

Jacob 5 – Words of Mormon

Jay Ball, 29 Mar 2020

Lesson:

Jacob adopted the words of Zenos to bear testimony of the things he, Jacob, had been taught by the Lord. You may remember Nephi did the same thing by using Isaiah's words. The Lord spoke to Jacob face-to-face. (2 Ne 11:2-3) So when Jacob said the events "must surely come to pass" he was independently confirming as another witness the prophecy was accurate. Jacob did not reveal a new allegory, provide a new narrative, or tell a new story. He used words of earlier prophets to state his message, adding only, "I prophesy these scriptures are true."

Footnote in Stick of Joseph to verse 2: This unusual order of words ("words of me") would be normal in Hebrew where the pronominal suffix would have been used.

Olive Tree in a vineyard? Footnote in SJ to verse 3: While the Torah prohibits sowing diverse seeds in a vineyard (Deut. 22:9), the Mishnah does not consider the presence of olive trees in a vineyard as violating this commandment (m.Kilayim 6:3-5). Since ancient times, olive trees have traditionally been cultivated alongside grapes due to their mutual affinity for the same soil and climate, their staggered harvest seasons, and the protection the trees afford the grapes from certain weather phenomena. This practice continues today.

Skip to verse 48 (end of 47) Who is it that has corrupted my vineyard?

v 48

This is our pride and haughtiness. We think we are in control We have forgotten God and His covenants with the fathers. "Taking strength unto themselves," means we think we can disrespect, ignore and even violate laws upon which blessings are predicated but still claim the blessings.

When we read about the lofty branches taking strength unto themselves, the tendency is to apply that to someone outside our circle. It can't mean us, it must apply to all the heathens out there in the world. I suggest we liken this to ourselves. President Bensons popular talk warning us against pride was given to and directed at members of the church. President Oak's, as recent as 2010 reminded, us the church is still under condemnation for taking lightly the Book of Mormon. The message and warnings of Book of Mormon are directed at the audience who has it in our possession.

v 49-51

In all His preparation to save His people, the Lord cannot think of anything more He could have done. He has prepared salvation for us. But it is only preparation. We must be willing to receive it. (see D&C 19:19-20)

What more could God do? To do more would rob us of our agency by compelling us to submit. He cannot do that, because it would end our existence (D&C 93:30-31). Without the freedom to choose we do not exist. Therefore, what more could he have done?

In order to lay a foundation to better understand some of the significance to this parable in Jacob 5, I want to follow a footnote and turn to 1 Ne ch 15.

1 Ne 15:6-8 Laman and Lemuel cannot understand the words of Lehi concerning natural branches of olive tree.

Skipping to 1 Ne 15:12-14...

Milo HaGoyim

“Fulness of the Gentiles.” See Gen. 48:19; Rom. 11:25; 3 Nefi 7:4 [16:4-7]. This phrase (הגוים מלא) appears in Rom. 11:25 where the KJV has “fulness of the Gentiles” as part of the explanation of the Olive Tree parable. It also appears in Gen. 48:19, where the KJV translates it as “a multitude of nations” as part of Jacob’s blessing on Ephraim. Jacob plainly states that Ephraim’s descendents will become the fulness of the Gentiles. Hence this work began among the Gentiles and goes to all of scattered Israel in the hand of Ephraim. See also Ezek. 37:19.

Wherefore the Lord said, Forasmuch as this people draw near me with their mouth, and with their lips do honour me, but have removed their heart far from me, and their fear toward me is taught by the precept of men: Therefore, behold, I will proceed to do a marvellous work among this people, even a marvellous work and a wonder: for the wisdom of their wise men shall perish, and the understanding of their prudent men shall be hid. (Isa 29:13-14)

The Talmud ascribes Isa 29:14 to a teaching that:

“The Torah is destined to be forgotten in Israel, because it is said, Then the Lord will make thy plagues wonderful: (Dt. 28:59) now, I do not know what this wonder is, but when it is said, Therefore, behold, I will proceed to do a marvelous work among this people, even a marvelous work and a wonder [and the wisdom of their wise men shall perish], (Is. 29:14) it follows that this wonder refers to Torah.” (b.Shabb. 138b)

Rab taught that this portion of Isaiah refers to an apostasy of Israel from the Torah, and goes on to relate it to the famine of hearing the word spoken of in Amos 8:11-12:

“Our Rabbis taught: When our Masters entered the vineyard at Yabneh, they said, The Torah is destined to be forgotten in Israel, as it is said, Behold, the days come, saith the Lord God, that I will send a famine in the land, not a famine of bread, nor a thirst for water, but of hearing the words of the Lord. And it is said, And they shall wander from sea to sea, and from the north even to the east; they shall run to and fro to seek the word of the Lord, and shall not find it. (Amos 8:11f)” (ibid)

<https://stickofjoseph.org/our-blog/the-sealed-book-and-the-restoration-of-the-house-of-israel/>

So what do we conclude from this rabbit trail of scriptures? The apostasy of Judah is realized by the “fulness of the Gentiles” which must be connected with the coming forth of the book predicted in Isa

29. That would be The Book of Mormon. Or in the words of Ezekiel 37, the Stick of Joseph in the hands of Ephraim (which is it's own discussion for another time).

Returning to Jacob 5

Some keys to help understand this parable:

Throughout the allegory, "fruit" means salvation in a covenantal sense. It requires the promises made to the fathers (see Abraham 1:2) to be the same covenant given to you.

Natural fruit, "which natural fruit is good and the most precious above all other fruit." (v 61 - cf Lehi's dream)

Roots - promises made to the fathers that their seed would not be utterly destroyed.

We seek to obtain our own promise with the Lord, so that we will not be burned at His coming (Malachi as quoted to Joseph Smith, JSH v 39, leaving neither root nor branch - familial terms).

"He also quoted the next verse differently: And he shall plant in the hearts of the children the promises made to the fathers, and the hearts of the children shall turn to their fathers. If it were not so, the whole earth would be utterly wasted at his coming." (JSH 1:39)

What does it mean to have our own promise with the Lord?

Joseph Smith letter to Uncle Silas

"If the saints in the days of the apostles were privileged to take the ancients for examples, and lay hold of the same promises, and attain to the same exalted privilege of knowing that their names were written in the Lamb's Book of Life and that they were sealed there as a perpetual memorial before the face of the Most High, will not the same faithfulness, the same purity of heart and the same faith bring the same assurance of eternal life, and that in the same manner, to the children of men now in this age of the world?

I have no doubt but that the holy prophets and apostles and saints in ancient days were saved in the kingdom of God; neither do I doubt but that they held converse and communion with him while they were in the flesh, as Paul said to his Corinthian brethren that the Lord Jesus showed himself to above five hundred saints at one time after his resurrection. Job said that he knew that his Redeemer lived and that he should see him in the flesh in the latter days. I may believe that Enoch walked with God and by faith was translated. I may believe that Noah was a perfect man in his generation and also walked with God. I may believe that Abraham communed with God and conversed with angels. I may believe that Isaac obtained a renewal of the covenant made to Abraham by the direct voice of the Lord. I may believe that Jacob conversed with holy angels, and heard the voice of his Maker, that he wrestled with the angel until he prevailed and obtained the blessing. I may believe that Elijah was taken to Heaven in a chariot of fire with fiery horses. I may believe that the saints saw the Lord and conversed with him face to face after his resurrection. I may believe that the Hebrew church came to Mount Zion, and unto the city of the living God, the Heavenly Jerusalem, and to an innumerable company of angels. I may believe that they looked into eternity and saw the Judge of all, and Jesus the Mediator of the new covenant. But

will all this purchase an assurance for me, and waft me to the regions of eternal day, and seat me down in the presence of the King of kings with my garments spotless, pure, and white?

Or must I not rather obtain for myself, by my own faith and diligence in keeping the commandments of the Lord, an assurance of salvation for myself? And have I not an equal privilege with the ancient saints? And will not the Lord hear my prayers and listen to my cries as soon as he ever did to theirs, if I come to him in the manner they did? Or, is he a respecter of persons?"

(JS Papers, Documents Vol. 3, pp. 303-308)

v 52-53

How great a number is required in order for the Lord to vindicate his promise? It's not about numbers. It's never been about a big volume. It's the quality of the salvation. Because if you can save but one, what you have saved is infinite and eternal. And therefore it continues on forever.

v 54

Notice the word "mother." The term reconfirms there is both male and female roles in the religion of the fathers, because it was genealogical and familial. It will restore on earth the Family of God.

v 61, 62

v 64

God will provide everything necessary. If a few will accept God's offer, He will "prepare the way for them that they may grow." The "good fruit" will be restored to the fathers, and become part of their house, numbered among Abraham's seed.

v 71

In the final effort, God is personally assisting His servants. He is personally in charge. The test is for the branches to respond and bear fruit.

The tree will be pruned. The required pruning, digging, cutting, moving and grafting will be unsettling. Pruning sometimes requires the blunt declaration, 'You are in error. You follow a false tradition that will damn you.' Tough pruning is difficult for the servant, hard for the tree, and challenging to all, it must be done.

We can plant the doctrine, restore truth, and remember the Prophet Joseph Smith's words, but if we are not nourished from it we will not be grafted in to the living roots. Our hearts will not turn to the fathers. His servants will dispense pruning, care, and ministrations but fruit must grow in response. Without responding, the branches remain unproductive in a damaged vineyard, ultimately only suitable to be burned. "Grafting" restores, reconnects, and returns, or in other words, plants in the hearts of the children the promises made to the fathers. (see JSH 1:39)