

JAROM

FAITH: Mormonism | TEXT: Book of Jarom | VOLUME: 1830 | AUTHOR: Jarom

OVERVIEW

The Book of Jarom, written by the son of Enos, covers a period of approximately 40 years in Nephite history. Jarom admits he writes little new revelation, deferring to the sufficiency of his fathers' writings regarding the 'plan of salvation.' The text portrays a society oscillating between spiritual hardness ('stiffneckedness') and faithful adherence to the Law of Moses. A central theme is the 'Prosperity Covenant' specific to the Americas: that the Nephites would prosper and be preserved from their enemies only insofar as they kept the commandments. Consequently, the text describes a rigorous religious life where prophets, priests, and teachers labor diligently to 'prick the hearts' of the people to prevent their destruction. Historically, the text makes significant claims regarding Nephite civilization, asserting they possessed advanced metallurgy (iron, steel, brass) and 'machinery,' and that they had become exceedingly rich while successfully repelling the Lamanites, who are depicted as savage and blood-drinking.

KEY FIGURES

Jarom, Enos, Omni, The Messiah, Lamanites, Nephites

DOCTRINES ANALYZED

1. THE PROSPERITY COVENANT

Assertion: Spiritual obedience guarantees material prosperity and military security in the promised land; disobedience guarantees destruction.

"But the word of the Lord was verified... saying, That inasmuch as ye will keep my commandments, ye shall prosper in the land. (Jarom 1:9)"

Evangelical Comparison: In Evangelical theology, the New Covenant is ratified in Christ's blood and does not promise territorial sovereignty or material wealth as a sign of God's favor. Indeed, the New Testament often associates faithfulness with suffering (Romans 8:17, 2 Timothy 3:12). Jarom, however, presents a strict Deuteronomic framework applied to the Americas: the survival of the nation and the accumulation of gold and silver are direct indicators of their standing with God. This creates a theology where suffering or poverty implies sin or divine disfavor.

2. RETROACTIVE CHRISTIAN FAITH

Assertion: Ancient Nephites (c. 400 BC) believed in Jesus Christ with the same specificity as post-resurrection Christians, viewing Him 'as though he already was.'

"persuading them to look forward unto the Messiah, and believe in him to come, as though he already was. (Jarom 1:11)"

Evangelical Comparison: Biblical theology describes a 'mystery' kept hidden for ages and generations, only fully revealed in Christ (Colossians 1:26). The Old Testament saints had faith in God's promises, but they saw them 'from afar' (Hebrews 11:13). Jarom asserts that the Nephites possessed a fully developed Christology centuries before the Incarnation, collapsing the distinction between the Old and New Covenants and rendering the progressive nature of biblical revelation unnecessary.

COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS

Divergence Status: Yes

Theological Gap: The theological gap is twofold. First, Soteriology: Jarom promotes a conditional covenant where divine favor (manifested as protection and prosperity) is earned through strict obedience to the Law of Moses. This obscures the Evangelical doctrine of Sola Gratia (Grace Alone), where God's favor is unmerited. Second, Revelation: Jarom claims the Nephites knew the Messiah 'as though he already was.' This flattens biblical history, removing the developmental nature of the Old Testament covenants and the uniqueness of the Incarnation as the 'fullness of time' (Galatians 4:4).

Shared Values:

Belief in a Messiah; Importance of keeping commandments; Reality of the Holy Spirit; Necessity of repentance

Friction Points:

1. [Major] Sola Fide – Salvation (temporal and spiritual) is contingent on 'doing much' and keeping the law strictly.
2. [Critical] Sola Scriptura – Claims extra-biblical revelation and anachronistic clarity about Christ that bypasses the biblical timeline.
3. [Moderate] Theology Proper (Providence) – God's mercy is depicted as conditional upon the people not being 'swept off,' linking divine nature directly to human performance.

Semantic Warnings:

"Prosper"

In Text: Material wealth (gold, silver), military victory, and retaining land ownership.

Evangelical: Often refers to spiritual flourishing or success in God's will, which may include suffering (e.g., Joseph in prison, Genesis 39:23).

Example: *In Jarom 1:9, prospering is verified by not being destroyed. In Psalm 1, the righteous prosper like a tree, regardless of material circumstance.*

"Machinery"

In Text: Implies complex mechanical devices used for building or war.

Evangelical: N/A (Term not used in KJV Bible; anachronistic for ancient texts).

Example: *Jarom 1:8 claims 'machinery' existed in 400 BC Americas.*

SOTERIOLOGY

Salvation Defined: Primarily defined in this text as preservation from physical destruction ('swept off') and possession of the land.

How Attained: By keeping the commandments, the Law of Moses, and the Sabbath day holy.

Basis of Assurance: Material prosperity and military success are the visible signs of assurance.

Comparison to Sola Fide: Jarom emphasizes 'laboring diligently' and strict law-keeping to prevent destruction. This contrasts with Romans 3:28, 'man is justified by faith without the deeds of the law.'

MANDATES & REQUIREMENTS

Explicit Commands:

1. Keep the commandments to prosper
2. Keep the Law of Moses
3. Keep the Sabbath day holy
4. Look forward unto the Messiah

Implicit Obligations:

1. Maintain genealogy records
2. Fortify cities against enemies
3. Labor diligently to warn others of sin
4. Produce weapons and tools

Ritual Requirements:

1. Observance of the Law of Moses
2. Sabbath observance

EVANGELISM TOOLKIT

Discovery Questions:

1. Jarom 1:9 says you prosper only 'inasmuch' as you keep the commandments. How do you interpret times of financial struggle or illness? Does that mean you aren't keeping the commandments?
2. The text mentions the Nephites had machinery and steel (v. 8). Why do you think archaeologists haven't found evidence of these industries in the Americas from that time period?
3. Jarom says they looked forward to the Messiah 'as though he already was.' If they already knew everything about Him, why was the 'mystery' of Christ hidden from the Old Testament saints (Colossians 1:26)?

Redemptive Analogies:

1. The Pricked Heart – Just as the Nephite teachers sought to prick hearts to bring repentance, the Holy Spirit pierces our hearts to reveal our need for a Savior. [Acts 2:37 'Now when they heard this, they were pricked in their heart...']
2. The Threat of Being Swept Off – The fear of judgment is real, but Christ took that destruction upon Himself so we wouldn't be 'swept off' but gathered in. [John 5:24 '...shall not come into condemnation; but is passed from death unto life.']

Spiritual Weight:

1. Performance Anxiety / Prosperity Gospel [Severe] – The believer is burdened with the idea that their physical safety and financial stability are direct report cards on their spiritual obedience. Suffering becomes a source of shame and proof of sin.
2. Cognitive Dissonance [Moderate] – The believer must reconcile the text's claims of steel, machinery, and vast populations with the complete lack of archaeological evidence, often leading to intellectual compartmentalization.

PISTEMOLOGY

Knowledge Source: Revelation, prophecy, and the 'Holy Spirit' manifesting according to faith.

Verification Method: Material prosperity and military victory are seen as verification of the 'word of the Lord' (Jarom 1:9).

Evangelical Contrast: Biblical epistemology relies on the objective Word of God (2 Timothy 3:16) and the internal witness of the Spirit regarding Christ (Romans 8:16), not on material outcomes or subjective 'manifestations' linked to human merit.

TEXTUAL CRITICISM

Dating: Internal dating: approx. 420-361 B.C. Published: 1830 A.D.

Authorship: Attributed to Jarom; Critical view attributes to Joseph Smith.

Textual Issues: The inclusion of 'machinery' and 'steel' in a text purporting to be from 400 B.C. Americas is a major anachronism indicative of 19th-century authorship.