

Comments on 3 Nephi 27

In this chapter Jesus emphasizes deed over word, when the question of what the official name of the Church should be.

1 AND it came to pass that as the disciples of Jesus were journeying and were preaching the things which they had both heard and seen, and were baptizing in the name of Jesus, it came to pass that the disciples were gathered together and were united in mighty prayer and fasting. 2 And Jesus again showed himself unto them, for they were praying unto the Father in his name; and Jesus came and stood in the midst of them, and said unto them: what will ye that I shall give unto you? 3 And they said unto him: Lord, we will that thou wouldst tell us the name whereby we shall call this church; for there are disputations among the people concerning this matter.

4 And the Lord said unto them: Verily, verily, I say unto you, why is it that the people should murmur and dispute because of this thing? 5 Have they not read the scriptures, which say ye must take upon you the name of Christ, which is my name? For by this name shall ye be called at the last day; 6 And whoso taketh upon him my name, and endureth to the end, the same shall be saved at the last day. 7 Therefore, whatsoever ye shall do, ye shall do it in my name; therefore ye shall call the church in my name; and ye shall call upon the Father in my name that he will bless the church for my sake.

8 And how be it my church save it be called in my name? For if a church be called in Moses' name then it be Moses' church; or if it be called in the name of a man then it be the church of a man; but if it be called in my name then it is my church, if it so be that they are built upon my gospel.

v1-8 The twelve disciples unite themselves in fasting and prayer because they have a question they need answered (v. 1). Jesus appears to them and asks them what they need (v. 2). They respond by saying they would like him to tell them what to name the church because there are arguments among the people concerning what the name ought to be (v. 3).

Jesus replies saying they ought not to argue amongst themselves (v. 4) as it is plain the church should be in his name (v. 5-8).

v3 "we will that thou wouldst tell us", the core of the dispute appears to be lack of an explicit statement by Jesus of "You shall call my church 'The Church of Christ'". The disciples had already adopted the name "the church of Christ" per 26:21 and Jesus makes it clear there is an implicit statement in v. 5, so the only thing lacking is an explicit statement by himself.

"there are disputations among the people concerning this matter", unfortunately, we are left to speculate over what the exact nature of the dispute was. Verse 8 suggests the argument had something to do with men's names, perhaps similar to what Paul complains of in 1 Cor. 1:10-17, where people are picking favorite apostles or disciples to follow, rather than focusing on Christ. Or, perhaps it was something as trivial as people arguing over what the official name was.

v5 The answer the question was already in the scriptures, but as is so often the case with contentious people they ignore what they have and demand more. Regarding the doctrinal content of this verse, cp. Mosiah 5:7-12.

9 Verily I say unto you, that ye are built upon my gospel; therefore ye shall call whatsoever things ye do call, in my name; therefore if ye call upon the Father, for the church, if it be in my name the Father will hear you; 10 And if it so be that the church is built upon my gospel then will the Father show forth his own works in it. 11 But if it be not built upon my gospel, and is built upon the works of men, or upon the works of the devil, verily I say unto you they have joy in their works for a season, and by and by the end cometh, and they are hewn down and cast into the fire, from whence there is no return. 12 For their works do follow them, for it is because of their works that they are hewn down; therefore remember the things that I have told you.

v9-12 More important than a name, the church should be built on His works as defined by His gospel. Jesus rebukes those involved in the dispute by saying it is merely over a point in doctrine and name. What they should be focusing on is their walk, not their talk. Particularly note in v. 8 Jesus says if the church is in His name and if they are built on His gospel then it is His church. If it is called by His name and they are not doing His works, then they are not His church. The confirming factor is works.

v11 "the works of men, or upon the works of the devil", it is likely the "or" is an equation of the works of men and the works of the devil, not a conditional of one or the other. The works of men are the works of the devil, cf. Alma 5:41-42.

13 Behold I have given unto you my gospel, and this is the gospel which I have given unto you--that I came into the world to do the will of my Father, because my Father sent me. 14 And my Father sent me that I might be lifted up upon the cross; and after that I had been lifted up upon the cross, that I might draw all men unto me, that as I have been lifted up by men even so should men be lifted up by the Father, to stand before me, to

be judged of their works, whether they be good or whether they be evil-- 15 And for this cause have I been lifted up; therefore, according to the power of the Father I will draw all men unto me, that they may be judged according to their works.

16 And it shall come to pass, that whoso repenteth and is baptized in my name shall be filled; and if he endureth to the end, behold, him will I hold guiltless before my Father at that day when I shall stand to judge the world. 17 And he that endureth not unto the end, the same is he that is also hewn down and cast into the fire, from whence they can no more return, because of the justice of the Father. 18 And this is the word which he hath given unto the children of men. And for this cause he fulfilleth the words which he hath given, and he lieth not, but fulfilleth all his words. 19 And no unclean thing can enter into his kingdom; therefore nothing entereth into his rest save it be those who have washed their garments in my blood, because of their faith, and the repentance of all their sins, and their faithfulness unto the end.

20 Now this is the commandment: Repent, all ye ends of the earth, and come unto me and be baptized in my name, that ye may be sanctified by the reception of the Holy Ghost, that ye may stand spotless before me at the last day. 21 Verily, verily, I say unto you, this is my gospel; and ye know the things that ye must do in my church; for the works which ye have seen me do that shall ye also do; for that which ye have seen me do even that shall ye do; 22 Therefore, if ye do these things blessed are ye, for ye shall be lifted up at the last day.

v13-22 Jesus defines the fundamentals of his "gospel". The good news is Jesus has done the will of the Father (v. 13) in bringing about the resurrection and judgement of all men (v. 14-15).

Whoever repents, is baptized, and endures to the end will be found guiltless at Judgement (v. 16, 20). Those who fail to endure to the end will be damned because no unclean thing can enter into heaven (v. 17, 19). This is what the Father had said to men, and so it will be fulfilled because he speaks the truth (v. 18).

They know what they are supposed to do because they have seen Jesus' example (v. 21), and if they follow his example they will be exalted at Judgement (v. 22).

23 Write the things which ye have seen and heard, save it be those which are forbidden. 24 Write the works of this people, which shall be, even as hath been written, of that which hath been. 25 For behold, out of the books which have been written, and which shall be written, shall this people be judged, for by them shall their works be known unto men. 26 And behold, all things are written by the Father; therefore out of the books which shall be written shall the world be judged.

27 And know ye that ye shall be judges of this people, according to the judgment which I shall give unto you, which

shall be just. Therefore, what manner of men ought ye to be? Verily I say unto you, even as I am.

28 And now I go unto the Father. And verily I say unto you, whatsoever things ye shall ask the Father in my name shall be given unto you. 29 Therefore, ask, and ye shall receive; knock, and it shall be opened unto you; for he that asketh, receiveth; and unto him that knocketh, it shall be opened.

v23-29 Jesus turns his attention specifically to the twelve disciples. He admonishes them to write down the things they have been commanded to write (v. 23-26) because they will be judges among their people (v. 27). He tells them he will leave them, but in his absence, they can ask the Father for guidance and He will provide it (v. 28-29).

v25-26 Just as there is a heavenly record of things on earth (v. 26), so should there be an earthly record (v. 25). But, if there is a heavenly record out of which people will be judged, then what purpose is the earthly record with respect to Judgement? See 2 Ne. 30:16-18.

30 And now, behold, my joy is great, even unto fulness, because of you, and also this generation; yea, and even the Father rejoiceth, and also all the holy angels, because of you and this generation; for none of them are lost. 31 Behold, I would that ye should understand; for I mean them who are now alive of this generation; and none of them are lost; and in them I have fulness of joy.

32 But behold, it sorroweth me because of the fourth generation from this generation, for they are led away captive by him even as was the son of perdition; for they will sell me for silver and for gold, and for that which moth doth corrupt and which thieves can break through and steal. And in that day will I visit them, even in turning their works upon their own heads.

33 And it came to pass that when Jesus had ended these sayings he said unto his disciples: Enter ye in at the strait gate; for strait is the gate, and narrow is the way that leads to life, and few there be that find it; but wide is the gate, and broad the way which leads to death, and many there be that travel therein, until the night cometh, wherein no man can work.

v30-33 Jesus expresses joy over the present generation being saved (v. 30-31) and sorrow over the fourth generation which will sell him out for the things of the world (v. 32). He then comments that few enter into the narrow gate while many enter the broad gate (v. 33).

v30-31 Jesus probably told the twelve this so they would know the present generation is saved and things won't go bad for some

time. Even though there is some contention among them, as evidenced by the dispute concerning the name of the church (cf. v. 3), it is petty and will not result in anyone losing their standing in heaven.

v32 "fourth generation from this generation", this is counting a long generation, about 100 years, or the extent of the natural lifespan. A short generation in the Scriptures is about 20 years, or the average span of a reproductive generation. In 4 Ne. 1:22 after 200 years from the birth of Christ almost all of the second generation has passed away, thus the count here is the long count.

v33 This verse is likely an additional comment on the subject of v. 30-32. Just as there are some who enter in at the strait gate, those of v. 30-31, there are many more who enter the broad gate, those of v. 32.

That he is specifically talking to the twelve disciples when he says this can be taken as him telling them they are granted the privilege of entering in the strait gate. This cannot be taken as an admonition to the twelve disciples. It is plain they are already in the strait gate, as they are sanctified (cf. 19:25) and in the next chapter Jesus effectively makes the calling and election sure for nine of them and translates the other three.

Copyright © 2020 by S. Kurt Neumiller <kurt.neumiller@gmail.com>. All rights reserved. No part of this text may be reproduced in any form or by any means for commercial gain without the express written consent of the author. Digital or printed copies may be freely made and distributed for personal and public non-commercial use.