

# 2 Nephi 10

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## Jacob's Likening of Isaiah

### **2 Nephi 10:1–2**

1 And now I, Jacob, speak unto you again, my beloved brethren, concerning this righteous branch of which I have spoken.

2 For behold, the promises which we have obtained are promises unto us according to the flesh; wherefore, as it has been shown unto me that many of our children shall perish in the flesh because of unbelief, nevertheless, God will be merciful unto many; and our children shall be restored, that they may come to that which will give them the true knowledge of their Redeemer.

### *Comments*

Jacob begins the second day of his sermon by referring to the topic he began at the end of the previous day's sermon. He is speaking of the righteous branch of Israel. Lehi had taught some version of the allegory of the olive tree, and Jacob will provide the full allegory in his own book. At this point, he simply refers to the branch with the assumption that his listeners will understand what he means. This suggests that the allegory of the olive tree, which Lehi taught and Nephi reinforced, was part of the common understanding by this time. Most of the lessons of the righteous branch had dealt with the Nephites being gathered back to Israel. Jacob will shift that emphasis.

Jacob spoke the day before to a people he believed required repentance. He will now combine that problem of disobedience to the law with the teaching he gave concerning the coming Messiah. The simple presence of the Messiah will not be sufficient to turn a people to righteousness.

Jacob specifically points these lessons at his audience, reminding them that they have received promises according to the flesh. There are promises of safety upon righteousness, but destruction, if they are not righteous. Jacob repeats the prophetic promise that many will perish, but some will survive. Although that is in the future, he undoubtedly hoped to awaken in his audience the need for repentance to forestall the prophesied destruction.

## Crucifixion of Christ and Scattering of Israel

### **2 Nephi 10:3–4**

3 Wherefore, as I said unto you, it must needs be expedient that Christ—for in the last night the angel spake unto me that this should be his name—should come among the Jews, among those who are the more wicked part of the world; and they shall crucify him—for thus it behooveth our God, and there is none other nation on earth that would crucify their God.

4 For should the mighty miracles be wrought among other nations they would repent, and know that he be their God.

### *Comments*

One of the most human of our bad traits is to almost universally think poorly of those who are not of our group. This may be behind Jacob's discussion of the wickedness of the Jews that was so bad that they would crucify their God. It is a sentiment that began to develop in early Christianity after the destruction of the temple and the irreparable rift between Jews and Christians. It is probable that this is the only way a people who are uninvolved in the actual historical conditions could imagine that God himself would walk among his people as a mortal, and as a mortal be ignominiously killed.

While the text clearly says that the Messiah would be crucified, we cannot tell if Jacob's audience would have any understanding of what that meant. It is probably the result of the translation, since Joseph clearly knew the terrible method by which Jesus was killed. The import of the message was that he would be killed, not the method.

### **2 Nephi 10:5–6**

5 But because of priestcrafts and iniquities, they at Jerusalem will stiffen their necks against him, that he be crucified.

6 Wherefore, because of their iniquities, destructions, famines, pestilences, and bloodshed shall come upon them; and they who shall not be destroyed shall be scattered among all nations.

### *Comments*

Although the obvious reference is the children of Israel in Jerusalem, Jacob intends that his audience understand that this is one of the paths that they might travel. If they too become iniquitous, they too will read of the destructions, famines, pestilences, and bloodshed. All of those things have already been prophesied for the future Nephites if they are not righteous.

Both Nephi and Jacob understood scripture as a model for current behavior. Similarly, prophecy that affected one branch of the house of Israel could be applied to another. Although Jacob is describing a distant future in another hemisphere, he still intends that his audience apply that prophecy to themselves. They are

to see themselves as possibly parallel to those in future Jerusalem. Jacob has warned his audience that they are becoming iniquitous, and he is demonstrating how that iniquity works out in the future.

## **Covenants, Restoration, and Promised Land**

### **2 Nephi 10:7–9**

7 But behold, thus saith the Lord God: When the day cometh that they shall believe in me, that I am Christ, then have I covenanted with their fathers that they shall be restored in the flesh, upon the earth, unto the lands of their inheritance.

8 And it shall come to pass that they shall be gathered in from their long dispersion, from the isles of the sea, and from the four parts of the earth; and the nations of the Gentiles shall be great in the eyes of me, saith God, in carrying them forth to the lands of their inheritance.

9 Yea, the kings of the Gentiles shall be nursing fathers unto them, and their queens shall become nursing mothers; wherefore, the promises of the Lord are great unto the Gentiles, for he hath spoken it, and who can dispute?

### *Comments*

The purpose of prophesying future devastation is not to change the future, but to influence the present. Thus, while the picture Jacob painted showed the result of unrighteousness, he now turns to the positive side of the equation. There is repentance.

Upon repentance, Israel can be restored to righteousness. The scattered Israel in Jerusalem can be gathered. At this point, Jacob returns to the text of Isaiah 49:23 which Nephi had given him as a beginning text and with which he began in 2 Nephi 6:7. In the early case, Jacob appears to have used that text to speak to the value of the gentiles in the midst of the Nephites. Here, Jacob returns to Isaiah's original context, which was the future of Old World Israel.

In this way, Jacob has tied Isaiah's prophecy to both the Old World branch of Israel and the New World branch. He sets them up as parallel, and therefore parallel in the gathering of the righteous branch (with which he began this second day's sermon).

### **2 Nephi 10:10–14**

10 But behold, this land, said God, shall be a land of thine inheritance, and the Gentiles shall be blessed upon the land.

11 And this land shall be a land of liberty unto the Gentiles, and there shall be no kings upon the land, who shall raise up unto the Gentiles.

12 And I will fortify this land against all other nations.

13 And he that fighteth against Zion shall perish, saith God.

14 For he that raiseth up a king against me shall perish, for I, the Lord, the king of heaven, will be their king, and I will be a light unto them forever, that hear my words.

### *Comments*

Jacob shifts the scene from the Old World to the New World. Thus, he was again speaking about his immediate audience. Jacob had earlier used the idea of gentiles to describe the indigenous population that was already in the New World. With everything else in this sermon that is being tied together, the most conservative reading is to see these gentiles also as the existing indigenous populations. How does this enhance our understanding of what Jacob was doing?

If Jacob is speaking of his intermingled gentiles, then he is also speaking of those who have received the promise of the land—that they would prosper if they remain righteous. Thus, a land of liberty is what allowed them to prosper and practice their religion. That is the way Mormon will later use the concept of liberty.

What about the phrase “no kings upon the land”? There is an unfortunate comma in the sentence that disguises the meaning. That comma was included by the compositor, not by revelation. The better reading keeps the longer phrase together: “there shall be no kings upon the land who shall raise up unto the gentiles.” Thus, it isn’t that there would not be kings. Most of the New World was subject to a king at one time or another. The meaning is that there would be something about what those kings might do.

The context suggests that we should read “raise up unto the gentiles” as parallel to verse 14’s “raise up a king against me shall perish.” The context is defense against outside dangers. Thus, while there would be kings on the land, witnessed by the Lamanite kings, they would not be a threat to them if they fulfilled their part of the covenant of the land.

Jacob began this day’s sermon citing prophecy that destruction would come, so this promise is part of the conditional covenant. In verse 14, Jacob makes sure that his audience understand that no king can stand against the king of kings. Rather than stating that there would be no king upon the land, Jacob is clearly stating that their king of heaven is the only true king, and against Yahweh no worldly king could stand.

### **2 Nephi 10:15–17**

15 Wherefore, for this cause, that my covenants may be fulfilled which I have made unto the children of men, that I will do unto them while they are in the flesh, I must needs destroy the secret works of darkness, and of murders, and of abominations.

16 Wherefore, he that fighteth against Zion, both Jew and Gentile, both bond and free, both male and female, shall perish; for they are they who are the whore of all the earth; for they who are not for me are against me, saith our God.

17 For I will fulfil my promises which I have made unto the children of men, that I will do unto them while they are in the flesh—

### *Comments*

After declaring that the ultimate king is Yahweh, Yahweh speaks of defeating those who oppose him. This is certainly a prophecy of the end times, although Jacob will make it more relevant to his own people in the following verses.

The point is that all who fight against Zion will ultimately perish. The language used for this description of who “all” might be is a literary set of oppositions. This is a known Hebraic literary technique where the part stands for all. Thus, by stating the opposition of Jew and Gentile, Jacob includes all humankind. Similarly, bond and free, male and female, similarly describe all humankind, and intensify the statement.

We can see the similar usage in 1 Corinthians 12:13: “For by one Spirit are we all baptized into one body, whether we be Jews or Gentiles, whether we be bond or free; and have been all made to drink into one Spirit.” Paul’s context is positive, where Jacob’s use is negative, but the point of inclusion is the same. This is also a phrase that we see in the New Testament but not in the Old Testament. While the technique is older than the New Testament, it is New Testament language that influenced this particular translation of the idea.

The import of this set of verses comes in the last verse, verse 17. Yahweh declares that he will fulfill the promises he has made. To this point, it is a promise that he will be the king of kings and will vanquish his enemies. That positive message turns darker in the next verses.

## ***2 Nephi 10:18–19***

18 Wherefore, my beloved brethren, thus saith our God: I will afflict thy seed by the hand of the Gentiles; nevertheless, I will soften the hearts of the Gentiles, that they shall be like unto a father to them; wherefore, the Gentiles shall be blessed and numbered among the house of Israel.

19 Wherefore, I will consecrate this land unto thy seed, and them who shall be numbered among thy seed, forever, for the land of their inheritance; for it is a choice land, saith God unto me, above all other lands, wherefore I will have all men that dwell thereon that they shall worship me, saith God.

### *Comments*

Yahweh’s promise that he will fulfill his covenants comes crashing down on the Nephites. Yahweh declares that “I will afflict thy seed by the hand of the gentiles.” There is a covenant given to the Nephites, and it promises prosperity and safety if they are righteous. Prophecy, and perhaps current conditions, declare that they will not always be righteous. Thus, they will be afflicted by the gentiles.

A problem with understanding these verses is the use of the word *gentile*. Jacob has previously used that term to describe the indigenous populations who had joined with the Nephites. While that was a

convenient way to discuss internal issues, there remain innumerable indigenous peoples who have not joined with the Nephites. In its description of all who are outsiders, the term *gentile* refers to anyone who is not Nephite—in the same way that Jacob will declare the use of the term *Lamanite* in Jacob 1:14.

Yahweh also declares that in addition to afflicting their seed, these future gentiles will have their hearts softened to support the Nephite seed. This again reprises the Isaiah passage about the gentiles being the nursing fathers and nursing mothers to Israel.

The beginning *wherefore* in verse 19 links the description of what will happen with the way in which Yahweh fulfills his covenant. The promise of the land will continue, and it will become inclusive of all who join into the covenant associated with that promise.

## Remember God and Be Reconciled to Him

### ***2 Nephi 10:20–21***

20 And now, my beloved brethren, seeing that our merciful God has given us so great knowledge concerning these things, let us remember him, and lay aside our sins, and not hang down our heads, for we are not cast off; nevertheless, we have been driven out of the land of our inheritance; but we have been led to a better land, for the Lord has made the sea our path, and we are upon an isle of the sea.

21 But great are the promises of the Lord unto them who are upon the isles of the sea; wherefore as it says isles, there must needs be more than this, and they are inhabited also by our brethren.

### *Comments*

Jacob has covered a wide range of topics, and he is now tying them all together. He has spoken of the Nephites as a branch broken off, although through the comparison to those in Jerusalem as a branch broken off. Nevertheless, he sees his people as parallel to, and therefore inheritors of, the covenants between Yahweh and the children of Israel.

Yahweh's covenants have always been conditional, something that Jacob has repeated in this sermon with respect to the promise associated with the land. Jacob now ties his people even more directly to that original covenant by noting that they were driven out and led to an isle of the sea. Isaiah had prophesied the gathering of those on the isles of the sea, therefore Jacob's people are part of those blessings.

### ***2 Nephi 10:22–25***

22 For behold, the Lord God has led away from time to time from the house of Israel, according to his will and pleasure. And now behold, the Lord remembereth all them who have been broken off, wherefore he remembereth us also.

23 Therefore, cheer up your hearts, and remember that ye are free to act for yourselves—to choose the way of everlasting death or the way of eternal life.

24 Wherefore, my beloved brethren, reconcile yourselves to the will of God, and not to the will of the devil and the flesh; and remember, after ye are reconciled unto God, that it is only in and through the grace of God that ye are saved.

25 Wherefore, may God raise you from death by the power of the resurrection, and also from everlasting death by the power of the atonement, that ye may be received into the eternal kingdom of God, that ye may praise him through grace divine. Amen.

### *Comments*

The conclusion of Jacob's sermon returns its focus directly on Jacob's audience. Yahweh has from time to time lead children of Israel away from the original land. Nevertheless, Yahweh remembers all of them. As the Nephites are also a people who have been broken off, they too will be remembered.

If Yahweh remembers them, then they must remember Yahweh. Thus, Jacob returns to the discussion of Yahweh's plan for the earth. Jacob's people are not only *able* to act for themselves, they *must* act for themselves. However, it is only through acting according to Yahweh's laws that the blessings will apply.

Jacob's admonition that it is only through the grace of God that his audience is saved is a throwaway line for modern Christianity. For Jacob's audience, it was part of the choice that had to be made. There were indigenous peoples among them who had brought beliefs with them. Jacob has spoken against idolatry and believing in their own wisdom. Therefore, in the context of the times, this declaration that it was only through the grace of God that they would be saved is a plea for them to repent, to forsake their previous religious ideas, and follow the strait path of Yahweh's plan.

