

General Comments on 3 Nephi 11-26

These chapters cover only two days of events, but do so in exceptional detail. The volume of text dedicated to this event underscores its importance. No other event in the book receives so much attention or such detailed coverage.

Topical Breakdown

Day 1 (11:1-19:3)

- Introduction of Jesus the Christ (ch. 11)
- Christ teaches them his word (12:1-14:27)
- The end of the Law (15:1-10)
- The gathering and redemption of Israel (15:11-16:20)
 - Brief Isaiah quote (16:18-20)
- Christ intercedes for the people (ch. 17)
- Institution of the Sacrament (ch. 18)
- Preparation for the next day (v. 19:1-3)

Day 2 (19:4-26:15)

- Disciples teach Christ's word (19:4-14)
- Christ intercedes for the people (19:15-36)
- Sacrament observed again (20:1-9)
- Gathering and redemption of Israel, cont'd. (20:10-26:5)
 - Micah quotes (20:16, 19)
 - Compound Isaiah quote (20:32-45)
 - Lengthy Isaiah quote (ch. 22)
 - Malachi quote (ch. 24-25)

Parenthesis by Mormon (26:6-15)

Day 3 (26:16)

Passover Themes

As discussed in the comments on ch. 10 and below on ch. 11, Christ's appearance to the Nephites probably occurred on or near the Passover Feast.

The Passover has been observed on and off by Israel since Moses led Israel out of Egypt. Some of the practices surrounding it are Scripturally instituted, and some are

traditions derived from related Scriptural texts. When we compare the major Scriptural and traditional themes of Passover with the events among the Nephites they parallel each another closely. As such, it is instructive to see the events of 3 Ne. 11-26 in the light of the Passover.

The general setting of the Passover serves to provide a broad context for the topics Jesus chooses to discuss and a number of actions performed. Each of the topics He discusses and each action performed is important in and of itself, but it makes more sense and is more contiguous when the seemingly separate sermons and actions are seen as a larger whole.

The following table outlines the Passover practices which are Scripturally dictated with the accompanying Old Testament reference and the corresponding text from 3 Nephi. The second table presents traditional Jewish Passover themes with their corresponding Scriptural texts. These traditional themes are just that, traditional. How ancient they are and how inspired they are isn't clear. It is plain from the New Testament some of these traditions are ancient and accurate interpretations of the Scriptures (e.g., the Messiah would come at Passover), but it is also plain from the New Testament that some the traditions are misguided (e.g., the Messiah would physically deliver Israel from their oppressors as Moses did). Regardless, the major parallels follow:

Scriptural

Ingathering	Lev. 23:1-8	3 Ne. 11:1-2
Seder/Sacrament	Exod. 12:14-20 Lev. 23:9-14 Num. 28:16-25	3 Ne. 18:1-11 3 Ne. 20:3-9
Teach children	Exod. 12:25-27	3 Ne. 17:11-25 3 Ne. 26:14

Traditional

Elijah's Coming	Mal. 4	3 Ne. 25
Messiah's Coming	Isa. 11:1-5 Mal. 3-4	3 Ne. 11 3 Ne. 24-25

Intercession/ Delivery	2 Sam. 22 (Ps. 18) Ps. 116, 118	3 Ne. 19:28-34
Redemption of Israel	Ps. 113-115, 117 Isa. 11:6-12:6	3 Ne. 15:11-16:20 3 Ne. 20:12-26:2
Resurrection/ Judgement	Ezek. 36:37-37:14	3 Ne. 26:3-5

The single largest theme of the Passover is the redemption of Israel. Just as the original Passover was the prelude to ancient Israel's Exodus from Egypt, the subsequent Passover Festivals become a prediction of the redemption of Israel. Hence the ancient Jew's expectation that Jesus would free them from the Romans, and their complete abandonment of him when he failed to do just that.

This is reflected in the amount of discussion Christ gives the Nephites on the topic. Also note the amount of text Mormon dedicates to it when he editorially summarizes other material.

This theme of the redemption of Israel is spiritualized by Jesus in the New Testament when he institutes the Sacrament (cf. Matt. 26:26-28). The symbolism is Israel's true redemption is a spiritual one, and the physical redemption would come if Israel were spiritually ready for it. Jesus takes the Passover Seder, the memorial meal of unleavened bread, representing Israel's imminent flight from Egypt, and changes it into a symbol of spiritual redemption where the unleavened bread represents the sacrifice of his body for the resurrection and the wine represents the sacrifice of his blood for the forgiveness of sins. Jesus teaches the same principle with the Nephites, but also discusses the literal physical redemption of Israel in an eschatological context.

That the redemption of Israel from its scattered state is only secondarily physical and dependent upon their spirituality is not a new theme. When Jesus reinterprets the Passover Seder into the Sacrament, he simply emphasizes something the Law has taught all along. The corporate well-being of Israel is dependent upon their spiritual condition. If they rebel against the Lord, then He punishes them and scatters them. If they repent and return to Him, He gathers them, just as promised in Lev. 26.

The spiritual emphasis is plainer in ch. 11-26 because the audience has greater faith than did the audience in and around Jerusalem, cf. 17:8, 19:35 (this is not because the Lehites are intrinsically more spiritual, but because the most wicked among them have been destroyed, leaving a more spiritual remnant). Given this more spiritual audience, Jesus performs many great miracles among them, they witness angels, and he teaches them the truth about the gathering of Israel.

The overwhelmingly obvious connection to the Passover is the group of Nephites present were spared the destruction of ch. 8 where the more wicked were destroyed. This group of Nephites were passed over, or spared, where the others died like the Egyptians.

Comments on 3 Nephi 11

Nearly a year after the Great Cataclysm (cf. ch. 8:5 and 10:18), a large group of people are gathered to the Temple at Bountiful, probably to observe Passover.

On the gathering to Bountiful, note Nephi and the other 11 disciples who are ultimately ordained to be the twelve are all present, cf. v. 22, 12:1. This suggests the more faithful among the survivors were gathered to the Temple for some purpose. There is nothing in the text explicitly suggesting they were doing anything more than discussing what had transpired and the connections of these signs to this Jesus Christ who was preached to them, cf. v. 1-2. However, the timing strongly suggests they were either preparing for or observing the Passover feast. The Passover Feast would be a particularly poignant time for Christ to reveal himself to them, given the blatantly Messianic message of that feast. Also, a gathering of some 2500 people consisting of men, women, and children (cf. 17:25), including people who are lame and ill (cf. 17:7-10), strongly suggests the people were there for some formal gathering. If it were some casual gathering, it is unlikely entire families would have come out and brought people who were not well-suited to travel.

Mormon leaves us uninformed as to the condition of the Temple itself as far as damage resulting from the Great Cataclysm. But, the city Bountiful is not on the list of cities destroyed in ch. 9. We hear about there being a Temple in Zarahemla in Mosiah 1:18-2:6, but after that we hear nothing of

that Temple. If the Temple survived through the history of the Nephites up until the Great Cataclysm, it certainly appears to have not survived beyond that, cf. 4 Ne. 1:8.

1 AND now it came to pass that there were a great multitude gathered together, of the people of Nephi, round about the temple which was in the land Bountiful; and they were marveling and wondering one with another, and were showing one to another the great and marvelous change which had taken place. 2 And they were also conversing about this Jesus Christ, of whom the sign had been given concerning his death.

3 And it came to pass that while they were thus conversing one with another, they heard a voice as if it came out of heaven; and they cast their eyes round about, for they understood not the voice which they heard; and it was not a harsh voice, neither was it a loud voice; nevertheless, and notwithstanding it being a small voice it did pierce them that did hear to the center, insomuch that there was no part of their frame that it did not cause to quake; yea, it did pierce them to the very soul, and did cause their hearts to burn. 4 And it came to pass that again they heard the voice, and they understood it not. 5 And again the third time they did hear the voice, and did open their ears to hear it; and their eyes were towards the sound thereof; and they did look steadfastly towards heaven, from whence the sound came. 6 And behold, the third time they did understand the voice which they heard; and it said unto them:

7 Behold my Beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased, in whom I have glorified my name--hear ye him. 8 And it came to pass, as they understood they cast their eyes up again towards heaven; and behold, they saw a Man descending out of heaven; and he was clothed in a white robe; and he came down and stood in the midst of them; and the eyes of the whole multitude were turned upon him, and they durst not open their mouths, even one to another, and wist not what it meant, for they thought it was an angel that had appeared unto them.

9 And it came to pass that he stretched forth his hand and spake unto the people, saying: 10 Behold, I am Jesus Christ, whom the prophets testified shall come into the world. 11 And behold, I am the light and the life of the world; and I have drunk out of that bitter cup which the Father hath given me, and have glorified the Father in taking upon me the sins of the world, in the which I have suffered the will of the Father in all things from the beginning.

12 And it came to pass that when Jesus had spoken these words the whole multitude fell to the earth; for they remembered that it had been prophesied among them that Christ should show himself unto them after his ascension into heaven.

13 And it came to pass that the Lord spake unto them saying: 14 Arise and come forth unto me, that ye may thrust your

hands into my side, and also that ye may feel the prints of the nails in my hands and in my feet, that ye may know that I am the God of Israel, and the God of the whole earth, and have been slain for the sins of the world. 15 And it came to pass that the multitude went forth, and thrust their hands into his side, and did feel the prints of the nails in his hands and in his feet; and this they did do, going forth one by one until they had all gone forth, and did see with their eyes and did feel with their hands, and did know of a surety and did bear record, that it was he, of whom it was written by the prophets, that should come. 16 And when they had all gone forth and had witnessed for themselves, they did cry out with one accord, saying: 17 Hosanna! Blessed be the name of the Most High God! And they did fall down at the feet of Jesus, and did worship him.

v1-17 The people gathered to the Temple at Bountiful are talking amongst themselves concerning the Great Cataclysm (v. 1, cp. ch, 8-10) and also the Christ who was represented by this sign (v. 2). As they are talking, they hear a transcendent voice, but do not recognize its source so they look all around (v. 3), presumably at eye level at each other. The voice sounds again, but they still do not understand it (v. 4). Only after they open their ears and look up to heaven (v. 5) do they understand the voice when it sounds the third time (v. 6).

The voice tells them to look and see God's Beloved Son, whom He is pleased with, who has made His name glorious (v. 7).

They again look up into heaven and are awestruck to see a man in a white robe descend out of heaven into their presence. They assume it is an angel (v. 8).

But when the man is standing among them (v. 9) he introduces Himself as the Lord Jesus Christ whom the prophets have talked about (v. 10), and who has accomplished the Atonement (v. 11).

The people are stunned and fall down at the introduction when they remember the prophets told them the resurrected Christ would appear to them (v. 12).

Jesus bids them (v. 13) to come and witnesses the scars of His sacrifice so they may witness firsthand who He is (v. 14). The people do so one by one until all of them receive a personal witness (v. 15) and each of them fall down and praise God worshipping Him at His feet until all are before him praising God (v. 16).

The initial confusion and failure to understand the voice is explained by the general context of what the survivors are

doing. The survivors are gathered to the Temple, probably in preparation to observe the Passover feast, an institution of the Law of Moses. And, even if they are not gathered to observe the Passover, it is plain from 15:2 that they have not abandoned practice of the Law of Moses. This is despite statements by the Lord Himself about a year earlier (cf. 9:17-19) and a considerable history detailing this very subject (cf. 1:24-25, 2 Ne. 25:24, Mosiah 13:27, Alma 25:15, Alma 30:3, Alma 34:13).

This seems odd given the presence of Nephi, who had a pretty direct line to the Lord. The probable source of confusion is the Lord's statement as documented in 9:17-19. He says there the Law is fulfilled and literal sacrifices are no longer to be performed, but He doesn't tell them what to do next. Do they still observe the Law of Moses, but just not do the literal sacrifices? Do they abandon the Law entirely? If they abandon the Law, what kind of ritual do they replace it with? Well, the Lord apparently didn't tell them that back in ch. 9. And, they have generally forgotten the Lord was supposed to appear to them Himself (cf. v. 12), so they weren't anticipating Him intervening.

This is probably what the conversation in v. 1-2 was about. They know the Law of Sacrifice is over with completely, and the Law of Moses is "fulfilled". But now what? Do they still observe the feasts of Passover, Weeks, and Tabernacles? What about the Sabbath? Does Temple worship change radically from this point out, and if so, how? Given such a dramatic change in the ritual of worship, we would have to assume Nephi himself had more questions than answers. Even if he did have all the answers, how willing would others be to listen to them if they represented such a huge shift in ritual?

Aside from the context, a close look at the interaction of the people with Christ explains a good deal of what is happening as well. The section of text starts out with the people talking with one another about the Great Cataclysm and also Christ (v. 1-2). A voice calls down from heaven twice and both times the people cannot understand it and are looking all around in confusion as to the source and meaning of the voice (v. 3-4). Only after they "open their ears" and turn their eyes towards heaven do they hear and understand the voice (v. 5-7), and then see Christ descending being dumbfounded in the process (v. 8).

Contrast the behavior of the people:

v. 1-4

Talking among selves

Ears closed

Casting eyes about

Not in Christ's presence

v. 5-8

Silent, paying attention

Ears opened

Looking straight up to heaven

In Christ's presence

Their reaction in v. 5-8 informs us about what was happening in v. 1-4. Their failure to heed the Lord's word and abandon the Law of Moses caused them to be deaf to God's voice. Instead of heeding what the Lord told them they chose to reason amongst themselves. So, when God speaks to them, they do not recognize the source.

It is not until they stop talking, listen to the voice of God, and look up into heaven that they see Christ. And the revelation of Christ causes an end to their confusion.

When people reason things out on their own without, fail to seek revelation, and generally ignore what revelation has been given to them, it leaves them deaf to the word of God and blind to heavenly things.

v1 "a great multitude", we are informed in 17:25 there are approximately 2500 people present, including men, women and children.

"they were marveling and wondering one with another", the destruction over the land was not uniform, cf. 3 Ne. 8:11-12. The cities cited in 3 Ne. 9 were the most hard-hit, but clearly cities such as Bountiful experienced some damage. When the people gathered together they would have been coming from different locations, so they were discussing the relative severities with they had individually witnessed and recovered from. As this appears to have been the first major ingathering, then it would be a natural human reaction to get the word of mouth about what had happened across the face of all the land.

v3 "small voice", not a spectacle, cp. 1 Kings 19:12.

18 And it came to pass that he spake unto Nephi (for Nephi was among the multitude) and he commanded him that he should come forth. 19 And Nephi arose and went forth, and bowed himself before the Lord and did kiss his feet. 20 And the Lord commanded him that he should arise. And he arose and stood before him. 21

And the Lord said unto him: I give unto you power that ye shall baptize this people when I am again ascended into heaven. 22 And again the Lord called others, and said unto them likewise; and he gave unto them power to baptize.

And he said unto them: On this wise shall ye baptize; and there shall be no disputations among you. 23 Verily I say unto you, that whoso repenteth of his sins through your words, and desireth to be baptized in my name, on this wise shall ye baptize them--Behold, ye shall go down and stand in the water, and in my name shall ye baptize them. 24 And now behold, these are the words which ye shall say, calling them by name, saying: 25 Having authority given me of Jesus Christ, I baptize you in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost. Amen. 26 And then shall ye immerse them in the water, and come forth again out of the water. 27 And after this manner shall ye baptize in my name; for behold, verily I say unto you, that the Father, and the Son, and the Holy Ghost are one; and I am in the Father, and the Father in me, and the Father and I are one.

v18-41 The overarching theme of this section is that the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit are one (v. 22-28), so those who worship Them must be one as well (v. 29-41). If they are not one, then they are contentious and are the sons of the adversary (v. 29, 40). To be one with the Father (v. 32, 36), we must do away with contention (v. 30-31), repent and be baptized by water and the Spirit (v. 32-36, 39), and become humble as little children are humble (v. 37-38).

v18-27 Jesus calls Nephi and some others to him and he authorizes them to baptize repentant people (v. 18-22), telling them exactly how to do it (v. 23-26), instructing them not to argue over it (v. 27).

28 And according as I have commanded you thus shall ye baptize. And there shall be no disputations among you, as there have hitherto been; neither shall there be disputations among you concerning the points of my doctrine, as there have hitherto been. 29 For verily, verily I say unto you, he that hath the spirit of contention is not of me, but is of the devil, who is the father of contention, and he stirreth up the hearts of men to contend with anger, one with another. 30 Behold, this is not my doctrine, to stir up the hearts of men with anger, one against another; but this is my doctrine, that such things should be done away.

31 Behold, verily, verily, I say unto you, I will declare unto you my doctrine. 32 And this is my doctrine, and it is the doctrine which the Father hath given unto me; and I bear record of the Father, and the Father beareth record of me, and the Holy

Ghost beareth record of the Father and me; and I bear record that the Father commandeth all men, everywhere, to repent and believe in me. 33 And whoso believeth in me, and is baptized, the same shall be saved; and they are they who shall inherit the kingdom of God. 34 And whoso believeth not in me, and is not baptized, shall be damned. 35 Verily, verily, I say unto you, that this is my doctrine, and I bear record of it from the Father; and whoso believeth in me believeth in the Father also; and unto him will the Father bear record of me, for he will visit him with fire and with the Holy Ghost. 36 And thus will the Father bear record of me, and the Holy Ghost will bear record unto him of the Father and me; for the Father, and I, and the Holy Ghost are one.

37 And again I say unto you, ye must repent, and become as a little child, and be baptized in my name, or ye can in nowise receive these things. 38 And again I say unto you, ye must repent, and be baptized in my name, and become as a little child, or ye can in nowise inherit the kingdom of God. 39 Verily, verily, I say unto you, that this is my doctrine, and whoso buildeth upon this buildeth upon my rock, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against them. 40 And whoso shall declare more or less than this, and establish it for my doctrine, the same cometh of evil, and is not built upon my rock; but he buildeth upon a sandy foundation, and the gates of hell stand open to receive such when the floods come and the winds beat upon them. 41 Therefore, go forth unto this people, and declare the words which I have spoken, unto the ends of the earth.

v28-40 Jesus declares his doctrine. Jesus' doctrine is people must believe in him, repent, be baptized, and receive the Holy Spirit. While the modern Western reader typically equates Christian "doctrine" with various religious principles, philosophical tenets, and creedal statements, Jesus' doctrine is precisely the opposite. Jesus teaches a person must humble themselves even as a little child (v. 38) in order to obtain the Kingdom. Anything that contradicts this is a lie (v. 40).

Jesus' statement directly contradicts precisely what happened in early Christian history in the Old World. [Ecumenical Creeds](#) were used in the early Church to exclude people based on esoteric doctrinal differences, not personal behavior or belief in Christ, in efforts to obtain [religious](#) and [political power](#). This is in sharp contrast to Christ's teachings and the [didache](#), which is concerned about personal behavior. The Lord hates creeds (cf. JS-H 1:19).

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