is what Jesus promises to satisfy. [Matthew 5:6 - 'Blessed are they which do hunger and thirst after righteousness: for they shall be filled.]
2. The desire for the salvation of enemies – Reflects the heart of Christ who prayed for His enemies. [Luke 23:34 - 'Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do.]

Spiritual Weight:

1. Performance Anxiety [Moderate] – The text links God's visitation to 'diligence.' This creates a burden where the believer feels God's presence is constantly contingent on their performance level.
2. Subjective Uncertainty [Severe] – By modeling assurance on hearing a voice in the mind, the text sets a standard that, if not experienced, leaves the believer doubting their salvation or standing with God.

EPISTEMOLOGY

Knowledge Source: Subjective Experience (Feeling/Voice)

Verification Method: Internal sensation ('sunk deep into my heart') and mental impression ('voice... into my mind').

Evangelical Contrast: Biblical epistemology grounds truth in the objective historical record of Scripture (2 Peter 1:19-21). Enos grounds truth in a subjective 'wrestle' and internal voice, shifting the locus of authority from the external Word to the internal experience.

TEXTUAL CRITICISM

Dating: 1830 (Publication)

Authorship: Joseph Smith (Critical view) / Enos (Traditional view)

Textual Issues: Contains 19th-century revivalist language ('wrestle,' 'guilt swept away') and KJV New Testament phraseology ('nurture and admonition') anachronistic to the claimed 420 BC setting.