

3 NEPHI 12–16



3 Nephi 12–14

3 Nephi 12–14 — Study Questions

These three chapters contain some of the most sublime statements ever to be found in scripture or anywhere else. The words of Jesus in the Sermon on the Mount have been studied extensively by Christians everywhere. They are sacred. Please approach them reverently and prayerfully. As you study these chapters, here are some intriguing general questions to beneficially ponder. I hope they will help you receive and love these exquisite words of Jesus with all your heart, mind, and strength.

Escalation

- What are the main themes in Jesus’s Sermon at the Temple in Bountiful and His Sermon on the Mount in the Old World?
- How often and in what ways do themes escalate over the course of this masterful Sermon?
- How is that escalation compatible with the character of this sermon as a ritual ascent text leading people into the presence of God? (see “enter” in 3 Nephi 14: 13, 21–23).
- How do the following themes escalate or intensify as this Sermon progresses from initial to higher levels of duty and spirituality: (a) giving to others, (b) praying and asking of God, (c) justice, elements regarding punishments and rewards, and (d) consequences of failed discipleship from simple circumstances to eternal concerns?
- Would you agree that the Sermon at the Temple and Sermon on the Mount become more serious and more advanced as they progress from beginning to end?

Vocabulary

- How many words and phrases in these chapters do you think would have been familiar to the Nephites, or, how many of them were they hearing for the first time?
- How many of those familiar words and phrases would have been “at home” in the Psalms or in connection with activities or themes already strongly related to practices or ordinances in their temple? See John W. Welch, “The Common Israelite Background,” in *Illuminating the Sermon at the Temple & the Sermon on the Mount* (Provo, UT: FARMS, 1999), 151–177. In other words, was Jesus beginning with familiar ideas and building upon them, or were these teachings totally new to these listeners?
- As a general characteristic, do General Conference talks and the wordings of our Temple ordinances likewise start simple and become more challenging at the end?

Audiences

- What differences are there between the Sermon on the Mount in Matthew 5–7 and the Sermon at the Temple in 3 Nephi 12–14?
- Why are those differences significant in terms of the audiences Jesus was addressing?
- Which of the differences are due to the following:
 - the post-resurrection setting in 3 Nephi,
 - the Nephite setting and culture,
 - the fact that the Nephites were more dependent upon written law,
 - the explicit covenant-making setting emphasizing the heart,
 - the more immediate relation to God in their presence,
 - the unseemly penalties that had been dropped,
 - a more established church organizational setting that was in place,
 - a greater universality of spiritual blessings now that Jesus had expanded his mission beyond just the House of Israel,
 - or the anti-Pharisaical, possible anti-Gentile, and alleged anti-Pauline elements were absent and irrelevant here?

You may find other differences as well. See John W. Welch, “The Sermon at the Temple and the Sermon on the Mount: The Differences,” in *Illuminating the Sermon at the Temple & the Sermon on the Mount* (Provo, UT: FARMS, 1999), 125–150.

Languages

- What do the textual similarities and differences between 3 Nephi 12–14 and Matthew 5–7, as well as the earliest Greek manuscripts of the Gospel of Matthew, tell us about the nature of the translation given to us by Joseph Smith? See Welch, “Joseph Smith and the Translation of the Sermon at the Temple,” in *Illuminating*

the Sermon, 179–198; Welch, “The Sermon at the Temple and the Greek New Testament Manuscripts,” in *Illuminating the Sermon*, 199–210.

A Pre-Matthean Origin

- Does the Book of Mormon sustain the important idea that the Sermon on the Mount was actually given by Jesus and not created or compiled later by Matthew or some other writer? Consider (a) the characteristic words of Jesus, (b) the pre-Matthean elements in the text, (c) the temple settings and private audiences for parallels from the Sermon on the Mount in Mark and Luke, (d) the selection of texts used in the public setting in the Sermon on the Plain in Luke 6, and (e) Jesus’ overall attitude toward the Temple. See Welch, “Jesus and the Composition of the Sermon on the Mount,” in *Illuminating the Sermon*, 211–237.

A Ritual Text

- Might the Sermon on the Mount have been used as a ritual text in preparing proselytes for baptism and to renew their covenantal commitments as Christians?
- How does the Sermon on the Mount compare with other rituals or ceremonies of conversion, initiation, or admission into such groups as (a) Apostolic Christianity, (b) the Qumran community, (c) Talmudic Judaism, or (d) the Greek mystery religions or utopian groups? See Welch, “The Sermon in Light of Ritual Studies,” in *Illuminating the Sermon*, 239–250.

Face to Face

- As you imagine Jesus speaking the words of the Sermon at the Temple, how do you imagine the expressions on his face?
- How many “faces” of Jesus do you see here? Consider its faces or expressions of direct verbal instruction, of moral and ethical persuasion, of enlightenment with allegorical illustrations, of authority with promises and consequences, and of loving invitation.

Reality and Practicality

- In this text, a faithful reader will see the face of sincerity, wisdom, and truth. The answer to the urgent question, “Master, what shall I *do* to obtain eternal life?” (Luke 10:25) is found here in abundance, clarity, and sensitivity, every step of the way.

Further Reading

John W. Welch, *Illuminating the Sermon at the Temple and the Sermon on the Mount* (Provo, UT: FARMS, 1999).

3 Nephi Chapters 12–14 — Seeing the Sermon at the Temple as a Temple Text

Embedded in the Book of Mormon, at the climactic moment of the first day of Jesus' ministry among the Nephites at the temple in Bountiful (3 Nephi 11–18), are three chapters that are substantially the same as the Sermon on the Mount in Matthew 5–7. Because "the mountain" is a symbol of the Temple in Jerusalem (see Psalms 24:3; Isaiah 2:2), I have collectively called these accounts the "Sermon at the Temple." Over the ages, people have tended to break the statements in the Sermon on the Mount up into many little expressions rather than to understand them as a cohesive whole. The text is worth a great deal even when viewed just as a series of short aphorisms or ethical proverbs. But Jesus delivered His message all in one piece, and its parts are interconnected. Its thoughts flow from one to the next, and the linkages are significant.

While the Sermon at the Temple in Bountiful adds to our understanding of the Sermon on the Mount in several ways, its most important contribution for me is how it unlocks this age-old mystery of the unity of the Sermon. The main reason that the Sermon on the Mount has remained a sealed text for most readers is the problem of discerning what holds it all together. Does the Sermon on the Mount have a single theme or logic, or is it a haphazard collection of disjointed sayings?

The answer offered by 3 Nephi is most remarkable. Simply stated, the Sermon at the Temple is a temple text. By "temple text" I mean one that relates to the temple, one that contains allusions to the most sacred ordinances and teachings of the plan of salvation. Temple texts are found in several places in the Bible and Book of Mormon. Often, they are presented in or near a temple (see, for example, King Benjamin's speech). They ordain or otherwise convey divine powers through symbolic or ceremonial means, presented together with commandments that are or will be received by sacred oaths that allow the recipient to stand ceremonially in the presence of God. This Sermon in 3 Nephi is clearly a covenant-making text. It gives people commandments and instructions that they must accept by way of covenant at the end of the day (in 3 Nephi 18). That important detail is something that the New Testament does not tell us explicitly, although the Sermon on the Mount follows shortly after the baptism of Jesus in Matthew 3, which may link the Sermon to covenant-making preparation. In 3 Nephi 11, the people are clearly at the temple in Bountiful. The surrounding world and the whole environment have been cleansed, and the purified saints who were present are worthy and ready to meet the resurrected Savior.

Several such texts may be found in the scriptures, notably including Jacob's speeches at the temple in the city of Nephi (2 Nephi 6–10; Jacob 2–3), as well as King Benjamin's speech at the temple of Zarahemla (Mosiah 1–6). The temple setting is an essential element in understanding the fabric of these speeches. As we read these teachings of Jesus, if we comprehend the context, the place where He was speaking and the audience He was

talking to, we can understand much better why He said what He did, especially when certain key statements have clear temple significance. This approach does not diminish the ethical and didactic functions of the Sermon. On the contrary, the moral force of the Sermon is only enhanced by the solemnity of a sacred setting, which encourages listeners to receive its values with deepened commitment.

The Sermon is a very carefully structured text. It starts at an entrance point with the Beatitudes, and then builds, culminating at the end when Jesus talks about who shall enter into the presence of God, namely “He that doeth the will of my Father who is in Heaven” (3 Nephi 14:21). This textual structure is known as an ascent text that takes us up and up, towards the Father, step-by-step. As we think in that broader context, we can see how each one of the elements in the Sermon on the Mount builds and depends on what came before. We can make best use of the Sermon if we can appreciate it as a whole and as we examine and contemplate each of its steps.

Some Biblical scholars view Jesus as merely a great teacher or a philosopher who dispensed wisdom randomly to people, but there are a lot of things in these Sermons that cannot be viewed as just wisdom. For example, penalties are given. Jesus pronounced privileges, like their getting to be the salt of the earth, but if they did not live up to that responsibility, they would be thrown out (Greek, *ek ballō*). Jesus said they would be cast out of the community. Here is an important difference between private spirituality and covenantal community-building. If they did not live up to the community standards, they would be expelled and then trodden underfoot. If your right hand offends you, cut it off. If your eye offends you, pluck it out. Jesus did not really expect people to do that, but was explaining what would happen spiritually if the promises that they were making were not kept. Understanding the whole—all the parts—and looking at each word is very important.

Matthew 5 begins with an easily overlooked statement indicating that Jesus and his disciples needed a peaceful location where they could have spiritual time together. Thus, “He went up into a mountain” (Matthew 5:1). Sometimes we get the impression that Jesus just went up onto a hillside. But the text is clear, Jesus went up into the *mountain*, which is exactly what Moses did in Mount Sinai, and it is exactly the phrase that occurs in Psalm 24:3, “Who shall ascend into the hill of the Lord?” The Hebrew reads *mountain*, but the King James translators said *hill*. Ascending into the hill or mountain of the Lord was referring to the temple.

The Sermon on the Mount Seen in Twenty-Five Stages of Ascent

Jesus and his disciples go "into the Mountain" (5:1; compare Exodus 19:20; 24:13)

- 1: A promise of ultimate heavenly blessings is given (the Beatitudes, 5:3-12)
- 2: A charge is given, with a warning, to become the salt of the earth (5:13)
- 3: A calling is given to be a light unto the world to the glory of God (5:14-16)
- 4: Obligation imposed to obey and teach the fullness of the law and prophets (5:17-20)
- 5: Anger, ill-speaking, and ridicule of brothers are prohibited (5:21-22)
- 6: All animosities are reconciled before gifts are given at the altar (5:23-26)
- 7: Sexual fidelity is required before, during, and after marriage (5:27-32)
- 8: Oaths are sworn along this path only by saying "yes, yes" or "no, no" (5:33-37)
- 9: Disciples agree to do good and to pray for all people, including enemies (5:38-47)
- 10: Gifts of sun and rain upon all are promised as blessings from heaven (5:45)
- 11: Passing from that first level into a higher order of perfection (5:48)
- 12: Donations are given voluntarily and inconspicuously to the poor (6:1-4)
- 13: Prayers are offered without fanfare, both in private and as a group (6:5-13)
- 14: Forgiveness is given and is commensurately received (6:14-15)
- 15: Fasting, washing, and anointing are done in a secret setting (6:16-18)
- 16: Treasures are consecrated with singleness of heart in loving service to God (6:19-24)
- 17: Assurances of sufficient food, drink and glorious clothing are received (6:25-34)
- 18: In preparing for the final judgment, people judge themselves, not others (7:1-5)
- 19: A curse is placed on those who inappropriately disclose that which is holy (7:6)
- 20: A threefold petition is made: asking, seeking, and knocking (7:7-8)
- 21: Good gifts are received from the Father, and gifts are given as he gives (7:9-12)
- 22: The righteous enter through a narrow opening that leads into life (7:13-14)
- 23: They enjoy and bear the fruits of the tree of life, not of corruptness (7:15-20)
- 24: Doing God's will, they are allowed to enter into his presence and kingdom (7:21-23)
- 25: They then build upon this rock by hearing and doing these things (7:24-27)

Based on John W. Welch, *The Sermon on the Mount in the Light of the Temple* (London: Ashgate, 2009).

The following is a list of temple elements that can be found in the Savior's visit in 3 Nephi. The first one, the presence of God (the appearance of Jesus and his words in the first person), was the first clue that pointed me towards understanding this sermon in this new light. These features, which are characteristic of the Holy of Holies or sacred functions in the temple of Jerusalem, appear in 3 Nephi:

- The presence of God (the appearance of Jesus and his words in the first person)
- The words of the Lord (3 Nephi 11–27)
- The fullness of joy (3 Nephi 16, 17, 27, 28)
- The Ten Commandments (3 Nephi 12)
- The law of the covenant (3 Nephi 20, 29)

- The Ark (evidences of God’s presence: manna, Aaron’s rod, tablets of the law)
- The mercy seat (mercy, 3 Nephi 17, 22, 26)
- The heavenly throne (3 Nephi 12:34)
- The shewbread (the bread of the sacrament and the body Jesus had shown)
- The seraphim, angels, priests (3 Nephi 17, 18, 27)
- Shining white robes (3 Nephi 11, 19)
- Day one, creation, order (expound all things from the beginning, 3 Nephi 26:3)
- Silence (3 Nephi 11)
- Three dimensions, a perfect cube (perfect, 3 Nephi 12:48)
- Ascending into heaven (3 Nephi 18)
- Entering, a narrow passageway (3 Nephi 14)
- Connecting heaven and earth (3 Nephi 13)
- The mystery of life (3 Nephi 27)
- Secret things (3 Nephi 14, 26)
- Unity (3 Nephi 28)
- Raising to a higher state (3 Nephi 28)
- Sonship, divine acknowledgment (3 Nephi 11)
- Translated beings (3 Nephi 28)
- Sending forth (3 Nephi 11, 19)
- Healing (3 Nephi 17, 26)
- Covenant making (3 Nephi 18)
- Verbatim ritual repetition (3 Nephi 19)
- The face of the Lord shining upon the people (3 Nephi 19)

Further Reading

John W. Welch, “Overview” in *Illuminating the Sermon at the Temple and the Sermon on the Mount* (Provo, UT: FARMS, 1999), 4. “The unique insights afforded by 3 Nephi in the Book of Mormon bring the greatness of the New Testament Sermon on the Mount most dramatically into focus.”

Book of Mormon Central, “Why Did Jesus Deliver a Version of the Sermon on the Mount at the Temple in Bountiful? (3 Nephi 12:6),” *KnoWhy* 203 (October 6, 2016).

Book of Mormon Central, “What Makes 3 Nephi the Holy of Holies of the Book of Mormon? (3 Nephi 14:13–14),” *KnoWhy* 206, (October 11, 2016). “At the pinnacle of the history recorded in the Book of Mormon readers find in 3 Nephi the story of the resurrected Jesus Christ who descended from heaven to teach the people at the temple in Bountiful. The magnitude and sacred content of 3 Nephi 11–26 has brought BYU Professor John W. Welch to call it the ‘holy of holies’ of the Book of Mormon. A careful analysis of the text reveals that it can be seen as a literary counterpart to the physical holy of holies

of the ancient temple. The book depicts a temple setting where Jesus Christ descended from heaven to the temple in the Nephite city of Bountiful (see 3 Nephi 11). With the people gathered around, Christ taught them from that sacred edifice. His words were replete with temple-related terms and imagery, although these are not often noticed. Jesus both opened and closed His initial sermon speaking about building upon the rock, ‘evoking images of the temple and its eternal stability.’”

John W. Welch, “Seeing Third Nephi as the Holy of Holies of the Book of Mormon,” *Journal of the Book of Mormon and Other Restoration Scripture* 19, no. 1 (2010): 36–55; also published in *Third Nephi: An Incomparable Scripture*, ed. Andrew C. Skinner and Gaye Strathearn (Salt Lake City and Provo, UT: Deseret Book and Neal A. Maxwell Institute for Religious Scholarship, 2012), 1–33.

3 Nephi Chapters 12–14 — Reading the Sermon at the Temple on Several Levels

The Sermon at the Temple can—and *should*—be understood at several different levels:

- The first level I would call a private, spiritual level. This is a level where we read to determine where we can individually be a better people by trying to develop and inculcate these kinds of spiritual attributes.
- Then there is a second way of reading it, which encourages us to be good members of society and to be on good terms with our fellow men and families. This is an ethical reading where these wisdom rules will make life more pleasant socially and culturally.
- The third way of reading is what I would call a covenantal mode, where step-by-step requirements and expectations are given for entering a covenant community.
- The fourth way of reading is as a temple text, to learn how we can come into the presence of God and become like Him.

How do we explain the close parallel between the *Sermon on the Mount* in the New Testament and the *Sermon at the Temple* in 3 Nephi? This question is often asked, especially as biblical scholars have more and more come to the conclusion that Matthew simply put the *Sermon on the Mount* together long after Jesus’ death, resurrection, and ministry. They consider that it could have been compiled as long as 20–40 years after Jesus had died. People, they think, had been collecting its saying in what we might call scrapbooks. That view of the *Sermon on the Mount* is certainly incompatible with the fact that Jesus, shortly after his resurrection, appeared in Bountiful and gave essentially the same text. In actuality, He may have given this speech many times, altered to suit the needs of each particular audience (see, for example, the Sermon on the Plain, in Luke 6). In an important way, the “sermon” in 3 Nephi begins in 3 Nephi 11 and goes to the end of chapter 18, where Jesus gives everyone the sacrament, and places them under covenant to keep the

commandments which he has just given them. Seeing it in that context helps unfold the covenant-making nature of this text.

Further Reading

John W. Welch, *Illuminating the Sermon at the Temple and the Sermon on the Mount* (Provo, UT: FARMS, 1999), chapters 4 and 5.

3 Nephi 12

3 Nephi 12 — How Gentle God’s Commands

As I awoke in Cambridge, England, on the day when I was to address the Society for Christian Ethics there on the subject of Ethical Formation in the Sermon on the Mount, the hymn that filled my soul was “How Gentle God’s Commands.” I sang it to myself and felt with reassurance its application to the topic of my upcoming presentation.

After delivering the words in 3 Nephi 12–14, Jesus said, “Behold, I have given unto you the commandments” (3 Nephi 15:10). These were new (or renewed) commandments: “Old things are done away, and all things have become new” (3 Nephi 12:47). As you re-read 3 Nephi 12, count how many “commandments” you find. I recommend that you count each “beatitude,” each “charge,” each “wish of the Lord” and each “imperative” among the commandments.

- In applying these teachings of Jesus, think of each of them in your life in two contexts: (a) in an ordinary daily ethical setting, and (b) in a sacred temple context. For example, what does it mean in ordinary life to be “poor in spirit” or to “mourn” or to “hunger and thirst”? What do such things mean in a temple context?
- What is a “temple theme”? In chapter 12 alone, what does “obtaining mercy,” “seeing God,” or “being called the children of God” have to do with the temple? How are the following further elements especially at home in the temple: salt (used in sacrifices), light, candlestick (the menorah), commandments, unity (no ridicule), properly approaching the altar, chastity (see Leviticus 18 and 20), swearing oaths and vows, God’s throne, returning evil with good, praying for enemies, the rising sun, the opening of the windows of heaven, and “perfection”?
- Does 3 Nephi 12:16 justify “showing off,” or must we let our light shine before others in a very certain way and for a particular purpose?
- Is there ever such a thing as “righteous anger” (compare Matthew 5:22 with 3 Nephi 12:2, where the excuse of having a “cause” is correctly not found)?
- Who has the obligation to initiate reconciliation with a brother or sister? (12:23)

- Should a follower of Christ ever go to court against a fellow saint either as a plaintiff or as a defendant? (12:25)
- Might using pornography already be akin to committing adultery physically? (12:28)
- What did Jesus think and teach about divorce? (12:31–32; compare Deuteronomy 24:1–4). Did He have all cases of civil divorce in mind, or does He have in mind here covenant marriages that involve God as a third partner unifying the husband and wife?
- What does it mean to “swear not at all”? (12:34). Is it ever proper to swear oaths by something external, which God doesn’t need? Or do we make our commitments to God by saying “Yes,” or “No,” and thereby give Him our pledge?
- How can we be like our Father in Heaven who makes “his sun to rise on the evil and on the good”? (12:45)
- Matthew 5:48 says, “Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect.” 3 Nephi 12:48 says, “I would that ye should be perfect even as I, or your Father who is in heaven is perfect.” What do the differences here mean to you?
- How would you summarize, describe, or classify the contents of 3 Nephi 12? What adjectives, categories, or text-types come most satisfactorily to mind? Would you answer this question differently with respect to Matthew 5?
- How do the teachings in this chapter instruct and challenge all readers to live the gospel in its fullest sense? How can they teach us that we are not better than other people? How do they build fellowship among the Saints, loyalty in marriage, and going the second mile?

Further Reading

John W. Welch, “Temple Themes and Ethical Formation in the Sermon on the Mount,” *Studies in Christian Ethics* 22, no. 2 (2009): 148–60.

3 Nephi 12:1–12 — What Kind of Statements Are the Beatitudes?

The Sermon began with a promise of ultimate blessings. The first few verses are commonly known as the Beatitudes. The Beatitudes are the starting point, and a foundation, directing us toward the end and purpose of the Sermon.

The Beatitudes are declarations of future blessings. In the Greek it just says, *macharioi oi katharoi*, or “Blessed the poor in spirit.” There is no verb expressed in these statements. We are expected to understand from the context what the tense of that connecting verb of being is. Usually the tense of the first phrase matches the tense of the second. So, it reads: “Blessed *will be* these people for they *shall see*.” This future tense implies that it is a postponed promise at the outset of this covenant-making and commandment-giving text. Indeed, the Greek word “*macharios*” does not mean “happy” or “fortunate” in a generic

sense. It most often refers to the ultimate blessed state of the souls of those who go on into the next life with eternal joy and well-being.

These ultimate promises also act in a way as a set of entrance requirements. Psalm 24, for example, asks, “who shall ascend into the hill [the temple] of the Lord?” Having clean hands and a pure heart are then stated as entrance requirements. Thus, the Beatitudes given by Jesus also provide a kind of entrance requirement. Using language from Psalm 24, one of them requires and promises, “Blessed are [shall be] the *pure in heart*, for they shall see God.”

3 Nephi 12:1–12 — Language of the Psalms in the Sermon on the Mount

Beginning here in the Beatitudes and continuing throughout the Sermon, we encounter many key words and distinctive phrases—at least 100 of them—that are particularly predominant in the Psalms, which are the words to the temple and pilgrimage hymns of the Hebrew Bible. Here are few examples:

Blessed

The Greek word translated as “blessed” is *macharioi*, and it is the very first word in the book of Psalms, appearing in Psalm 1:1, which reads, “Blessed is the man that walketh not in the counsel of the ungodly, nor standeth in the way of sinners, nor sitteth in the seat of the scornful. But his delight is in the law of the Lord; and in his law doth he meditate day and night (Psalm 1:1–2). In other words, *blessed* are the people who keep the law of the Lord. That very same word is used 25 more times in the Greek version of Psalms, which was the main translation of the Hebrew Psalms used by the early Christians. *Beatification* (blessedness) in this temple context refers to ultimate blessings in the Celestial world, being eternally blessed in the presence of righteous and divine beings. Happiness is not guaranteed in every minute of this life, but it says you will be *exalted*. That is what it means to be blessed.

The Sons of God

Another Beatitude states: “Blessed are [will be] the peacemakers for they shall be called the *sons of God*.” The concept of being sons of God is echoed Psalms 2:7, “The Lord hath said unto me, Thou art my Son; this day have I begotten thee.” Psalm 82 says explicitly, “All of you are children of the most High.”

The Pure in Heart

As mentioned above, behind the promise, “Blessed are the *pure in heart*, for they shall see God,” stands Psalm 24:4. “Who shall stand in his holy place, He that hath clean hands and a *pure heart*.” The word for pure here, “*katharsoi*,” refers to something that is thoroughly cleansed. The English word catharsis comes straight from this Greek word, which is very

meaningful in a temple context. How are we purified? Where is our *catharsis*? It is through repentance and the washing and purification ordinances in the temple.

Many other examples of Psalmic language can be found in the Sermon on the Mount. Biblical scholars typically see the Sermon on the Mount as belonging to what they call wisdom literature. And, indeed, it does contain proverbial material such as, “Do unto others as you would have them do unto you,” and so they have looked outside of religious texts for the literary background of the voice of the Sermon on the Mount. However, there is a stronger, more foundational, voice here—namely the sacred and sublime.

Further Reading

John W. Welch, *The Sermon on the Mount in the Light of the Temple* (London: Ashgate, 2009), esp. 183–190, 241–242.

John W. Welch, “The Temple, the Sermon on the Mount, and the Gospel of Matthew,” in *Mormonism and the Temple: Examining an Ancient Religious Tradition* (Logan, UT: BYU Studies and the Academy for Temple Studies, 2013), 66–71, esp. Table 1.

3 Nephi 12:1–11 — Blessed Are All They...

Notice also that the Beatitudes in the Sermon on the Mount in Matthew do not include the word “all” as this Sermon at the Temple does. Jesus emphatically and repeatedly declares, “blessed are *all* they” In five places the word “all” shows up in the Book of Mormon version—all those who mourn, all those who hunger, all the pure in heart, all the peacemakers, and all they who are persecuted for my name’s sake. The text ensures that this blessedness will encompass everyone who truly possesses these virtues for Christ’s sake. Jesus will not exclude anyone who is deliberately willing to come to Him through the straight path and narrow gate that He has prescribed.

3 Nephi 12:1–2 — Blessed Are They Who Listen to the Apostles

The Book of Mormon text begins with two new Beatitudes, and they are likely temple related. The first one: “Blessed are ye if ye shall give heed unto the words of these twelve whom I have chosen from among you to minister unto you.” That instruction, which is also emphasized in Latter-day Saint temples, is also right here in the Sermon at the Temple. When Joseph Smith translated this in May of 1829, he had not yet received, let alone imagined, the temple ordinances. And yet, temple elements occur over and over again in the words and deeds of Jesus in Bountiful.

In the second verse here, there is another Beatitude—a double one—that is unique to the Book of Mormon version. “More blessed are they who shall believe in your words *because that ye shall testify* that ye have seen me, and that ye know that I am.” That is followed by “Blessed are they who shall believe in your words, and *come down into the depths of humility*

and be baptized.” This is a commission to the Twelve, to testify and to baptize. When Jesus will then say in 12:14, “I give unto you to be the light of the world and to be the salt of the earth,” He has already explained what that meant. They and all others in turn knew the content of the obligation that they had been given as followers of Christ.

3 Nephi 12:3 — Blessed Will Be the Poor in Spirit Who Come unto Me

In 3 Nephi 12:3, “Yea, blessed are the poor in spirit *who come unto me.*” The phrase “who come unto me” can be interpreted as “come follow me.” That required aspect of being “poor in spirit” is not in the biblical version.

3 Nephi 12:10 — Blessed Will Be Those Who Are Persecuted for Jesus’ Sake

Implicit in what is said here—“persecuted for my name’s sake”—is that persecution is not for someone’s own sake or something we have brought on ourselves. Exalting persecution comes from bearing the name of Jesus. This persecution is not sought for by a true Christian. We do not want Jesus to be persecuted and reviled. But if we become the target of reviling because of Him, He said that He would absorb that difficulty, that disadvantage, that pain, because we are doing it for Him. He knows that there will be such trials and persecutions.

3 Nephi 12:13 — I Give unto You to Be the Salt of the Earth

The Savior called people before He started to teach them. In both this statement and in the “light of the world” statement, the 3 Nephi version adds the phrase “I give unto you to be,” replacing the Matthew 5 present indicative words “ye are.” “I give unto you” is equivalent to “this is your calling” or “This is your assignment.” In other words, “I give unto you this responsibility to be this kind of people.” Then He proceeded to enable them by instructing them on how they will have the abilities, the powers, and the gifts to accomplish what He is asking them to do.

“I give unto you to be the salt of the earth,” is a charge, given with a warning. This charge redefined who the participant is to become because of this covenant. Interestingly, every sacrificial covenant in ancient Israel had to have salt added as a part of it. In the covenant that God has with the world, we will become the covenant figures of the world to provide the necessary salt to make the covenant efficacious.

The Book of Mormon says the salt “loses *its* savor.” The early Book of Mormon manuscripts support the reading, “*its* savor.” We usually do not think of salt being masculine and, in fact, the Greek word for salt is neuter. In Matthew chapter 5, the King James version says that it has lost *his* savor. For some reason the King James translators unnecessarily thought that salt should be masculine. The Book of Mormon text is gender neutral.

In the Greek text, there is no noun equivalent to “savor.” The phrase is *ean de to halas mōranthē*. Deterioration is implicit in the meaning of the verb *mrainō*, here in the form *mōranthē*. That verb is derived from the adjective *mōros* (dull, stupid, the origin of “moron”), and meant “to become foolish,” but with salt and other flavorings, it was used to mean “to become insipid,” or “flavorless.” The adjective (*mōros*) is used in the parable of the wise man and the foolish man, who is there called *moron*. Maybe it really should be translated, “if the salt become foolish....” We will learn at the end of the Sermon on the Mount how we can become foolish. Remaining pure and apart is important here. He has appointed us to be apart and pure, and not to be foolish or contaminated by the impurities of the world around us.

3 Nephi 12:14–16 — *I Give unto You to Be the Light of This People*

The people from Jerusalem would have readily related that statement to the Temple in Jerusalem, for the fire of the temple was burning twenty-four hours a day. It was a beacon that could be seen from miles away, in all directions. The Temple was the ultimate light on the hill, and the people in the temple made it much more than just a building: the priests were there keeping fires burning, and they had to have righteous people there performing the ordinances and sacrifices. However, in the 3 Nephi version, Jesus explicitly said to all of the multitude—men, women, and children—“I give unto you....” In other words, He challenged all of them to “be the light of this people.” He was saying that, as a temple community, they will be a light on a hill as was and is the temple.

In verse 15, Jesus asked, “Do men light a candle,” that is in Greek a lamp (*luchnos*), which refers to a little clay lamp. Does a person light their lamp and put it under a bushel (a *modius*)? No. When you light a lamp, you put it on—not a *candlestick* because they did not have candles—but on a *luchnia*. In Exodus (in the Greek Septuagint), the word *luchnia* exclusively means the *menorah* of the temple. Thus, Jesus instructs each of us to bring our *lamp* and add it to the light of the *menorah*, which was the light within the temple. Your light, then, would add to the light upon the hill of the temple. It would shine so that everyone in the House of Israel would see.

What is a *modius*? A “bushel” is a very rough approximation for what the Greek indicated. In the traditional Greek dictionary (LS), it is defined “as a dry measure of about two gallons.” That word, of Latin origin, was used almost exclusively with regard to the Egyptian god Serapis. Serapis was a male god in Egypt that was the companion of Isis. He was an agricultural god; they sacrificed to Serapis and he would make their crops grow. He always wore a *modius*, a measuring container on his head, as his cap or crown. Jesus may have been teaching that you should not put your light under one of those pagan gods that the Gentiles worship, because they were to understand instead that He was the light they should be holding up.

Further Reading

Book of Mormon Central, “[What Makes 3 Nephi the Holy of Holies of the Book of Mormon? \(3 Nephi 14:13–14\)](#),” *KnoWhy* 206, (October 11, 2016).

3 Nephi 12:18–20 — Jesus Exhorts Us to Keep the Commandments

Jesus applied the covenant to obey and to teach the fullness of “the law and commandments of the Father” (3 Nephi 12:19), including repentance. He pointed out that we must keep every “jot and tittle” of the law, since it was not destroyed, but fulfilled (v. 18). He asked us to offer a “broken heart and contrite spirit” as a sacrifice (see already 3 Nephi 9:20), and to come to Him and be saved. He presented here both a law of sacrifice and a law of obedience. Jesus would then continue further by giving the higher aspects of the law once these first two foundational laws were understood and accepted.

Here we learn that Jesus gave many important commandments, and we in the Church should also be clear on that. These commandments range from keeping the Sabbath Day holy to loving your neighbor as yourself. They incorporate many things that we should encourage each other to do. The laws and doctrines of the Kingdom of God constitute an interwoven fabric. As Neal A. Maxwell has said at the end of his book *Whom the Lord Loveth*, “The doctrines of the Church need each other as much as the people of the Church need each other. We dare not break the doctrines apart or specialize within them, because we need them all,” and because they all need each other as one great whole.

3 Nephi 12:21–22 — Jesus Commands Us Not to Be Angry with Our Brother

The Ten Commandments include the law, “Thou shalt not kill.” Taking this to a deeper level, Jesus gives a new version of this commandment: “Thou shall not be angry with thy brother.” Why taming our tempers and emotions is important in all of our human relations, what Jesus says here is specifically relevant within a religious covenant community. It is unbecoming for members of the covenant community to be angry with each other. We may not call him or her a fool, *moros*. As with insipid salt, fools are cast out, excommunicated. That kind of demeaning speech used against a member of the community is inappropriate; it is a powerful form of evil-speaking, and there is a strict prohibition against speaking evil of anyone who is among the members of the holy church.

Matthew 5:22 reads, “Whosoever is angry with his brother without a cause...” but 3 Nephi 12:22 does not have the phrase “without a cause.” The Book of Mormon has the stronger statement here. If you are angry with your brother, period, you are in trouble, and you will be in danger of the council and in danger of the judgment of God. In the Greek, the one small word *eikē* has been translated as “without a cause,” but it can also mean “rashly” or “unseemly.” Perhaps someone inserted that little word later into Jesus’s warning here, thinking that surely Jesus did not mean that we could not *ever* be angry. However, in the

Book of Mormon, Jesus strongly declared that He did not want anger at all among his covenant makers. Some of the earliest manuscripts of Matthew do not have that little word *eikē*, so the better manuscripts and translations assume that Jesus originally said what the Book of Mormon has him say.

3 Nephi 12:23–24 — To Which Brother Was Jesus Referring?

We may well ask, “Who is our brother?” It is anyone in the covenant community. If we are angry with a fellow covenant member, we are alienating ourselves from the community. In Matthew it next says, “If thou bring thy gift to the altar, and *there* rememberest that thy brother hath ought against thee...,” then we must reconcile with the brother, and then we can come back to the altar and offer our gift. In 3 Nephi 12, it is a little different. “If ye shall come unto me, or shall *desire to come* unto me, and rememberest that thy brother hath aught against thee...” Whether we already find ourselves at the altar or are just wishing to come to the altar of Christ, we must be reconciled to our community.

To which brother was Jesus referring? To any brother, or sister. Both in the Bible and here in 3 Nephi, where Jesus taught in an explicit temple context, if you ever realize that somebody especially within the Church has a problem with you, you need to seek that person out and reconcile before going forward with your service or worship in the name of Christ.

3 Nephi 12:25–26 — Who Is Your “Adversary?”

Next Jesus says, “Agree with thine adversary quickly.” There are two ways to answer the question of who this adversary may be. First, when we are with a group of people preparing for any holy sacrificial activity, and we realize that some dispute exists that may lead to litigation, the “adversary” would be the person who is accusing us in court. We are to leave and settle the issue as best we can before we proceed, so that our spiritual activities are not impaired.

A second way to understand who the “adversary” is may come from the Hebrew term for an adversary, or a prosecutor, or a plaintiff. In Jewish law the term is a *satan*. The devil, or Lucifer, is called Satan because at the final judgment, he will be our accuser. He will be the plaintiff. He will be there making accusations and trying to win the day. Against him, we will have Jesus as our advocate, if we have retained Him through our repentance and acceptance. I do not know that there is an allusion here in this text to Satan, but it is interesting that the terminology is such that it may already have in mind the final judgment. Jesus may be saying here that we need to put Satan quickly aside and to get out of Satan’s way. We do not “settle” with Satan by agreeing with him, and we are not going to win any fights against him without the help of the Savior. But we take refuge in the temple, getting quickly into a safe place where we can make our offerings amidst a group of faithful people, we are stronger together against the forces of evil.

3 Nephi 12:27–32 — A Higher Order of Marriage, Chastity, and Divorce

Next, Jesus taught the law of chastity and a related law of divorce pertaining to covenant marriages. On divorce, He comments that it was written in the Law of Moses that if a man were going to put his wife away, he needed only to give her a written bill of divorcement. This is found in Deuteronomy 24:1. But instead, Jesus now said that divorce is only permissible in the case of fornication. He did not allow the same kind of latitude as was available under Deuteronomy. There were many Jewish interpretations of Deuteronomy 24, such as those that said that, if a man found any uncleanness, or anything that was undesirable about his wife, he could give her a bill of divorcement. For those people, marriage had become a simple contract between a man and a woman, and that contract could be broken unilaterally, usually by the man.

But Jesus taught that covenant marriage (see Malachi 2:14) was not that kind of bilateral relationship. Spouses bound by covenant with God, however, were only to enter into divorce under very certain conditions, probably only if they could prove that there had been a real violation of the marriage covenant. Especially in Matthew 19, Jesus explains (in answer to the question about why he disagrees with Deuteronomy 24) that what *God has put together*, man shall not put asunder. Jesus teaches here that covenant marriages, which involve God in the relationship, are not easy to live (Matthew 19:11). Such marriages are not unilaterally created, and thus they are not to be unilaterally terminated. There may or may not have been a way in early Christianity for some kind of an ecclesiastical determination that such a marriage could legitimately end, but such was not something that either the husband or wife should decide on their own accord without thinking about God and His will. For Jesus, the covenant relationship of marriage was sacred. In my view, what Jesus said about divorce (both in Matthew and at the temple in Bountiful) assumes a covenant relationship between the husband and wife that had been ratified, blessed, or sealed by God, and thus could not be lightly abandoned. Jesus taught that, in this new temple context, the responsibilities of marriage, divorce, and chastity will be taken much more seriously, and that the heavenly blessings, accordingly, are much higher.

3 Nephi 12:33–37 — A More Solemn Way of Swearing and Promising

The old law of “forswearing yourself” is referring to swearing an oath invoking the name of God, usually in connection with testimony in court. It also referred to making vows when consecrating certain property to the temple, as in Leviticus 27. Jesus offered three prohibitions: do not swear, even by heaven, by the earth, or by thine head. Thou shalt not *forswear thyself* is translated *thou shalt not bear false witness* in Matthew. In the Ten Commandments, it reads, “Thou shalt not take the name of the Lord thy God in vain,” which is defined in the Bible notes as “uttering an oath or makes a promise using the Lord’s name without valid purpose.”

Jesus' injunction to not "swear by thy head" may sound strange, but a priest under the Law of Moses had to retire when they grew white hairs (3 Nephi 12:36). The mandatory retirement age under the Law of Moses for priests was fifty years old. It was a lot of work to do all the heavy lifting involved with the sacrifices, so they had to be young enough that their hair was still black. If one single white hair appeared, they lost their job as a priest. Perhaps people would swear "by my black hair," meaning they were perfectly able, as a priest, to invoke the name of God. However, Jesus prohibited that. That is not how we make our oaths and covenants, for "you cannot make one hair black or white."

Jesus said that our communication should be simply "Yea, yea and nay, nay." That means if they were going to enter into the covenant being made there, they should just bow their heads and say "yes," or "no."

3 Nephi 12:39–45 — Give Aid to Even Your Enemies

We must help the poor and the needy. Both Matthew 5 and 3 Nephi 12 mention that if someone asks you to give them your coat, you should give them your cloak too; if they ask you to go a mile, go two. People who were on the road may have asked for this kind of help, especially refugees. There were a lot of refugees in the ancient world, where people were constantly being cast out of their communities, and famine would lead them to go seeking food. The children of Israel ended up in Egypt because there was a famine in their land. They went to Egypt to buy wheat from the stores that Joseph had wisely preserved.

Today there are plenty of displaced people. We have refugees right in our own community. They are not hard to find. We need to reach out, we need to look more. The Church does a lot, but it is also up to individuals to do so also.

Some people may ask, why should we bring refugees in when they are our enemies? The Sermon on the Mount passages that I am thinking of in response to that question is "Love your enemies," and not only that, but "Do good to them that despitefully use you." "Turn the other cheek." After all, "God maketh his sun to rise on the evil and on the good," and we should strive to be like God and his Son.

3 Nephi 12:48 — Jesus Invites Us to Strive for Perfection

It is very significant that Jesus taught the people at the temple in Bountiful to be perfect even as he or his Father which is in Heaven is perfect. What Jesus actually said was, "*I would that ye should be perfect.*" Verbally, this was not so much a commandment, it was not an order, as it was a wish or an open invitation. That we could become as He and His Father are was the greatest, deepest desire of his heart, that we would go on to become fully perfected, fully completed, fully initiated and brought into a complete understanding of who we are and who He is, which can eventually be our great blessing.

At this point, the people had now gotten through the first stage of this instruction; they had gone through what we might call the Aaronic Priesthood part, what was said and written under the old law by those of former times. When we move to the next chapter, in 3 Nephi 13, Jesus gives the road map on the next stage in becoming perfect and finished.

Indeed, the Greek word in the New Testament for perfect is *teleois*, which means “complete, finished, or fully developed.” Nowadays, we think of the concept of *perfect* scientifically or mathematically. For us, something is perfect if it is one hundred percent. But this was a foreign concept in antiquity. In the ancient world, they could not even express a fraction with a numerator greater than one. They had terms for one half, one third, one fourth, one fifth, but if they wanted to say “three-fourths,” they had to say “one-half-plus-one-fourth.” How much less could they imagine the mathematical idea of ninety-five one-hundredths. The ancients did not have the zero either, so, they did not have either of these ideas, of *perfection* and *nothingness*, on a mathematical scale as we do.

Interestingly and instead, there are Greek texts from the mystery religions, such as the Orphics and the Pythagoreans, that all had initiation rituals. When people had been through the initiation, they were called *teliotos*, roughly equivalent to our word “completed.” We can finish a project and say that it is *finished*, but we are not saying that it is *perfect*.

Our modern impression of perfection is more related to a basic philosophical idea of Platonism. Plato posed questions such as, “Do you know what a chair is? How do you know what a chair is? Have you ever seen a perfect chair? Which chair in this room is the perfect chair?” He then could show that there was no such thing as the absolute chair in the material world. So, for them the concept of a chair only existed somewhere out there in the realm of pure forms and ideals. The essential or perfect idea of things thus became idealized and conceptualized. Christianity eventually adopted this idea of Platonism, and with it developed our modern perception of “perfection.” In Hebrew, however, the word that gets translated into “perfect” is *shalom*, which doesn’t mean perfect but means to be *at peace* and *satisfied*. And not just at peace with ourselves, but at peace with God. *Shalom* also describes the relationship that we have with God when we have been through the process of atonement, and we are reconciled and at peace with God.

Further Reading

Book of Mormon Central, “[What Does It Mean to Be Perfect?](#) (3 Nephi 12:48),” *KnoWhy* 335 (July 5, 2017). “Instead of expecting people to be ‘without mistake,’ Jesus may have been commanding them to be made whole through making covenants with Him.”

Thomas S. Monson, “[Choices.](#)” *Ensign*, May 2016: “The gift of repentance, provided by our Savior, enables us to correct our course settings, that we might return to

the path which will lead us to that celestial glory we seek. ... As we contemplate the decisions we make in our lives each day—whether to make this choice or that choice—if we choose Christ, we will have made the correct choice.”

3 Nephi 12:48 — Temple Connections to Being Perfect

There are a lot of wonderful, rich nuances to this word “perfect,” and many, many of them have temple connections. There is a subtle undertone of another word for perfect, *teliosis*. This word is found eleven times at the end of Exodus and the beginning of Leviticus to describe an offering that is *consecrated* to God and given in the temple. Giving it to God is your final act, the *teliosis*. Now, bear in mind that the law of consecration is one of the last of the principles in the endowment.

Similarly, if you were to say a phrase like “the presence of God” to one of Jesus’ listeners, they most likely would immediately associate it with the holy of holies in their temple; that was where the presence of God was found. When Jesus said, “Repent of your sins, and come unto me,” they may have thought that has something to do with instruction on how to stand worthily before the face of God. The holy of holies was a perfect cube, 10 cubits by 10 cubits by 10 cubits, and the number ten is not accidental. It was the perfect number to the third power because it represented the state of completeness, or perfection— God’s perfection. Thus, with this word, Jesus was essentially teaching how to be able to enter into the holy of holies. Under the Law of Moses, only the high priest could go into the holy of holies. But upon Jesus’ death, the veil into the holy of holies was rent, and now everyone who is worthy, has the proper priesthood and instruction, and has a covenant relationship is able to enter into the presence of God, as the people gathered in Bountiful fully enjoyed.

3 Nephi 13

As you read this chapter, consider such questions as:

- How long does it take to reach this chapter out loud? (not very long)
- How many “commandments” are found in this chapter? (quite a few statements here are imperatives)
- What is the “ordinary life” meaning of each passage, and what is the “temple significance” of each? (many of these points have two levels)
- In what ways are we presented with a “higher order” of spirituality and righteousness in 3 Nephi 13 than was given in 3 Nephi 12?
- What benefits come from giving to the poor in secret?

- What is the order of prayer taught by the Savior in this chapter? And according to this pattern, what should a person be sure to include in his or her prayers? (do we pray enough for help in overcoming temptations, do we ask enough for forgiveness, and do we praise God enough for his wonderful goodness?)
- Is it fair that we should be forgiven only to the extent that we forgive others?
- How can we teach one another and our children to appreciate fasting, washing, and anointing?
- How does a person “lay up treasures in heaven”? What should be one’s motivation in doing this?
- In what ways is it true that a person cannot serve two masters?
- Since the Book of Mormon directs this statement specifically to the Twelve disciples, what should an ordinary member of the Church make of the passage about the lilies of the field and the Lord giving us food and clothing? What relevance does this part of the Sermon at the Temple have in today’s world and economy?

3 Nephi 13:1–4 — Give Gifts to Honor God

Jesus said that we should give our gifts in secret, not to be seen of men. For this reason, of course, none of us have ever seen a plaque on the wall in the back of our chapels that lists the top ten tithing donors of the ward. It would be outrageous to do that. In some social settings, those who give most command more respect. We understand why that happens, but Jesus taught that the Father, who seeth in secret, himself shall reward thee openly. Thus, our donations are given completely confidentially.

Even if a bishop wanted to look at the tithing receipts handed out at the end of the year for tax purposes, they may not be a complete record of a person’s tithing, because we can donate directly to the tithing office. The Bishop never gets a report from the tithing office, and tithing settlement is on the honor system. We go to great lengths in the Church to see that such gifts and contributions are given in secret. Those funds are treated as consecrated gifts. They are used by revelation as directed by the Prophet.

3 Nephi 13:5–8 — Jesus Teaches about Prayer

Jesus recommended personal, individual prayer in these Sermons. He suggested that we go into our closets to pray alone. The Greek uses the second person singular “you” (“thou”) in “when you pray.” He adds that we should not use vain repetitions or pray just to be heard.

In Luke 18:9–14, we read of Jesus telling a parable to “certain which trusted in themselves that they were righteous, and despised others,” about a Pharisee and a publican [tax collector], both of whom went to the temple to pray. The Pharisee, stood and uttered words such as, “God, I thank thee, that I am not as other men are, extortioners, unjust,

adulterers, or even as this publican,” and proceeded to list his qualities. The publican, meanwhile, smote upon his breast, saying, “God be merciful to me a sinner.” Jesus was teaching us in Luke, as here in 3 Nephi 13:7, to be humble in our prayers, approaching God sincerely. We shall not be heard for “our much speaking. Be not ye therefore like unto them, for your Father knoweth what things ye have need of before ye ask him.”

Joachim Jeremias, a German theologian (1900–1979) drew attention to the following prayer that is recorded in the Talmud, a prayer that was much like what Jesus is suggesting in the Sermon that we should avoid. It was recorded as Rabbi Nehunia’s prayer of thanks that followed his rather effusive first prayer of praise. The example Jesus gave, then, was taken from a real prayer, or as Jeremias put it, “The prayer was taken from life” (Joachim Jeremias, *Parables of Jesus*, New York, NY, Charles Scribner’s Sons, 1972, 143):

I give thanks to Thee, O Lord my God, that Thou hast set my portion with those who sit in the *Beth ha-Midrash* (house of learning) and Thou hast not set my portion with those who sit in [street] corners, for I rise early and they rise early, but I rise early for words of Torah and they rise early for frivolous talk; I labour and they labour, but I labour and receive a reward and they labour and do not receive a reward; I run and they run, but I run to the life of the future world and they run to the pit of destruction (*Berakoth 28b*, in *Babylonian Talmud*).

3 Nephi 13:9–13 — Jesus Taught the Lord’s Prayer

Beyond private prayer, Jesus gave the Lord’s Prayer. It demonstrates how we should pray as a group. Jesus begins: “when *ye* [plural] pray.” Several early Christian texts document the use of sacred group prayers, with the participants standing in a circle around Jesus at the center. The Lord’s Prayer was undoubtedly intended as a pattern or model for group prayers. Jesus probably taught something like it on several occasions and fluidly modified it somewhat each time, as reflected in the fact that no two texts of the prayer are quite the same (see Matthew 6:9–13; Luke 11:2–4; and 3 Nephi 13:9–13; Didache 8 offers yet a fourth independent version). The early church father Origen understood the Lord’s Prayer to be only a model or outline, and the rabbis similarly expressed strong prohibitions against reciting a fixed prayer, recommending that in saying a set personal prayer one should vary it a little each time.

It is possible, in the early church, that the person leading the prayer may have said, “Our Father which art in Heaven,” and then the group may have responded antiphonally, “Hallowed be thy name.” The pattern for that prayer was thought to be one of the holy things that should not be cast before the dogs.

In the Sermon at the Temple, the words “give us this day our daily bread” are not found in the Book of Mormon version, but they are in the Joseph Smith Translation. Why might that

be not here in the situation in Bountiful? The word “daily” is an untranslatable word in the Greek. The word is *epiousion*, and a literal translation might be, “Give us this day our bread that is beyond being.” The roots of *epiousion* are *ousion*, a form of *eimi*, which is “to be.” The *epi* means “above” and “upon.” How did it become “daily bread”? Well, the Jerome translation into Latin rendered this as “daily.” And indeed, we eat bread daily, and should give thanks daily. However, the Greek may have been saying something more like “Give us this day our heavenly bread,” or that which is “above” nature or “super” natural. Jesus is that bread, or the new heavenly manna, as he said, “I am that bread of life” (John 6:48).

Further Reading

Book of Mormon Central, “[Why Is the Lord’s Prayer Different in 3 Nephi?](#) (3 Nephi 13:9) *KnoWhy* 204 (October 7, 2016).

John W. Welch, *Illuminating the Sermon at the Temple and the Sermon on the Mount* (Provo, UT: FARMS, 1999), 79–82, 206–208.

John W. Welch, “[The Lord’s Prayers](#),” *Ensign*, January, 1976.

3 Nephi 13:28–30 — God Will Clothe Us When We Rely on Him

After speaking about washing, anointing (13:16–18), laying up treasures in heaven (13:19–21), and serving only one master (13:22–24), Jesus concluded this section of the Sermon by speaking in an aside to the twelve disciples, about God clothing them in garments more glorious than Solomon’s. He was making sure that they knew that He would take care of them. However, like most of Christ’s sayings in this Sermon, there are several levels of meaning here. The word for “raiment”, and [what ye shall] “put on,” here in the Greek is *enduo*, and we get the word “endow” from that Greek word. When you are *endowed* you are literally being robed or dressed. One meaning of the verb form of the word is to “invest with clothing,” literally or figuratively. It means to put on clothing, but also means to put on virtues and powers. Here Jesus says, “I will robe you; I will clothe you in garments more glorious than Solomon’s.” This is yet another temple element. Solomon was the great temple builder and king in Jerusalem following the death of his father King David, and as great as Solomon was, he still died. The garment of which Jesus speaks will have eternal value, and if we seek “first the kingdom of God and his righteousness” (13:33), all things shall be added unto us.

Shortly after that, in the Sermon (see 3 Nephi 14:12), Jesus said, “This is the law and the prophets.” So, we may conclude that what we are given in 3 Nephi 13 constitutes the higher “prophets” and Melchizedekian material, just as 3 Nephi 12 had taught the “law” or the Aaronic segments.

Further Reading

John W. Welch, "New Testament Word Studies—Endow," *Ensign*, April 1993.

3 Nephi 14

Chapter 14 — Preparing to Pass Successfully through the Final Judgment

In these concluding statements, Jesus prepares all of his followers to pass victoriously through God's final judgment.

- He tells us the standard by which we will be judged, namely the manner in which we ourselves have judged others.
- He tells us that we must seek, and ask, and even knock, in order to receive the gifts our Father has prepared for us, for God will not force any person into his presence against their own will.
- He makes it clear that there are only two ways, and two kinds of fruit trees, and that we will be judged by the fruits or our works, and that only those who do the will of the Father and are "known" to Him shall be allowed to enter.
- He admonishes all to build their lives upon "the rock," upon him and his holy mount.

3 Nephi 14:1–2 — Judge Righteous Judgment

Jesus warned people not to judge unrighteously. Of course, in daily life we must make decisions, value judgments, and personal assessments. But we must do this carefully, realizing that if we judge unrighteously, God will ultimately hold us to our own unrighteous standards. Elder Oaks taught:

I have been puzzled that some scriptures command us not to judge and others instruct us that we should judge and even tell us how to do it. I am convinced that these seemingly contradictory directions are consistent when we view them with the perspective of eternity. The key is to understand that there are two kinds of judging: final judgments, which we are forbidden to make; and intermediate judgments, which we are directed to make, but upon righteous principles. ... There is a doctrine underlying the subject of gospel judging. It was taught when a lawyer asked the Savior, "Which is the great commandment in the law?" (Matthew 22:36). Jesus answered: "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind. This is the first and great commandment. And the second is like unto it, Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself. On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets [vv. 37–40]."

Thus, Jesus mentions “the law and the prophets” in 3 Nephi 14:12. Judging, in the sense of *deciding*, is not the problem, but the problem is judging incorrectly, in an ungodly fashion, or selfishly, in an unneighborly fashion.

Thus, President Brigham Young wisely taught:

I am very thankful that it is not our province ... to judge the world; if it were, we would ruin everything. We have not sufficient wisdom; our minds are not filled with the knowledge and power of God. ... And we must also acquire the discretion that God exercises in being able to look into futurity, and to ascertain and know the results of our acts away in the future, even in eternity, before we will be capable of judging. (*Journal of Discourses* 19:7–8)

The risk here is that we may want to play it safe and not judge at all, attempting to avoid judging unrighteously, but we are commanded to “judge righteously” (Alma 41:14), so we may not be keeping the whole commandment if we try to play it too safe. We are commanded to help our brother by casting the fleck of sawdust, the “mote,” out of a brother’s eye (13:5), but in order to do so, we must first get the huge wooden ceiling beam out of our own eye or field of vision.

Obviously, we have to be careful. We need to consider how we will be judged and what the final judgment will look like. Notice that the judging principle is similar to the forgiveness concept. If we forgive a lot, we will be forgiven a lot. How we judge is how we will be judged. In the end, combining these principles, Jesus teaches that mercy triumphs over judgment.

Further Reading

Dallin H. Oaks, “[Judge Not and Judging](#),” *BYU Devotional*, March 1, 1998.

3 Nephi 14:6 – Keep Sacred Things Sacred

At this point, Jesus said, “Give not that which is holy unto the dogs, neither cast ye your pearls before swine.” What did He mean by “that which is holy?” What was it that He was comparing to pearls? What pearls and holy things should we be safeguarding? How can we apply this in our day?

The “holy” things in this verse may be referring to a sacred ritual of some kind that is not to be shared indiscriminately with people. Speaking literally, dogs were unclean creatures by the law. The cost of a dog was not be brought into the temple of the Lord for a vow (Deuteronomy 23:18). Things that were unclean, such as flesh torn by beasts, were to be fed to dogs: “neither shall ye eat any flesh that is torn of beasts in the field; ye shall cast it to the dogs” (Exodus 22:31), which made them all the more unclean. But nothing that was holy was to be given to them.

3 Nephi 14:13–23 — Not All Who Say “Lord, Lord” Will Enter the Kingdom of Heaven

Finally, Jesus told us the way back to His Father. There are only two ways. He gave us the strait and narrow path to follow. If we will follow that path, recognize false teachers in sheep’s clothing, come to the gate and knock at His door, and ask for admission, He will open it. The Father will be there to greet us, and we will be allowed to enter in through a narrow entry into His presence. But others who do not follow this path will be told, unfortunately, “I never knew you; depart from me, ye that work iniquity” (13:23).

As King Benjamin taught, the only way we can really know the Lord is by entering into a covenant, taking upon ourselves His name and then serving Him (Mosiah 5:5–13) with all our heart—single-mindedly with full consecration to Him and an eye single to His purposes. Those who “know” the Lord in this relational way will then be allowed to enter into His presence.

Many of these teachings must have had a familiar ring to Jesus’s audiences. The line, “Depart from me ye workers of iniquity,” comes right out of Psalm 6:8, a song that the audience probably sang as temple worshippers. I do not want the Lord to say to me, “Depart ye worker of iniquity,” but instead, “Enter into my presence.”

3 Nephi 14:24–27 — We Must Build on the Only Sure Foundation

Finally, Jesus makes it clear that he expected the Nephites to metaphorically build their houses upon a rock. Would any old rock work as such a great foundation? What rock do you think a Jewish listener may have thought of when Jesus made this statement? They may have thought of Moses striking the rock and water gushing forth (Numbers 20:8–11). They may have thought of the temple mount, the rock of sacrifice and safety (Judges 13:19; Psalms 27:5).

The King James version of this says that the wise man built his house on *a* rock, but the Greek says, *the* rock, not just *a* rock. It says *epi tēn petran*—upon *the* rock. Sometimes we talk about the wise man building his house upon a rock as though any old rock would do. What rock should we be building upon? Helaman 5:12 says, “Remember that it is upon the rock of our Redeemer, who is Christ, the Son of God, that ye must build your foundation.” The Savior and his temple are one. We can build upon the mountain of the Lord, where he is to be found.

3 Nephi 15–16 Overview

In the chapters 15–18, the ministry of Jesus among the people at Bountiful continues throughout the rest of that first day. Here are a few questions regarding the words of Jesus in chapters 15–16:

- How have old things become new without being destroyed?
- How do the words of Jesus in these verses shape the Latter-day Saint view of divine law, of the law of Moses, and the mission of Jesus Christ?
- How is this information important for the world in general and to you in particular?
- Why and what does Jesus speak to the Nephite disciples about God remembering His sheep?
- What can one learn about the relationships between God and Jesus, between God and all His people who are of the House of Israel, and between God and the Gentiles in these verses?
- How does that knowledge strengthen your relationship with the Father and His Son?

While Jesus re-uses several phrases from chapters 11–14 in 3 Nephi 15 and 16, there is more going on in this summation and application than a mere recapitulation. The essence of the Sermon was well understood and clearly applied. The Sermon on the Mount has not been just dropped into the Book of Mormon in a clumsy kind of way. But it belongs here in brilliant ways that Jesus will now review, explicate, and apply. Notice that Jesus reused His own words. Having initially taught them, He now enlightened them, going through in the reverse order, as follows:

In chapter 12, Jesus had introduced four things in this order:

If the salt shall lose its savor (12:13),

Be the light of this people (12:14),

Think not that I am come to destroy the law or the prophets (12:17), and

In me it hath all been fulfilled (12:18).

In chapters 15 and 16, Jesus emphasizes and elaborates these specific points in the opposite order, as follows:

The law in me is fulfilled (15:4),

I do not destroy the prophets (15:6–7),

Ye are a light unto this people, who are a remnant of the house of Joseph (15:12), and

Those who will not turn to Christ will be as salt that has lost its savor (16:15).

Obviously, Jesus knew how to use the structural and rhetorical power of introducing ideas in one order and then going back through those in the opposite order to finish where he started. It was a powerful and an organized way of presenting ideas. It is a recognizable chiasmic structure with which these people were well familiar. The structure may indicate that these passages were most likely not just being casually repeated, but were being embedded deliberately in a holy two-way covenant-making context.

Further Reading

John W. Welch, "Worthy of Another Look: Reusages of the Words of Christ," *Journal of the Book of Mormon and Other Restoration Scripture* 22, no. 1 (2013): 62–72.

3 Nephi 15:1 — Jesus Had Now Taught Everything He Had Taught in the Old World

Jesus said in 3 Nephi 15:1 that he had taught the people in Bountiful "the things" that he taught his disciples in Jerusalem before he ascended into heaven. As previously discussed in the set of notes addressing 3 Nephi 10:18, that ascension was most likely at the end of Jesus's 40-day ministry among his disciples and the many others to whom he appeared. He ascended, waited until the time was right—not very long—and then he appeared in the New World shortly thereafter.

3 Nephi 15:1 — We Should Remember and Do His Sayings

"Therefore, whoso *remembereth* these sayings of mine and *doeth* them" This is building on 3 Nephi 14:24, "Therefore, whoso *heareth* these sayings of mine and *doeth* them, I will liken him unto a wise man, who builds his house upon a rock." But it is not enough just to hear them; now they must be remembered. There is a difference between hearing and remembering. Jesus emphasized, especially in the sacrament prayers, the importance of *remembering* what he taught. Here he says, "If you remember and do them, I will raise you up at the last day." This is a covenantal promise on his part. It was no longer just "if you hear and do them," and build your house, you are building on a rock. The floods will descend and your house will stand. Here Jesus says more than that. If you build your house on this rock—which is the temple or all the temple-related teachings and the covenants that are involved there—then I will raise you up at the last day. You will have the blessings of the holy resurrection and be able to come forth into the presence of God.

3 Nephi 15:9–10 — Those Who Endure to the End Shall Be Saved

This is the resurrected Christ speaking to them, so when He spoke of enduring to the end, He was speaking from His own serious experience and perspective. When He said, “I am the law and light,” it is important to remember here that Jesus Christ had already overcome death and had been resurrected. So He was speaking from a different perspective now in giving these commandments and promises. The people in Bountiful had put their fingers in the tokens of His sacrifice, and so they knew what He was saying. When he said, “I am the law, I have done this,” it seems like a very different perspective from before. Jesus had spoken as one who would be going to do these things. He is now speaking as one truly having even greater power and authority.

3 Nephi 15:21–22 — Other Sheep I Have Which Are Not of This Fold

When Jesus appeared to the Nephites, he told them that they were among the “other sheep” that must be brought into the fold (3 Nephi 15:21). 1 Nephi 5:14 states that Lehi was a descendant of Joseph, and in Alma 10:3, Amulek tells the people of Ammonihah that Lehi was a descendant of Manasseh. The tribes of Ephraim and Manasseh, sons of Joseph, were among the northern tribes that became “lost.” The Nephites, then, were actually part of the “lost” tribes, and the “other sheep” referred to them, among others. However, the people of ancient Judea understood him “not, for they supposed it had been the Gentiles; for they understood not that the Gentiles should be converted through their preaching” (3 Nephi 15:22). And, just as Jesus Christ remembered these “other sheep,” he will remember all of God’s children, today and forever.

Further Reading

Book of Mormon Central, [“Why Did Jesus Say That There Were “Other Sheep” Who Would Hear His Voice?”](#) (3 Nephi 15:21), *KnowWhy* 207 (October 12, 2016).

3 Nephi 16

The careful integration of the Sermon at the Temple throughout the remainder of 3 Nephi provides a means of understanding seemingly obscure parts of the Sermon on the Mount, as has been noted above. But it does something else as well. By quoting His own words so often, Jesus taught His people the central importance of this primary Sermon, which He said (19:8) was to be remembered and used with precision, “nothing varying.” So should it be for us as well.

In this chapter, Jesus next explains that He will go to “other sheep” (16:1) in addition to these people at Bountiful, so that they may all be “one fold and one shepherd” (16:3). He commands the Nephites to write what Jesus has taught them so that it can come forth and

all “may be brought to a knowledge of [Christ], their Redeemer” (16:4). The believing Gentiles will be blessed, but the “fullness” of the gospel will be taken from “the unbelieving Gentiles” who commit all kinds of sins. But if they will repent, they shall yet “be numbered among my people” (16:13). Otherwise, they will be “trodden under foot” (16:15), as the salt that has lost its savor (12:13). Jesus then ended this concluding peroration by saying that, in all of this, the words of Isaiah (in Isaiah 52:8–10) “shall be fulfilled,” and he then quoted Isaiah 52:8–10 (see 16:17–20), and was about to leave.

I suspect that Jesus was thinking at that time that He would discuss Isaiah 52:8–10 further on the next day, as He was already planning to come again to these people on the next day (17:3). And indeed, when Jesus will return, He will pick up (in 3 Nephi 20:32–39) exactly where He leaves off here with Isaiah 52:8–10. That text was very important to the Nephites, having been cited by Abinadi back in Mosiah 15:29–31.

But as Jesus was turning to leave thinking He had already overwhelmed them (quoting Isaiah tends to do that to people), Jesus saw that the people were in tears. Moved with deepest compassion, He magnificently stayed on, as we will learn next in 3 Nephi 17–18.

Further Reading

Dana M. Pike, “‘How Beautiful upon the Mountains’: The Imagery of Isaiah 52:7–10 and Its Occurrences in the Book of Mormon,” in *Isaiah in the Book of Mormon*, ed. Donald Parry and John Welch (Provo: FARMS, 1998), esp. 266–272.

Book of Mormon Central, “Why is the Sermon at the Temple Echoed throughout the Rest of 3 Nephi? (3 Nephi 16:6), *KnoWhy* 208 (October 13, 2016).”

John W. Welch, “Echoes from the Sermon on the Mount,” in *The Sermon on the Mount in Latter-day Scripture*, ed. Gaye Strathearn, Thomas A. Wayment, and Daniel L. Belnap (Provo and Salt Lake City, UT: Religious Studies Center, Brigham Young University and Deseret Book, 2010), 314–315; reprinted as “Reusages of the Words of Christ,” *Journal of Book of Mormon Studies and Other Restoration Scripture*, 22 no. 1 (2013): 63–71.