

September 21-27, 2020

3 Nephi 12–16

“I AM THE LAW, AND THE LIGHT”

Summary: *Jesus calls and commissions the Twelve—He delivers to the Nephites a discourse similar to the Sermon on the Mount—He speaks the Beatitudes—His teachings transcend and take precedence over the law of Moses—Men are commanded to be perfect even as he and his Father are perfect—Compare Matthew 5.*

Jesus teaches the Nephites the Lord’s Prayer—They are to lay up treasures in heaven—The Twelve in their ministry are commanded to take no thought for temporal things—Compare Matthew 6.

Jesus commands: Judge not; ask of God; beware of false prophets—He promises salvation to those who do the will of the Father—Compare Matthew 7.

Jesus announces that the law of Moses is fulfilled in him—The Nephites are the other sheep of whom he spake in Jerusalem—Because of iniquity the Lord’s people in Jerusalem do not know of the scattered sheep of Israel. [A.D. 34]

Jesus will visit others of the lost sheep of Israel—In the latter days the gospel will go to the Gentiles and then to the house of Israel—The Lord’s people will see eye to eye when He brings again Zion. [About A.D. 34]

Supplemental Jewish and Holy Land Insights

What is the model for the New Testament “Sermon on the Mount?”

There is a powerful advantage in comparing the Sermon on the Mount given in Israel with the same instructions given in the Book of Mormon lands. In the Galilee, Jesus spoke to the Twelve. “And seeing the multitudes, he went up into a mountain: and when he was set, his disciples came unto him.” (Matthew 5:1) In Israel, a shepherd has “lead sheep” with bells around their necks to assist in leading the flock. These are older sheep from the previous year. They have more experience and know their shepherd better than the flock. In a possible shepherd’s model, Jesus, the Good Shepherd, gave the Sermon on the Mount, apparently to the twelve disciples. In turn, their mission was to teach the multitudes.

How different is the “Sermon on the Mount” model in Book of Mormon Lands?

In the Book of Mormon lands he spoke to the multitude and the Twelve he choose from among the Nephites. The Twelve and the multitude were worthy to know the Savior more devotedly. He was able to teach the Twelve with the multitude. “And it was the more righteous part of the people who were saved,

and it was they who received the prophets and stoned them not; and it was they who had not shed the blood of the saints, who were spared . . .” (3 Nephi 10:12) “. . . it came to pass that when Jesus had spoken these words unto Nephi, and to those who had been called, (now the number of them who had been called, and received power and authority to baptize, was twelve) and behold, he stretched forth his hand unto the multitude, and cried unto them, saying: 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, and to be your servants; and unto them I have given power that they may baptize you with water; and after that ye are baptized with water, behold, I will baptize you with fire and with the Holy Ghost; therefore blessed are ye if ye shall believe in me and be baptized, after that ye have seen me and know that I am.” (3 Nephi 12:1)

How can I turn my attention from “me” to “Him?”

What the Savior taught in the Sermon on the Mount is often interpreted as being a Christian guideline by those who only have the New Testament account. It seems that many attempt to interpret human characteristics listed in the Beatitudes. “Blessed are the poor in spirit . . . mournful . . . meek . . . hunger and thirst after righteousness . . . merciful . . . pure

in heart . . . peacemakers . . . persecuted for righteousness' sake." (Matthew 5:3-11) (emphasis added). However, we may learn more of the Lord's intention as the Book of Mormon account is considered. There are only a few additional words, yet they turn the direction of the Beatitudes to the Savior instead of to the people. Note the extra words in the Nephite rendition of this same sermon.

<p>"Blessed are the poor in spirit <u>who come unto me</u>, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven." (3 Nephi 12:3) (emphasis added)</p>	<p>Blessed are the poor in spirit: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. (Matthew 5:3)</p>
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In that sense, the Sermon on the Mount is inviting all people, whether rich or poor in spirit, happy or mourning, popular or persecuted, to come unto him. He also promised a specific blessing for "coming unto him." Note the comparison of both accounts

<p>"Blessed are they which do hunger and thirst after righteousness: for they shall be filled <u>with the Holy Ghost.</u>" (3 Nephi 12:6) (emphasis added)</p>	<p>"Blessed are they which do hunger and thirst after righteousness: for they shall be filled." (Matthew 5:6)</p>
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Again, more insight can be gained through another rendition of that verse which states that those hungering and thirsting after righteousness would be filled with the Holy Ghost.

How can I recognize the "upgrade" of the "Law of Moses?"

In this remarkable sermon, Jesus also indicated that the Law of Moses was fulfilled in him, that he was restoring a higher law, one that was governed and dictated more by the spirit and intent than by the letter of the law, which was given at Mount Sinai. An even deeper understanding of the Sermon on the Mount comes when comparing it to the "sermon" and the commandments given on

Mount Sinai. For example, "For I say unto you, That except your righteousness shall exceed the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees, ye shall in no case enter into the kingdom of heaven. Ye have heard that it was said by them of old time, Thou shalt not kill; and whosoever shall kill shall be in danger of the judgment: But I say unto you, That whosoever is angry with his brother . . . shall be in danger of the judgment." (Matthew 5:20-22) (3 Nephi 12:22)

How do I recognize the value in the "Spirit of the Law" over the "Letter of the Law?"

A closer look at the Beatitudes reveals that Jesus gave additional commandments. They were based on the original Law of Moses but had deeper spiritual implications, implying that the reason behind keeping the commandments was more the spiritual guideline than the letter of the law. Another example follows.

<p>"Behold, I give unto you a commandment, that ye suffer [allow] none of these things to enter into your heart; For it is better that ye should deny yourselves of these things . . . (3 Nephi 12:29-30)</p>	<p>"Ye have heard that it was said by them of old time, Thou shalt not commit adultery: But I say unto you, That whosoever looketh . . . to lust . . . hath committed adultery . . . already in his heart." (Matthew 5:27-28)</p>
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The Book of Mormon rendition gives the counsel with clearer meaning.

How do I get the strength to replace the "Lesser Law" with the "Higher Law?"

The old and new laws are again like a chiasmus, with the Savior's ministry and subsequent atonement as the center. His atonement is the turning point that pivots the lesser law to the higher law made possible through His atonement. The following poem illustrates the principle of "do's and don'ts" as a lesser law and the principle of "following the spirit" as the higher law.

SERMONS ON THE MOUNTS

(Daniel Rona, 2020[©])

The law was given, the standard set. but, best was not accepted yet.
We compromised with heaven's voice, just ten commandments was our choice.
Tooth for tooth and eye for eye, retribution was the cry.

- LESSER
LAW**
1. No other God -
 2. Or image graven -
 3. Not in vain, the name of Heaven -
 4. Remember Sabbath,
 5. Father, Mother -
 6. Thou shalt not kill -
 7. Nor defile another -
 8. Do not steal -
 9. Or false word belabor -
 10. Do not covet the wealth of neighbor -

But then was promised a covenant new; inwardly, God would speak to you.
With sins forgiven and God revealed, a higher law on us was sealed.

- HIGHER
LAW**
10. Bless your neighbor -
 9. Share a kindly word -
 8. Give to others -
 7. And clean thoughts preferred -
 6. No need for anger to hide your smile -
 5. Parents, children, walk the second mile -
 4. Use the Sabbath, blessings to bestow -
 3. The name of God in your good deeds show -
 2. Your life will God's true image mirror,
 1. As you and He become much nearer.

The secret of God's law is known—when action by intent is shown.
In heaven's highest throne to stay, use thought and reason to guide the way.
The highest law is now defined—in thought, in spirit and in the mind.

What specific date did the Lord choose to restore the "Higher Law?"

As previously stated, the two sets of law form a chiasmus around the ministry and atonement of Jesus – the lesser law that would lead to him and the higher law to live like him. Fifty days after Jesus' crucifixion at Passover, the Holy Ghost came upon the congregation in Jerusalem. The Jewish holiday commemorating the giving of the lesser law at Mount Sinai is also celebrated fifty days after Passover. Apparently, the same day was also used in giving the gift of the Holy Ghost, the

higher law. The day is called Pentecost. "And when the day of Pentecost was fully come, they were all with one accord in one place. And suddenly there came a sound from heaven as of a rushing mighty wind, and it filled all the house where they were sitting. And there appeared unto them cloven tongues like as of fire, and it sat upon each of them. And they were all filled with the Holy Ghost, and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance." (Acts 2:1-4)