

Come, Follow Me: September 21 – 27

3 Nephi 12 – 16

“I Am the Law, and the Light”

by Third Hour

Jesus calls disciples and teaches the people (3 Nephi 12):

Jesus introduced the 12 disciples to the people and told them He had given the Twelve power to baptize and to confer the gift of the Holy Ghost. He tells the people they are blessed if, now that they have seen Him, choose to be baptized. But in verse 2, He says that those who believe their second-hand witness are even more blessed.

Then Christ delivered what we call “the beatitudes” as He did at the Sea of Galilee when He gave what we call “the sermon on the mount.” Yet, there are differences between the two sermons. It’s worth discussing those differences.



Illustration of Christ appearing to the Nephites by Andrew Bosley. Image via ChurchofJesusChrist.org

The following is from [Interpreter Foundation’s study helps](#):

The text of verses 1-2 is not in Matthew, but in 3 Nephi it adds four additional uses of the word blessed:

- “Blessed are ye if ye shall give heed unto the words of these twelve whom I have chosen”
- “Blessed are ye if ye shall believe in me and be baptized, after that ye have seen me”

- “More blessed are they who shall believe in your words because that ye shall testify that ye have seen me”
- “Blessed are they who shall believe in your words, and come down into the depths of humility and be baptized”

Then Jesus spoke nine more declarations of being blessed in verses 3-12, with several significant changes in the Book of Mormon version (below, in bold and italics). How do these variations add to your understanding?

- “Yea, blessed are the poor in spirit **who come unto me**, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven” (verse 3).
- “And blessed are **all** they who do hunger and thirst after righteousness, for they shall be filled **with the Holy Ghost**” (verse 6).
- “And blessed are **all** they who are persecuted **for my name’s sake**, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven [and they] **shall have great joy**” (verses 10, 12).

Note how living and developing our character in the ways Jesus teaches can help take us from an outward obedience to a more inward form of living; becoming more as He is. Thus we are accepting the Savior’s invitation to “be the light of this people” and “let [our] light so shine before this people, that they may see [our] good works and glorify [our] Father who is in heaven” (verses 14, 16).” (See the link above to the Interpreter’s page.)

Look at verses 17 and 18. There is a big difference between doing away with the Law of Moses and fulfilling it. Most Latter-day Saints know very little about the Law of Moses, and when asked about it, will simply say “an eye for an eye.” When asked what that means, they’ll say, “If you put out my eye, I get to put out yours.” This is backwards from what the Law of Moses is all about. Remember that this law was not created by Moses, but by the God of the Old Testament, Christ Himself, to prepare the people to recognize and receive Him. The way it works is that if I put out your eyes, I have to restore to you the best I can in order to repent. I will have to BE your eyes if I can’t replace them. The Jews restored 4-fold when they repented. Not only that, “doing unto others” is part of that law: Leviticus 19:18 says, “Thou shalt not avenge, nor bear and grudge against the children of thy people, but thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself: I am the Lord.”

Beginning in verse 18, Christ goes on to explain what it looks like to live a higher law with Melchizedek commandments added to Aaronic. The Jews under the Law of Moses were supposed to take their animal sacrifices to the temple with an attitude of repentance and humility. But offering sacrifices had taken on an attitude that relied more on tradition, celebration, and habit without changing their behavior. Tradition is when your parents always did this, and everyone around you does this, so you do this in order to fit in. Celebration is when the time of sacrifice is a holiday, and all sorts of celebratory festivities get in the way of the true meaning of the offering. Habitual service becomes spiritless when these things creep in.

As an example, in your family, talk about Christmas or another important holiday in your culture. What is the central meaning? What are the traditions that have grown up around that meaning? Do they sometimes distract us from the central meaning? What things have become habitual about the holiday? Why do we do them?

Jesus went on to talk about our hearts and desires. Murder is a sin; but Jesus wants us not even to be angry unto violence. He wants us to pray for and negotiate with our adversaries. Adultery is a sin, but Christ wants us to clear our minds of lustful desires. He upholds marital fidelity; He counsels us not swear. He teaches us to be generous and charitable. And then the ringer—“Therefore I would that ye should be perfect even as I, or your Father who is in heaven is perfect.”

This is a killer for Latter-day Saints, because we completely misunderstand what Christ is asking of us. We have gotten to the point in our Sunday School lessons where we teach that being “perfect” means being “whole,” and that is correct. But all the Jews of the time would have understood what Christ was saying because from very ancient times they knew that to be “whole” meant to have the **attributes of God**. Having an attribute is completely different than doing everything right or keeping the commandments 100%. There are 7 attributes of God and you can illustrate them using the Jewish temple lamp, the menorah:



Image via Pixabay

The central and most important attribute of God is LOVE. Assign that to the central branch. It's considered a feminine attribute. The other two most important attributes are JUSTICE and MERCY. Assign these two attributes to the branches on either side of the central branch. These are God's 3 central attributes. The other 4

are...PROPHECY, PRIESTHOOD, KINGSHIP, and ENDURING TO THE END IN RIGHTEOUSNESS. Discuss how our temple covenants provide us with some of these attributes. Discuss how you can meditate on how you are doing. Instead of feeling guilty because you were late with your tithing payment, ask yourself, “How did I do today? Was I loving? Was I just? Was I merciful? Do I honor my temple covenants? Am I seeking temple covenants? Am I enduring in faith? [Here’s an article discussing more.](#)

Laying up treasures in heaven (3 Nephi 13):

Verses 1 through 4 include Christ’s teachings on giving alms. What is the reward of giving alms secretly? Then Christ teaches the people about prayer. Talk about the verses that comprise the Lord’s prayer. How do they equate to our own personal prayers? (See verses 5 – 13.) What are our treasures in heaven (verses 19 – 21)?

Verses 22 and 23 discuss light. “Seeing eye to eye” means seeing eye to eye with God. It’s an individual thing between you and the Lord. What happens when you achieve this?

What happens when you try to serve two masters (verse 24)? Look at verses 32 and 33. This is guidance for the 12 disciples. How does it work or how can it work in our own lives?

Doing the Father’s will (3 Nephi 14):

In verses 1 – 5, Jesus talks about not judging, but we are required to judge things multiple times a day. Currently, as our societies grow more wicked, it seems like the only sin is to judge others and it doesn’t matter what else you do. Why is this backwards? What is the difference between righteous judgment and condemning others? What does it mean to condemn the sin and not the sinner?

Look at verse 6. How does this verse relate to learning line upon line and precept upon precept? From another angle, how could unbelievers be related to swine in this verse? Does this sound insulting coming from a loving Christ? How is this a logical, realistic view of mortality?

Verses 7 – 12 have to do with good gifts, but also with asking. The only people who don’t receive exaltation or salvation are those who refuse those gifts. Also, the Lord blesses those who ask for blessings. Why is asking so important?

Verse 12 relates back to the verse from Leviticus above. The Jewish Bible consists of what we call the Old Testament. The first 5 Book of Moses are called the Law. Other parts of the Bible are called the Prophets and the Writings. Jesus is referring to the Old Testament here, most of which the Nephites and Lamanites had (that which was recorded up to 600 B.C.).

What are the “fruits” of the believers? (See verses 14 – 27.)

The Nephites are the “other sheep” (3 Nephi 15):

In verse 1, Jesus tells the people that they have now heard the things He taught in the Holy Land. He will reveal that the Nephites and Lamanites who survived the cataclysm are more righteous than the Jews in the Holy Land so He is able to reveal much more to them than He was able to during His ministry in mortality. In verse 1, Jesus says that whoever remembers His commandments and does them will be “raised up at the last day.” There are many people nowadays who don’t want to affiliate with a church. They call themselves “spiritual but not religious.” This is a life without commandments. Why is there no saving power in this choice?

In verse 2, we see that some people didn’t understand the fulfilling of the Law of Moses. Jesus perceived this. The whole Law of Moses is a type of Christ; He is the central focus. In verse 5, Christ straight out tells us that He gave the law (while scholars try to find other sources from existing societies). He goes on to say in verse 6 that there are Old Testament (and Book of Mormon before Christ) prophecies that haven’t yet been fulfilled. They all will be fulfilled. Look at verse 9. How is Christ both the law and the light?

The best way to understand the fulfillment of the Law of Moses is to receive the endowment in the temple, which progresses from Aaronic Law to Melchizedek Law leading to Celestial Law. The patron is progressing from Mosaic Law to the Law of Christ fulfilled. Patrons commit to live the foundational laws and the higher laws.

In verse 12, Jesus begins to remind the people of their royal heritage as a remnant of the house of Joseph, with this land as a gift from God. In verse 14, we see that Christ was unable to tell His followers in Jerusalem about these “other sheep.” Nor could He tell them about the “other sheep” among the Lost Tribes in the north. Note that there are two groups of Lost Tribes. The main group was carried off by the Assyrians and over decades and centuries emigrated to other places and are found all over the world. The second group started out with the first but repented and were led away by God as a cohesive group. These are those the Savior would visit after He finished His work among the Nephites and Lamanites. (See verses 16 – 24.)

Jews and Gentiles (3 Nephi 16):

Christ continues talking about the Lost Tribes. Verse 4 is astonishing if you pay close attention. Jesus says to write these things He has just said. Then, if the Jews in Jerusalem never ASK about the other sheep, the record will be in the Book of Mormon and will be brought to them by the Gentiles. Here we are back at the subject of “asking.” How many years are involved in bringing this knowledge to them?

Beginning in verse 6, how are the Gentiles blessed? In verse 10, what will the Gentiles do with the gospel? What will be the result for the tribes of Israel? Read verses 17 – 20. What do they mean?