

Book of Mormon Study –3 Nephi 27-4 Nephi

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3 Ne 28:6-8

Why did the apostles on the Mount of Transfiguration [look] upon the long absence of [their] spirits from [their] bodies to be...bondage? (D&C 45:16-17) Because going to the Spirit World means a lengthy tenure there, awaiting the resurrection. Why did John the Beloved (who was among those on the Mount) then ask to tarry until [Christ] come[s] in [His] glory? (D&C 7:3) Because he would rather be here working than in the Spirit World trying to bring people along there. Why did the three Nephites likewise ask that they not taste of death; but [to] live to behold all the doings of the Father unto the children of men? They had the same concern as John. What were the other nine Nephite disciples really asking when they requested to speedily come unto [Christ's] kingdom instead of either living here or waiting in the Spirit World? They wanted to rise quickly from the dead and resume the journey as those who had arisen from the dead with Christ. These were all men who were in Christ's presence and had the promise to be exalted. Yet they were either: 1. Remaining here, without death, to minister; or 2. Going to what they thought would be "bondage" in the Spirit World to await their eventual resurrection; or 3. Dying but then proceeding "speedily" (or immediately) into Christ's kingdom. Every one of them would be exalted. But that does not change the distance and paths that must be crossed between here in the flesh and rising to exaltation or the potential choices that can be made. Likewise, as a living mortal you can have an association with the General Assembly and Church of the Firstborn (a priestly reference that requires you to understand about the "rights of the fathers") here—now. If you do this, you become one of those solitary souls who live as a stranger and sojourner on earth. Your association is with heaven, not with earth. But that does not fulfill the prophecies and covenants regarding Zion. You can have the same kind of life, but it is your life alone if you live without bringing others with you. You will live without a city, a community, all things in common, no poor among that community, a temple, rites, and the completion of the restoration of all things. You may have a life worthy of Zion, but it will not be a City of Zion, the New Jerusalem. You can be a "citizen," but you will be a sojourner in exile here.

3 Ne 30:2

Turn, all ye Gentiles, from your wicked ways; and repent of your evil doings, of your lyings and deceivings, and of your whoredoms, and of your secret abominations, and your idolatries, and of your murders, and your priestcrafts, and your envyings, and your strifes, and from all your wickedness and abominations, and come unto me, and be baptized in my name, that ye may receive a remission of your sins, and be filled with the Holy Ghost, that ye may be numbered with my people who are of the house of Israel.

A precaution go us - those who are going to inherit this book. Mormon made sure to insert this at this point in the narrative. What's remarkable is as we look at this verse is how this ties into what we're now going to receive about the practice of Zion among those in the next short book in the Book of Mormon.

Keep in mind this list of defects when we look at what the description of what Zion was NOT in 4 Ne 1:16.

4 Ne 1:2

And it came to pass in the thirty and sixth year, the people were all converted unto the Lord, upon all the face of the land, both Nephites and Lamanites, and there were no contentions and disputations among them, and every man did deal justly one with another.

I made note of this last week from 3 Ne 26:19-20. After they manage not only to have the same faith and to eliminate from them contentions and disputations, then they go on, "and every man did deal justly one with another." There's a difference between mercy and justice. Justice is a tougher standard. We don't want justice. We want a merciful Redeemer who will come in and who will make up for our defects. But this is saying, "every man [Me, inside me, this is the stuff we're talking about], did deal justly [the higher standard] with one another." You don't have to give me mercy, because I'm going to give YOU justice. I'm going to be tougher on myself. It is fair that I do this for you.

You've heard people respond, "Oh no, no, you don't have to do that for me..."

No, the standard by which they are evaluating their conduct, internal to themselves, is the more difficult standard. They're going to deal justly with one another.

"I will break my heart, I will break my wallet, I will break my life before I will not deal justly with you and give you everything that you're entitled to."

See, this is putting the shoe on the other foot, and it's not the more relaxed and kindly and gentle standard, because when they're dealing with one another they want to deal justly.

4 Ne 1:3

And they had all things common among them; therefore there were not rich and poor, bond and free, but they were all made free, and partakers of the heavenly gift.

See Ether 12:8 (6-12).

The Heavenly Gift can be defined as an offer made directly from the Lord, (as in the case here and we saw it again through Joseph Smith) through a new gospel dispensation, with Heaven's intent to bestow the fullness of the gospel and priesthood upon a generation. This fullness includes an expanding scriptural canon, revelation, Heavenly visitors, and prophetic power, as well as all blessings and sealing power necessary for fullness of salvation and exaltation. It has been offered by the Lord more often than it has been welcomed and accepted by mankind. This is reflected in the Lord's lament, O ye people...of the house of Israel, how oft have I gathered you as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings and have nourished you. And again, how oft would I have gathered you as a hen gathereth her chickens

under her wings, yea, O ye people of the house of Israel who have fallen. Yea, O ye people of the house of Israel, ye that dwell at Jerusalem as ye that have fallen, yea, how oft would I have gathered you as a hen gathereth her chickens and ye would not. O ye house of Israel whom I have spared, how oft will I gather you as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings if ye will repent and return unto me with full purpose of heart. But if not, O house of Israel, the places of your dwellings shall become desolate until the time of the fulfilling of the covenant to your fathers (3 Nephi 10:4-7). The Lord's offer can only be accepted on the condition of obedience and faith. When the fullness is accepted, people live in peace and happiness: And they had all things common among them; therefore, there were not rich and poor, bond and free, but they were all made free and partakers of the Heavenly gift (4 Nephi 1:3). He has shewn himself unto the world, and glorified the name of the Father, and prepared a way that thereby others might be partakers of the Heavenly gift (Ether 12:8). When the fullness is refused (by mankind not complying with the conditions of the covenant), the opportunity to establish a Heavenly order and Zion is lost.

The inevitable result of having the heavenly gift is there were no rich, and there were no poor, and there were no bond, and there were no free. This is NOT a description of a socio-economic order alone. The foundation of Zion shows up here as the heavenly gift. It's the presence and the abundance of the things of the Spirit. It's not that we have now solved the social-welfare state, because the social-welfare state is the arm of flesh effort to try and imitate something that we all, in our gut, think is probably a fair thing to do, to have everyone be on an equal plane and have everyone deal with one another so that there are no rich and poor or bond or free. But every time people (including attempts by the church) have tried that as the goal in itself, it hasn't worked, and it doesn't work because to get where you need to get in order for the things to work, it has to be the heavenly gift. It has to be people in harmony with each other because they are in harmony with the Lord. By getting in harmony with the Lord you find that YOU are a lot more tolerable to others, and others are suddenly more tolerable to you. Even defective others are more tolerable to you, if you're in harmony with the Lord. Because if you can see them as the Lord sees them, they are beautiful; they are wonderful! Every one you have ever met is a child of your Heavenly Father, and if you can get the heavenly gift, then you stop seeing things through the lens of this world, and you start seeing things as they really are.

This description of Zion in 4 Nephi begins at verse 5 once you have the presence of the heavenly gift. It goes to verse 24 at the 201st year. That's 168 years in 20 verses. And while you might think that's an abbreviation, it's actually everything we need to know, and it's startling in what it tells us. There's an abundance of information that is downloaded in a rapid-fire fashion.

[4 Ne 1:5](#)

And there were great and marvelous works wrought by the disciples of Jesus, insomuch that they did heal the sick, and raise the dead, and cause the lame to walk, and the blind to receive their sight, and the deaf to hear; and all manner of miracles did they work among the children of men; and in nothing did they work miracles save it were in the name of Jesus.

They healed the sick; they raise the dead; they cause the lame to walk, the blind to receive their sight, the deaf to hear. "...and in nothing did they work miracles save it were in the name of Jesus,". It is about Him, and it is about His work and is about bringing about His will. And why was it His will that the

sick among them be healed and the dead rise again? Why is it that, during this period of time, it was in conformity with His will that the lame walk, and the blind receive their sight, and the deaf hear, and all manner of miracles occur?

Don't they need cripples? Don't they need the blind? Don't they need people to whom they ought to be ministering to? Shouldn't there be a group of them, who, unlike the verse mentioned earlier, are in bondage to the ailments of the body?

Apparently not. Apparently, we need it. Apparently it serves an extraordinarily useful purpose for us, but in their setting they've got bigger things to do. They've got more important things to do, and it will tell us what that is.

4 Ne 1:7-8

And the Lord did prosper them exceedingly in the land; yea, insomuch that they did build cities again where there had been cities burned. Yea, even that great city Zarahemla did they cause to be built again.

These people are busy; they're engaged in activities. They're not just sitting about; they're accomplishing something. But they're not accomplishing something in the way in which we accomplish something. If you wanted to rebuild a city among us, the way in which we set about to rebuild cities is extraordinarily inefficient. We divide up the capital that's used to finance the construction, and we create a whole industry and people out there that never produce anything except let people use their money, and that's all they do. And they become really quite wealthy as a consequence of that. There are some people that do some small component, and all they do is that small component, and they sell it at a high price. And whether it's easy or whether it's difficult, the purpose behind that is their own self-interest. And we have managed to figure out how to get along in a society with every single person working for their own self-interest, and we've never come together to say, how might we benefit one another by the contribution of whatever our unique gifts are. When the Lord talks about gifts in D&C 46, He's talking about gifts as the property belonging to not the person who has the gift but the church itself. It's not a commodity that someone owns; it is the presence of God in the life of a person that is intended to elevate and to benefit and to bless everyone. The presumption is everything is to be done for the benefit and the glory of Zion.

4 Ne 1:9

But there were many cities which had been sunk, and waters came up in the stead thereof; therefore these cities could not be renewed.

From the geological information presented on the Hopeland model maps, it appears that the waters (lakes and rivers) have greatly receded rather than grown. I wonder where in the Hopeland model we see where waters might have been buried under water?

4 Ne 1:10-11

And now, behold, it came to pass that the people of Nephi did wax strong, and did multiply exceedingly fast, and became an exceedingly fair and delightsome people. And they were married, and given in marriage, and were blessed according to the multitude of the promises which the Lord had made unto them.

Again in verse 23 it says they multiplied exceedingly, and they filled the whole land. There appears to be a lot of sex going on in Zion. What is it about Zion that results in this baby boom?

The “multitude of the promises,” the “married and given in marriage” - think about that for a moment. We have just had the fulsome restoration of the benefits of the Gospel by the coming of the Christ in which He has restored some things that are too sacred to be committed into the written account of the events (see last 2 lessons), and now it says in passing, “they’re given in marriage, and He blessed them according to these promises.” Well, what is that telling us? It’s the covenant of Abraham. It’s the temple marriage. He’s saying that these people enter into the covenant of marriage, and as a consequence of the covenant of marriage, they realize the benefits of the promises made. And what are the promises made that you associate with the covenant of Abraham? It’s not just benefits that pertain to this life; it’s benefits that pertain to all eternity. It’s the promise of exaltation. It’s the promise that you become part of the Church of the Firstborn; you become part of the General Assembly; you become part of the citizens, not just of a society here on this earth, but a society that includes a heavenly body; and you have the right to commune with all of those that are participants in this larger organization.

These are they who are come unto Mount Zion, and unto the city of the living God, the heavenly place, the holiest of all. These are they who have come to an innumerable company of angels, to the general assembly and church of Enoch, and of the Firstborn... But great and marvelous are the works of the Lord, and the mysteries of his kingdom which he showed unto us, which surpass all understanding in glory, and in might, and in dominion; Which he commanded us we should not write while we were yet in the Spirit, and are not lawful for man to utter; Neither is man capable to make them known, for they are only to be seen and understood by the power of the Holy Spirit, which God bestows on those who love him, and purify themselves before him; To whom he grants this privilege of seeing and knowing for themselves; That through the power and manifestation of the Spirit, while in the flesh, they may be able to bear his presence in the world of glory. (D&C 76:66-67, 114-118)

4 Ne 1:12

And they did not walk any more after the performances and ordinances of the law of Moses; but they did walk after the commandments which they had received from their Lord and their God, continuing in fasting and prayer, and in meeting together oft both to pray and to hear the word of the Lord.

Does it say meeting together on the Sabbath? It doesn’t say that. Meeting together in order to correlate the activities of the Stake at 6:30 in morning every Sunday? Meeting together to hold some presidency meeting or other? And what were they doing when they got together? They’re fasting; they’re praying;

they're meeting together; they're bearing testimony; and they're listening to the word of God. Listening to the word of God. Does that mean reading the scriptures? It doesn't say, "and reading together the scriptures." They got together to hear the word of God.

Early accounts in the church would include an expectation of an abundance of the gifts of the Spirit to be manifest. Often in the journals of those in the earliest part of the Restoration, folks would prophesy as they came up from the waters of baptism. Look at the account in Joseph Smith-History, verse 73, after Joseph and Oliver were baptized; "Immediately on our coming...out of the water after we had been baptized, we experienced great and glorious blessings from our Heavenly Father. No sooner had I baptized Oliver..., than the Holy Ghost fell upon him, and he stood up and prophesied many things which should shortly come to pass...so soon as I had been baptized by him, I also had the spirit of prophecy, when, standing up, I prophesied concerning the rise of [the] Church, and many other things... Our minds being now enlightened, we began to have the scriptures laid open to our [understanding], and the true meaning and intention of their more mysterious passages revealed unto us in a manner which we never could attain to previously, nor ever before had thought of."

I don't imagine they were getting together to rehash and reiterate a limited and redundant, correlated curriculum that tends to put us to sleep. I imagine there was something exciting about it!

"I advise all to go on to perfection, and search deeper and deeper into the mysteries of Godliness." Joseph Smith, Discourses of the Prophet Joseph Smith, pg. 364

[Stick of Joseph footnote 4 Ne 1:12](#)

3 Nephi 4:7 [9:17-20]; 7:2 [15:2-10]. The original Hebrew might also be understood as a rhetorical question: "And did they not walk more after the performances and ordinances of the Torah of Moshe?" See note to Moshiah 8:1 [Mosiah 13:27] on the issue of rhetorical questions and statements in Hebrew.

[4 Ne 1:13](#)

And it came to pass that there was no contention among all the people, in all the land; but there were mighty miracles wrought among the disciples of Jesus.

See, this is now the second time that they've mentioned "no contention." It was mentioned back in verse 2: "no disputations and no contentions among them". We see it again here in verse 13, and it's mentioned again in verse 15, and they talk about "the love of God which did dwell in the hearts of the people." Etching in plates is hard work. There's absolutely no reason for redundancy. Therefore, we have to conclude that while they thought they had gotten rid of contention, they found another level of harmony among them. And then when they thought they had achieved a perfection of that harmony, they found yet another level of harmony among themselves. Oh, three degrees. Well, that's interesting. "Because of the love of God, which did dwell in the hearts of the people." The love of God. Consider faith, hope, charity. These three also reflect three degrees. Here we have charity now, where we have finally arrived at the point where there is such a fulsome elimination of the problem that they use the same word, but they don't have to mean the same thing with it.

4 Ne 1:16

And there were no envyings, nor strifes, nor tumults, nor whoredoms, nor lyings, nor murders, nor any manner of lasciviousness; and surely there could not be a happier people among all the people who had been created by the hand of God.

Envyings. We have upward mobility in the church. We have elders, and then you have elder's quorum presidents; and you have wards, and you have bishops; and you have stake presidents that rule and reign over bishops; and you have area presidents who rule and reign over stake presidents; and you have general authorities; and you have first presiding authorities in the Quorum of the Twelve and the First Presidency; and then you have the First Presidency; and then you have the President. And all along scattered in there, there's lots and lots of opportunity for envyings, because we're suffering from the defect that the Savior noted among His own disciples about wanting those chief seats. A Savior, who knelt and washed the feet, the most menial act that you can engage in in that society, is dealing with the problem of disciples, an inner circle who want recognition; they want those seats. And what does Christ teach them? "Beware of the scribes, which love to go in long clothing, and love salutations in the marketplaces, And the chief seats in the synagogues, and the uppermost rooms at feasts: (Mark 12:38-39)

Better to go sit in the back of the room and get called up. Look at Nephi in the crowd at the temple Bountiful and how the Lord had to call him up. Nephi wasn't up there saying, "The great and wonderful, His holiness has appeared. I'm here to introduce Him." Because really all that is is a diversion of attention to the one doing the introduction (like Chaucer in Knight's Tale). Don't we all know someone, those whose life's ambition is to have some office in the church?

surely there could not be a happier people among all the people who had been created by the hand of God.

Compare with: But behold there never was a happier time among the people of Nephi, since the days of Nephi, than in the days of Moroni, yea, even at this time, in the twenty and first year of the reign of the judges. (Alma 50:23)

What's the difference between a "happier people" and a "happier time"?

4 Ne 1:27

...they did receive all manner of wickedness, and did administer that which was sacred unto him to whom it had been forbidden because of unworthiness.

Some quotes from the Book of Enoch.

Look at what Azazel has done, who has taught all unrighteousness [oppression] on earth and revealed the eternal secrets which were made and kept [performed] in heaven, which men were striving to learn: (1 En 9:6, RH Charles version [OTP in brackets]. See also chapter 7 for some of the things the Watchers taught.)

And heal [give life to] the earth which the angels have ruined [corrupted], and proclaim the healing of the earth, for I will restore the earth and heal the plague, that

not all of the children of men may perish through all the secret things that the Watchers have disclosed and have taught their sons. (1 En 10:7)

(Say to them): "You were in heaven, but all the mysteries of heaven had not been revealed to you, and you knew worthless ones [rejected mysteries], and these in the hardness of your hearts you have made known to the women, and through these mysteries women and men work much evil on earth." (1 En 16:3)

See also Rom 16:25-26; Eph 3:3-11; Col 1:26; 1 Cor 2:7

In the ordinances as they have been restored in the temple today, everyone who enters in is expected to come to the veil possessing certain knowledge, capable of identifying themselves as having been true and faithful, and be received in an embrace, and then welcomed into the presence of God. It's a normal and expected part of the ordinances, as they have been restored. Those ordinances are supposed to be teaching us something. They are the Lord's way of shouting in a multimedia presentation, "Here is how I did what I did and what I would like you to do in the process of you becoming like me, a son of God, a daughter of God, a member of the household of faith, and part of the church and kingdom of the Firstborn." You have to become the Firstborn. You have to become one with Him. You have to become part of that, not in an organized group-think kind of way, in an individual way in which you connect up with Holiness, in which you become a vessel of Holiness. You are someone to whom sacred things have been entrusted, and you become, in turn, sacred as the bearer of them.

Isaiah's prophecy concerning the last days' temple clearly identifies it as a house where man will be instructed in God's path. It will be a facility where the God of Jacob will teach His pathway of ascent back to the Throne of God. Mankind will learn the laws governing that pathway. (Isaiah 2:2-3). Therefore, when the Holy Order returns, those who are initiated will be given more than just the laying on of hands. It will include men and women, as husband and wife. They will be given understanding of things which the world cannot know because it is forbidden for the profane to obtain what God decrees for the righteous alone to maintain in holiness. The unholy are excluded from this knowledge.

The Book of Mormon excludes sacred information from the ungodly (see, e.g., 1 Nephi 14:28; 3 Nephi 26:11-12,16; 3 Nephi 27:23). Joseph Smith did not reveal everything entrusted to him (see D&C 76:114-116; JS-H 1:20). Information can be sacred. It can be controlled by God so that when He determines to communicate it to man, He will do so either by catching the individual up into the heavenly realm or by commanding that a temple be built to house His revelations. Either option will require that those who enter in must be approved by His decree, because the way is guarded by sentinels who protect what is Holy from those who are profane.