

General Comments on 3 Nephi 15-16

In chapters 11-14 the resurrected Lord tells the Lehites the Law of Moses is over and done and He gives them the new method of worship, what we would refer to as Christianity.

In these two chapters, the Lord explains how the Law of Moses is fulfilled with respect to unfulfilled predictions (15:2-10), and what connection to natural Israel remains (15:11-16:20). Owing to the pervasive nature of the Law of Moses in their previous religious experience, it is not surprising they would have questions on how other related issues, like the covenant with Abraham, will continue to work.

The conversation on the Times of the Gentiles (16:8-10) sets a more practical series of events and conditions than seen in Zeno's Allegory of the Olive Trees in Jacob 5, and explain why the Lord will pull natural Israel out from among the nations whom they were scattered among.

Comments on 3 Nephi 15

1 AND now it came to pass that when Jesus had ended these sayings he cast his eyes round about on the multitude, and said unto them: Behold, ye have heard the things which I taught before I ascended to my Father; therefore, whoso remembereth these sayings of mine and doeth them, him will I raise up at the last day.

v1 Jesus concludes the recitation of the general message he delivered to the people around Jerusalem during his mortal ministry. He then tells them those who hear and remember and do his sayings will be raised up, or exalted, at the Day of Judgment.

His comment in the latter half of the verse closely parallels that of Matt. 5:19. In the ch. 12 account, that version is changed substantially from Matthew's version so as to address the subject of the fulfilment of the Law. But, here, clearly, the general idea of Matt. 5:19 is endorsed. Jesus' intent is to distance the Law from exaltation. Where observing the Law was formerly necessary for exaltation (the context of Matt. 5), it no longer is (the context of ch. 12).

2 And it came to pass that when Jesus had said these words he perceived that there were some among them who marveled, and wondered what he would concerning the law of Moses; for they understood not the saying that old things had passed away, and that all things had become new.

3 And he said unto them: Marvel not that I said unto you that old things had passed away, and that all things had become new. 4 Behold, I say unto you that the law is fulfilled that was given unto Moses. 5 Behold, I am he that gave the law, and I am he who covenanted with my

people Israel; therefore, the law in me is fulfilled, for I have come to fulfil the law; therefore it hath an end.

6 Behold, I do not destroy the prophets, for as many as have not been fulfilled in me, verily I say unto you, shall all be fulfilled. 7 And because I said unto you that old things have passed away, I do not destroy that which hath been spoken concerning things which are to come. 8 For behold, the covenant which I have made with my people is not all fulfilled; but the law which was given unto Moses hath an end in me.

9 Behold, I am the law, and the light. Look unto me, and endure to the end, and ye shall live; for unto him that endureth to the end will I give eternal life. 10 Behold, I have given unto you the commandments; therefore keep my commandments. And this is the law and the prophets, for they truly testified of me.

v2-10 Jesus senses the audience is confused over the end of the Law of Moses (v. 2). He tells them not to be confused or wonder at the end of the Law (v. 3).

Jesus explains to them the Law of Moses is fulfilled (v. 4) because He is the one who gave the Law to Israel and his mission was to fulfill it (v. 5). He fulfilled it during his mortal ministry.

The testimony and predictions of the prophets is not abolished because whatever predictions and testimonies did not specifically refer to his mortal ministry will yet be fulfilled (v. 6). In other words, any of the predictions not yet fulfilled will still be fulfilled, but those which have been fulfilled are over and done with, specifically the Law of Moses.

Jesus clarifies that the end of the Law does not mean an end to the covenant with Israel (v. 7). All those things pertaining to Israel which have not been fulfilled will still be fulfilled, even though the Law has been fulfilled (v. 8).

Then, for emphasis, Jesus tells them that He embodies and personifies the Law, He is the light, meaning the example or manifestation, of the Law. Those who look to and follow His example will have eternal life (v. 9). The Law and the Prophets testify of Him, so they should keep his sayings (v. 10).

As the Law and Prophets pointed Israel to Christ's mortal ministry, now that his mortal ministry is completed he represents and embodies those predictions. The implication is Jesus cannot be destroying or invalidating or contradicting the Law and Prophets because he fully represents them. Even as He is alive, so are the Law and Prophets alive. But, those predictions are fulfilled in Him, and are now completed.

As Moses and the Prophets all pointed Israel to Christ before He came, now Christ is in their presence their testimony points Israel at Him and tells them to listen to Him. The Law

and the Prophets are His former witnesses, but now He is present telling them firsthand what they should be doing.

From Jesus' comments we can safely assume the people were generally having difficulty figuring out where the Law ended and the covenant with Israel started. It was made very clear to them repeatedly, at least in theory, that the Law would cease (cf. 29:17). But once it came time for the Law to cease in practice, the people didn't really know what to do. The Lord's statement in 9:19 says He will no longer accept literal sacrifices, which is easy enough to stop, but what about all the other peripheral covenants and activities ascribed to the Law?

Given the selective holdovers from the Law in our present day worship (e.g., the Sabbath, exclusive formal Temple worship, the Sacrament being derivative of the Passover meal) we should sympathize with the difficulty they were having at the time when it came to letting go of the Law or Moses. Yes, all of the spiritual content of the Law continued to be in force, hence the Sermon on the Mount, but which of the outward performances and rituals stay and which go? It would have been a real dilemma to draw lines without the Lord stepping in Himself.

This dilemma is manifested in all of the conflict Paul found himself in throughout the book of Acts as he was battling the Judaizers within the Church in the Old World. Jesus eliminates that problem in the New World by stepping in personally to deal with it.

11 And now it came to pass that when Jesus had spoken these words, he said unto those twelve whom he had chosen: 12 Ye are my disciples; and ye are a light unto this people, who are a remnant of the house of Joseph. 13 And behold, this is the land of your inheritance; and the Father hath given it unto you. 14 And not at any time hath the Father given me commandment that I should tell it unto your brethren at Jerusalem.

15 Neither at any time hath the Father given me commandment that I should tell unto them concerning the other tribes of the house of Israel, whom the Father hath led away out of the land. 16 This much did the Father command me, that I should tell unto them: 17 That other sheep I have which are not of this fold; them also I must bring, and they shall hear my voice; and there shall be one fold, and one shepherd. 18 And now, because of stiffneckedness and unbelief they understood not my word; therefore I was commanded to say no more of the Father concerning this thing unto them.

19 But, verily, I say unto you that the Father hath commanded me, and I tell it unto you, that ye were separated from among them because of their iniquity; therefore it is because of their iniquity that they know not of you. 20 And verily, I say unto you again that the other tribes hath the Father separated from them; and it is because of their iniquity that they know not of them.

21 And verily I say unto you, that ye are they of whom I said: Other sheep I have which are not of this fold; them also I must bring, and they shall hear my voice; and there shall be one fold, and one shepherd. 22 And they understood me not, for they supposed it had been the Gentiles; for they understood not that the Gentiles should be converted through their preaching. 23 And they understood me not that I said they shall hear my voice; and they understood me not that the Gentiles should not at any time hear my voice--that I should not manifest myself unto them save it were by the Holy Ghost. 24 But behold, ye have both heard my voice, and seen me; and ye are my sheep, and ye are numbered among those whom the Father hath given me.

v11-24 After the discussion in v. 2-10 about how the Law is over but the covenant with Israel is not, Jesus speaks specifically to the twelve disciples concerning the present state of the covenant with Israel (v. 11).

He tells them they are to be an example to this remnant of the tribe of Joseph (v. 12) in their promised land (v. 13).

The Father has never had Jesus tell Judah at Jerusalem anything specific about this remnant of Joseph (v. 14-15), except that there were some scattered sheep who needed shepherding (v. 16), because of their own rebelliousness and iniquity (v. 17).

It was precisely because of their rebelliousness that this remnant of Joseph was separated from them (v. 19). And, there are also other remnants of other tribes of Israel separated from them, of which they are equally ignorant (v. 20).

This remnant of Joseph, and presumably these other scattered remnants of Israel as well, are who Jesus was referring to when He told Judah at Jerusalem there were scattered sheep who needed shepherding (v. 21). However, when He told them about the other sheep, they mistakenly thought He was talking about the Gentiles (v. 22). They didn't realize Christ would never go to the Gentiles, but would send the Spirit to them (v. 23, cp. 1 Ne. 10:11, 2 Ne. 26:13, John 16:7). The fact that He is with them now and speaking to them personally indicates they are His sheep and He is their shepherd (v. 24), and therefore part of the covenant with Israel.

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