

Book of Mormon Study –3 Nephi 17-19

Online zoom Sunday School, 11 Oct 2020

(<https://jayball.name/book-of-mormon-study-lessons>)

3 Ne 17:1-3

Behold, now it came to pass that when Jesus had spoken these words he looked round about again on the multitude, and he said unto them: Behold, my time is at hand. I perceive that ye are weak, that ye cannot understand all my words which I am commanded of the Father to speak unto you at this time. Therefore, go ye unto your homes, and ponder upon the things which I have said, and ask of the Father, in my name, that ye may understand, and prepare your minds for the morrow, and I come unto you again.

Christ finishes His explanation to the Nephite audience and then pauses. He spends some time looking at the group of Nephites whom He had been teaching. And, after they stare back without question or inquiry, He laments they are just not getting it. They are too spiritually weak to receive what He would like to teach them. He suggests they go home and pray and ponder, and see if they can't be ready to be taught tomorrow.

They are unprepared to receive what He is coming to teach them because they are missing the very point which He just taught! He had told them the disciples at Jerusalem are not going to receive any knowledge of them unless these other disciples ask. If they do not ask, then the disciples at Jerusalem will not know about the Nephites. After making this clear, Christ tells the Nephites there are still other sheep. And in response to this clearest of declarations, there is no inquiry! The Nephites simply do not ask. They listen to what the Lord is willing to tell them, but they are unwilling to ask to learn more! It could not be a clearer example of the necessity of asking. Nor a clearer example of how the Lord is disappointed when we fail to ask Him.

It is learning which is the most difficult. It is far easier to perform a miracle. These people are prepared to receive miracles (as we continue reading in verses 6-10). But they are not prepared to be taught. Today people continue to mistake the things which matter most and are the most difficult to achieve on the one hand, with what is less difficult on the other hand. It is learning, being taught, and receiving further light and knowledge which always challenges the human mind the most. Here we are talking about learning through revelation, not merely by study.

Another thought on this verse is that I'm reminded of when he was with the two disciples when they arrived at Emmaus and "he made as though he would have gone further." (Luke 24:28)

When they arrived at Emmaus, He came in, because they asked Him to stay. If they had not asked, He would have passed by. That also tells you something important about our Lord. He does not force Himself upon you. You must invite.

Stick of Joseph footnote 3 Ne 17:16

Isa. 64:3 (4). There is a direct connection here with a Baraita (pre-Talmudic tradition), which is quoted twice in the Talmud (and in the Midrash Rabbah and Zohar): “What is the meaning of ‘Eye has not seen’ (Isa. 64:3)? Rabbi Joshua ben Levi said: This is the wine that has been kept in its grapes from the six days in the beginning” (b.Berakhot 34b; b.Sanhedrin 99a). [The Yayin HaMeshumar—the wine that has been kept] And the Midrash Rabbah says: “Because he bared his soul unto death (Isa. 53:12) and bruised themselves with the Torah which is sweeter than honey, the Holy One, blessed be He, will hereafter give them to drink of the wine kept in its grapes since the six days in the beginning” (Midrash Rabbah to Numbers 13:2 [500]). And we read in the Zohar: “The Tzadik (The Righteous) is the Yesod (foundation) in Yah, the mystery (sod) which is the wine which has been kept in its grapes from the six days in the beginning” (Zohar; Roeh M’haimna on Pinchas). This Baraita directly connects with the partaking of the wine of the Seder in 3 Nephi 8:6–7 and with Mashiach as the suffering servant of Isa. 53 (See notes to Moshiyah 8 [Mosiah 14-15]).

See [The Mystery of the Passover Wine and the Stick of Joseph](https://stickofjoseph.org/our-blog/the-mystery-of-the-passover-wine-and-the-stick-of-joseph/)

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3 Ne 17:20

And they arose from the earth, and he said unto them: Blessed are ye because of your faith. And now behold, my joy is full.

Words are incapable of describing what is meant by the expression “my joy is full”. We read earlier in Alma where Ammon was so overcome with joy that it exhausted his strength (Alma 27:17).

Could the kind of joy Christ speaks about in this verse compare in some measure with the joy Christ must have felt at meeting Mary after his resurrection? John’s account records that Christ told Mary: ‘Touch me not.’ In the Joseph Smith Translation the words are changed to read: ‘Hold me not.’ (JST-John 20: 17.) I imagine that when Mary realized it was Jesus, she embraced Him joyfully. That she did not timidly reach out her hand, but she readily greeted Him with open arms, and He, in turn, embraced her. This was a moment where the Lord was triumphant, exultant, overjoyed at His return from the grave, and she shared His joy. As dark and terrible as were the sufferings through which He passed, the magnitude of which is impossible for man to put into words, these feelings of triumph were, on the other hand, of equal magnitude in their joy and gratitude. He had attained to the resurrection of the dead! Just as He had seen His Father do, He likewise held the keys of death and hell! He had the deep satisfaction of having accomplished the most difficult assignment to be given by the Father, knowing it was a benefit to all of His Father’s children, and it had been done perfectly.

I think it no question that Mary and Christ embraced. That there would have been nothing timid about the warm encounter she had with Him. Then He said to her, ‘Hold me not’ because He had to ascend, return and report to His Father. I believe Joseph Smith was correct when he revised this language.

Note also in this verse they are called by the Lord “Blessed”.

3 Ne 18:3-4

And when the disciples had come with bread and wine, he took of the bread and brake and blessed it; and he gave unto the Disciples and commanded that they should eat. And when they had eaten and were filled, he commanded that they should give unto the multitude.

It is interesting these 12 are consistently referred to as “disciples” and not as “Apostles.” There isn’t a single “Apostle” in the Book of Mormon record. Only “disciples.” There are 12 of them, and they are treated exactly as were the Apostles in Jerusalem. This was a distinction David Whitmer believed to be significant. He disliked the claim to restore Apostles.

Notice in the narrative the Lord “commanded that they should eat.” This is an interesting phrasing. It is more than an invitation. It is more than an offering. It is a commandment. Why? What is it about partaking of His sacrament, eating in remembrance of the body of Christ, that must be done? Why is it a commandment?

Why would people who had seen, touched, knelt at the feet of the risen Lord, need to partake of the bread as a “witness” and “remembrance” of Him? How can this add to what they had already received? Why is the sacrament sacred enough to be celebrated by the Lord with people who are in His very presence?

3 Ne 18:5

And when the multitude had eaten and were filled, he said unto the Disciples: Behold there shall one be ordained among you, and to him will I give power that he shall break bread and bless it and give it unto the people of my church, unto all those who shall believe and be baptized in my name.

Notice now the “multitude” takes part in eating the bread and “were filled.” This raises the question of how they were filled. Were their stomachs filled because of the amount they ate? Did they eat until they were filled, or did they get filled on just a small amount of bread? Or was this a spiritual filling where each heart was touched and each person’s countenance before the Lord filled with light?

This is a group which has just a few hours before engaged in a “hosanna shout” before the Lord. (3 Nephi 11: 17.) Now, however, they are “filled.” It is a profound moment with deep significance.

The Lord then tells the disciples that “there shall be one ordained among you” to break the bread. Notice it is “one.” All twelve have been asked to pass the sacrament to the multitude, but from among them “shall one be ordained” to receive “power that he shall break bread and bless it.” Why would only “one” be chosen to do this? All twelve had been given the power to baptize. (3 Nephi 11: 21-22.) Only one of them is to bless the sacrament. What does that suggest about the sanctity of the sacrament, if it is performed in the correct manner? Should it be viewed as a “higher ordinance” because of the more exclusive reservation of the “power” conferred by the Lord? What does that tell us about the manner we ought to proceed? Have we missed something in our reading of these verses?

Now the record is written by Nephi. (3 Nephi 1: 2.) He is the first one called by the Lord. (3 Nephi 11: 18.) He is the first one given power to baptize by the Lord. (3 Nephi 11: 18-21.) But the identity of the person given “power that he shall break bread and bless it” is not recorded. We can know it is Nephi

because he was always the one given the other power first. More to the point, however, we can know it was him because he kept the record. Had it been another, he would have told us. But since it was him, he declined to draw further attention to himself. Identifying himself previously was necessary for the narrative to be complete. Here, however, identifying himself would call undue attention. As a humble follower of Christ, it was not appropriate for him to do so, therefore the disciple is unnamed in our account.

Why is “power [to] break bread and bless it” conferred separately from the power to baptize? In D&C 20, the authority is coextensive. (See D&C 20: 38-39, 46.) Why does the Lord separate it among the Nephites? Since we have this account, does it add any instruction for us about the significance of the sacrament?

Sometimes we neglect things because of our familiarity with them. We presume wrongly that we understand them because of their frequent repetition. Here, however, the sacrament seems to take on greater significance. It achieves a pinnacle that exceeds even touching the risen Lord.

When we share food with one another, we become part of the same material. We share substance. When a meal is shared, life is shared. We become one of the same substance.

The substance which binds us is the “body of Christ” in symbol. Christ “broke” the bread before it was blessed. What does breaking the bread symbolize about Christ? How is His broken body intended to unite us with one another, and with Him?

Why is the broken bread distributed to those who “shall believe and be baptized in my name?” Does the order matter? Can a person be baptized before they believe, later come to believe, and then receive the sacrament correctly? Or must they come to believe first, then receive baptism second, before it is proper to partake of the sacrament? We’ve been working our way through the Lord’s commandments deliberately trying to unlock their specific requirements. They are simple. They can be done by anyone. But they are specific and should be followed in the same manner the Lord instituted them. This is the “straight path” which He says is narrow and few will find. Perhaps it is not found because we proceed with inexactitude to do what He has laid out before us with exactness.

The Lord occupies the role as Master and as Example. He bids us to follow Him. And He tells us His way is plain. If we confuse it, muddle it, and fail to do it as He has asked us to do, then it is not His failure, but ours. He has made it clear that He respects no one, but is open to all. But it is open on the exact terms. And some times the terms are exacting.

3 Ne 18:6-7

And this shall ye always observe to do, even as I have done, even as I have broken bread and blessed it and given it unto you. And this shall ye do in remembrance of my body, which I have shown unto you. And it shall be a testimony unto the Father that ye do always remember me. And if ye do always remember me ye shall have my Spirit to be with you.

Here the Lord emphasizes a formula He has provided in this ordinance:

- “Always observe to do.” It is to be done, and when it is done it is to be done in an “observant” way.
- “Even as I have done.” His example is intended to clarify and define the manner the ordinance is to be observed. He regulates it by what He has done.
- “Even as I have broken bread and blessed it.” The manner, the process, the gestures of breaking it first and then blessing it second, are to be followed exactly.
- “And given it unto you.” When it is broken, then blessed, those who qualify by having repented and been baptized receive it as a gift or token from Christ. It is His body.

Now the Lord clarifies in explanation what He has earlier clarified in the blessing: This is to be done “in remembrance of [His] body.” It is through His body that He, the living sacrifice, shows us the way. A loving God has died for us. His body is a testimony of **life, obedience, sacrifice, cruelty, forgiveness, death, resurrection, immortality, power and glory**. When you remember His life you should remember all that is associated with it.

Here the Lord reminds the Nephites they are to remember the body “which [He] has shown unto [them].” The sacred embrace and ceremony of recognition (which we discussed in our last lesson), should return to the mind of those present whenever they received the bread again. The Lord could give no greater testimony of what He had done, who He was, and how He served them than by showing to them His risen body still bearing the marks of crucifixion.

The act is intended to be a “testimony unto the Father that ye do always remember [Him].” The act of testifying is not composed merely of the act of eating the bread. To actually testify to the Father you must:

1. Repent
2. Be baptized
3. Receive the bread after it has been properly blessed with power
4. Remember His body and the ten things symbolized through it

This is the acceptable sacrifice the Father will receive as a “testimony” of Christ.

Should you perform this, then you will receive power to “have [His] Spirit to be with you.”

These are simple steps. They are possible to be performed. When they are, the Father receives the act as a testimony before Him of the truth that you do always remember His Son. It will be recorded in heaven, and will be a witness for your salvation in the Day of Judgment.

It is interesting the Lord should give us language that makes “observing to do” and “as He has done” a required part of the process. Those words are probably best when viewed in their clearest meaning, and accomplished with exactitude. Though He measures our hearts, when instructions are given in simplicity, one fair measure of the heart is how closely we follow the instruction.

Since the result is to have His Spirit to be with you, it should be a simple matter to determine by reflection if you have His Spirit as your companion. If you can feel that He is always with you, then you have an acceptable testimony to the Father. If you do not, then perhaps you should revisit the steps He has provided to see what you might improve. There is a law irrevocably decreed before the foundation of the world upon which all blessings are predicated. And when we receive any blessing from the Lord, it

is by obedience to the law upon which the blessing is provided. Therefore, it makes sense that you can determine the extent to which you have followed the formula by the result promised. Having Christ's Spirit to be with you is significant enough proof that you should know the truth of the matter. Since you know the means by which to judge, see that you judge the matter correctly. (Moroni 7: 18.)

3 Ne 18:8

And it came to pass that when he said these words, he commanded his Disciples that they should take of the wine of the cup and drink of it, and that they should also give unto the multitude that they might drink of it.

In this description we do not have mention of the blessing pronounced upon the wine. Moroni will later clarify that it was blessed and provide us the words of His blessing (see Moroni 5: 1-2.)

Once again it is a "command" to partake. The Lord, knowing how critical this act is for salvation and a testimony before the Father, makes it a command that the disciples drink of it.

Wine was generally either purple or red. Our blood is purple when deprived of oxygen in our veins, and red when filled with oxygen in our arteries. These two colors of blood inside our bodies are akin to the predominate colors of wine.

Once again it is the disciples who partake first. Then, after having partaken, they pass it to the multitude. This illustrates the practice of receiving it before being able to pass it to others. It is not possible to pass along what has not first been received. This is true of all the Lord's ordinances. It is one of the reasons Alma rebaptized himself the instant he first began to baptize others. (Mosiah 18:14.) Those who bless are to be sanctified by partaking, then they pass the sacrament as sanctified ministers. Those who are passing are not more important, but rather they are first purified. Then those to whom they minister may receive the ordinance from those who are already clean.

Our modern practice is to pass the sacrament first to the "presiding authority" who is present. The presiding authority (who is always mentioned at the beginning of the meeting) is identified, and then the priests who pass the sacrament bring it to that person first. After he partakes, the sacrament is passed to others. We show great deference to authority in our system. In the Third Nephi events presided over by the Lord, He shows great deference to purity.

The Lord's commandment to the disciples is followed by the instruction to provide the wine to the multitude "that they might drink." The ones officiating are "commanded," whereas the multitude is provided the opportunity to follow by example. Instead of a "commandment" to the multitude, there is an invitation. Clearly the Lord understands the importance of example and respects free will. Those who want to follow Him closest will be told what they must do. Then others are invited to follow of their own free will, and not by compulsion.

This systematic progression begins with knowledge of the Lord. They met Him. They felt the prints in His side, hands and feet. They had no veil separating them from Him. Yet, despite this knowledge, He walks them through ordinances where they qualify to return permanently to His presence. The ordinances are important enough for the Risen Lord to personally conduct and instruct on how to perform them. It is not merely what we believe, nor what we understand, but it is also what we do that matters. We must

follow Him and His Divinely ordained ordinances. But to do so we need to perform them as He has instructed.

We require a priest to repeat the entire sacrament prayer if he gets a word wrong or adds a word while pronouncing the blessing. In this we show how exact we believe the ordinance is to be followed. We should perform it in every particular as the Lord has instructed. When we do, then the promise of having His Spirit to always be with us is realized.

3 Ne 18:9

And it came to pass that they did so, and did drink of it and were filled; and they gave unto the multitude, and they did drink, and they were filled.

Partaking of the broken bread filled the disciples, and then the multitude, so again drinking the wine filled both.

What were they filled with?

Since this is an ordinance where the promised result is to “have His Spirit to be with them,” (3 Nephi 18: 7) is any meaning of “filled” adequate apart from being filled with His Spirit? Clearly this ceremony is not performed to merely fill the belly. It harkens back to His promise to those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, that they are to be filled. What the Lord presents in ceremony is the fulfillment of the earlier promise in His sermon. There is a beautiful symmetry to His sermon, His promise, the catalyst ordinance, and the reality of being “filled” which is missing from the New Testament record. In this respect, as in so many others, the Book of Mormon is the preferred, and more revealing account of the Lord’s ministry.

The Lord’s work is to bring about redemption for mankind. He redeems. In ceremony, and now in reality, He is working with a multitude to bring about their preparation and redemption. It is a Master Teacher, proving by His words and deeds, that He knows how to lead souls to salvation.

It is of interest that the record prepared by Mormon in such a painstaking effort takes the time to include these details for our instruction. They are intended not merely as history, but also as a guide. The plan of salvation is to be shared, so that others may follow it and themselves be “filled” with His Spirit.

Now note the prayers all refer to Christ’s Spirit. This is something apart from the Holy Ghost. It is Christ’s Spirit which is to “always be with them.”

What does it mean to have Christ’s Spirit to be with you? To guide you?

This is an important point, and worthy of some discussion by Joseph in The Lectures on Faith.

The Spirit of Christ is also referred to in Section 84: 45-47. It is also described using the word “light” instead of His Spirit, in Section 88: 5-13. If you read those carefully you realize that connecting with His Spirit or His light will also put you in contact with everything else governed by Him. He is the light which “enlighteneth your eyes, which is the same light that quickeneth your understandings;”

This is why Joseph commented that the closer a man draws to God the clearer his understanding will be on all subjects. Greater light means clearer perception. It involves discerning between truth and error. It allows you to see what is dark, and who is dark, and what is light and who is filled with light. The light of a person's countenance is upon them, and if the Lord's Spirit fills you then you can see others just as He sees them.

It was His Spirit that enabled the Nephites to become one. With it, Zion becomes possible. Without it, Zion is only a theory to be abused and misunderstood. Without it, Zion is a vain ambition of conspiring men. It will not come to pass. With His Spirit, Zion is inevitable, because He will bring again Zion. If you would like to see the course of this doomed people changed at least as to your part, then these teachings and following these ordinances are the means by which the Lord's Spirit becomes available to you.

[Stick of Joseph footnote 3 Ne 18:28](#)

The Torah prohibits uncircumcised males from partaking of the Passover (Ex. 12:42–45).

[Stick of Joseph footnote 3 Ne 18:29](#)

This is almost identical to 1 Cor. 11:29, “drinks damnation to himself,” pointing to an underlying Hebrew word nefesh נפש, which can mean “soul, life, or self” (see Moshiah 1:10,16, 18 [Mosiah 2:32-33; 3:18, 24-25]).

[3 Ne 18:28-29](#)

And now behold, this is the commandment which I give unto you, that ye shall not suffer any one knowingly to partake of my flesh and blood unworthily, when ye shall minister it; For whoso eateth and drinketh my flesh and blood unworthily eateth and drinketh damnation to his soul; therefore if ye know that a man is unworthy to eat and drink of my flesh and blood ye shall forbid him.

This commandment about partaking of the bread and wine is the one He needed them to understand. They should take precautions to prevent those who they know to be unworthy from partaking. The reason is merciful. When they partake of His flesh and blood unworthily, they establish a testimony before the Father of their unworthiness.

Remember the bread and wine become a testimony to the Father. (See 3 Nephi 18: 10.) The observance comes to the attention of the Father. It is a witness before Him. Therefore, when the flesh and blood are taken by those who are unworthy, the witness which comes to the Father is of their unworthiness. The Father cannot look upon sin with the least degree of allowance. (D&C 1: 31.) When a person comes before the Father in a witness of their unworthiness, such a person “eateth and drinketh damnation to his soul.” This person has asked the Father to take notice of their unworthiness.

It is the responsibility of those who minister these things to “forbid him” in such circumstances. They are their brother's keeper. Though it may be difficult for the person to be warned, it is merciful to do so. The sacrament is to be offered to the worthy, never offered to the unworthy. The worthy should “forbid” the unworthy from taking.

This is not an unkind teaching. It is not exclusionary or discriminatory. It is based on the doctrine Christ teaches, and the import of the act which witnesses to the Father. That witness occurs whenever the sacrament is properly administered, with appropriate power to bless, in a setting the Lord has authorized, by those who have repented and are properly baptized. Among such people the bread and wine should be given only to those who are worthy.

Now, the responsibility is on the ones administering the bread and wine. But the duty only extends to those who are “knowingly... unworthy.” That is, the ones who administer are not obligated to police others. They are not required to interview and determine worthiness. They are only to take note of such things as come to their attention and require the conclusion that the recipient is “unworthy.” Obvious misdeeds are important, private matters and individual failings are not consequential to the ones administering the rite.

“Therefore, if ye know that a man is unworthy to eat and drink [Christ’s] flesh and blood ye shall forbid him.” But only if you “know” such is the case. Then, you should “forbid” him from doing so. Not by force, but by refusing to minister the sacrament to him. This becomes impractical, however, when it is a tray passed down a row of people, who cannot be forbidden to partake. In that kind of ceremony, the individual cannot be forbidden except through general teaching and warning. Then the individual is free to choose for themselves whether to heed the caution or to ignore it. The question remains, however, if that relieves the persons ministering the sacrament from their obligation to “forbid him” if he is known to be unworthy.

These are interesting points. All the more so because the Lord has taken the time to teach us these principles. And for Him to teach them, and provide them to us as part of restoring the Gospel to our day, I presume that informs us these points are to be followed.

Whether we choose to follow His teachings or not becomes, for most of us, a matter of convention and acceptance of popular behavior. If these teachings are found in the Book of Mormon, but not observed by us in how we proceed each Sabbath, then we tend to feel comfortable that what we do is right and the text has been corrected by modern practice. It is an interesting conclusion to draw. One which, upon careful examination, does not always leave us with the same feeling of comfort.

Well, the Lord had this to say about us in 1832:

“your minds in times past have been darkened because of unbelief, and because you have treated lightly the things you have received— Which vanity and unbelief have brought the whole church under condemnation. And this condemnation resteth upon the children of Zion, even all. And they shall remain under this condemnation until they repent and remember the new covenant, even the Book of Mormon and the former commandments which I have given them, not only to say, but to do according to that which I have written—” (D&C 84: 54-57).

[3 Ne 18:36-37](#)

In chapter 11 Christ gave Nephi and twelve others power to baptize. We read:

“And Nephi arose and went forth, and bowed himself before the Lord and did kiss his feet. And the Lord commanded him that he should arise. And he arose and stood before him. And the Lord said unto him: I give unto you power that ye shall baptize this people when I am again ascended into heaven. And again the Lord called others, and said unto them likewise; and he gave unto them power to baptize.” (3 Ne 11:19-22)

Christ did not touch them, He said to them, “I give you power to baptize.” Although the record is incomplete, these disciples, in all likelihood, had previously been ordained. But Christ was renewing His church when He came. All that was needed to obtain the power to baptize was (and is) for Christ to tell you.

This is in contrast to the power given by Christ to lay on hands for the Holy Ghost. For power to do that, Christ needed to touch them. When Christ actually does give power to give the Holy Ghost the account stresses the touching:

*“And it came to pass that when Jesus had made an end of these sayings, he **touched** with his hand the disciples whom he had chosen, one by one, even until he had **touched** them all, and spake unto them as he **touched** them. And the multitude heard not the words which he spake, therefore they did not bear record; but the disciples bare record that he gave them power to give the Holy Ghost. And I will show unto you hereafter that this record is true (3 Ne 18:36-37, emphasis added).”*

Once John the Baptist came and laid his hand on Joseph, we have had a practice of continuing to lay hands on one another to confer Aaronic Priesthood.

[3 Ne 18:38](#)

And it came to pass that when Jesus had touched them all, there came a cloud and overshadowed the multitude that they could not see Jesus.

Stick of Joseph footnote gives these references:
Deut. 31:15; Mark 9:7; Mosiah 27:11; Ether 2:4

[Stick of Joseph footnote 3 Ne 19:4](#)

The appearance of the Greek name “Timothy” (Timo - Theos) “honoring God” should come as no surprise. No less a scholar than Dr. Cyrus Gordon suggests the Greek word “Theos” migrated to Ancient America. He writes of the Uto-Aztecan (Nahuatl) word teo - tl: “For example teo - tl ‘god’ could have been introduced from Greek theo - s... Greek influence in Ancient America does not come as a complete surprise. Since Mycenaean times, the Greeks have been a nautical people” (Gordon, C.H. (1971) Before Columbus. New York, ny: Crown. p. 136).

[3 Ne 19:9](#)

And they did pray for that which they most desired; and they desired that the Holy Ghost should be given unto them.

3 Ne 19:11

And it came to pass that Nephi went down into the water and was baptized.

There is a similar pattern as when Alma baptized himself (Mosiah 18:14-15). Also compare the account of the baptism of Adam (Moses 6:64-65).

3 Ne 19

The text clearly differentiates between the "disciples" or the ones Jesus had "chosen" on the one hand, and the "multitude" on the other hand. This distinction must be recognized to catch the import of what is being taught or shown in the account.

3 Ne 19:12-13

And he came up out of the water and began to baptize. And he baptized all those whom Jesus had chosen. [i.e., the twelve disciples] And it came to pass when they were all [i.e., the twelve] baptized and had come up out of the water, the Holy Ghost did fall upon them [again the twelve], and they were filled with the Holy Ghost and with fire.

This baptism is a form of preparatory washing for the ceremonies which are underway in this part of the Book of Mormon. It is consistent with the higher ordinances of the Gospel, and with what the record is about to reveal happened on this second day of Christ's ministry among the Nephites. So the ceremonial baptism here is best regarded as a form of ceremonial washing of the twelve disciples who participated in them.

The washing of these chosen twelve is immediately followed by an anointing of the Spirit. These disciples are now washed, anointed and prepared for an endowment from on-high. Now that the twelve are prepared by these first cleansing rites, Christ returns to minister further rites to them. "Jesus came and stood in the midst and ministered unto them. And it came to pass that he spake unto the multitude, and commanded them that they should kneel down again upon the earth, and also that his disciples should kneel down upon the earth." (3 Ne 19:15-16.) There are two distinct groups here in the narrative.

The twelve are now assembled in a circle (as we understand from the language 'Jesus came and stood in the midst'). He is in the center of the circle, as a fixed point about which the circle is drawn. He is the point by which a compass can draw a perfect round. This is a ceremony unfolding in the record. You must understand this to understand the record. The disciples are then commanded to pray (v 17). This is a prayer circle, familiar to anyone who attends the Temple.

While the disciples pray in a circle, the Lord then knocks at the veil three times. You will remember from last lesson we mentioned of the three degrees of separation between God and man. As God reached downward, He called three times the day before. Now, when reaching upward, there is a three-fold petition at the veil to bring a response.

The first knock at the veil is set out in full in verses 20-23. The second is also set out in full in verses 28-29. The final knock is described, without quoting the words used, in verse 32. Anyone who has been to the temple will immediately recognize the ceremonial setting of this account. These events are not just haphazard or unscripted. They are part of ceremonial worship which is required of any person who will conform to heaven's patterns.

The Lord's disciples are assembled in a circle, in prayer. They are praying in unison. The final ceremonial preparation comes as they are clothed in white. Sacred clothing is an important part of the ceremonial preparation for receiving the Father. Christ taught that without a proper "wedding garment" people are not permitted into the wedding feast. (see Matt 22:11-14). Sacred clothing is a part of appearing before God and having your shame removed. (see e.g. Gen 3:21; 2 Ne 9:14, Rev 3:18). It is an essential part of the true faith. It is, therefore a part of the ceremony recounted here.

Now that the disciples have been washed, anointed, clothed in white garments, and otherwise instructed so as to prepare them to receive further light and knowledge through the veil, the veil is parted. This point of the ceremony, however, has its own veil extended over it in the record. "And tongue cannot speak the words which he prayed, neither can be written by man the words which he prayed. And the multitude did hear and do bear record; and their hearts were open and they did understand in their hearts the words which he prayed. Nevertheless, so great and marvelous were the words which he prayed that they cannot be written, neither can they be uttered by man." (verses 32-34). And so it is with these things. They can be learned, but they cannot be taught. Those who are willing to receive them, however, will receive them. But only when they are prepared to respect the limits which should always separate the sacred from the profane.

Sidetone: The notion that Joseph Smith copied another ordinance or another rite in restoring Temple worship is laughable. The Book of Mormon account is written in 1829. Joseph would not begin to restore the Temple rite until 1842. Nothing in Joseph's words or statements in 1829 even remotely suggest he anticipated Temple ceremonies. Though Joseph had no idea where the Restoration was headed in 1829, the Lord did.

The Book of Mormon is a sacred text. It contains a fullness of the Gospel of Jesus Christ. It is a tool provided by God which can be used to prepare any person seeking God's presence. The Book of Mormon and the Temple are the primary means by which God has chosen to prepare us for the return to God and our redemption from the Fall. In the visit of Christ recorded in 3 Nephi we see these two tools merge together. The Risen Lord's ministry to the Nephites is a Temple text. It is best understood in its ritual setting. There is a clear ceremonial path being depicted which is intended to instruct you in the mysteries of godliness. But it must be seen through the eyes of faith. Then, having seen it through those eyes of faith, you can qualify to see the underlying reality it is trying to help you believe exists. This Book of Mormon text is trying to bring you through the veil. If you will heed its instructions, then you will be moved closer to that event.

[3 Ne 19:15](#)

And it came to pass that while the angels were ministering unto the disciples, behold, Jesus came and stood in the midst and ministered unto them.

Angels are ministering to people after the baptism. All this is going on. Unobtrusively in the middle of all this, almost as if it were a passing comment, Christ comes down and is ministering with them. Compare this with Christ's appearance to the Nephites that we discussed two lessons ago (see notes from 3 Ne 11:8). The Lord's humility and example is on display. He did not appear with fanfare and pageantry.

3 Ne 19:18

And behold, they began to pray; and they did pray unto Jesus, calling him their Lord and their God.

They pray to Jesus. While Jesus was mortal, when one called him "good" he would not accept the salutation but said only one is good. That is God (see Mark 10:18). Here, Christ is perfected. He has done all the Father asked. He is worthy to be prayed to. (I'm reminded here of the confusion from Bruce R. McConkie words to BYU students, "gaining a special, personal relationship with Christ... is both improper and perilous". Our Relationship with the Lord – BYU Speeches, Bruce R. McConkie, 2 March 1982 <https://speeches.byu.edu/talks/bruce-r-mcconkie/relationship-lord/>)

3 Ne 19:29

Father, I pray not for the world, but for those whom thou hast given me out of the world, because of their faith, that they may be purified in me, that I may be in them as thou, Father, art in me, that we may be one [echad], that I may be glorified in them.

The Stick of Joseph's use of the word "echad" points to this footnote:
John 17:9–11; 3 Nephi 5:8; 9:9; 13:3. See echad in Glossary.
Echad The number one. Implies alike, together, united.