

ZION'S ADVOCATE

And blessed are they who shall seek to bring forth my Zion at that day, for they shall have the gift and power of the Holy Ghost." 1st Nephi 3:124

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THE OUTCOME OF LATTER DAY WORK

Viewed from the Parable of Zenos.

We purpose to examine the parable of Zenos on the question that forms the subject of this article, because we know of no other communication to men that throws so much light on the subject. Really, the main object of the parable, the climax of it, is to show what the Lord will do prior to his coming; how he will wrest victory from defeat.

The author of the parable is one of the prophets mentioned in various places in the Book of Mormon (for instance, 1 Nephi 5: 240-242, Helaman 3:53-54) whose words were contained in the scriptures which the Nephite colony brought with them from Jerusalem, which, it will be remembered, was fuller than our Bible, or Old Testament. (See 1 Nephi 3:163.) The parable will be found in the third chapter of Jacob, beginning with the 30th verse.

The prophecy in the parable revolves around the house of Israel, because Israel is so inextricably associated with the Lord's work. Israel is compared to a tame olive tree, but it must be understood that the figure, primarily, represents a spiritual idea. Temporal circumstances are influenced by spiritual reasons. Branches are broken off because of failure to keep God's commandments. Branches are led away for preservation, and that God's truth may be perpetuated, and his power demonstrated for the good of men. Branches are grafted in to give the tree new life—grafted into what, literal Israel, or spiritual Israel? This puts the thought where we can see clearly that the figure represents something spiritual, and Nephi tells us that it is "the true vine," or "true fold of God." (1 Nephi 4:21-22; 6:2.) Branches may be grafted into the tree only through gospel means, as Nephi explains. (Nephi 3:19 and 1 Nephi 4:16.) Paul employs the figure of the parable in the same way. (Romans 11:17-24.)

For convenience, we will divide the parable into the two parts, the first relating to the Lord's work in the early Christian centuries, the second part dealing with the last days. There is a period prior to the Christian dispensation when God sought to prepare Israel to be what he would have them, but in spite of all his efforts Israel

would not come up to the spiritual standard, and the tree began to decay. (Verses 31-35.) The Lord's work was in peril. To save his cause, the young and tender branches were led away, and planted in other parts of the world. There were the ten tribes, often called the "lost tribes," the Nephites, the Mulokites, and there may have been others. We are struck with the thought that when a branch was led away it was done for the preservation of the branch, temporally and spiritually. If the branches had remained they would have shared the affliction that fell upon the nation. It is an example of what appears to be a general fact in history. When the body becomes diseased, safety to any members of that body depends upon coming out of the body. The Lord called Mosiah and the righteous to come out from among the Nephites who had become corrupt some centuries after coming to the promised land. Jesus would like to have made the Jewish church His church. It was His church until it wandered away and refused to return to Him. He came unto his own and they received him not, therefore he had to call out those who desired to follow him. The gospel of Christ is offered to all men, and it is not because of any partiality that the obedient are called to come out of Babylon. Always the course of truth and right has meant a breaking away, a coming out, and woe to them who, like Lot's wife, look back.

The "main branches" of the diseased tree were destroyed. (Verse 36) History tells us of the captivity, affliction and destruction that fell upon Israel.

Wild branches were grafted in. (Verses 36-40.) This was fulfilled when the apostles took the gospel to the Gentiles, and the Gentiles began to come into the church. The parable tells us that the fruit borne of this pruning, grafting process was good. The fruit borne by the branches that were led away was good, also, except the Nephite branch, planted in the "good spot of ground;" it had brought forth part tame fruit, and part wild. (Verses 49-68.)

Second Part

We come now to the second part of the parable. A "long time" has passed away." It must be the last days that are indicated, because "the time draweth near, and the end soon cometh." (Verses 72-73.) A second survey of the vineyard is made. The church into which the wild grafts

partial truth; how could he expect the results he expresses so much disappointment at not finding?

But let us examine the parable further. The Master continues to grieve. Again and again he declares that **he has done all that he could for his vineyard.** (Verses 89, 100, 101, 109.) Of what point of time is the Master speaking, before the restoration of the fullness of the gospel, or afterwards? It is very important for us to get at the truth on this question. It will mean the difference between complacency or intelligent alertness. Could the Master truthfully say he had done all that he could for his vineyard before he restored the fullness of the gospel? Could he justly condemn men until he had done so? An affirmative answer would make God false to his own word, and render the Book of Mormon a contradictory record. In that wonderful vision of Nephi's, given before Jacob wrote the parable of Zenos in the Nephite record, the Lord expresses sympathy for the Gentiles, and says they shall not always be left to stumble along spiritually because of the insufficient light they have. He promises to give them the Nephite record. But let us read the exact words:

"Neither will the Lord God suffer that the Gentiles shall for ever remain in that awful state of blindness, which thou beholdest they are in because of the plain and most precious parts of the gospel of the Lamb which have been kept back by that abominable church, whose foundation thou hast seen. Wherefore, saith the Lamb of God, I will be merciful unto the Gentiles." We have quoted 1 Nephi 3:179, and part of verse 180. Pass on to verse 183, and we read again: "And after the Gentiles do stumble exceedingly because of the plain and most precious parts of the gospel of the Lamb which has been kept back."—"I will be merciful unto the Gentiles in that day, insomuch that I will bring forth unto them in mine own power, much of my gospel, which shall be plain and most precious, saith Lamb; For behold, saith the Lamb, I will manifest myself unto thy seed, that they shall write many things which I shall minister unto them, which shall be plain and precious; And after thy seed shall be destroyed and dwindle in unbelief, and also the seed of thy brethren; behold, these things shall be hid up, to come forth unto the Gentiles by the gift and power of the Lamb; And in them shall be written my gospel, saith the Lamb, and my rock and my salvation." (Verses 183-186.)

Back to the parable. Lamenting again and again that he has done all he could for his vineyard, and saddest of all, the last branch, planted in the good spot, choice "above all other parts of the land," has "withered" (verse 88, 93, 96,) the Master declares the entire vineyard good for

nothing, and says to his servant, "Let us go to, and hew down the trees of the vineyard, and cast them into the fire," etc. (Verse 109.) But the servant pleads,—“Sprare it a little longer.” The Master relents and decides to do so. (Verses 110, 111.)

The Remedy.

Beginning with verse 112, the Master proceeds to lay before his servant a plan for redeeming the vineyard, for saving his cause from failure. He commands that the gospel shall now be taken to Israel that the natural branches may be grafted into the tame olive tree. This means that the Gentile times are fulfilled, and that the restoration of Israel will bring success to the Lord's work where the Gentiles have failed.

"But has the gospel work among the Gentiles accomplished nothing?" the reader may anxiously inquire. The parable answers that question. While it is evident that the Gentile church has failed to qualify—stronger language could not be used than that "it has withered away," spiritually speaking, of course, for though the numbers professing be multitudinous and devoted of the fruits of the spirit of Christ, they are spiritually dead—while it is evident, we say, that the parable prophesies the failure of the Gentile church, the gospel school has produced some whom the Lord can use. Here let us stop to suggest a word of caution against any extreme interpretation. There is no statement in the Book of Mormon more plainly attested than that **the Gentiles shall take the gospel to Israel.** Let there be no doubt on that point. The number, however, will be few, as we shall see. The Master commands his servant to go forth and call other servants (verse 125), and sad to say, only a few respond.—“And it came to pass that the Lord of the vineyard sent his servant; and the servant went and did as the Lord had commanded him, and brought other servants; and they were few.” (Verse 136.) It is interesting, in this connection, to notice the prophecy of Joel: "For in mount Zion and in Jerusalem shall be deliverance, as the Lord hath said, and in the remnant whom the Lord shall call." (Joel 2:32.)

The Master charges the few to go forth and labor with all their might because "the end" is very near, and "the season" (the millennium) "will soon come." The Master furthermore declares that this is the **last time** that he will "nourish" his vineyard. (Verses 126, 128, 138.) Section 92, paragraph 1, Doctrine and Covenants, explains what is meant by nourishing the vineyard. The church is reproved for not considering more seriously the commandments to build "mine house" (the temple) in Zion, wherein the Lord designed to prepare his apostles to **prune his vineyard** for the "last time." A read-

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ing of the paragraph will show that the endowment is referred to, and in section 87:3, 4, the Lord says that when the time comes for the gospel to go to Israel,—“Then cometh the day when the arm of the Lord shall be revealed in power in convincing the nations, the heathen nations, the houses of Joseph, of the gospel of their salvation. For it shall come to pass in that day, that every man shall hear the fulness of the gospel in his own tongue, and in his own language, through those who are ordained unto this power, by the administration of the Comforter, shed forth upon them, for the revelation of Jesus Christ.” The emphasis is ours, to call attention to the fact that the servants who take the gospel to Israel will be endowed with power from on high that they may be equal to their task, for it is the last opportunity men will have because, in the language of the parable, the “end draweth nigh.”

We are yet waiting for the endowment that will qualify the chosen servants to do the work designed in the parable of Zenos, and in the revelations quoted. It is foolish to claim that it has been given, because the promised results have not followed; the work has not been done. In the parable we are examining the results do follow; the work is done. The few servants do not fall away; they are faithful.—““And they did obey the commandments of the Lord of the vineyard, in all things.” (Verse 140.) Notice what is said of the results: “And there began to be the natural fruit again,” “even like as it was in the beginning,” and the Master blesses his faithful servants. (See verses 141, 145, 147.)

In 3 Nephi 10:1-4, we learn more about what will be accomplished when Israel comes into the gospel. The New Jerusalem will be builded. Let us not excuse ourselves, when we read this, and say the work was not for the Gentiles to do. In

Nephi's vision, where he is shown the coming forth of the Nephite record, the Lord says: “And blessed are they who shall seek to bring forth my Zion at that day, for they shall have the gift and the power of the Holy Ghost.”—1 Nephi 3:187. It is not only our duty to seek to establish Zion, but the Lord promised he would help us if we would try to do it. It may be a little aside from our subject, but we can not help observing, before we pass this important point, that the remnant, the “few” who will take the gospel to Israel, will have to establish a Zionie condition among themselves, wherein every man will love his brother as himself, before they can receive the endowment which will authorize and qualify them to take the gospel to Israel, for let us remember that the Lord told the church in 1831 that the “abundance of the manifestations of the Spirit” should be withheld until “in your temporal things you shall be equal.” So long as there is inequality we do not love our brother as ourself, and there can be no Zionie condition where brotherly love does not exist.

It may be disappointing to learn that the Gentile church, as a whole, will not do the work that the gospel was instituted in these last days to accomplish. Let us be encouraged, however, by the assurance the parable of Zenos gives, that the work will be done; that a remnant will be found who will “do the Master's will in all things.” This remnant, though “few,” will become mighty in the Lord's hands to take the gospel into all the world to gather Israel out of all nations. The grandest part of the latter day work lies before us, and we each have the privilege of being among the “wise virgins.”

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The general conference of the Church of Christ will convene with the Temple Lot Branch, Independence, Mo., on the 6th of April, 1923, at 7:30 p. m.

A. HIMES, Presiding Elder.
C. L. WHEATON, Sec'y. of the Church.

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were made is now bringing forth "all sorts of fruit." (Verse 74,) and none of it is good. (Verse 77.) Let us pause here to consider the history that is wrapped up in this outline sketch. It is evident that centuries have elapsed. The church that was started at Jerusalem is no longer a local affair; it has become world wide. Briefly, its history has been as follows. It flourished in righteousness for a time, then it began to go into apostasy. Constantine came upon the stage early in the fourth century, and the church became a world power, dominating the middle ages. Early in the sixteenth century Martin Luther inaugurated the Reformation which resulted in the formation of the various Protestant churches. In the first half of the third century after the beginning of the Reformation, the work that was begun by the noble Reformers was carried still further by a prophet chosen in the last days, to whom the angel seen by John committed "the everlasting gospel to preach unto them that dwell on the earth." (Revelations 14:6.) The parable has jumped from ancient to modern times, for "the end soon cometh." As we noticed before, a second survey of the vineyard revealed the fact that while there was plenty of fruit, of "all sorts," none of it was good. The tame branches hidden in the "nether most parts of the vineyard" had done no better than the tree into which the wild branches were grafted. (Verses 85-87.) The saddest blow of all was when it was found that the last planting, upon the "good spot, choice above all other parts of the vineyard," had withered away. (Verses 88-95.)

We will pause, here, to consider who this last planting in the choice spot was. The first guess that a good many make is that the Nephites are referred to. The comment reads very similar to that in verse 68, but it is a well known fact that history repeats itself. The course of one nation moves in a circle pretty much like that of another. Verse 94 informs us that a people had been removed to make room for the last planting. In his vision, Nephi saw that his people would be destroyed, that his brethren, the Lamanites, would be scattered, and the Lord would bring another people to the choice land who would build a "mighty nation." (See 1 Nephi, 3rd chapter, verses 147-151, and 1 Nephi 7:15.) Thus we see that before the time of the branch which has "withered away," the Lord had swept a people from off the land to make room for the branch which the second survey of the vineyard reveals to have withered, so that the expression does not identify the branch as the Nephites. Furthermore, we shall see, as we read on in the parable, that the Master proceeds to unfold a plan for the rescue of his work which he says will be the last effort that he will make--"For behold, this is the last time that I shall nourish my vine-

yard." (Verse 138.) Clearly then, the branch that withered away does not mean the Nephites. The expression misleads only because some forget that the parable is tracing the progress of the Lord's work and the significance of the statement is spiritual. If that were not true, the parable would come to an end right here, for there would be no use for the Master to plan for a people that were dead and gone.

Well, if this last planting refers to the Gentile nation who succeeded the Nephites on the choice land, how can that idea be harmonized with two points in the parable, first, that God planted the branch in the choice land, and second, that it was a tame branch, that is, a branch of Israel? may be asked. On the first point we have already cited evidence to show that the coming of the Gentile people was not an accident, but was designed by the Almighty. (See 1 Nephi 3:148; 7:15; 2 Nephi 1:10; 3 Nephi 9:65, 89, 90.) The second point--How can the last planting be of Israel? Through Ephraim, who has lost his identity, "that it be not a people." (Isaiah 7:8.) Through multitudinous Ephraim, sown among the people, scattered among the nations. (See Zech 10:9; Hos. 7:8, 9:16, 17; Gen. 48:13-20.) Not all Gentiles are Ephraim, but Ephraim is among the Gentiles, as the foregoing texts show, and is classed with the Gentiles. We like to think of our noble fore-fathers as being of Ephraim. It is a reasonable explanation of their thirst for justice and truth. The Bible tells us that Joseph's branches ran over the wall; that Joseph's land was more choice than the land promised Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. (See Genesis 49:22,26.) Again, the "stick of Joseph" was to be in the hand of Ephraim. (Ezek. 37:15-23.) How could this be unless the people who received the record written by the descendants of Joseph were of Ephraim? If the Book of Mormon did not come forth unto Ephraim, then Ezekiel's prophecy is not true. Again, Jeremiah declares that in the last days Ephraim is the first born of the gospel. (See Jer. 31:6-9.) We think the evidence cited leaves no question about the last planting in the choice land being of Israel, although known outwardly as Gentiles.

When the Lord had completed his survey of the vineyard, he wept. The time was so short, and he found no fruit that he could lay up for "the season," which we understand to mean the millennium. The servant tried to comfort his Master with the thought that the "roots" had not perished. In other words, the principles of truth were still alive. But the Master replies--"The roots profiteth me nothing, so long as it shall bring forth evil fruit." (Verses 80,81.) May not the "roots" refer to the creeds, might be asked, but the question suggests another; why would the Master lament so bitterly if men had only