

The Book of Mormon: Another Testament of Jesus Christ

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Jacob 5- Words of Mormon, Class Summary

“O Be Wise”

What does it mean to you to “know” something? What does it mean to “understand” something? What does it mean to you to “be wise?” Do you believe there’s a difference between knowledge, understanding, and wisdom? If so, what would that be?

In my mind, there is a difference between these related, but separate concepts. First, knowledge. To know something implies a mental comprehension of an idea or concept. However, we may know something but not understand it. Understanding takes knowing a step further—it involves the heart. It means we “get it” in a way that only knowing doesn’t always include. For example, I may know the theory of relativity and be able to repeat it, but still not “get it.”

Wisdom goes another step further. Wisdom involves knowing in the head, feeling in the heart, and communing with God in the soul. Wisdom is a vertical process, involving our Higher Power.

Allegory of the Olive Trees

“The parable of Zenos, recorded by Jacob in chapter five of his book, is one of the greatest parables ever recorded. This parable in and of itself stamps the Book of Mormon with convincing truth. No mortal man, without the inspiration of the Lord, could have written such a parable. It is a pity that too many of those who read the Book of Mormon pass over and slight the truths which it conveys in relation to the history, scattering, and final gathering of Israel” (*Answers to Gospel Questions*, comp. Joseph Fielding Smith Jr., 5 vols. [1957–66], 4:141).

1) What is an allegory?

An allegory is “a story with more than one level of meaning,” it “uses symbolic representations to convey moral or spiritual ideas.” It is similar to how the Savior teaches, with parables, but parables are considered shorter and less complex than an allegory.

2) Why does Jacob share this allegory here?

We find the answer in Jacob 4:12-18. Jacob shares this allegory in order to expound upon how the Jews would reject Christ and His atonement (Jacob 4:12-18).

3) What is the main point of this allegory?

Elder Jeffrey R. Holland of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles gives us the answer: “This allegory as recounted by Jacob is from the outset intended to be about Christ. . . . Even as the Lord of the vineyard and his workers strive to bolster, prune, purify,

and otherwise make productive their trees in what amounts to a one-chapter historical sketch of the scattering and gathering of Israel, the deeper meaning of the Atonement undergirds and overarches their labors.

“In spite of cuttings and graftings and nourishings that mix and mingle trees in virtually all parts of the vineyard, it is bringing them back to their source that is the principal theme of this allegory. Returning, repenting, reuniting—at one-ment—this is the message throughout.’

“... At least fifteen times the Lord of the vineyard expresses a desire to bring the vineyard and its harvest to his ‘own self,’ and he laments no less than eight times, ‘It grieveth me that I should lose this tree.’ One student of the allegory says it should take its place beside the parable of the prodigal son, inasmuch as both stories ‘make the Lord’s mercy so movingly memorable.’

“Clearly this at-one-ment is hard, demanding, and, at times, deeply painful work, as the work of redemption always is. There is digging and dunging. There is watering and nourishing and pruning. And there are always the endless approaches to grafting—all to one saving end, that the trees of the vineyard would ‘thrive exceedingly’ and become ‘one body; ... the fruits [being] equal,’ with the Lord of the vineyard having ‘preserved unto himself the ... fruit.’ From all the distant places of sin and alienation in which the children of the Father find themselves, it has always been the work of Christ (and his disciples) in every dispensation to gather them, heal them, and unite them with their Master” (*Christ and the New Covenant*[1997], 165–66).

What does Elder Holland help us understand about the work of redemption from the allegory’s many references to digging, dunging, nourishing, pruning, and grafting?

“What Could I Have Done More for My Vineyard?”

Jacob 5, verses 41 & 47 show us the undying love and devotion the Lord has for His vineyard—for us. He never gives up. He gives so many chances. He digs and nourishes and prunes and works tirelessly to save his vineyard. Read also Jacob 5:4, 7, 33, & 60. *How do you feel as you read these verses? Do you feel the Lord’s undying love for you? In what ways do you feel that love in your daily life?*

The Lord asked three times, “What could I have done more for my vineyard?” ([Jacob 5:41, 47, 49](#)). Elder Jeffrey R. Holland commented on how this question helps us understand the true nature of God and His unceasing efforts on behalf of His children:

“After digging and dunging, watering and weeding, trimming, pruning, transplanting, and grafting, the great Lord of the vineyard throws down his spade and his pruning shears and weeps, crying out to any who would listen,

‘What could I have done more for my vineyard?’ What an indelible image of God’s engagement in our lives! What anguish in a parent when His children do not choose Him nor ‘the gospel of God’ [[Romans 1:1](#)] He sent!” (in Conference Report, Oct. 2003, 74; or *Ensign*, Nov. 2003, 72).

Truly, the Lord “stretches forth his hands . . . all the day long” for our salvation ([Jacob 6:4](#)). Again, how does this make you feel?

Understanding the Allegory: Jacob 5

President Joseph Fielding Smith said:

“[Zenos’] remarkable parable portrays how [the] branches of the olive tree (Israelites) were carried to all parts of the earth (the Lord’s vineyard) and grafted into the wild olive trees (the Gentile nations). Thus they are fulfilling the promise that the Lord had made. Today Latter-day Saints are going to all parts of the world as servants in the vineyard to gather this fruit and lay it in store for the time of the coming of the Master” (*Answers to Gospel Questions*, 5 vols. [1957–66], 4:142).

As we seek to understand this allegory, we will come to understand not only the time of Christ and the scattering and apostasy of Israel, but we will come to understand what will be in our day, the latter days, as Israel is gathered once more.

If we break it down, there were actually 4 visits to the Vineyard. Let’s look at each.

- 1) 5: 3-14 The Scattering of Israel
- 2) 15-28 The Time of Christ
- 3) 29-49 The Great Apostasy
- 4) 50-77 The Gathering of Israel

As you read these verses, what do you learn about the Savior? What do you learn about the plan of salvation? What do you learn about your own life?

Verses 70-74 are particularly important for us, for they teach the principles of missionary work for our day. *Read the following verses and search for how they may apply to this day and especially to you.*

- In comparison to the world’s population, the missionary force is small (see [verse 70](#)).
- We are engaged in the Lord’s work, and He will labor with us (see [verse 71](#)).
- Workers in the Lord’s kingdom are successful only as they learn to obey the commandments of the Lord in all things (see [verse 72](#)).
- As missionaries go forward, they find many valiant people throughout the world (see [verse 73](#)).

The Lord is stretching forth His hand...Jacob 6

Read Jacob 6:4-6. After teaching Zenos's allegory, what gospel principles did Jacob emphasize? One thing that stands out for me is, once again, how the Lord continues to stand with his hand outstretched, ready to give us all we need to return to Him. Yet, how many in today's world reject His offer? How many fail to grasp His hand, to hold on with all their strength, might, and will? How many fail to receive His divine help on a daily, even moment-by-moment basis?

How can knowing that the Lord is stretching 'forth his hands...all the day long' (v.4) for you deepen your appreciation for Him?

In what ways can we serve the Lord in this final gathering? Specifically, what can you do? What will you do? When will you begin?

"O Be Wise..."

"...What can I say more?" (Jacob 6:12) Such a simple, yet powerful verse. *How can we "be wise?" What does this look like on a daily basis for you? How can we help our children "be wise?"* Truly, the only real wisdom comes from the Savior, from knowing Him, and especially from following Him. *What can you do to know and follow the Savior more wisely?*

Jacob 7: Sherem's Lesson: Avoid Being Deceived

Sherem teaches us what happens when we allow ourselves to be deceived. How can we prevent ourselves from being deceived when Satan works so tirelessly against us? President Ezra Taft Benson shared the following three questions we can ask ourselves:

"1. What do the standard works have to say about it? ...

"The Book of Mormon, Brigham Young said, was written on the tablets of his heart and no doubt helped save him from being deceived. ...

"2. The second guide is: what do the latter-day Presidents of the Church have to say on the subject—particularly the living President? ...

"3. The third and final test is the Holy Ghost—the test of the Spirit. ... This test can only be fully effective if one's channels of communication with God are clean and virtuous and uncluttered with sin. Said Brigham Young:

"You may know whether you are led right or wrong ... for every principle God has revealed carries its own convictions of its truth to the human mind. ... "What a pity it would be if we were led by one man to utter destruction!" (in Conference Report, Oct. 1963, 16–17).

How can you apply these questions in your life to prevent deceptions from creeping in?

Enos' "Wrestle before God"

Enos didn't wrestle with God, as too many of us do. Instead, he wrestled with himself, before God. Enos' wrestle involved "yearning to do God's will. Such prayers are assisted and guided by the Holy Spirit, who intercedes 'with groanings which cannot be uttered.' Note Enos' choice of words in these verse, 'sunk deep' (1:3), 'hungered,' "cried unto him in mighty prayer and supplication,' 'all the day long did I cry,' 'I did still raise my voice high' (v.4)." (BOM Student Manual, 1981) Have we ever "wrestled" before God in such a way?

As Spencer W. Kimball once asked:

"How many of you have thus persisted? How many of you, with or without serious transgressions, have ever prayed all day and into the night? Have you ever wept and prayed for many hours? How many of you have prayed for five hours? For one? For thirty minutes? For ten?... How much do you pray, my young friends? How often? How earnestly? If you should have errors in your life, have you wrestled before the Lord? Have you found your deep forest full of solitude? How much has your soul hungered? How deeply have your needs impressed your heart? When did you kneel before your Maker in total quiet? For what did you pray—your own soul? How long did you thus plead for recognition—all day long and when the shadows fell, did you still raise your voice in mighty prayer, or did you liquidate it with some trite word and phrase? As you struggle in the spirit and cry mightily and covenant sincerely, the voice of the Lord God will come into your mind, as it did to that of Enos, '... Thy sins are forgiven thee, and thou shalt be blessed.'" (Prayer, BYU Speeches of the Year, 11 Oct. 1961, pp.8-9)

"Do we hunger?" Do we wrestle with ourselves? How can we make prayer more meaningful?

Truly, the story of Enos is one worth reading, studying, and feasting upon. His is more than just a story; it shows us the way to Jesus Christ. As the 1981 Book of Mormon 121-122 student manual reads, "What price would you be willing to pay to know the Lord and to have a personal relationship with him? What would the essential ingredients of that price be? Enos answered all of these questions from personal experience. He gave us the formula for knowing the Lord, becoming changed, and acquiring a deep love for him and his children. To analyze the book of Enos is to analyze the price for developing a truly dynamic relationship with the Lord." (p. 145).

Wow! How do you feel as you read that? Do you feel as inspired and excited as I do? *Are you willing to "analyze" this book, to learn from Enos the way toward a "dynamic relationship with the Lord?" Do you desire this? Why or why not?*

“Offer Your Whole Souls as an Offering unto Him” Omni 1:25-26

What do you feel is the relationship between coming unto Christ and offering our “whole souls as an offering unto him”? The following statement by President Ezra Taft Benson offers an idea: “God loves us. He is watching us. He wants us to succeed. We will know some day that He has not left one thing undone for the eternal welfare of each of us. . . . This is our day to show what we can do—what life and sacrifice we can daily, hourly, instantly make for God. If we give our all, we will get His all from the greatest of all” (“Jesus Christ—Gifts and Expectations,” *Ensign*, Dec. 1988, 6).

Why must we offer our “whole souls” to receive the blessings of salvation? What can you sacrifice this week to come unto God more completely?

In conclusion...

The allegory of the olive tree, Jacob’s preaching with Sherem, and Enos’ wrestle with God all go back to one thing: the great plan of redemption and the incredible love our Savior has for each of us. Truly, we must seek to give back what little we have to He who has given all for us.

Elder Neal A. Maxwell taught the meaning of offering ourselves to the Lord: “Real, personal sacrifice never was placing an animal on the altar. Instead, it is a willingness to put the animal in us upon the altar and letting it be consumed!” (in Conference Report, Apr. 1995, 91; or *Ensign*, May 1995, 68). On the same topic, Elder Maxwell later taught: “As you submit your wills to God, you are giving Him the *only* thing you *can* actually give Him that is really yours to give” (in Conference Report, Apr. 2004, 48; or *Ensign*, May 2004, 46).

It is my prayer that we will choose to give Him what is rightly His already—even our will, our devotion, our love. I testify that, as we do so, we will receive of His remarkable love, we will be filled, and we will become like Him. We will be led, through our wildernesses, and we will receive that divine inheritance that awaits those who are His true followers. It’s up to each of us. “O be wise...”

Extra Tools

For a description of each element of the Vineyard, visit https://www.lds.org/bc/content/shared/content/images/gospel-library/manual/32506/32506_000_016_01-symbol_meaning.pdf

For a visual of the allegory of the tame and wild olive trees, visit https://www.lds.org/bc/content/shared/content/images/gospel-library/manual/32506/32506_000_016_02-olivetree.pdf

See also “A Brief History of the Scattering of Israel”:

https://www.lds.org/bc/content/shared/content/images/gospel-library/manual/32506/32506_000_057_09-history.pdf

And “The Gathering of Israel”

https://www.lds.org/bc/content/shared/content/images/gospel-library/manual/32506/32506_000_057_10-gathering.pdf

Ponder This

Revisit the italicized questions in this outline and truly ponder them. Focus on the following especially:

- 1) What does it mean to you to “be wise?” How can you be wiser in your daily life?
- 2) How do you feel as you read these verses? Do you feel the Lord’s love for all His people? For you? Why or why not? Write about this in your journal.
- 3) What can you give to the Savior? What are you willing to sacrifice? To offer? To do for Him? How will you do it? What stands in your way? How will you overcome? Write about this in your journal.