

## Comments on 3 Nephi 9

This chapter comprises a lengthy quotation of the Lord Jesus Christ apparently delivered shortly after the three hours of destruction described in ch. 8.

The comments by the Lord can be divided into two parts. The first portion is the justification of the destruction of the wicked (v. 2-12), and the second portion is the appeal to the more righteous survivors to repent and return to Him (v. 13-22).

1 AND it came to pass that there was a voice heard among all the inhabitants of the earth, upon all the face of this land, crying:

2 Wo, wo, wo unto this people; wo unto the inhabitants of the whole earth except they shall repent; for the devil laugheth, and his angels rejoice, because of the slain of the fair sons and daughters of my people; and it is because of their iniquity and abominations that they are fallen!

3 Behold, that great city Zarahemla have I burned with fire, and the inhabitants thereof. 4 And behold, that great city Moroni have I caused to be sunk in the depths of the sea, and the inhabitants thereof to be drowned.

5 And behold, that great city Moronihah have I covered with earth, and the inhabitants thereof, to hide their iniquities and their abominations from before my face, that the blood of the prophets and the saints shall not come any more unto me against them.

6 And behold, the city of Gilgal have I caused to be sunk, and the inhabitants thereof to be buried up in the depths of the earth; 7 Yea, and the city of Onihah and the inhabitants thereof, and the city of Mocom and the inhabitants thereof, and the city of Jerusalem and the inhabitants thereof; and waters have I caused to come up in the stead thereof, to hide their wickedness and abominations from before my face, that the blood of the prophets and the saints shall not come up any more unto me against them.

8 And behold, the city of Gadiandi, and the city of Gadiomnah, and the city of Jacob, and the city of Gimgimno, all these have I caused to be sunk, and made hills and valleys in the places thereof; and the inhabitants thereof have I buried up in the depths of the earth, to hide their wickedness and abominations from before my face, that the blood of the prophets and the saints should not come up any more unto me against them.

9 And behold, that great city Jacobugath, which was inhabited by the people of king Jacob, have I caused to be burned with fire because of their sins and their wickedness, which was above all the wickedness of the whole earth, because of their secret murders and combinations; for it was they that did destroy the peace of my people and the government of the land; therefore I did cause them to be burned, to destroy them from before my face, that the blood of the prophets and the saints should not come up unto me any more against them.

10 And behold, the city of Laman, and the city of Josh, and the city of Gad, and the city of Kishkumen, have I caused to be burned with fire, and the inhabitants thereof, because of their wickedness in casting out the prophets, and stoning those whom I did send to declare unto them concerning their wickedness and their abominations. 11 And because they did cast them all out, that there were none righteous among them, I did send down fire and destroy them, that their wickedness and abominations might be hid from before my face, that the blood of the prophets and the saints whom I sent among them might not cry unto me from the ground against them.

12 And many great destructions have I caused to come upon this land, and upon this people, because of their wickedness and their abominations.

v2-12 The justification for the destruction of the wicked is framed with an introduction (v. 2) and conclusion (v. 12) and is composed of a series of five repetitive arguments, all of which hinge on the rejection and murdering of His prophets, summarized as follows:

Intro: My people (v. 2)

are slain because of their iniquity and abominations

Zarahemla...Moroni...Moronihah (v. 3-5)

to hide their iniquities and their abominations from before my face, that **the blood of the prophets and the saints** shall not come any more unto me against them.

Gilgal...Onihah...Mocum...Jerusalem (v. 6-7)

to hide their wickedness and abominations from before my face, that **the blood of the prophets and the saints** shall not come up any more unto me against them.

Gadiandi...Gadiomnah...Jacob...Gimgimno (v. 8)

to hide their wickedness and abominations from before my face, that **the blood of the prophets and the saints** should not come up any more unto me against them.

Jacobugath (v. 9)

to destroy them from before my face, that **the blood of the prophets and the saints** should not come up unto me any more against them.

Laman...Josh...Gad...Kishkumen (v. 10-11)

that their wickedness and abominations might be hid from before my face, that **the blood of the prophets and the saints** whom I sent among them might not cry unto me from the ground against them.

Conclusion: This people (v. 12)

are destroyed because of their wickedness and abominations

The Lord lists the destroyed cities and states why, because they killed His servants and cast out any who believed in Him. There were no righteous left among them, so there was no reason for the Lord to hold back from destroying them (cf. Hela. 13:14). The underlying theology goes back to the Sodom and Gomorrah incident where Abraham pleads for any righteous which might be among the wicked, cf. Gen. 18:22-23. The Lord will relent for the sake of the righteous, but when there are no righteous there is no reason to relent.

Taking vengeance on the blood of the prophets is one of those classic OT themes (cf. Deut. 32:43, 2 Kings 9:7) which makes its way into the New Testament (cf. Luke 11:49-51, Rev. 19:2), Book of Mormon, and Doctrine & Covenants (cf. D&C 136:36).

A tangential issue to this is the account we have of the wickedness of the Nephites in the years preceding ch. 8 is quite sanitized. We are informed in 7:19 that Lehi was stoned to death by disbelievers, but that is only to let us know that Nephi raised him from the dead. And there are a couple of other tangential references in 10:12 and 10:15, but again, only a general comment. Given the accusations of murdering prophets and casting out the righteous leveled at no less than 15 cities, there must have been considerable systematic persecution against the church which Mormon mostly glossed over in favor of the present condemnations.

v2 "the devil laugheth, and his angels rejoice", the adversary knows perfectly well what it takes for the Lord to destroy the wicked, so he takes pleasure in leading his mortal subjects to that destruction. It seems he also takes additional pleasure in destroying natural Israel.

13 O all ye that are spared because ye were more righteous than they, will ye not now return unto me, and repent of your sins, and be converted, that I may heal you? 14 Yea, verily I say unto you, if ye will come unto me ye shall have eternal life. Behold,

mine arm of mercy is extended towards you, and whosoever will come, him will I receive; and blessed are those who come unto me.

15 Behold, I am Jesus Christ the Son of God. I created the heavens and the earth, and all things that in them are. I was with the Father from the beginning. I am in the Father, and the Father in me; and in me hath the Father glorified his name. 16 I came unto my own, and my own received me not. And the scriptures concerning my coming are fulfilled. 17 And as many as have received me, to them have I given to become the sons of God; and even so will I to as many as shall believe on my name, for behold, by me redemption cometh, and in me is the law of Moses fulfilled. 18 I am the light and the life of the world. I am Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the end.

19 And ye shall offer up unto me no more the shedding of blood; yea, your sacrifices and your burnt offerings shall be done away, for I will accept none of your sacrifices and your burnt offerings. 20 And ye shall offer for a sacrifice unto me a broken heart and a contrite spirit. And whoso cometh unto me with a broken heart and a contrite spirit, him will I baptize with fire and with the Holy Ghost, even as the Lamanites, because of their faith in me at the time of their conversion, were baptized with fire and with the Holy Ghost, and they knew it not.

21 Behold, I have come unto the world to bring redemption unto the world, to save the world from sin. 22 Therefore, whoso repenteth and cometh unto me as a little child, him will I receive, for of such is the kingdom of God. Behold, for such I have laid down my life, and have taken it up again; therefore repent, and come unto me ye ends of the earth, and be saved.

v13-22 After explaining why He destroyed the wicked, the Lord now encourages the survivors to repent. As was the case with v. 2-12, this section of the speech has an introduction (v. 13-14) and conclusion (v. 21-22) which are similar in that they encourage the survivors to return to Him. The main content is then an explanation of Himself and His purposes (v. 15-18), and what is required to return to Him (v. 19-20).

v13-14 The Lord pleads with those who survived to return to Him (v. 13). He tells them His arms are open and they will be blessed if they take advantage of His mercy.

The immediate necessity of the Lord emphasizing His mercy would be plain to anyone who had just endured three hours of horror on earth as all of nature convulsed and consumed the wicked, and now they had three days of smothering darkness to look forward to. Nobody who had just endured that would reflect on the tender mercies of the Lord. No, rather, the Lord needed to make it very clear to them that while He had just destroyed

the wicked, those who had survived were the more righteous whom He was now imploring to repent. Note He also identifies Himself as the Creator (v. 15), the one who grants sonship to God, the Redeemer (v. 17), and the light and life of the world (v. 18).

These are all positive images which the Lord is portraying, not negative harsh ones which are common in prophetic texts with judgement themes. The Lord's intent is to counter the gut reaction of these survivors and point out to them it was an act of mercy on His part that they were spared, rather than having them curse Him for the destruction they just witnessed.

It is plain from this that a lot of the survivors were not particularly religious or penitent. It is clear many of the survivors needed to repent and be baptized, cf. 4 Ne. 1:1. So, when the Lord says he really did only destroy the most wicked, He meant it.

v15-18 The Lord introduces and explains Himself to the survivors. He presents his pre-mortal (v. 15), mortal (v. 16-17), and post-mortal (v. 18) aspects to the people, so they will understand plainly who He is.

The majority of the explanation focuses on his mortal aspect, as we would expect since He had just finished it. He fulfilled the predictions by going to His own people and being generally rejected by them (v. 16), but to those who did accept him he granted that they should be the sons of God. He has accomplished this by redeeming his people from death and hell. He has also fulfilled the Law of Moses (v. 17).

v19-20 In v. 13 the Lord tells the people to return to Him, so he now explains how it is they may do so. He Lord does not want them to perform any literal physical sacrifices anymore (v. 19). Rather, he wants the spiritual sacrifice of a broken heart and a contrite spirit. These people will be cleansed by the Holy Spirit, even as were the Lamanites (v. 20).

v20 "even as the Lamanites", the thing to note here is the Lamanites who repented and were baptized by the Spirit were under the Law of Moses, and zealously observed the Law, cf. Hela. 13:1, Hela. 15:5. The Lord is saying in v. 19 that he doesn't want literal sacrifices anymore, instead he wants the kind of spiritual sacrifice the Lamanites offered him. Since the Lamanites were observing the Law of Moses, what the Lord really wanted all along was that spiritual sacrifice and not the

physical one. His selection of this group as an example emphasizes the spiritual over the physical when it comes to worship.

"and they knew it not", I would take this to mean it was an inward spiritual baptism and not an outward physical one. They would have known an outward physical baptism when it was performed, but the sanctifying effect of the Holy Spirit is not some outward performance that people see.

As in the contrast of v. 19 with v. 20, the Lord doesn't want outward sacrifices anymore, those which people can see and witness. Instead, he wants an inward sacrifice, one which people cannot see or witness.

And again, this plays on the example of the Lamanites. They zealously kept the Law, which was easily seen and witnessed, but the Lord dismisses that in favor of this spiritual baptism, which is unseen.

v21-22 The Lord then closes this discourse by emphasizing His mission is to redeem people from sin (v. 21). So, those who repent will He receive. It is for the repentant that He laid down his life and took it up again, so they might be saved (v. 22).

As with v. 13-14, the Lord wants the audience to know His primary intent is to save, and not destroy. This stands in stark contrast to what the survivors have just witnessed.

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