

Comments on 3 Nephi 21

In this chapter, Jesus focuses mainly on the role of the Gentiles in the restoration of Israel (v. 1-10), and the reaction the Gentiles will have to that role. Some will reject him (v. 11-21) and some will accept him and assist in the gathering of Israel (v. 22-29).

1 AND verily I say unto you, I give unto you a sign, that ye may know the time when these things shall be about to take place-- that I shall gather in, from their long dispersion, my people, O house of Israel, and shall establish again among them my Zion; 2 And behold, this is the thing which I will give unto you for a sign--for verily I say unto you that when these things which I declare unto you, and which I shall declare unto you hereafter of myself, and by the power of the Holy Ghost which shall be given unto you of the Father, shall be made known unto the Gentiles that they may know concerning this people who are a remnant of the house of Jacob, and concerning this my people who shall be scattered by them;

3 Verily, verily, I say unto you, when these things shall be made known unto them of the Father, and shall come forth of the Father, from them unto you; 4 For it is wisdom in the Father that they should be established in this land, and be set up as a free people by the power of the Father, that these things might come forth from them unto a remnant of your seed, that the covenant of the Father may be fulfilled which he hath covenanted with his people, O house of Israel; 5 Therefore, when these works and the works which shall be wrought among you hereafter shall come forth from the Gentiles, unto your seed which shall dwindle in unbelief because of iniquity; 6 For thus it behooveth the Father that it should come forth from the Gentiles, that he may show forth his power unto the Gentiles, for this cause that the Gentiles, if they will not harden their hearts, that they may repent and come unto me and be baptized in my name and know of the true points of my doctrine, that they may be numbered among my people, O house of Israel;

7 And when these things come to pass that thy seed shall begin to know these things--it shall be a sign unto them, that they may know that the work of the Father hath already commenced unto the fulfilling of the covenant which he hath made unto the people who are of the house of Israel. 8 And when that day shall come, it shall come to pass that kings shall shut their mouths; for that which had not been told them shall they see; and that which they had not heard shall they consider. 9 For in that day, for my sake shall the Father work a work, which shall be a great and a marvelous work among them; and there shall be among them those who will not believe it, although a man shall declare it unto them. 10 But behold, the life of my servant shall be in my hand; therefore they shall not hurt him, although he shall be marred because of them. Yet I will heal him, for I will show

unto them that my wisdom is greater than the cunning of the devil.

v1-10 Jesus gives a sign of when the work of gathering Israel will start (v. 1, 7) and provides a couple of parenthetical comments (v. 4, 6) to explain why the Gentiles are going to be involved in it.

The sign that the gathering of Israel has commenced in the last days (v. 1) is when these Scriptures written to the Lehites (v. 2) are brought forth to scattered Israel through the Gentiles (v. 3).

It is part of the Father's plan to have the Gentiles set up on this land promised to Lehi's children because they will bring the gospel to the remnants of Israel (v. 4).

Thus, the historical, contemporary, and future words written by the Lehites will go to the Gentiles in the last days, and they will give them to the remnants of the Lehites (v. 5).

Again, it is part of the Father's plan to do it this way because then the Gentiles will have the opportunity to accept the gospel, repent, and be adopted into Israel's covenant (v. 6).

So, when people see these writing come among them in the last days, they will know that work to gather Israel have started (v. 7).

Jesus then paraphrases a number of Old Testament Prophets to explain and contextualize his plan for the Gentiles and Israel (v. 8-10).

v1 "I give unto you a sign", in Isa. 66:18-20 it says the Lord will give a sign among the Gentiles for the gathering of Israel. Jesus' comments here are likely in reference to this passage in Isaiah.

v4 Compare 16:4.

v8-10 The paraphrase in verse 8 is intended to draw on the context of Isa. 52:15 where the powerful kings of the Gentiles will be stunned and awed at the manner in which the Lord gathers Israel. Verse 9 draws on the sealed book context of 29:10-14 and then draws on Hab. 1:5 to invoke the message of Gentile nations being used to accomplish the Lord's goals with Israel (there in Hab. 1 the Lord is describing His plan to use the Chaldeans to suit His needs, but will then turn and punish the Chaldeans when they offend Him, just as the latter-day Gentiles do when they reject the gospel when it is sent among them). Verse 10 then paraphrases Isa. 52:14 to say that though Israel

will be smitten at hands of the Gentiles, the Lord will relent from His anger and heal Israel per Isa. 57:17-19.

v10 Note Jesus is quoting Isa. 52:14 in reference to Israel and not Himself, indicating plainly that passage has a broader application than only referring to the Messiah. Also compare 20:44.

11 Therefore it shall come to pass that whosoever will not believe in my words, who am Jesus Christ, which the Father shall cause him to bring forth unto the Gentiles, and shall give unto him power that he shall bring them forth unto the Gentiles, (it shall be done even as Moses said) they shall be cut off from among my people who are of the covenant.

12 And my people who are a remnant of Jacob shall be among the Gentiles, yea, in the midst of them as a lion among the beasts of the forest, as a young lion among the flocks of sheep, who, if he go through both treadeth down and teareth in pieces, and none can deliver. 13 Their hand shall be lifted up upon their adversaries, and all their enemies shall be cut off.

14 Yea, wo be unto the Gentiles except they repent; for it shall come to pass in that day, saith the Father, that I will cut off thy horses out of the midst of thee, and I will destroy thy chariots; 15 And I will cut off the cities of thy land, and throw down all thy strongholds; 16 And I will cut off witchcrafts out of thy land, and thou shalt have no more soothsayers; 17 Thy graven images I will also cut off, and thy standing images out of the midst of thee, and thou shalt no more worship the works of thy hands; 18 And I will pluck up thy groves out of the midst of thee; so will I destroy thy cities. 19 And it shall come to pass that all lyings, and deceivings, and envyings, and strifes, and priestcrafts, and whoredoms, shall be done away.

20 For it shall come to pass, saith the Father, that at that day whosoever will not repent and come unto my Beloved Son, them will I cut off from among my people, O house of Israel; 21 And I will execute vengeance and fury upon them, even as upon the heathen, such as they have not heard.

v11-21 Jesus states plainly whoever will not believe His words, which will come through the Gentiles to the remnant of Israel, will be cut off from the covenant with Israel (v. 11). Then, the Lord's people will have power over the Gentiles (v. 12) when the Gentile's worldly power and ways will be thrown down (v. 13-19). Whoever will not accept Jesus Christ will be cut off from Israel (v. 20), and the Lord will execute terrible fury upon them, the likes of which have never been seen before (v. 21).

v12-19 These verses are a compound of various Old Testament Prophetic statements. Verse 12 is another quote of Micah 5:8. And, not surprisingly, v. 13-19 are paraphrases of Isaiah's

descriptions of Babylon, cp. Isa. 13:19, Isa. 21:9, Isa. 43:17, Isa. 47:9-13. Also cp. Isa. 2:6-20 and Isa. 5:8-23 where apostate Israel is castigated for being like the Philistines.

v21 A reference to the Day of the Lord, which in New Testament parlance is called the Second Coming.

22 But if they will repent and hearken unto my words, and harden not their hearts, I will establish my church among them, and they shall come in unto the covenant and be numbered among this the remnant of Jacob, unto whom I have given this land for their inheritance; 23 And they shall assist my people, the remnant of Jacob, and also as many of the house of Israel as shall come, that they may build a city, which shall be called the New Jerusalem. 24 And then shall they assist my people that they may be gathered in, who are scattered upon all the face of the land, in unto the New Jerusalem. 25 And then shall the power of heaven come down among them; and I also will be in the midst. 26 And then shall the work of the Father commence at that day, even when this gospel shall be preached among the remnant of this people.

Verily I say unto you, at that day shall the work of the Father commence among all the dispersed of my people, yea, even the tribes which have been lost, which the Father hath led away out of Jerusalem. 27 Yea, the work shall commence among all the dispersed of my people, with the Father to prepare the way whereby they may come unto me, that they may call on the Father in my name.

28 Yea, and then shall the work commence, with the Father among all nations in preparing the way whereby his people may be gathered home to the land of their inheritance. 29 And they shall go out from all nations; and they shall not go out in haste, nor go by flight, for I will go before them, saith the Father, and I will be their rearward.

v22-29 However, if the Gentiles hear the words of Christ and repent, then the Lord will establish the Church among them and they will be included in Israel's covenant (v. 22), and assist in the gathering of natural Israel so New Jerusalem will be built (v. 23).

If and when New Jerusalem is built, then the believing Gentiles will further assist in gathering natural Israel (v. 24), and the power of God will be with them and Christ himself will be among them (v. 25). Then the work to gather in the Leuites and all the remnants of Israel will be in earnest (v. 26) so there will be a way made for all the remnants to return to the Lord (v. 27) and be gathered to their ancestral lands (v. 28). Scattered Israel will go out from among the nations with the Lord watching over them (v. 29).

v23 "that they may build a city...New Jerusalem", the early saints were commanded through Smith to start building New Jerusalem so as to establish Zion (cf. D&C 84:3-4), but as a result of various difficulties this was never achieved (cf. D&C 124:51). However, this did not preclude the world-wide missionary effort discussed in v. 26-28.

If we compare v. 23-24 with Ether 13:6-8, we will note in the passage in Ether it states New Jerusalem will be built by the remnants of Joseph. In v. 23 it says the Gentiles "shall assist my people, the remnant of Jacob" when the New Jerusalem is built. This suggests the time when New Jerusalem will be built is when the Church is composed of a significant portion of natural Israel, and perhaps even a majority. This might seem arbitrary or irrelevant, but in the context of Zenos' allegory of the olive trees, the tame olive tree ends up doing best and producing the most good fruit after the wild grafts which have gone bad are removed and replaced with grafts of returning tame branches.

v29 This verse quotes Isa. 52:12 again as did 20:42. The imagery of the Lord as their vanguard and rearward invokes the original Exodus where there was a pillar of fire by night and a cloud by day which lead them at the front and protected them at the rear.

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