

Comments on Mosiah 5

1 And now, it came to pass that when king Benjamin had thus spoken to his people, he sent among them, desiring to know of his people if they believed the words which he had spoken unto them. 2 And they all cried with one voice, saying: Yea, we believe all the words which thou hast spoken unto us; and also, we know of their surety and truth, because of the Spirit of the Lord Omnipotent, which has wrought a mighty change in us, or in our hearts, that we have no more disposition to do evil, but to do good continually. 3 And we, ourselves, also, through the infinite goodness of God, and the manifestations of his Spirit, have great views of that which is to come; and were it expedient, we could prophesy of all things. 4 And it is the faith which we have had on the things which our king has spoken unto us that has brought us to this great knowledge, whereby we do rejoice with such exceedingly great joy. 5 And we are willing to enter into a covenant with our God to do his will, and to be obedient to his commandments in all things that he shall command us, all the remainder of our days, that we may not bring upon ourselves a never-ending torment, as has been spoken by the angel, that we may not drink out of the cup of the wrath of God.

v1-5 Unlike the end of his previous speech the people do not give him an obvious sign of the impact of what he has said (cp. 4:1), so king Benjamin sends messengers out among the people to see what the consensus is (v. 1). The people in general respond saying they believe everything Benjamin has said. They know it is true because the Holy Spirit has brought about a change in them such that they no longer want to do evil, but do good (v. 2). The Spirit has manifested to them what is to come and they themselves could testify of the things Benjamin has spoken (v. 3), because they have obtained the "great knowledge" Benjamin has referred to (v. 4, cp. 4:12). The result is the people are willing to covenant with God to be obedient to His commands all their lives so they will not end up suffering the wrath of God at Judgement which was spoken of earlier (v. 5, cp. 3:25-27).

v2 The people have been changed from carnal to spiritual by yielding to the Spirit per 3:19. Their statement indicates they understand what Benjamin has said to them in the previous chapter concerning making the change permanent, and not just a passing thing.

v3 One would assume when the people say they could testify of things to come they are speaking in the same vein as was Benjamin, concerning the consequences of sin and Judgement and presumably the mortal ministry of Christ and so forth. The people spiritually perceive the reality of what Benjamin has told them of concerning the future.

Taking the ambiguity of the "all things" to mean other things outside of the context of the Benjamin's speech and their own confessions is speculative.

"prophecy", unlike the vernacular English usage which has come to mean "predict", the Scriptural definition means "testify in an

authoritative manner". Predicting things is only incidental to bearing testimony.

6 And now, these are the words which king Benjamin desired of them; and therefore he said unto them: Ye have spoken the words that I desired; and the covenant which ye have made is a righteous covenant. 7 And now, because of the covenant which ye have made ye shall be called the children of Christ, his sons, and his daughters; for behold, this day he hath spiritually begotten you; for ye say that your hearts are changed through faith on his name; therefore, ye are born of him and have become his sons and his daughters. 8 And under this head ye are made free, and there is no other head whereby ye can be made free. There is no other name given whereby salvation cometh; therefore, I would that ye should take upon you the name of Christ, all you that have entered into the covenant with God that ye should be obedient unto the end of your lives.

9 And it shall come to pass that whosoever doeth this shall be found at the right hand of God, for he shall know the name by which he is called; for he shall be called by the name of Christ. 10 And now it shall come to pass, that whosoever shall not take upon him the name of Christ must be called by some other name; therefore, he findeth himself on the left hand of God. 11 And I would that ye should remember also, that this is the name that I said I should give unto you that never should be blotted out, except it be through transgression; therefore, take heed that ye do not transgress, that the name be not blotted out of your hearts. 12 I say unto you, I would that ye should remember to retain the name written always in your hearts, that ye are not found on the left hand of God, but that ye hear and know the voice by which ye shall be called, and also, the name by which he shall call you. 13 For how knoweth a man the master whom he has not served, and who is a stranger unto him, and is far from the thoughts and intents of his heart? 14 And again, doth a man take an ass which belongeth to his neighbor, and keep him? I say unto you, Nay; he will not even suffer that he shall feed among his flocks, but will drive him away, and cast him out. I say unto you, that even so shall it be among you if ye know not the name by which ye are called. 15 Therefore, I would that ye should be steadfast and immovable, always abounding in good works, that Christ, the Lord God Omnipotent, may seal you his, that you may be brought to heaven, that ye may have everlasting salvation and eternal life, through the wisdom, and power, and justice, and mercy of him who created all things, in heaven and in earth, who is God above all. Amen.

v6-15 Benjamin's reply can be divided into two blocks based upon subject. First, he tells the people the covenant they have made (v. 6, 8) makes them children of Christ, being spiritually born again (v. 7).

Second, he discusses the matter of Judgement as one of being before God and having him choose to place you either on His right hand or his left hand. Those who accept Christ and covenant with God (v. 9), and remain steadfast in the faith will receive eternal life (v. 15). However, those who do not accept Christ and covenant with God (v. 10), or those who fall into sin after making the covenant will be found on God's left hand (v. 11). So, Benjamin exhorts them to

remember and know the voice of the Lord (v. 12) by serving Him and doing His works (v. 13). Because if a person is not the Lord's, then the Lord will send them where they belong (v. 14).

v6 "the covenant which ye have made", normally there is some kind of formal act associated with making a covenant, but in this case it appears there was none. The people just said they were making one and that was that. However, I would assume the lack of a formal act is at least part of the reason why Benjamin decides to document names of covenant makers in 6:1.

v7 The concept of being spiritually born again is one that is commonly considered a NT theme, but is in fact one that has its source in the OT, cp. Deut. 10:16, Deut. 30:6, Isa. 44:3, Isa. 53:8-10, Isa. 66:7, Jer. 4:4, Jer. 24:7, Ezek. 18:31.

v9 "the right hand of God", Benjamin is probably playing on his own name here. The Hebrew "ben yamin" means "son of the right hand". He may be holding himself up as an example of one that has endured to the end as he is close to the end of his natural lifetime.

v13 "how knoweth a man", The Hebrew term "yada" is translated to "know" in the KJV. But the Hebrew term includes much more than the common English usage of "know" which largely focuses on intellectual or academic knowledge. The Hebrew term is very much couched in the concept of knowledge by experience. You know someone well because you have spent a lot of time with them. That is the idea here. You know the Lord and He knows you because of experience, you have done His will and therefore know His desires and thoughts.

v15 "the Lord God Omnipotent", the term "Omnipotent" is only used once in the KJV Bible (cf. Rev. 19:6) and is only used in the Book of Mormon in the quotation of the angel (v. 3:3, 3:17, 3:18, 3:21), twice by King Benjamin (v. 2, and here), and never again. Naturally, there are other statements saying effectively the same thing, but the term itself is not used anywhere else. The scriptural use of the word would be along the lines of "almighty" as opposed to Western philosophy's notion of omnipotence.

"seal", the concept is that of having a king place his seal upon you, as a signet ring being pressed into hot wax on a letter to prove it has the king's approval. The Hebrew term is as follows:

02856 chatham {khaw-tham'}

a primitive root; TWOT - 780; v

AV - seal 18, seal up 6, marked 1, stopped 1, variant 1; 27

1) to seal, seal up, affix a seal

1a) (Qal)

- 1a1) to seal, affix one's seal
- 1a2) to seal up, fasten up by sealing
- 1b) (Niphal) to seal
- 1c) (Piel) to lock up
- 1d) (Hiphil) to be stopped

For context, it is used in Deut. 32:34, 1 Ki. 21:8, Neh. 10:1, Esther 3:12, and in the OT Prophets as well.

The Greek term, as appearing in Rom. 4:11 carries the same meaning, as follows:

4973 sphragis {sfrag-ece'}

probably strengthened from 5420; TDNT - 7:939,1127; n f

AV - seal 16; 16

- 1) a seal
 - 1a) the seal placed upon books
 - 1b) a signet ring
 - 1c) the inscription or impression made by a seal
 - 1c1) of the name of God and Christ stamped upon their foreheads
 - 1d) that by which anything is confirmed, proved, authenticated, as by a seal (a token or proof)

So, when the Scriptures talk about a person being sealed it means the person has had the Lord stamp His seal upon them. It doesn't mean "seal" in the English sense of "seal an envelope".

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