

Greetings! Welcome to the first installment of The Gospel Notes Newsletter!

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----- Article 1-----

The simple things

I've recently come to a realization that I should have realized many years ago concerning a passage of scripture that really should have been so much easier to figure out than I made it to be. I suspect that many in the church have had lively debates about it, but I feel that it is illustrative of how sometimes we overcomplicate the Gospel.

3 Nephi 5

39 And again, I say unto you, Ye must repent, and become as a little child, and be baptized in my name, or ye can in no wise receive these things.

40 And again, I say unto you, Ye must repent, and be baptized in my name, and become as a little child, or ye can in no wise inherit the kingdom of God.

Just two verses, but there have often been lively debates about differences between the two verses - specifically about the order in which statements are presented.

Verse 39 puts the process this way:

- 1.Repent
 - 2.Become as a little child
 - 3.Be baptized
- (or ye can in no wise receive these things)

Verse 40 puts the process this way:

- 1.Repent
 - 2.Be baptized
 - 3.Become as a little child
- (or ye can in no wise inherit the kingdom of God)

Why steps 2 and 3 have been ordered differently is the question, yet do you think that Jesus intended for his words to be confusing?

The confusion arises, I believe, because we try to make verse 40 a repeat of verse 39. Have you ever wondered why that is the case? Why do we assume these verses are about the same thing, when clearly there are two baptisms.

For verse 39, I've come to realize that it refers to the baptism by water. For verse 40, I now believe it is referring to the baptism by fire and the Holy Ghost. Jesus was not being confusing at all - we have just been making the assumption that he was repeating himself to make the importance of baptism more clear.

The caution of verse 39 is that if you don't do these three steps, you can in no wise receive these things. What things? And how is that different from the caution in verse 40 that "or ye can in no wise inherit the kingdom of God"?

Let's begin with the question of what the "things" referred to in verse 39 are if this is in reference to the baptism by water.

Jesus has just finished explaining his doctrine, or at least some parts of it:

3 Nephi 5

29 And there shall be no disputations among you as there hath hitherto been; neither shall there be disputations among you concerning the points of my doctrine as there hath hitherto been;

30 For verily, verily, I say unto you, He that hath the spirit of contention is not of me, but is of the devil, who is the father of contention; and he stirreth up the hearts of men to contend with anger one with another;

31 Behold, this is not my doctrine, to stir up the hearts of men with anger one against another; but this is my doctrine, that such things should be done away.

32 Behold, verily, verily, I say unto you, I will declare unto you my doctrine. And this is my doctrine, and it is the doctrine which the Father hath given unto me;

I suspect that the "things" referred to might be the doctrine that Jesus has just given them. A lack of repentance and a lack of baptism makes it difficult, if not impossible, to receive the doctrine of Christ. We know two basic things about baptism by water:

1. Baptism by water is for the remission of sins
2. Baptism by water is to fulfill all righteousness (Jesus' example)

We know this, very concisely, from this verse:

Moroni 8:12 Behold, baptism is unto repentance, to the fulfilling the commandments unto the remission of sins.

He (or she) that is not baptized is not able to fulfill the commandments, and therefore cannot abide in the doctrine of Christ.

Verse 40, referring to inheriting "the kingdom of God", seems more readily understandable - and again we go to Mormon's letter to Moroni in chapter 8 to see the meaning unfold:

Moroni 8:29 And the firstfruits of repentance is baptism; and baptism cometh by faith, unto the fulfilling the commandments; and the fulfilling the commandments bringeth remission of sins; and the remission of sins bringeth meekness and lowliness of heart; and because of meekness and lowliness of heart, cometh the visitation of the Holy Ghost, which Comforter filleth with hope and perfect love, which love endureth by diligence unto prayer until the end shall come, when all the saints shall dwell with God.

The baptism by fire and the Holy Ghost brings assurances by continued diligence unto prayer, and this culminates in an eternal inheritance in the kingdom of God. This is the promise of eternal life. We can't receive the promise of eternal life without receiving the Holy Ghost. It is that promise, that assurance, that enables us to live fully as God always wanted us to.

What Jesus says in just a few words unfolds to something very rich and filling if we put aside our assumptions.

Jared

-----Article 2-----

Events fulfilling prophecy

There are some people -- Christians in particular -- that seem bent on making everything into some obscure fulfillment of some prophecy. While some of those may certainly be possible, it seems unlikely that every prophecy about a plague or a particular figure in the scriptures is fulfilled by every newspaper headline. Doing so will lead people to a catastrophic view of scripture.

How is a view of scripture "catastrophic?"

A good example is the rapture theology which has taken the Christian world by storm. This theology is taken from a few words of scripture and made into something very different, to the point that it has become the primary teaching of "respected scholars."

Much of this theology depends on circumstances in the nation of Israel. In it are tied together references to Armageddon, Megiddo, the return of the Lord, tribulations among the Jews/Israel, the rise of an anti-Christ, and periods of time of both 3 1/2 and 7 years, the implant of chips in the hands or forehead, and so on. Basically, every prophetic utterance becomes a building block to support the theology. But these are not square blocks. They are odd-shaped and not cemented together.

Such views are catastrophic because the belief in these things is built the same way as a house of cards. Take away one or two things and the entire belief collapses. It is the work of the adversary to use these constructs to disillusion "believers" - all without firing a shot. It is a way to introduce fear to a population of people whose belief in, faith in, and love of Jesus Christ **should** remove all fear.

Beginning in the 1800's, time predictions about Christ's return have flourished - and destroyed the faith of many who place their trust in those predictions. You don't suppose, do you, that such predictors of the time and date of Christ's return - all of whom have failed - were inspired of God to give false information?

Rather, Jesus explained that the wise man will build upon a rock - the things that are certifiably true. The things that are not true must perish.

The truth is that we can see very real things happening before our eyes that the scriptures do show us - without having to make up some obscure interpretation to explain it. Perhaps the most obvious of these is again from Matthew 24:

Matthew 24/Mark 13 (verse numbers differ)

25 And you also shall hear of wars **and rumors of wars**; see that ye be not troubled; for all I have told you must come to pass. But the end is not yet.

26 Behold, I have told you before, **Wherefore, if they shall say unto you, Behold, he is in the desert, go not forth, or, Behold, he is in the secret chambers, believe it not.**

27 For as the light of the morning cometh out of the east, and shineth even unto the west, and covereth the whole earth, so shall also the coming of the Son of Man be.

28 And now I show unto you a parable: Behold, wheresoever the carcass is, there will the eagles be gathered together; so likewise shall mine elect be gathered from the four quarters of the earth.

29 **And they shall hear of wars and rumors of wars.** Behold, I speak unto you for mine elect's sake.

30 For nation shall rise against nation and kingdom against kingdom; there shall be famine, and pestilences, and **earthquakes in divers places.**

31 And again, because iniquity shall abound, the love of men shall wax cold; but he that shall not be overcome, the same shall be saved.

32 And again, this gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in all the world for a witness unto all nations; and then shall the end come, or the destruction of the wicked.

We have seen many through the years that have sought to become as Christ and have led many away to destruction, and it is on account of their willingness to listen to works and words of darkness. We will see more of it in times to come, but rest assured that the Lord does not work in darkness. (1 John 1:5 This then is the message which we have heard of him and declare unto you--that God is light, and in him is no darkness at all.)

We live in a time in which the reporting of tensions between nations is so much more readily accessible that the "rumors of wars" are reported before any actual preparations for war exist. Just yesterday the news outlets were reporting that the President of Russia, Vladimir Putin, was threatening nuclear war. Meanwhile today others are saying it wasn't an actual "threat." Who can you believe when they both report the same event differently and yet so convincingly?

The old rumor game is very much alive in this modern era of instant communications.

Not all things are rumors though - there are actual wars going on in many places, many of which are not as well reported perhaps, but they are there. I found this on the following site:

<https://geneva-academy.ch/galleries/today-s-armed-conflicts#:~:text=This%20is%2C%20in%20numbers%2C%20the,Turkey%2C%20Yemen%20and%20Western%20Sahara.>

Middle East & North Africa: (more than) 45 armed conflicts

Africa: 35 armed conflicts

Asia: 21 armed conflicts

Europe: 7 armed conflicts

Latin America: 6 armed conflicts

Total: 114

Wikipedia reports the number of armed conflicts to be about 57 in total based on different criteria

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_ongoing_armed_conflicts

I don't know about you, but that seems like a lot of armed conflicts regardless of which number you pick. It illustrates that the prophecy Jesus gave is becoming truer every day, which despite the circumstances of having wars, we know that the word of the Lord must be fulfilled.

With risk comes opportunity, and so it is with us in the latter days because we know that "this gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in all the world." That is something to take joy in because it means that many souls might come to a knowledge of the truth and be saved.

That gospel of which Jesus spoke is no house of cards - it is very real and full of power. If we believe these scriptures to be true then we do not need to fear the future, but to look forward to it with rejoicing as we look for the remaining scriptures to be fulfilled.

1 Nephi 7

36 Wherefore, **he will preserve the righteous by his power**, even if it be so that the fullness of his wrath must come and the righteous be preserved, even unto the destruction of their enemies by fire.

37 Wherefore, **the righteous need not fear**; for thus saith the prophet, They shall be saved, even if it so be as by fire.

38 Behold, my brethren, I say unto you that these things must shortly come; yea, even blood, and fire, and vapor of smoke must come;

39 And it must needs be upon the face of this earth.

40 And it cometh unto men according to the flesh if it so be that they will harden their hearts against the Holy One of Israel;

41 For behold, **the righteous shall not perish**;

42 For the time surely must come that all they who fight against Zion shall be cut off.

We have been given the instruction to be steadfast in the Gospel and to endure to the end, but we must know that rock upon which we stand so that we cannot be easily moved by the winds of doctrine that seek to push us out of our place. Do you know your rock?

Jared