

Summary Handout

“Press Forward with a Steadfastness in Christ”

Lesson

11

Summary

2 Nephi 31–33

Scripture Summary:

Nephi tells why Christ was baptized—Men must follow Christ, be baptized, receive the Holy Ghost, and endure to the end to be saved—Repentance and baptism are the gate to the strait and narrow path—Eternal life comes to those who keep the commandments after baptism.

Angels speak by the power of the Holy Ghost—Men must pray and gain knowledge for themselves from the Holy Ghost.

Nephi's words are true—They testify of Christ—Those who believe in Christ will believe Nephi's words—They shall stand as a witness before the judgment bar. [Between 559 and 545 B.C.]

Supplemental Holy Land and Jewish insights:

Feasting – Food for Thought: A religious Jewish family will always discuss Torah during every meal. You might remember that for them the eating tables must be square or at least have four corners. That is because the sacrificial Altar of the Lord doesn't exist any more and the tables with food simulate the altar and eating the sacrificial offering. “A feast held in connection with religious acts is called *se'udab shel mitzvah* and is the duty of every Jew. Whether to celebrate a joyous family occasion such as a wedding, or to honor a holiday by eating festive meals, a *se'udab shel mitzvah* must be eaten in the spirit of pleasure and enjoyment, blessing and thanksgiving, being particularly careful to avoid overeating.” (Encyclopedia Judaica Jr.)

Table Talk: “The Talmud describes in detail the various modes of conduct to be observed at meals. For example persons should engage in a discussion of Torah during the meal so that they will be ‘as though they had eaten at the table of God.’ Furthermore, the table is regarded as a substitute for the altar in the Temple, and therefore, it must be treated with reverence. Before any meal, the hands must be washed pronouncing the appropriate blessing over the washing, after which bread is eaten. The meal is concluded with the Grace after Meals.” (Encyclopedia Judaica Jr.)

Festive Holiday Meals: “When a meal is eaten for the purpose of honoring a festival or rejoicing in the fulfillment of a commandment, it is considered more than an ordinary meal; it is a *se'udab shel mitzvah*. Psalm 126, *shir ba-ma'alot*, is recited before Grace after Meals, and in the Grace itself, there is usually an additional paragraph appropriate to the occasion. Such festive meals include the following: **1)** Sabbath and festivals . . . often accompanied by a short sermon of Torah . . . singing of hymns . . . the presence of two loaves of bread (*hallot*), and the eating of fish or meat . . .” **2)** A *melaveh malkah*, a festive meal held after the departure of the Sabbath, **3)** the Passover seder, **4)** the Purim dinner, **5)** the meal before the fast of the Day of Atonement (*se'udab mafseket*), **6)** the *siyyum*, a feast made on the completion of the study of a Talmudic tractate. Such a feast is usually held on the morning of the eve of Passover so that the firstborn can participate (and thereby be exempt from fasting on that day), and **7)** the banquet of the *bevra kaddisha* (the burial brotherhood) held on the Seventh of Adar.” (Encyclopedia Judaica Jr.)

Festive Family Meals: “Joyous family occasions also have various *se'udot shel mitzvah* connected with them: **1)** the circumcision feast, **2)** the meal at the ceremony of the redemption of the firstborn (*pidyon ha-ben*), **3)** the festive meal celebrating a bar mitzvah, **4)** the betrothal and wedding feasts, and **5)** the occasion of dedicating a new home (*se'udat hanukkat ha-bayit*).” (Encyclopedia Judaica Jr.)

Monthly Days of Fasting and Prayer: Remember that for the religious Jew there is a fasting day each month. It stands to reason that the meal afterwards is a “feast” of sorts - with prayers. It is the custom among religious Jews to pray before and after every meal. Each prayer is preceded by a washing of hands in “living water” that is naturally flowing. Over time, these and other prayers have come to be pre-written. Yet that was not the biblical custom or instruction.

Fixed or Spontaneous Prayers? “In general, biblical prayer was spontaneous and personal; the more formal aspect of worship probably consisted of bringing sacrifices at set times and with a fixed ritual. It seems, however, that even during the period of the First Temple there were already some prayers whose wording was set and which were always recited on certain specific occasions. Some scholars, basing themselves on Psalms 55:18 and Daniel 6:11, believe that the practice of worshipping at least three times a day may be traced back to the biblical period.” (Encyclopedia Judaica Jr.)

Prayer with Real Intent: There is an effort in Judaism to at least say the pre-written prayers with real intent. This is called *Kavvanah* (direction, intention or concentration). “Because the times of the services and even the words which were to be recited, were fixed, there was a danger that prayer would lose its vitality and become mere routine. In order

to overcome this danger, the rabbis urged the worshiper to meditate before he began to worship, to think of 'before Whom he was standing' in prayer, and to create a new prayer every time he worshiped. They placed great emphasis on the emotional aspect of prayer, calling it 'service of the heart' and stressing that God appreciates most the pure intentions of the worshiper. Later authorities sought to embellish the fixed prayers with original poems (*piyyutim*,) or with short introductions (*kavvanot*) whose purpose was to direct the heart and mind of the worshiper. Melodic chanting was used as a means of increasing *kavvanah* and worshipers were taught to sway as they prayed, thus throwing their entire body into the worship."

Personal Prayer Replaced with Memorized Prayers: "Books containing the texts of the customary daily and festival prayers did not exist in ancient times. The reader would pray aloud and the congregants would chant the words along with him, or they would simply say 'amen' to the blessings. Only after the completion of the Talmud, when many of the components of the Oral Tradition were first compiled in written form, were the prayers written down. Thus, the very first 'prayer book' was produced only in the ninth century." (Encyclopedia Judaica Jr.)

Nephi Speaks to the Jews as a Jew and Includes the Gentiles "I have charity for the Jew--I say Jew, because I mean them from whence I came. I also have charity for the Gentiles. But behold, for none of these can I hope except they shall be reconciled unto Christ, and enter into the narrow gate, and walk in the strait path which leads to life, and continue in the path until the end of the day of probation." (2 Nephi 33:8-9)

Tolerance and Acceptance: I remember when Rabbi Wagner, who was chairman of a Denver Inter Faith committee, was telling me that, after associating with Mormons, he wanted the Mormons to be part of that committee. Rabbi Wagner's personal friend, a Pastor and an associate member of that committee objected strenuously to Mormons being included. He even threatened to leave the Inter Faith Committee and challenged the friendship. The Rabbi told me, "I have seen and heard this kind of thing before." Mormons were included and the Pastor resigned; however, the friendship continued. It takes two to make or break a friendship. The Book of Mormon Prophet, Nephi, prays for acceptance or, at least, respect for his and the Lords words, wherever they come from.

"And you that will not partake of the goodness of God, and respect the words of the Jews, and also my words, and the words which shall proceed forth out of the mouth of the Lamb of God, behold, I bid you an everlasting farewell, for these words shall condemn you at the last day." (2 Nephi 33:14)

Daniel Rona, born in Israel and living in Jerusalem has authored Old & New Testament and Book of Mormon Supplement Study Materials to be used in conjunction with the weekly LDS Gospel Doctrine Lesson study. NOTE: Three versions of the supplemental study materials are available *FREE* at www.HolyLandsRevealed.com. (Just click "LDS SUPPLEMENTS")

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