

## 3 NEPHI 8–11



### 3 Nephi 8

#### 3 Nephi 8 — Questions to Ponder

- According to the Nephite calculation of time, when did these disasters take place?
- What was happening in Jerusalem when these upheavals occurred the Western world (8:5–18)? See also Helaman 14:20–21 and Matthew 27:45–51.
- Why was it appropriate that darkness prevail at the time of Christ’s death (8:23)? Compare with 3 Nephi 1:19 and 11:11.

#### 3 Nephi 8:3 — Faith and Doubt

In the thirty-third year from the sign of Christ’s birth, it was approaching the time for the appearance of the sign of his death. The believing saints “began to look with great earnestness for the sign which had been given by the prophet Samuel.” Again, the doubters began disputing that a sign would be shown. One should wonder, what is the difference between doubting, on the one hand, and wondering, asking, and seeking, on the other hand? When one “wonders,” a person acknowledges and faces the fact that he or she doesn’t know something. Or when one “wonders,” a person can be inspired by the marvel or wonder of a strange or unfamiliar situation. And then when one “asks,” it involves opening his or her mind, welcoming new information or understanding, being open to possibilities, and having confidence that the person asked can help provide the answer or point the way toward a solution. And when one “seeks,” one goes looking, expends effort, works hard, and searches, wanting to find helpful and desirable items. While doubting focuses on negating and denying, looking with great earnestness is a positive, constructive process. Thus, the Lord commands us to “doubt not” (D&C 6:36; 58:29), but instead to ask, seek, and knock (Matthew 7:7).

### 3 Nephi 8:5–23 — Terrible Destruction at Christ’s Death

The destruction at Christ’s death was devastating. How long did the calamitous forces of nature last? Samuel’s prophecy said that the darkness was to last for three days (8:3), and the thick darkness, which could have been the result of something like volcanic action, actually lasted for three days (8:23). There was also, “a great and terrible tempest; and there was terrible thunder, insomuch that it did shake the whole earth as if it was about to divide asunder” (8:6). The people experienced “exceedingly sharp lightnings, such as never had been known in all the land” (8:7). Cities were destroyed—some were sunk into the ocean, roads were damaged, and “rocks were rent in twain” (8:18). Much of this, of course, had been foretold by Zenos (see 1 Nephi 19:10–12), but that would have made it all the more tragic and horrific.

The text in 3 Nephi 8:19 gives us some idea as to how frightening it would have been to live through these cataclysmic events, explaining that they “did last for about the space of three hours; and it was said by some that the time was greater; nevertheless, all these great and terrible things were done in about the space of three hours.” The earthquake and volcanic activity lasted for three solid hours! The terror must have been overwhelming.

Think about the worst natural disaster that you have experienced or seen reported on the news. Think of the pictures of wreckage and carnage caused by one storm, tornado, volcano or earthquake that typically strike suddenly and last only a few minutes or hours. How do those experiences compare with what we read about here that went on for 72 hours? It must have been unimaginably traumatic, disorienting, and frightening.

#### Further Reading

Book of Mormon Central, [“What Caused the Darkness and Destruction in the 34th Year? \(3 Nephi 8:20\),”](#) *KnoWhy* 197 (September 28, 2016).

## 3 Nephi 9

### 3 Nephi 9:1–12 — How Many Will Be Prepared When Christ comes Again?

In spite of the fact that prophecies indicate that at the time of the second coming of Christ, the earth’s population generally will be corrupt (and only a relatively small handful will be prepared to receive him) there are those who say that Christ will not come until the human family (as a whole) is ready for him. Judging by these verses, would you say that the majority of the Nephites were ready to receive him?

There are those who say that when Christ comes again, he will not destroy the wicked because he is a God of love. How would you answer this in light of chapter 9?

### 3 Nephi 9:2 — The Devil and His Angels Rejoice in the Death of the Nephites

The name of Satan appears frequently in the first part of 3 Nephi. He is a very real, powerful figure who had been able to strongly influence the hearts of these people. These terrible events were more of a battle between Satan and Jesus than between the righteous and wicked on earth, as we can tell by the cosmic forces that were brought into play. Satan wanted to do what he could to stop Jesus from being successful. Satan was still furiously angry that he had not been chosen by the Father to be sent (Abraham 3:27–28). In his earthly life, Jesus stood up against Satan in the wilderness—he first had to drive Satan out so that he could do what he needed to do while on the earth. The same thing was happening here in 3 Nephi, where Satan ran even further amuck and had to be driven out.

The last time that Satan is named in this terrible era is in 3 Nephi 7:5. Once Satan has his field day, his influence dissipates. Later, the resurrected Jesus will mention Satan: “Satan desireth to have you, that he may sift you as wheat. Therefore, ye must always pray unto the Father in my name” (3 Nephi 18:18–19). But for the rest of 3 Nephi, the powers of the Adversary are held at bay. The whole society had undergone tragic, ugly destruction in order to purge them of Satan’s influence. After the destruction, there was silence and three days of darkness. The survivors were then able to come to the temple, ready to truly listen and to hear, when Jesus appeared to them in the newly-cleansed environment.

### 3 Nephi 9:3–12 — Jesus Relates the Names of Destroyed Cities

The wicked cities were completely crushed, burned, leveled, ravaged, and sunk. The reason for the great destruction was given by Jehovah as his voice was heard among all the people. In 3 Nephi 9:3–12, Christ listed the cities that had been destroyed and the devastating forces that had brought about the destruction to each one. He explained that this was done “to hide their iniquities and their abominations *from before my face*”—a very interesting expression— “that the blood of the prophets and the saints shall not come any more unto me against them” (v. 5). And so that there was no misunderstanding as to the Lord’s purposes for complete annihilation of these wicked cities, he repeated this explanation several more times throughout this chapter (vv. 7, 8, 9 and 11).

The entire long phrase—“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”—is precisely repeated at the end of verses 5, 7, and 8. The phrase is slightly reworded in verses 9 and 11. In ancient cultures, when something was said multiple times, it was because the speaker wanted the listener to really hear and especially understand what had been said. It was a way of highlighting verbal information.

The words “my face” deserve particular consideration. In the Israelite temple experience, when the high priest went into the presence of the Lord, he stood before the Lord and

spoke face to face with deity. Moses spoke face to face with God. Jesus could not appear and have those wicked people before his face or, in other words, in his presence. They had been warned, and they had killed the prophets. It was important that if the people in 3 Nephi were going to become a temple-based community in which they would enter into covenants and ordinances, as well as live the laws and principles given in 4 Nephi, Satan had to be driven out. The ordinances and principles that they would be living after Christ's appearance included being baptized and receiving the gift of the Holy Ghost, dealing justly and honestly one with another, having no contention, marrying and living the law of chastity, and having their property consecrated and in common. Establishing that kind of a temple-based community required that Satan be banished.

Leviticus 26, a temple-related chapter, is filled with the Lord's blessings on those who keep the commandments and also includes His curses on those who are disobedient. The Lord spoke in the first person in these Leviticus passages. I encourage you to read that chapter. The Lord delineates, in direct speech, the curses that will come upon those who do not hearken to the Lord (26:14): "I will punish you," "I will bring a sword upon you," "I will send the pestilence among you," "I will make your cities waste, and bring your sanctuaries unto desolation," "I will bring the land into desolation," and so forth (see 26:24, 25, 31, 32). There are also major blessings intermixed throughout Leviticus 26.

The Lord spoke directly, out of the darkness, to the Nephites in 3 Nephi 9. This experience would have been similar to what the prophets experienced in the Holy of Holies in the presence—or before the face—of God, where He would speak in the first person directly to them. In 3 Nephi, the Lord appeared after the calamities had been abated, and he stood in their presence in a place that became like a Holy of Holies because he was present there.

### Further Reading

Book of Mormon Central, "[Is There Evidence of Sunken Cities in Ancient America? \(3 Nephi 9:7\)](#)," *KnoWhy* 429 (May 1, 2018).

Book of Mormon Central, "[Is There Evidence for Great Destruction in the Land Northward at the Death of Christ? \(3 Nephi 9:9\)](#)," *KnoWhy* 530 (September 6, 2019).

### 3 Nephi 9:19–20 — A Broken Heart and a Contrite Spirit

Jesus spoke again to the people who were mourning in the darkness after the great destructions. Christ here proclaimed that he would no longer accept animal sacrifices and burnt offerings. Instead, the Lord declared that he would receive a sacrifice of "a broken heart and a contrite spirit" (3 Nephi 9:17, 19).

This told the people that the law of sacrifice, as understood under the Law of Moses, was no longer acceptable to the Lord. The old law of sacrifice of animals that had been

practiced for millennia was no longer to be observed. What would be the new law of sacrifice? The answer to that question constitutes much of the teachings that the Lord would subsequently deliver among the Nephites.

Although the words “sacrifice of a broken heart and contrite spirit” never appear explicitly in the New Testament, Jesus used that phrase, found in the Psalms, to emphasize the point that adherence to the essential part of the law of sacrifice—one which had existed from ancient times and with which the righteous Nephites and Lamanites most likely would have been familiar—had now been fulfilled and superseded.

The requirement to sacrifice “a broken heart and a contrite spirit” is repeatedly stated in the Book of Mormon, not only by Jesus and Moroni after Christ’s coming (3 Nephi 12:19; Mormon 2:14; Ether 4:15; Moroni 6:2), but also by the early Nephite prophets, Lehi and Nephi, long before Christ’s birth (2 Nephi 2:7; 4:32).

Moreover, this crucial phrase can be found in the Old Testament, especially in the Psalms, and therefore may have been included on the plates of brass that Lehi’s family brought out of Jerusalem. Old Testament references to this principle include Psalm 51:17, which states that “[t]he sacrifices of God are a broken spirit: a broken and a contrite heart.” Psalm 34:18 declares that “[t]he Lord is nigh unto them that are of a broken heart; and saveth such as be of a contrite spirit.” The great Old Testament prophet Isaiah, when speaking messianically, declared that the Lord’s mission was to “bind up the brokenhearted” (Isaiah 61:1).

Therefore, even under the old Law of Moses, the sacrifice of an animal on the altar of the temple was to be accompanied by a broken heart. Once the shedding of the blood of an animal under the law of Moses had been fulfilled by the shedding of the blood of Christ, the role of blood was no longer necessary. However, the broken heart and contrite spirit remained as an essential spiritual requirement of the Lord’s people.

#### Further Reading

Book of Mormon Central, [“Why Did Jesus Tell All People to Sacrifice a Broken Heart and a Contrite Spirit? \(3 Nephi 9:19-20\),”](#) *KnoWhy* 198 (September 29, 2016).

## 3 Nephi 10

### 3 Nephi 10 — Are the Righteous to Be Preserved?

The prophecies repeatedly assert that the righteous will be preserved in the day of Christ’s future coming (1 Nephi 22:17, 19; Doctrine and Covenants 63:33–35; Moses 7:61). How is this prophecy reflected in what took place at Christ’s coming to the Nephites?

### 3 Nephi 10:4–6 — As a Hen Gathereth Her Chickens

The Lord’s comparison of himself to a hen gathering her chickens is a wonderful descriptive statement of his compassion and care. The way a hen gathers and nurtures her chickens is visually understood to be an ultimate demonstration of kindhearted provision for the needs of others. Though it is, of course, a natural mothering instinct that is often considered to be a female function, our transcendent Savior embodies all virtues. If a hen would do this for her chicks, how much more will our eternal Redeemer and Protector have an even greater level of care and concern for all of us, helping us, under his wing, to weather every storm of life?

In the New Testament, Jesus lamented on the Mount of Olives, saying, “O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, thou that killest the prophets, and stonest them which are sent unto thee, how often would I have gathered thy children together, even as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, and ye would not!” (Matthew 23:37 and Luke 13:34). His willingness there was rejected.



Figure 1 Mosaic on the altar in the Dominus Fleuit church on the Mount of Olives directly across from the Temple Mount in Jerusalem. Photo John W. Welch

Now, after his resurrection, Jesus spoke to all the people, and He accordingly amended His previous extension of protection to say how He had in fact (in the past), how He would still now (if they would have let Him), and how He yet will (in the future) gather them on condition of repentance and returning to Him with full purpose of heart.

### Further Reading

Book of Mormon Central, [“Why did Jesus Compare Himself to a Hen? \(3 Nephi 10:4\),”](#) *KnoWhy* 200 (October 3, 2016).

Book of Mormon Central, [“What Can We Learn from the Savior’s First Words at Bountiful? \(3 Nephi 11:10-11\),”](#) *KnoWhy* 341 (July 19, 2017).

## 3 Nephi 11

### 3 Nephi 11 — Study Questions

- When Jesus first appeared to the Nephites, there was a gathering of about 2,500 people (3 Nephi 17:25). At which temple were all these people gathered?
- Why might those people have been there?
- Who had assembled them early in the morning, and what were they doing, discussing, or praying for?
- What were the chances that all twelve of the men that Jesus was to choose to lead His Church were there in attendance, if that gathering were simply an informal gathering?
- How does the record describe the voice of God in 3 Nephi 11:3? How does this compare with the events in Helaman 5:30–31, 46–47. How does it compare with the experience of Elijah in 1 Kings 19:11–12?
- What do those encounters with the voice of God tell us about seeking for and receiving answers and help from God?
- The Father introduced his Son to the multitude (3 Nephi 11:7). Upon what other recorded occasions has the Father introduced the Son? (Hint: Look at Matthew 3:17; 17:5; and Joseph Smith—History 1:17).
- What important and authoritative information did the Savior provide the Nephite people on the subject of Baptism (3 Nephi 11:23–26)?
- What did Jesus say that indicated that baptism is essential to salvation and applicable to all men (3 Nephi 11:32–35)?
- What did Mormon write to his son Moroni (preserved in Moroni 8) that may explain why the Savior next mentioned that all people must repent and become as a little child, in order to be effectively baptized?

### 3 Nephi 11–28 — When and How Many Times Did Jesus Visit the Nephites?

It is not hard to estimate the year when the Savior appeared to the Nephites. Based on the statements of Mormon in his abridgement of this book of Nephi (the son of Nephi, the son of Helaman, as identified in the headnote to this book), several events included by Mormon were linked to a specific year, and in one case, even to a specific day. However, there is no statement of exactly when and how many times the Savior taught and ministered to the Nephites during that year. Perhaps, in a sense, the writers of the Book of Mormon wanted these events in Nephite history to be, in a spiritual sense, timeless.

Time was kept carefully before the appearance of the Resurrected Lord. In 3 Nephi 1:1, the text records that in the ninety-first year of the judges, six hundred years since Lehi left Jerusalem, Nephi prayed mightily because the deadline for the fulfillment of the prophecy of Samuel the Lamanite was imminent.

Nine years later, the signs of the birth of Jesus became the origin of the new dating system under the Nephite calendar (2:6-8)—as it would later become the basis for the Christian calendar system in the Old World.

Twenty-five years later, in 3 Nephi 8:5, the record states that three days of darkness and destruction began at the *beginning* of the thirty-fourth year after Jesus' birth—specifically, “in the thirty and fourth year, in the first month, on the fourth day of the month.” And in 3 Nephi 9:15, before the dust had settled, the people who had survived the calamities heard the voice of the Savior at that time. Out of the darkness, He declared His identity, defined the damage, and explained His purposes in the rest of that chapter.

Then, in 3 Nephi 10:18, we have a statement by Mormon that is a bit unclear. He says, “And it came to pass *in the ending of the thirty and fourth year, behold, I will show unto you that the people of Nephi who were spared, and also those who had been called Lamanites, who had been spared, did have great favors shown unto them, and great blessings poured out upon their heads, insomuch that soon after the ascension of Christ into heaven he did truly manifest himself unto them*—showing his body unto them, and ministering unto them.” Although this complex sentence—which originally had no punctuation—has been read otherwise, it seems to me to make the best sense to understand that Jesus “did truly manifest himself unto” the people in 3 Nephi 11 “*soon after*” his “*ascension*” into heaven.

When might that have been? That “*ascension*” cannot have been the time when Jesus “*ascended to [His] Father*” (John 20:17), the morning of his Resurrection, because by that time He had not yet taught anything to anyone. Thus, that ascension would more likely refer to Jesus’s “*ascension*” forty days later, during which days the resurrected Lord had taught to the Apostles in Jerusalem and Galilee many things “*pertaining to the kingdom of God*” (Acts 1: 3). Moreover, after Jesus had taught the people in Bountiful the words



found in 3 Nephi 11–14, He told them “Behold, ye have [now] heard the things which I taught [in the Old World] before I *ascended* to my Father” (3 Nephi 15:1).

This would mean that the words “*in the ending* of the thirty and fourth year” should best be understood as having been written from the perspective of Nephi and Mormon, speaking of things as they stood at the ending of that 34<sup>th</sup> year. Many “great favors” and “great blessings” had been poured out upon the heads of these people during the rest of that year.

Knowing that the crucifixion of Jesus occurred in the spring, just before Passover in Jerusalem, the next festival on the Israelite calendar of holy days would have been Pentecost (or the Feast of Weeks, seven weeks, fifty days, after Passover). That early summer festival celebrated the “firstfruits” (Exodus 34:22) and also the giving of the law (the Ten Commandments) to Moses on Mount Sinai. If Jesus appeared in Bountiful at that time, it would explain (1) why the people had gathered at their temple, as Pentecost required; (2) why Jesus emphasized so much, especially in 3 Nephi 12, obedience to the full meaning and purposes of the Ten Commandments; and also (3) how the Nephites would have rejoiced exceedingly at the resurrection of Jesus, which is that power that yields “the first-fruits of Christ unto God” (Jacob 4:11), through baptism, the “first fruits of repentance” (Moroni 8:25).

This also helps us understand that the Savior’s visit to the multitude at the Bountiful temple was only the beginning of a series of learning sessions, church organizational steps, missionary trips, blessings, and great favors that no doubt ran throughout that year, which concluded at the end of 3 Nephi. During that time, Jesus came and went at least two more times and probably more.

Thus, at the end of chapter 18, Jesus “departed from them, and ascended into heaven” (18:39; 19:1). He returned again in 3 Nephi 19:15, after the disciples conducted baptisms and had given the gift of the Holy Ghost while attended by angels. At that time, Jesus again “came and stood in the midst and ministered unto them” (19:15), when he taught extensively about the nature of the covenant and the prophecies of the Old Testament (3 Nephi 20–26).

And later, as the disciples were preaching the things they had heard and seen, Jesus showed himself again in 3 Nephi 27:2. After talking to the twelve disciples one by one (28:1), “He touched every one of them with his finger save it were the three who were to tarry, and then he departed” (28:12). He may well have appeared other times during the remainder of that 34<sup>th</sup> year unto the disciples as they went forth establishing his word. Thus, during that entire year, Jesus poured many great blessings and favors down upon them, even more than could be fully recorded.

### Further Reading

Book of Mormon Central, [“Why Is So Little Said about the Timing of Christ’s Temple Ministry? \(3 Nephi 10:18\),”](#) *KnoWhy* 481 (November 1, 2018).

### 3 Nephi 11:1 – The People Gather at the Bountiful Temple

There are two focal points that act as grand interchanges and moments of revelation and organization in the Book of Mormon. One of them is King Benjamin’s speech at the temple in Zarahemla, and the other is the Savior’s visitation at the temple in Bountiful. Interestingly, but not unexpectedly, they both took place at a temple.

King Benjamin had the families—men, women, and children—gathered at the temple for the coronation of his first son. In 3 Nephi, men, women and children were all there, in effect, for the coronation of Jesus, the Eternal Son of God, in their midst.

In both cases, a sacred covenant was entered into, first in Mosiah 5 and in a new form in 3 Nephi 18. The stipulations and nature of that covenant were explained both at the temple in Zarahemla and then at the temple in Bountiful. These two most important occasions are major points of intersection through which almost everything, not only in the Book of Mormon but in the whole gospel of Jesus Christ, sooner or later runs.

Both King Benjamin at the Zarahemla temple and the Savior at Bountiful offered a clear and specific culminating invitation. The words were slightly different but, if accepted, they achieve the same ends. King Benjamin’s invitation was very forthright:

Believe in God; believe that he is, and that he created all things, both in heaven and in earth; believe that he has all wisdom, and all power, both in heaven and in earth; believe that man doth not comprehend all the things which the Lord can comprehend. And again, believe that ye must repent of your sins and forsake them, and humble yourselves before God; and ask in sincerity of heart that he would forgive you; and now, if you believe all these things see that ye do them (Mosiah 4:9–10).

Jesus extended a similar invitation when he stated:

Repent, all ye ends of the earth, and come unto me and be baptized in my name, that ye may be sanctified by the reception of the Holy Ghost, that ye may stand spotless before me at the last day. Verily, verily, I say unto you, this is my gospel; and ye know the things that ye must do in my church; for the works which ye have seen me do that shall ye also do; for that which ye have seen me do even that shall ye do; Therefore, if ye do these things blessed are ye, for ye shall be lifted up at the last day. (3 Nephi 27:20–22)

Both of these inviting statements contain important elements of application for us and to all people everywhere. To quote Jesus’s injunction following his telling of the parable of the Good Samaritan, “Go, and do thou likewise” (Luke 10:37).

### Further Reading

John W. Welch, “The Temple Context and Unity of the Sermon at the Temple,” in *Illuminating the Sermon at the Temple and Sermon on the Mount* (Provo, Ut: FARMS, 1999), 23–46.

### 3 Nephi 11:3–7 — God the Father Speaks to the People Three Times

These people were brought to attention as they all heard a voice, a soft voice that pierced them to the center. It left them speechless. First of all, they were shocked, maybe even afraid. Their whole bodies began to quake. (3 Nephi 11:3). They certainly did not know what might happen next. Think of what they had lived through. The devastation and trauma must have still been very vivid in their minds, as it may have been only about forty days since the devastating destructions. They may have wondered if the calamitous events would start again or if it was the beginning of another storm. They did not know yet that this day was going to be very different.

Then their hearts started to burn (3 Nephi 11:3); they were beginning to feel the presence of the Holy Ghost. Twice they heard, but did not understand—however, they understood the third time. When we want to be heard, we petition repeatedly. The three-fold repetition indicated that God wanted to be heard. This also sounds rather like a ritual setting, where things are repeated three times. It is also a little like what happened to Nephi’s father and uncle Lehi in the Lamanite prison in Helaman 5:46.

### 3 Nephi 11:8 — The Savior Descends Slowly from Heaven

Jesus did not arrive in an instant. Following the triple announcement by the voice from heaven, He descended “in a white robe,” apparently slowly, as the people were awestruck. Was it significant that Christ came down in a white robe? Was the white robe temple-related? Was it related to purity? Perhaps it signaled that something very sacred was about to happen. The whole multitude turned to Christ, and they did not dare speak.

The ancient temple in Israel has been called “a sanctuary of silence” (based on Habakkuk 2:20). In the temple in ancient Israel, people sang hymns and there were noises associated with the preparation and burning of sacrifices, but for the most part, the worshippers were silent so they could hear the words of the Lord and hear the words of the priests. When we go to our temples, we are encouraged to be silent. There is an inscription posted in the Idaho Falls Temple from Habakkuk 2:20 which states, “The Lord is in his holy temple: let all the earth keep silence before him.” Being silent, then, is also a part of the temple experience, so we can listen and hear what the Lord has to say. Amazing things happen

in greater abundance the more silent we are. How can we hear the word of the Lord if we are too busy talking?

As Jesus began to prepare to take His leave after the first day, the crowd may have wondered how He would leave. His presence was extremely bright and they may not even have been aware of the sun going down. He did not depart in an instant—He left deliberately and slowly, beginning with His being enshrouded in a protective cloud (3 Nephi 18:38–39). The people may have identified seeing Christ leave in a cloud with the cloud that guided ancient Israel through the wilderness in the daytime and the pillar of fire over the tabernacle at night, both of which signaled His very presence. We later learn that Christ took His Twelve with Him into the cloud (Moroni 2:3), much like Moses took twenty-four elders up into Mount Sinai where they also saw and heard the voice of God.

### **3 Nephi 11:10 — Jesus Introduces Himself**

Putting them all at ease, the Resurrected Lord said: “Behold, I am Jesus Christ, whom the prophets testified shall come into the world.” As Elder Jeffrey R. Holland described this scene, “The God who turns the darkest night into morning light had arrived.”

Much of the book of 3 Nephi from this point forward is written in the first-person. Nowhere in ancient scripture do we have the risen Lord speaking more directly, using first-person pronouns. This is not someone else talking about Jesus—it is Jesus himself talking. Imagine the expressions that would have been on Jesus’ face as He said each line as if He were talking to each one of them individually. There is a face of earnest instruction in His words—getting their attention to be sure each one understands. There is a face of warning—letting them know the gravity of casting holy things before dogs or swine, lest they trample them under their feet. There is also a face of love—inviting them to know that He is the Good Shepherd and that He will gather them all into His fold.

I cannot imagine seeing those faces and not knowing that Jesus loves and wants each of His brothers and sisters—each of Heavenly Father’s choice spirits—to have the dew of resurrection (a name for the anointing oil of the Holy of Holies) applied to each of us. “This is eternal lives—to know the only wise and true God, and Jesus Christ, whom He hath sent. I am He. Receive ye, therefore, my law” (D&C 132:24; John 17:3). I know that if we will make even the slightest efforts in his direction, Jesus Christ will carefully bring us along the path—the straight and narrow path—that will lead to life eternal.

### **Further Reading**

Jeffrey R. Holland, *Christ and the New Covenant* (Salt Lake City, UT; Deseret Book, 1997), 250-251.

### 3 Nephi 11:11 — The Temple of Bountiful Becomes a Holy of Holies

Under the Law of Moses, the offering of the blood of an animal on the altar of sacrifice at the temple was used to make atonement for sins—to reconcile the people with God by removing their impurity. Previously, the people here had heard the voice of the Lord telling them that sacrifice by the shedding of blood had been discontinued (3 Nephi 9:17, 19), but they had not been instructed as to how they now were to rid themselves of the defilements of their sins. After appearing and identifying Himself to the people, Jesus Christ now explained that He had “drunk out of that bitter cup” and had taken upon himself “the sins of the world” (11:11). This was new revelation to the people. They were learning, for the first time, the new version of the law of sacrifice.

As on the Day of Atonement at the Temple, words of forgiveness would have been spoken by the high priest. Jesus’ statement in verse 11 would have immediately identified Himself, effectively, as the new high priest.

The whole multitude responded by falling to the earth. This was yet another temple-related response. We sometimes kneel in our temple experience. More often we bow our heads. When we kneel or bow our heads, we are symbolically signifying our obedience and submission to God’s will, as Jesus had “suffered the will of the Father” (3 Nephi 11:11). In Matthew 5:3, the first Beatitude states, “Blessed are the *poor* in spirit.” The word for “poor” in Greek is an ambiguous word. It means “the poor,” but also “the submissive.” It derives from the verb *ptōssō*, which literally means to fall or crouch down, to bow timidly, or to cringe or beseech like a beggar. Being “poor in spirit” refers to being a beggar with respect to the spirit, humbly beseeching or reducing oneself to the dust. The use of the word in this Beatitude refers to the poor who have “fallen down” or have bowed their heads in complete submission. This “falling down” (or kneeling down) is a very important recognition of our personal willingness to submit our will to the Father.

Thinking back to Lehi’s vision recorded in 1 Nephi 8, there were four groups of people who came to the tree. Remember, there was only one of the four groups of people who made it to the tree, partook of the fruit, and actually stayed. The members of this one group fell down in gratitude and thanksgiving for being there. In revelation given to the Prophet Joseph Smith, at the Second Coming of Christ, “every knee shall bow and every tongue shall confess” that Jesus is, indeed, the Christ (D&C 88:104). This is exactly as it ought to be.

#### Further Reading

Book of Mormon Central, “[Why Did the People Fall Down at the Feet of Jesus?](#) (3 Nephi 11:17),” *KnoWhy* 202 (October 5, 2016).

### **3 Nephi 11:12 — The People Remember That Christ Would Show Himself unto Them**

In Alma 16:20, Alma had prophesied that the Messiah would appear in the Nephite world: “[T]hey were taught that he would appear unto them after his resurrection; and this the people did hear with great joy and gladness.” Even so, the arrival of Jesus was a surprise to the Nephites in Bountiful. Their current prophet, Nephi, had not referred to such a prophecy. When the incident occurred, they “remembered” what Alma said (3 Nephi 11:12), but they had not come to the temple expecting this to happen.

### **3 Nephi 11:14–15 — The People Meet Their Resurrected Savior One by One**

There can be nothing more profound and so intimate to contemplate or even imagine than having one-on-one, direct physical contact with the Savior—to have Him embrace you, allow you to touch Him and to have Him cover you with the robes of His righteousness. What a blessing that would be. Every doctrine and every ordinance in the Gospel of Jesus Christ is a shadow of that culminating experience. The Hebrew word for “atone” may relate to the word “to cover.” Thus, while the atonement will cover sins, more than that the atonement is a personal embrace, becoming “at one” with the Savior. As Lehi said, shortly before his death, “I am encircled about eternally in the arms of his love” (2 Nephi 1:15). Nephi, Lehi’s son, similarly stated, “O Lord, wilt thou encircle me around in the robe of thy righteousness!” (2 Nephi 4:33).

The arms of our Savior are extended to us always. That is what is real. That is what real existence is all about. It is not just about a relationship; it is about an eternal relationship—a relationship that becomes the model and provides the power that will allow us to have eternal relationships with our spouse, with our children, with all of our brothers and sisters throughout the world.

When I take myself into that moment, I am stopped and overcome with awe and wonder. This would be, on any terms, a miraculous experience. There is a reason why the English word “miracle” comes from the ancient root words that mean “wonder” and “amazement.” When a miracle happens, the only true human response to it is absolute astonishment. I love how the Book of Mormon describes the silence of the people as they stood and watched the Savior; how they “durst not open their mouths, even one to another” (verse 8). In most situations, it would be very hard to repress the urge to comment, “Did you see that? Look at what is happening here!” But the experience of being in the presence of Jesus Christ was so overwhelming to them that it was unspeakable.

I cannot visualize myself going to the Savior first and my wife going second. Nor can I imagine her going first and leaving me to go second. In this situation, I think of myself not as my body, but as the eternal couple that she and I are as an eternal essence. I cannot imagine that we would not be there together. I do not know that I would be watching her

while we stood before the Savior, but we would be side-by-side and it would be an experience that we would not even have to talk about because we would have shared it so completely. We would smile. We would embrace. We would look at the Lord and know that it is through him that we have the power and the promise to be together forever. That is what this experience would mean to me.

### Further Reading

Book of Mormon Central, "[Why Did Jesus Minister to the People One by One?](#) (3 Nephi 17:21)," *KnoWhy* 209 (October 14, 2016).

### 3 Nephi 11:16–17 — The Nephites Shout Hosanna

The people at this temple were invited to come forward, one at a time, and see for themselves, and feel Christ's wounds with their own hands. In doing so, they were able to internalize the reality of the crucifixion and death of Jesus as well as the reality of His resurrection. After participating in this amazing experience, "they did cry out with one accord" (3:16). Most likely, somebody initiated and led the chorus. However, they all knew this hosanna shout—it was part of their ancient temple liturgy. They knew this from Psalms 118:25.

There was no better expression for these people to use in welcoming Jehovah, the Lord they had worshipped, into their midst—"Hosanna! Blessed be the name of the Most High God!" The ancient interpretation of the word "hosanna" means "save us now." "Hosanna" was used to respectfully address the God who saves, saved, will save, or is saving now. They had heard the Savior explain that He had completed the mission He was foreordained to accomplish. He had suffered greatly—"drunk out of that bitter cup"—to take upon Himself the sins of the world to save all mankind (11:11). They had felt and seen the scars that represented the depth of His divine suffering and understood that this had been done for them personally. The hosanna shout was the best expression of their deep love and gratitude to the Lord. The hosanna psalm continues, "God is the Lord, which hath shewed us light; ... Thou art my God, and I will praise thee; ... for his mercy endureth for ever" (Psalms 118:27–29).

The people then fell down at the feet of Jesus and worshipped Him. Anciently, people fell down in the presence of the high priest. There are many reasons why the people fell down before Jesus Christ. One likely explanation (evidenced by the fact that this took place in a ritual setting at the temple) is that the people were acknowledging Jesus as the Great High Priest. They were acclaiming Christ to be the true Eternal High Priest.

### Further Reading

Book of Mormon Central, "[Why did the People Fall Down at the Feet of Jesus?](#) (3 Nephi 11:17)," *KnoWhy* 202 (October 5, 2018).

### 3 Nephi 11:18–21 — Nephi is Called as the First Disciple

Assuredly, the greatest moment for Nephi, the son of Nephi, occurred next in the Savior's visit in Bountiful when he (the former high priest) was recognized and called out of the multitude by Jesus Christ (the eternal high priest; see Psalms 110:4). Nephi bowed down and kissed the feet of the Savior. That was a very tender moment. Jesus then called Nephi to even greater service and gave him, along with others, the authority and power to baptize the people. Jesus taught this and many of the primary core Christian principles that He had taught in Judea before his ascension (3 Nephi 15:1).

The visit of the Savior increased Nephi's knowledge and authority as he was called to a leadership role in Christ's church and was given further training. Nephi was present for the most glorious occasion of the Sermon at the Temple with its associated stages of ritual ascent. Although these experiences would be enormously great moments for everyone and anyone, Nephi must have been most deeply affected by them. He made special efforts to record these details. He also continued the rest of his life to serve the Savior along with his people, whom he loved, with all diligence, as did his son, yet another Nephi.

Records were kept leading up to the coming of the Savior. Meticulous records were then kept of the very words that Jesus spoke as He appeared to and taught the Nephite people. It seems to me that as the high priest, Nephi would have been the one who at least oversaw, if not actually conducted, the recording of these most sacred records.

Under the Law of Moses, only one person—the high priest—was allowed to go alone into the Holy of Holies in the temple. Thus, how amazing it must have been to him and to his people, that he could now share the glorious blessings of the Holy of Holies with all of them. Now, all of his people had the blessing to stand in the presence of the Lord—one by one—and see his countenance smiling upon them.

#### Further Reading

Book of Mormon Central, "Why Should 3 Nephi Be Read as the Book of the High Priest Nephi? (3 Nephi title and heading)," *KnoWhy* 577 (September 8, 2020).

### 3 Nephi 11:22–24 — Jesus Called the Twelve Disciples

The entire book of 3 Nephi is a story of spiritual maturation and of ascent. Beginning with the depths of darkness and the earthquakes, the early chapters in 3 Nephi are tumultuous—not only physically, but also politically. Why did the events of 3 Nephi begin with so much darkness? Why did it begin with Satan reigning with blood and terror, with political upheavals, and the whole government essentially collapsing? The old society that Nephi and the other apostles had grown up in was now completely obliterated. The newly appointed leaders who had survived the cataclysmic events were starting from Ground Zero, and the next step was to embody a priesthood brotherhood.



Nephi, as the leader of these people, had been able to prophesy. Through revelation, he knew of things that were going on in Galilee and in Judea as they were transpiring. He was able to teach, and some believed. It is my belief that the twelve men that Jesus called as his disciples had already been through the fires of temptation and trial together. They had experienced hardship and the testing of everything that could stretch a person to the limit. They had seen Nephi raise his brother from the dead, but they had also seen people being butchered and killed.

As these men were instructed by the Lord, they would have brought to the Lord their own needs arising out of these past experiences—needs for comfort and assurance. They would have had new levels of understanding and expectation explained to them. As they heard the words of Jesus throughout 3 Nephi, and as they experienced new covenants and ordinances, were ordained and given power, and brought up through the progression of one principle of the gospel leading to another, they must have felt the Lord's hand, guiding, directing, reassuring, and establishing his Kingdom on earth.

Jesus knew the hearts of the Twelve whom he called. He knew that they were absolutely trustworthy and that he could reveal to them even greater things pertaining to God's Kingdom on earth—some revelation that the multitude would not receive. As the people trusted in these disciples and as the Twelve trusted in the Lord, they would grow in strength to handle the burdens that would be placed upon them. Even though they had been given great power and authority, the disciples observed and experienced the Savior ministering to them with mercy and love. These men would have learned to model their life after what the Savior had done.

When the New Testament is read alone without Restoration scripture, some people, including many scholars, are uncertain whether Jesus actually ordained twelve apostles and how He did that. In 3 Nephi in the Book of Mormon, we know that Jesus laid His hands upon the heads of those twelve men and gave them power first to baptize, and later that day to give the gift of the Holy Ghost, and later yet to administer in all the ordinances of the Priesthood.

Interestingly, as a priest made a sacrifice under the Law of Moses, He would lay His hands upon the sacrificial animal. That act would transfer to the sacrificial animal the impurities of the person for whom the sacrifice was being made. The sacrificial animal would vicariously carry away and suffer the burden of that person's uncleanness and sins.

What we see here, of course, was the laying on of hands by Jesus on the heads of these disciples, symbolically making them sacrificial animals. The Twelve were to sacrifice their lives, if necessary. As they administered in the ordinances of the new order of the priesthood, they would be able to carry away the sins from people—sins and problems that

the people could not remove by themselves. However, the Twelve disciples would only be able to do that if they, themselves, were willing to sacrifice all things unto the Lord.

### **3 Nephi 11:24–28 — Christ Established His Church among the Nephites**

Some may wonder what the catalyst was that initiated Joseph Smith and Oliver Cowdery's concern about baptism and the authority to perform this ordinance. During the process of translating the Book of Mormon, Joseph and Oliver "on a certain day [in the month of May] went into the woods to pray and inquire of the Lord respecting baptism for the remission of sins" (Joseph Smith—History 1:68). In response, the Lord sent John the Baptist to confer upon them the Aaronic Priesthood, to instruct them concerning the nature of its authority, and then to command them to ordain and baptize each other (Joseph Smith—History 1:68–72).

It is interesting that it was in the middle of May, 1829, that the Prophet and Oliver Cowdery were in the midst of translating 3 Nephi in the Book of Mormon. Also of note is Oliver Cowdery's recollection, "No men in their sober senses, could translate and write the directions given to the Nephites, from the mouth of the Savior, of the precise manner in which men should build up His Church, ... without desiring the privilege of showing the willingness of the heart by being buried in the liquid grave, to answer a 'good conscience by the resurrection of Jesus Christ.'"

This information indicates that it was translating the Savior's instructions concerning baptism found in 3 Nephi 11 that led to this important event in Church history. The importance of receiving authorized and properly administered baptism was specifically pronounced in the account of the Savior's ministry found in 3 Nephi 11:23–26. As in Joseph Smith's day, the proper mode of baptism had been disputed anciently among the Nephites. This led the Savior to explicitly describe and clarify the process of baptism to the Nephites and counseled them: "And according as I have commanded you thus shall ye baptize. And there shall be no disputations among you, as there have hitherto been" (3 Nephi 11:28). The heavy reliance on the Book of Mormon in determining the correct procedures for priesthood ordination and baptism by one having authority is illustrated here:

### Doctrine and Covenants 20:72–74

The person who is called of God ...  
**shall go down into the water**  
 with the person who has presented himself or herself for baptism, and  
**shall say, calling him or her by name: Having been commissioned of Jesus Christ, I baptize you in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost. Amen. Then shall he immerse him or her in the water, and come forth again out of the water.**

### 3 Nephi 11:23–26

Behold, ye  
**shall go down and stand in the water,**  
 and in my name shall ye baptize them. And now behold, these are the words which ye  
**shall say, calling them by name, saying: Having authority given me of Jesus Christ, I baptize you in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost. Amen. And then shall ye immerse them in the water, and come forth again out of the water.**

#### Further Reading

Oliver Cowdery, *“Letter 1,” Messenger and Advocate* 1, no. 1 (1834):15.

Book of Mormon Central, *“Why Did Joseph and Oliver Seek Authority to Baptize? (3 Nephi 11:24–25),” KnoWhy* 279 (February 24, 2017).

Book of Mormon Central, *“Why did the Lord Quote the Book of Mormon When Reestablishing the Church? (3 Nephi 11:24),” KnoWhy* 282 (March 3, 2017).

### 3 Nephi 11:27-37 — Jesus Explains the Unity and Roles of the Members of the Godhead

The doctrine of the Godhead is developed in several Book of Mormon passages. Some of these scriptures simply confirm what is taught about the Godhead in the Bible and other modern revelations. Other passages, however, offer unique and unparalleled insights concerning this foundational doctrine. None is more important and authoritative than what Jesus Himself says here in 3 Nephi 11:27–37.

The Book of Mormon consistently affirms the unity and oneness of the Godhead. In 3 Nephi 11:27, Jesus said, “[V]erily I say unto you, that the Father, and the Son, and the Holy Ghost are one; and I am in the Father, and the Father in me, and the Father and I are one.” Jesus goes on here to emphasize that, while unified in purpose, each member of the Godhead is distinctly separate and unique, each bearing record of the other two (11:32, 36). Just as they testify of each other without disputation, their followers shall have “no disputations among [them]” (11:28).

The prophet Joseph Smith taught, “It is the first principle of the gospel to know for a certainty the character of God.” He also testified that readers of the Book of Mormon

would “get nearer to God by abiding by its precepts, than by any other book” (Book of Mormon Introduction).

The Book of Mormon account in 3 Nephi is a beautiful depiction of Christ’s love and universal outreach to all. He invited the people to “come forth unto me, that ye may thrust your hands into my side, and also that ye may feel the prints of the nails in my hands and in my feet, that ye may *know* that I am the God of Israel” (3 Nephi 11:14). In the Book of Mormon, Jesus Christ invites all of God’s children, one by one, to be intimately familiar with Him. He wants them all to personally witness and comprehend the effects of His infinite Atonement in their own lives. By coming unto Christ, by repenting and being baptized, and accepting the eternal benefits of His atoning powers, all can come to intimately be visited by God the Father, can build upon the rock of Christ, and live under the sanctifying power and guiding influence of the Holy Ghost (3 Nephi 11:35, 39).

#### **Further Reading**

Joseph Smith, Jr., “The King Follet Sermon,” *Ensign*, April 1971, online at [churchofjesuschrist.org](http://churchofjesuschrist.org)

Book of Mormon Central, “How Are the Book of Mormon’s Teachings About the Godhead Unique? (3 Nephi 11:27),” *KnoWhy* 266 (January 25, 2017).