

PDF version of the lesson notes.

## I. You Cannot Understand

- Read 3 Nephi 17:1–4:

(1) Behold, now it came to pass that when Jesus had spoken these words he looked round about again on the multitude, and he said unto them: Behold, my time is at hand. (2) I perceive that ye are weak, that ye cannot understand all my words which I am commanded of the Father to speak unto you at this time. (3) Therefore, go ye unto your homes, and ponder upon the things which I have said, and ask of the Father, in my name, that ye may understand, and prepare your minds for the morrow, and I come unto you again. (4) But now I go unto the Father, and also to show myself unto the lost tribes of Israel, for they are not lost unto the Father, for he knoweth whither he hath taken them.

- Jesus repeatedly refers to the Father in these verses: commanded of the Father, ask of the Father, go unto the Father, and not lost unto the Father. Why? How does this frequent mentioning affect the passage? What does it emphasize or reinforce? (Note, Jesus refers to the Father frequently in the previous chapter as well).
- *What does Jesus mean when he says "his time is at hand." Does it simply mean that he must leave soon? Something else?*
- Jesus perceives that the multitude is weak. What does this mean? In what sense are the people weak? Doesn't this seem kind of mean to tell the people that they are weak? Why is important that Jesus tells them that he perceives that they are weak? Why not just tell them that he perceives that they don't understand everything so they should go pray and ponder for understanding?
- What words do you think the people couldn't understand? The sermon in its entirety runs from chapter 12–16. Is it the breadth and scope of the material that makes it hard for the people to understand everything? Is this a case of information overload?
- Maybe it is not about the scope of the material? Maybe some of the sermon is difficult to understand? Are there parts that might be particularly difficult for the Nephites to understand? Are there parts that you find difficult to understand?

## A. Not Understanding and Chapter 16

- I wonder if the material of chapter 16 would have been particularly challenging for the

Nephites to understand? For example, verse 6–7 of chapter 16?

(6) And blessed are the Gentiles, because of their belief in me, in and of the Holy Ghost, which witnesses unto them of me and of the Father. (7) Behold, because of their belief in me, saith the Father, and because of the unbelief of you, O house of Israel, in the latter day shall the truth come unto the Gentiles, that the fulness of these things shall be made known unto them.

or even verses 13–15?

(13) But if the Gentiles will repent and return unto me, saith the Father, behold they shall be numbered among my people, O house of Israel. (14) And I will not suffer my people, who are of the house of Israel, to go through among them, and tread them down, saith the Father. (15) But if they will not turn unto me, and hearken unto my voice, I will suffer them, yea, I will suffer my people, O house of Israel, that they shall go through among them, and shall tread them down, and they shall be as salt that hath lost its savor, which is thenceforth good for nothing but to be cast out, and to be trodden under foot of my people, O house of Israel.

- What important themes or concepts are mentioned in these verses and chapter 16 in general the Jesus wants/hopes the Nephites will come to understand that may be difficult for them (us)?
- In general (among other things) I see a continuation of the theme of reversal that seems to run through much of scripture. The weak end up being a source of strength and the strong are saved by the weak. The weak are strong and the strong are weak (I wonder if this is part of the reason why Jesus mentions that he perceives the Nephites are weak?). The favored or covenant people are "saved" by those outside the covenant. The covenant becomes expansive and available to all that hearken to his voice. It is after this stunning reversal that the hope of Israel is finally fulfilled: Jerusalem is redeemed and the King triumphantly enters as heralds lift their voices.

(17) And then the words of the prophet Isaiah shall be fulfilled, which say:

18 Thy watchmen shall lift up the voice;  
with the voice together shall they sing,

for they shall see eye to eye  
when the Lord shall bring again Zion.

19 Break forth into joy, sing together,  
ye waste places of Jerusalem;  
for the Lord hath comforted his people,  
he hath redeemed Jerusalem.

20 The Lord hath made bare his holy arm in the eyes of all the nations;  
and all the ends of the earth shall see the salvation of God.

- How does this theme permeate chapter 17 in general?

## **B. Back to Just Chapter 17**

- What does it mean to ask the Father for understanding? How will asking for understanding help the prepare their minds for the morrow?
- I think it is interesting that in the backdrop of great destruction that Jesus instructs to go home and ponder, pray, and prepare themselves for tomorrow. There is no mention of cleaning up or rebuilding at this point. Is there something generally instructive that can be gleaned from this situation or is it too unique?

## **II. Jesus Heals the Sick**

- Read 3 Nephi 17:5–8:

(5) And it came to pass that when Jesus had thus spoken, he cast his eyes round about again on the multitude, and beheld they were in tears, and did look steadfastly upon him as if they would ask him to tarry a little longer with them. (6) And he said unto them: Behold, my bowels are filled with compassion towards you. (7) Have ye any that are sick among you? Bring them hither. Have ye any that are lame, or blind, or halt, or maimed, or leprous, or that are withered, or that are deaf, or that are afflicted in any manner? Bring them hither and I will heal them, for I have compassion upon you; my bowels are filled with mercy. (8) For I perceive that ye desire that I should show unto you what I have done unto your brethren at Jerusalem, for I see that your faith is sufficient that I should heal you.

- In both verse (1) and verse (5), the account mentions that Jesus looked round about at the multitude. Is this an important detail? Why would Mormon mention it multiple times?
- "What is the connection between healing the sick and Jesus' ministry? Why do the gospels, the Book of Mormon, and latter-day revelation consistently connect these two things?"[1]
- Healing of sick is, of course, important enough in isolation but is the timing of the healing a coincidence? Why heal the sick after Jesus pointed out the people are weak and don't understand his words? Why heal the sick after a long sermon and not at the beginning? Will the healing of the sick help the people understanding the sermon just given?

## **III. Jesus Prays**

- In verse 11 Jesus commands that the children should be brought unto him. He then prays. Read 3 Nephi 17:14–17:

(14) And it came to pass that when they had knelt upon the ground, Jesus groaned within himself, and said: Father, I am troubled because of the wickedness of the people of the house of Israel. (15) And when he had said these words, he himself also knelt upon the earth; and behold he prayed unto the Father, and the things which he prayed cannot be written, and the multitude did bear record who heard him. (16) And after this manner do they bear record: The eye hath never seen, neither hath the ear heard, before, so great and marvelous things as we saw and heard Jesus speak unto the Father; (17) And no tongue can speak, neither can there be written by any man, neither can the hearts of men conceive so great and marvelous things as we both saw and heard Jesus speak; and no one can conceive of the joy which filled our souls at the time we heard him pray for us unto the Father.

- Why would bringing the children cause Jesus to groan within himself (and what does it mean to groan within himself and how would one know the Jesus actually did groan within himself) and mention that he is troubled by the wickedness of the house of Israel? What's the connection between these things and the children?[2]
- In response to his groaning about the wickedness of Israel Jesus prays. Are you surprised by this action? Does the act of praying itself address the problem or is there a disconnect in this part of the text because we don't have a record of the words of the prayer?
- We don't hear the words of the prayer but what can we learn from the prayer?
- The end of verse 17 gives us the following glimpse into the prayer: "we heard him pray for us unto the Father."

What do we learn about the the power or importance of praying for others?

- In what sense is it possible for our prayers to be times of joy? Can joy fill our souls when we pray? Public prayers? private prayers?

#### **IV. Joy**

- Read 3 Nephi 17:18–20:

(18) And it came to pass that when Jesus had made an end of praying unto the Father, he arose; but so great was the joy of the multitude that they were overcome. (19) And it came to pass that Jesus spake unto them, and bade them arise. (20) And they arose from the earth, and he said unto them: Blessed are ye because of your faith. And now behold, my joy is full.

- What do we learn about joy in these verses?

- The use of the word "arose" or "arise" is fairly prominent in these verses. Why does Mormon emphasize this word? How does it affect how we understand the passage? How does it help us understand the joy the people were feeling?
- Relatedly, I think the phrase, "they arose from the earth" is very interesting? What do you think of we you hear a phrase like that? Do you connect the phrase with other scriptural accounts? Does that link or connection make sense in this situation or is that reading too much into the passage?
- Does the passage suggest a connection between joy and faith?

## V. Blessing the Children

- Read 3 Nephi 17:21–22:

And when he said these words, he wept and the multitude bare record of it, and he took their children, on by one, and blessed them, and prayed unto the Father for them. And when he had done this he wept again. And he spake unto the multitude, and said unto them, "Behold your little ones."

- Is it important to keep in mind the backdrop of upheaval and destruction that proceeding Jesus' visit when thinking about these verses?
- Blessing the children is, of course, important enough in isolation but is the timing of the blessing a coincidence? Will the blessing of the children help the people understanding the sermon just given?

## Endnotes

1. Faulconer, Jim, 2004, *Sunday School Lesson 39*, Times and Seasons.
2. Faulconer, Jim, 2004, *Sunday School Lesson 39*, Times and Seasons.