

Comments on Mosiah 3

Benjamin changes his subject away from the transfer in kingship, the first subject he said he would address in 1:10, towards the second subject he said he would address in 1:11, namely, their spiritual king. The chapter is largely composed of a quotation of an angel which visited Benjamin (v. 3-22), with an append of some comments from the Lord regarding what the angel said (v. 24-27).

1 And again my brethren, I would call your attention, for I have somewhat more to speak unto you; for behold, I have things to tell you concerning that which is to come. 2 And the things which I shall tell you are made known unto me by an angel from God. And he said unto me: Awake; and I awoke, and behold he stood before me.

v1-2 Benjamin announces a change in subject (v. 1). He informs the audience what he is about to tell them was in fact delivered to him by an angel of God (v. 2).

3 And he said unto me: Awake, and hear the words which I shall tell thee; for behold, I am come to declare unto you the glad tidings of great joy. 4 For the Lord hath heard thy prayers, and hath judged of thy righteousness, and hath sent me to declare unto thee that thou mayest rejoice; and that thou mayest declare unto thy people, that they may also be filled with joy.

5 For behold, the time cometh, and is not far distant, that with power, the Lord Omnipotent who reigneth, who was, and is from all eternity to all eternity, shall come down from heaven among the children of men, and shall dwell in a tabernacle of clay, and shall go forth amongst men, working mighty miracles, such as healing the sick, raising the dead, causing the lame to walk, the blind to receive their sight, and the deaf to hear, and curing all manner of diseases. 6 And he shall cast out devils, or the evil spirits which dwell in the hearts of the children of men. 7 And lo, he shall suffer temptations, and pain of body, hunger, thirst, and fatigue, even more than man can suffer, except it be unto death; for behold, blood cometh from every pore, so great shall be his anguish for the wickedness and the abominations of his people. 8 And he shall be called Jesus Christ, the Son of God, the Father of heaven and earth, the Creator of all things from the beginning; and his mother shall be called Mary. 9 And lo, he cometh unto his own, that salvation might come unto the children of men even through faith on his name; and even after all this they shall consider him a man, and say that he hath a devil, and shall scourge him, and shall crucify him. 10 And he shall rise the third day from the dead; and behold, he standeth to judge the world; and behold, all these things are done that a righteous judgment might come upon the children of men.

11 For behold, and also his blood atoneth for the sins of those who have fallen by the transgression of Adam, who have died not knowing the will of God concerning them, or who have ignorantly sinned. 12 But wo, wo unto him who knoweth that he rebelleth against God! For salvation cometh to none such except it be through repentance and faith on the Lord Jesus Christ.

13 And the Lord God hath sent his holy prophets among all the children of men, to declare these things to every kindred, nation, and tongue, that thereby whosoever should believe that Christ should come, the same might receive remission of their sins, and rejoice with

exceedingly great joy, even as though he had already come among them. 14 Yet the Lord God saw that his people were a stiffnecked people, and he appointed unto them a law, even the law of Moses. 15 And many signs, and wonders, and types, and shadows showed he unto them, concerning his coming; and also holy prophets spake unto them concerning his coming; and yet they hardened their hearts, and understood not that the law of Moses availeth nothing except it were through the atonement of his blood. 16 And even if it were possible that little children could sin they could not be saved; but I say unto you they are blessed; for behold, as in Adam, or by nature, they fall, even so the blood of Christ atoneth for their sins. 17 And moreover, I say unto you, that there shall be no other name given nor any other way nor means whereby salvation can come unto the children of men, only in and through the name of Christ, the Lord Omnipotent. 18 For behold he judgeth, and his judgment is just; and the infant perisheth not that dieth in his infancy; but men drink damnation to their own souls except they humble themselves and become as little children, and believe that salvation was, and is, and is to come, in and through the atoning blood of Christ, the Lord Omnipotent. 19 For the natural man is an enemy to God, and has been from the fall of Adam, and will be, forever and ever, unless he yields to the enticings of the Holy Spirit, and putteth off the natural man and becometh a saint through the atonement of Christ the Lord, and becometh as a child, submissive, meek, humble, patient, full of love, willing to submit to all things which the Lord seeth fit to inflict upon him, even as a child doth submit to his father. 20 And moreover, I say unto you, that the time shall come when the knowledge of the Savior shall spread throughout every nation, kindred, tongue, and people.

21 And behold, when that time cometh, none shall be found blameless before God, except it be little children, only through repentance and faith on the name of the Lord God Omnipotent. 22 And even at this time, when thou shalt have taught thy people the things which the Lord thy God hath commanded thee, even then are they found no more blameless in the sight of God, only according to the words which I have spoken unto thee.

v3-22 For the angel's speech I chose an arrangement that is somewhat forced. I present three inverted parallelisms with center themes that all focus on Christ. These three are bracketed by another small inverted parallelism which deals with the knowledge of Christ and accountability. I chose this arrangement to emphasize the core doctrine of the quotation, which is the acceptance of Christ.

The four inverted parallelisms are marked with A, B, C, D and numbers associated with the text for clarity. A simplified summary is also presented below.

[A1] 3 And he said unto me: Awake, and hear the words which I shall tell thee; for behold, I am come to declare unto you the glad tidings of great joy.

[A2] 4 For the Lord hath heard thy prayers, and hath judged of thy righteousness, and hath sent me to declare unto thee that thou mayest rejoice; and that thou mayest declare unto thy people, that they may also be filled with joy.

[B1] 5 For behold, the time cometh, and is not far distant, that with power, the Lord Omnipotent who reigneth, who was, and is from all eternity to all eternity, shall come down from heaven among the children of men, and shall dwell in a tabernacle of clay, and shall go forth amongst men, working mighty miracles, such as healing the sick, raising the dead, causing the lame to walk, the blind to receive their sight, and the deaf to hear, and curing all manner of diseases.

[B2] 6 And he shall cast out devils, or the evil spirits which dwell in the hearts of the children of men.

[B3] 7 And lo, he shall suffer temptations, and pain of body, hunger, thirst, and fatigue, even more than man can suffer, except it be unto death; for behold, blood cometh from every pore, so great shall be his anguish for the wickedness and the abominations of his people.

[B4] 8 And he shall be called Jesus Christ, the Son of God,

[B5] the Father of heaven and earth, the

[B5] Creator of all things from the beginning; and

[B4] his mother shall be called Mary.

[B3] 9 And lo, he cometh unto his own, that salvation might come unto the children of men even through faith on his name; and

[B2] even after all this they shall consider him a man, and say that he hath a devil, and shall scourge him, and shall crucify him.

[B1] 10 And he shall rise the third day from the dead; and behold, he standeth to judge the world; and behold, all these things are done that a righteous judgment might come upon the children of men.

[C1] 11 For behold, and also his blood atoneth for the sins of those who have fallen by the transgression of Adam,

[C2] who have died not knowing the will of God concerning them, or who have ignorantly sinned.

[C2] 12 But wo, wo unto him who knoweth that he rebelleth against God!

[C1] For salvation cometh to none such except it be through repentance and faith on the Lord Jesus Christ.

[D1] 13 And the Lord God hath sent his holy prophets among all the children of men, to declare these things to every kindred, nation, and tongue, that thereby whosoever should believe that Christ should come, the same might receive remission of their sins, and rejoice with exceedingly great joy, even as though he had already come among them.

[D2] 14 Yet the Lord God saw that his people were a stiffnecked people, and he appointed unto them a law, even the law of Moses.

[D3] 15 And many signs, and wonders, and types, and shadows showed he unto them, concerning his coming; and also holy prophets spake unto them concerning his coming; and yet they hardened their hearts, and understood not that the law of Moses availeth nothing except it were through the atonement of his blood.

[D4] 16 And even if it were possible that little children could sin they could not be saved; but I say unto you they are blessed; for behold, as in Adam, or by nature, they fall, even so the blood of Christ atoneth for their sins.

[D5] 17 And moreover, I say unto you, that there shall be no other name given nor any other way nor means whereby salvation can come unto the children of men,

[D5] only in and through the name of Christ, the Lord Omnipotent.

[D4] 18 For behold he judgeth, and his judgment is just; and the infant perisheth not that dieth in his infancy; but men drink damnation to their own souls except they humble themselves and become as little children, and believe that salvation was, and is, and is to come, in and through the atoning blood of Christ, the Lord Omnipotent.

[D3] 19 For the natural man is an enemy to God, and has been from the fall of Adam, and will be, forever and ever, unless he yields to the enticings of the Holy Spirit, and putteth off the natural man and becometh a saint

[D2] through the atonement of Christ the Lord, and becometh as a child, submissive, meek, humble, patient, full of love, willing to submit to all things which the Lord seeth

fit to inflict upon him, even as a child doth submit to his father.

[D1] 20 And moreover, I say unto you, that the time shall come when the knowledge of the Savior shall spread throughout every nation, kindred, tongue, and people.

[A2] 21 And behold, when that time cometh, none shall be found blameless before God, except it be little children, only through repentance and faith on the name of the Lord God Omnipotent.

[A1] 22 And even at this time, when thou shalt have taught thy people the things which the Lord thy God hath commanded thee, even then are they found no more blameless in the sight of God, only according to the words which I have spoken unto thee.

Summaries

A1 - I tell thee, glad tidings of great joy

A2 - Judged righteous, rejoice

A2 - None found blameless, except they repentant

A1 - You tell them, no more blameless

B1 - Mortal among men doing mighty works (condescension)

B2 - Cast out devils in men

B3 - He suffers for his people

B4 - Son of God

B5 - Father of Heaven and Earth

B5 - Creator of all things

B4 - Son of Mary

B3 - Salvation comes to man

B2 - Judged a devil by men

B1 - Resurrected and judge a righteous judgement (exaltation)

C1 - Blood automatically covers inadvertent wrongdoing

C2 - Those who sin ignorantly and die without knowledge

C2 - Woe to those who rebel

C1 - No salvation to rebellious unless they repent

D1 - Prophets have been sent to all nations

D2 - Israel appointed the Law of Moses

D3 - Hardened hearts against miracles, the Law, the prophets

D4 - Little children are free from sin and spared

D5 - No other means of salvation

D5 - Only through Jesus Christ

D4 - Men drink damnation unless they become childlike

D3 - Natural man an enemy to God unless yield to Holy Spirit

D2 - People must be humble and submissive and willing to submit

D1 - All nations will ultimately know the gospel

On inverted parallelism A, note it brackets the other three, indicating this is the knowledge that is the gospel (i.e., glad tidings of great joy as well as that which renders them no longer blameless). The center C parallelism also compliments the bracketing A parallelism in that both address the issue of knowledge of Christ and the responsibility it brings with it.

v3-4 parallels v. 21-22. The angel gives Benjamin the gospel (v. 3), so he can give his people the gospel (v. 4). However, this knowledge come with responsibility, and whoever obtains it is no longer blameless (v. 21). So, when Benjamin has taught his people, they will no longer be blameless (v. 22).

v4 The angel's speech is in reply to Benjamin's prayers in behalf of his people. The ideal prophet-king acts as an intercessor for his people, and as such is a type of Christ. The Biblical archetype of this is Abraham's intercession for any righteous that might have been in Sodom, cf. Gen. 18.

v5-10 This block of text presents the Lord, the Creator of Heaven and Earth (v. 5), as condescending to flesh (v. 5-8) and then being exalted again (v. 10) so that Salvation and Judgement might be achieved for man (v. 9-10). His condescension is marked by suffering for man (v. 7), but also his rejection by man (v. 9).

v8 "the Son of God...his mother shall be called Mary", the seemingly contradictory combination of deity and fallen flesh is accomplished by a divine Father and a mortal mother. Also note v. 17, the peak of the complimentary parallelism, agrees in subject as well, namely that Christ is the Lord of the OT, the only means of salvation.

v11-12 The blood of Christ's atonement automatically covers all those who ignorantly sin (v. 11), but those who willfully sin will not be covered by the atonement unless they repent (v. 12).

v13-20 This block of text indicates the knowledge of Christ is the only means of salvation for man. The Lord sends prophets to testify of Christ (v. 13), and gives the people laws (v. 14) that are a type of Christ. Yet, the people hardened their hearts and did not see the Law testified of the atonement (v. 15). The atonement is so fundamental not even babies would be saved without it, because of the Fall (v. 16). There is no other way to be saved, except through Christ, who is the Lord (v. 17). And the atonement is just, such that the baby that dies young does not perish, but the adult who does not humble themselves as a child does perish (v. 18). The natural, fallen condition of man is carnal and adversarial, and unless the man yields to the Holy Spirit they cannot humble themselves and submit to God (v. 19). But the time will come when knowledge of Christ will spread to all people (v. 20).

v16 "And even if it were possible that little children could sin, they could not be saved", i.e., without the atonement even little children could not be saved. This argument follows on the heels of the one in the preceding verse that says without the atonement the Law of Moses is pointless. The point is none, not those who observe the Law, not even little children, could be saved without the atonement.

v21-22 See the comments on v. 3-4 above.

23 And now I have spoken the words which the Lord God hath commanded me. 24 And thus saith the Lord: They shall stand as a bright testimony against this people, at the judgment day; whereof they shall be judged, every man according to his works, whether they be good, or whether they be evil. 25 And if they be evil they are consigned to an awful view of their own guilt and abominations, which doth cause them to shrink from the presence of the Lord into a state of misery and endless torment, from whence they can no more return; therefore they have drunk damnation to their own souls. 26 Therefore, they have drunk out of the cup of the wrath of God, which justice could no more deny unto them than it could deny that Adam should fall because of his partaking of the forbidden fruit; therefore, mercy could have claim on them no more forever. 27 And their torment is as a lake of fire and brimstone, whose flames are unquenchable, and whose smoke ascendeth up forever and ever. Thus hath the Lord commanded me. Amen.

v23-27 The quotation from the angel is then followed up by an additional quote from the Lord (v. 23). The present quote endorses

the preceding one, stating it will stand as a witness which will separate the righteous from the wicked (v. 24). If they are evil they will be damned for their actions (v. 25) by the indisputable justice of God (v. 26). Their punishment will be eternal (v. 27).

The closing statement is emphatic and rhetorically charged. It is aimed at those who have the gospel, yet rebel against it. One would assume the power and Spirit of the speech is what resulted in the crowd being overwhelmed in the opening verses of the next chapter.

v23 Benjamin states the preceding quote from v. 5-22 was given him from the Lord God. But, v. 2 informs us it was in fact from an angel of God. This may be splitting hairs as the angel of God possesses the authority of God, but when discussing matters of theophany it is common for writers to equate an angel of God saying something with God saying something. So, as readers, we need to be aware that just because it says "God told me to tell you..." doesn't necessarily mean the individual spoke with God face to face. For example, in v. 24 it says "thus saith the Lord", and it is common for people to assume it is a direct quotation of the Lord. However, from this context, it is probable the quotation is actually from the angel of the Lord.

This point becomes particularly important in the Gentile era of the gospel, as the Lord has made it clear he will never appear personally to a Gentile, cf. 1 Ne. 10:11, 3 Ne. 15:23.

v25-26 "drunk damnation...drunk out of the cup of the wrath of God", this cup of poison represents judgement on the wicked and is a common figurative image in the OT, cp. Isa. 57:17-23, Jer. 25:15-17, Ezek, 23:31, Zech, 12:2, Ps. 11:6, Ps. 75:8.

v27 Compare Isa. 30:33 for similar imagery.

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