



17. Discourse on God's Relationship with Israel. Encounter with Sherem. Jacob's Farewell.

(Jacob 4-7)

" . . . be reconciled unto him through the atonement of Christ, his Only Begotten Son, and ye may obtain a resurrection, according to the power of the resurrection which is in Christ, and be presented as the first-fruits of Christ unto God . . ." (Jacob 4:11)

Hymn 6, "Redeemer of Israel" (vv. 1-2,4)

Redeemer of Israel,
Our only delight,
On whom for a blessing we call,
Our shadow by day,
And our pillar by night,
Our King, our Deliv'rer, our all.

As children of Zion,
Good tidings for us,
The tokens already appear;
Fear not, and be just,
For the kingdom is ours;
The hour of redemption is near.

We know He is coming
To gather His sheep.
And lead them to Zion in love;
For why in the valley
Of death should they weep,
Or in the lone wilderness rove?

Structure of Jacob 4–7

- Writing on Plates (4:1–3)
 - editorial digression for his readers explaining his record keeping practices
- Discourse on God’s Relationship with Israel (4:4–6:13)
 - a written treatise, see 4:1; follows the basic Isaiah Quotation formula:
 - Introduction: Prophets and Prophecy (4:4–18)
 - Quotation: Zenos’ Allegory of the Olive Tree (5:1–77)
 - Interpretation: Jacob’s Meditation on Zenos’ Allegory (6:1–13)
- Encounter with Sherem (7:1–23)
 - dramatic episode
- Struggles with the Lamanites (7:24–25)
 - historical narrative summary
- Jacob’s farewell (7:16–27)
 - narrative and direct address

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Prophets and Prophecy (4:4–18)

- **Prophetic knowledge of Christ** (4:4–7)
 - “For, for this intent have we written these things, that they may know that we knew of Christ, and we had a hope of his glory many hundred years before his coming; and **not only we ourselves had a hope of his glory, but also all the holy prophets which were before us.** Behold, **they believed in Christ and worshiped the Father in his name, and also we worship the Father in his name . . .**” (4:4–5a)
 - Revelation and prophecy > hope > unshaken faith (4:6)
 - “Nevertheless, the Lord God showeth us **our weakness** that we may know that **it is by his grace, and his great condescensions unto the children of men, that we have power** to do these things.” (4:7; cf. Ether 12:27)
- The greatness of the revelations of God (4:8–9)
- **Be Reconciled to God** (4:10–11)
 - “. . . be reconciled unto him through the atonement of Christ, his Only Begotten Son, and ye may obtain **a resurrection**, according to the power of the resurrection which is in Christ, and **be presented as the first-fruits of Christ unto God . . .**” (4:11)
 - All will be resurrected; here Jacob is talking about obtaining **a glorious resurrection in the First Resurrection**
 - “first-fruits” foreshadows the Allegory of the Olive Tree . . .

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Zenos' Allegory of the Olive Tree (5:1-77)

- **Allegory**
 - An extended metaphor (see packet, 199); better, here an extended simile
 - "Uses symbolic representations to convey moral or spiritual ideas" (Institute Student Manual, 47)
- **Zenos**
 - Prophet whose writings were preserved on the Brass Plates
 - Apparently of the northern tribes of Israel before the Assyrian Captivity (721 B.C.)
 - Slain for his bold testimony of the Son of God (Helaman 8:19)
 - "...next to Isaiah himself—who is the prototype, pattern, and model for all the prophets—there was not a greater prophet in all Israel than Zenos." (Elder McConkie in *The Joseph Smith Translation*, 17)
 - Like Isaiah, he taught of the Savior and the destiny of the house of Israel (Millet and McConkie, *DCBM*, 47)
- **Steps of transmission**
 - The Lord (5:3) > quoted by Zenos > recorded on Brass Plates > Jacob transcribes to the Small Plates of Nephi

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Symbolism and Imagery

See packet, 199–200; *Student Manual*, 48

- **Objects**
 - Vineyard = the world
 - Tame olive tree = House of Israel, covenant people
 - Wild olive trees = Gentiles
 - Fruit = lives and works of individuals; cf. "first fruits of the resurrection"
 - Roots = gospel covenants and promises that give life and strength
 - Decaying branches = people in a state of wickedness and apostasy
- **People**
 - Master of the vineyard = the Lord
 - Servant(s) = prophets, missionaries, etc.
- **Actions**
 - Cultivating = the work of the Lord and his servants with the people of the world
 - Transplanting branches = scattering groups of people
 - Grafting branches = spiritual gathering (conversion) and temporal gathering
 - Casting branches into the fire = judgments of God, destruction of the wicked

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Outline of the Allegory 1

- **First Decay and Remedy (5:1–6)**
 - “For behold, thus saith the Lord, I will liken thee, O house of Israel, like unto **a tame olive-tree**, which a man took and nourished in his vineyard; and it **grew, and waxed old, and began to decay . . .**” (Jacob 4:3)
 - **Cultivate to encourage new branches to sprout**
- **Second Decay and Remedy (5:7–14)**
 - Remove and **burn withered main branches, graft in new**
 - Transplant young branches elsewhere
 - Cultivate further
- Long time intervenes (5:15)
- **General Success (5:15–28)**
 - main tree: **grafted branches produce good fruit (5:16b-18)**
 - first transplant in poor ground: produces good fruit (5:19-22)
 - second transplant in poorer ground: produces good fruit (5:23)
 - **third transplant in good ground, which requires help**: produces **good** and **bad (5:24-28)**
- Long time intervenes (5:29)
- **Third Decay (5:29–46)**
 - main tree: **bad roots, wild fruit (5:30–37)**
 - transplants: **evil fruit (5:38–46)**

Outline of the Allegory 2

- **Explanation: Roots versus Branches (5:47–48)**
 - “But what could I have done more in my vineyard? . . . Who is it that has corrupted my vineyard? And it came to pass that the servant said unto his master: Is it not the loftiness of thy vineyard—have not the branches thereof overcome the roots which are good? **And because the branches have overcome the roots thereof, behold they grew faster than the strength of the roots, taking strength unto themselves.** Behold, I say, is not this the cause that the trees of thy vineyard have become corrupted?” (Jacob 5:47–48)
- **Third Remedy (5:49–59)**
 - **Gather natural branches, graft back into the original tree**
- **Final Effort (5:60–69)**
- **Success Achieved (5:70–74)**
- Long time followed by **Fourth Decay and Final Destruction (5:75–77)**
 - “For behold, for a long time will I lay up of the fruit of my vineyard unto mine own self against the season, which speedily cometh . . . And when the time cometh that evil fruit shall again come into my vineyard, then will I cause the good and the bad to be gathered; and **the good will I preserve unto myself**, and **the bad will I cast away into its own place.** And then cometh the season and the end; and **my vineyard will I cause to be burned with fire.**” (Jacob 5:76–77)

Time Periods Suggested

See packet, 199

- First Visit (covering first and second decay, 5:1-14)
 - Jacob to Malachi (beginning of Israel to end of Old Testament)
- Long Time (5:15; *negative*)
 - **Jewish apostasy**: Malachi to Jesus (no prophets)
- Second Visit (general success, 5:15-28)
 - **Israel at the time of Christ and the apostles**
- Long Time (5:29-46, through third decay; *negative*)
 - **Christian apostasy**: post-apostolic Christianity through the Restoration (no prophets or apostles)
- Third Visit (5:49-59)
 - **Restoration to our day**
- Fourth Visit (5:60-69)
 - **Our day to Final, Glorious Coming of the Savior**
- Long Time (positive)
 - Millennium (5:70-74)
 - End of the World (5:75-77)

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Jacob's Meditation on Zenos' Allegory

(6:1–13)

- Zenos' prophecy concerning the House of Israel Will Come to Pass (6:1-4)
 - "And the day that he shall set his hand again the second time to recover his people, is the day, yea, even the last time, that the servants of the Lord shall go forth in his power, to nourish and prune his vineyard; and after that the end soon cometh . . . And how merciful is our God unto us, for he remembereth the house of Israel, both roots and branches; and he stretches forth his hands unto them all the day long; and they are a stiffnecked and a gainsaying people; but as many as will not harden their hearts shall be saved in the kingdom of God." (6:2-4)
- Jacob's Exhortation to Repentance and Faith in Christ (6:5-13)
 - "For behold, after ye have been nourished by the good word of God all the day long, will ye bring forth evil fruit, that ye must be hewn down and cast into the fire? Behold, will ye reject these words? . . . Know ye not that if ye will do these things, that the power of the redemption and the resurrection, which is in Christ, will bring you to stand with shame and awful guilt before the bar of God?" (6:7-9)

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Encounter with Sherem (7:1–23)

- Anti-Christ
 - **One who sets up himself or his system against Christ**
 - **One who sets up himself or his system instead of Christ**
- Sherem's two-pronged assault on the doctrine of Christ
 - "... he began to preach among the people, and to declare unto them that **there should be no Christ.**" (7:2)
 - "[Jacob,] ye have led away much of this people that they pervert the right way of God, and keep not the law of Moses which is the right way; and convert the law of Moses into the worship of a being which ye say shall come many hundred years hence." (7:7)
 - **Promoted the Law of Moses as an end to itself**
 - **Salvation by works alone**
- Sherem's techniques
 - Flattery, skillful use of language, denied predicative prophecy
- Jacob's response (read 7:10-12)
 - Scriptures, testimony, and the power of the spirit
- Sherem's end

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Jacob's Farewell (7:16–27)

- Somewhat melancholy
 - "... I conclude this record, declaring that I have written according to the best of my knowledge, by saying that
*the time passed away with us,
 and also our lives passed away
 like as it were unto us a dream,
 we being a lonesome and a solemn people,
 wanderers, cast out from Jerusalem,
 born in tribulation,
 in a wilderness,
 and hated of our brethren, which caused wars and contentions;
 wherefore, we did mourn out our days.*" (7:26)
- Records passed to Jacob' son Enos
- Final salutation
 - "... to the reader I bid farewell, hoping that many of my brethren may read my words. Brethren, adieu." (7:27)
 - *Adieu*, French for "go with God" or "farewell with blessing"
 - Similar to Hebrew *lehitra'ot*
 - Joseph Smith used an expression that most closely approximated the sense of Jacob's final salutation on the plates

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