

April 8–14: Jacob 5–7, “The Lord Labors With Us”

Priestcraft

Let's first cover the story of Sherem which is an example of one of the methods used by those who would lead us away from the truth. Jacob had planned not to write any more (Jac 6:13) but then he had the experience with Shereim and he wanted us to learn a lesson from that experience.

President Ezra Taft Benson stated that one of the great lessons of the Book of Mormon is to expose the enemies of Christ so that we will be able to recognize them and their methods

Ezra Taft Benson

"The Book of Mormon brings men to Christ through two basic means. First, it tells in a plain manner of Christ and his gospel....

"Second, the Book of Mormon exposes the enemies of Christ. It confounds false doctrines and lays down contention. It fortifies the humble followers of Christ against the evil designs, strategies, and doctrines of the devil in our day. The type of apostates in the Book of Mormon are similar to the type we have today. God, with his infinite foreknowledge, so molded the Book of Mormon that we might see the error and know how to combat false educational, political, religious, and philosophical concepts of our time." (CR, April 1975)

We will see more examples of the practice of priestcraft and the methods used to spread false doctrine, specifically in Alma when we study Nehor and Korihor

Jacob 7:1-4

1 And now it came to pass after some years had passed away, there came a man among the people of Nephi, whose name was Sherem.

2 And it came to pass that he began to preach among the people, and to declare unto them that there should be no Christ. And he preached many things which were flattering unto the people; and this he did that he might overthrow the doctrine of Christ.

3 And he labored diligently that he might lead away the hearts of the people, insomuch that he did lead away many hearts; and he knowing that I, Jacob, had faith in Christ who should come, he sought much opportunity that he might come unto me.

4 And he was learned, that he had a perfect knowledge of the language of the people; wherefore, he could use much flattery, and much power of speech, according to the power of the devil.

What tool does Sherem use to lead the people away from the truth?

(he preached many things which were flattering unto the people
he was learned... he had a perfect knowledge of the language
wherefore, he could use much flattery, and much power of speech)

No doubt Sherem was confident that he could outmaneuver Jacob with his power of speech.

Paul said that in the last days institutes would exist that “[have] a form of Godliness, but they deny the power thereof: from such turn away” (2 Tim 3:5). This seems to be the type of priestcraft that Sherem practice.

Jacob 7:6-7

6 And it came to pass that he came unto me, and on this wise did he speak unto me, saying: Brother Jacob, I have sought much opportunity that I might speak unto you; for I have heard and also know that thou goest about much, preaching that which ye call the gospel, or the doctrine of Christ.

7 And ye have led away much of this people that they pervert the right way of God, and keep not the law of Moses which is the right way; and convert the law of Moses into the worship of a being which ye say shall come many hundred years hence. And now behold, I, Sherem, declare unto you that this is blasphemy; for no man knoweth of such things; for he cannot tell of things to come. And after this manner did Sherem contend against me.

In what way would you say that Sherem had “a form of Godliness”?

(the law of Moses which is the right way)

In what way would you say that Sherem denied the power of God?

(convert law of Moses into the worship of [Christ])
(no man knoweth... of things to come)

Sherem made himself out to be the defender of their faith.
But he denied the need for Christ and the power of prophecy.

Jacob 7:8-12

8 But behold, the Lord God poured in his Spirit into my soul, insomuch that I did confound him in all his words.

9 And I said unto him: Deniest thou the Christ who shall come? And he said: If there should be a Christ, I would not deny him; but I know that there is no Christ, neither has been, nor ever will be.

10 And I said unto him: Believest thou the scriptures? And he said, Yea.

11 And I said unto him: Then ye do not understand them; for they truly testify of Christ. Behold, I say unto you that none of the prophets have written, nor prophesied, save they have spoken concerning this Christ.

12 And this is not all—it has been made manifest unto me, for I have heard and seen; and it also has been made manifest unto me by the power of the Holy Ghost; wherefore, I know if there should be no atonement made all mankind must be lost.

What argument does Jacob use against Sherem's statement that no man can know that Christ will come?

(none of the prophets have written, nor prophesied, save they have spoken concerning this Christ
also has been made manifest unto me by the power of the Holy Ghost)

What do we learn from Jacob's example of what to do when someone challenges us about something that we know to be true?

(God poured in his Spirit into my soul, insomuch that I did confound him in all his words)

The prompting of the Holy Ghost is much more convincing than the power of speech. Teach from the scriptures and bear testimony.

Studying and receiving a witness from the Holy Ghost is the only way we can know the truth - as Sherem himself found out

Jacob 7:15-17

15 And it came to pass that when I, Jacob, had spoken these words, the power of the Lord came upon him, insomuch that he fell to the earth. And it came to pass that he was nourished for the space of many days.

16 And it came to pass that he said unto the people: Gather together on the morrow, for I shall die; wherefore, I desire to speak unto the people before I shall die.

17 And it came to pass that on the morrow the multitude were gathered together; and he spake plainly unto them and denied the things which he had taught them, and confessed the Christ, and the power of the Holy Ghost, and the ministering of angels.

Sherem came to a knowledge of the truth after "he was nourished for the space of many days."

Scattering and Gathering of Israel

Chapter 5 is an allegory which expresses God's love and devotion to Israel. Jacob is quoting the prophet Zenos.

What do we know about Zenos?

One of five prophets quoted in the Book of Mormon from the Brass Plates but not included in our Old Testament.

Zenos is also quoted by Nephi (1 Nephi 19:10-17), Alma (Alma 33:3-11), Nephi - son of Helaman (Helaman 8:19), Samual the Lamanite (Helaman 15:11-12), and Mormon (3 Nephi 10:16))

The 1st time period of the allegory represents early Israel in the Promised Land (5:1-

6)

Jacob 5:3-6

3 For behold, thus saith the Lord, I will liken thee, O house of Israel, like unto a tame olive tree, which a man took and nourished in his vineyard; and it grew, and waxed old, and began to decay.

4 And it came to pass that the master of the vineyard went forth, and he saw that his olive tree began to decay; and he said: I will prune it, and dig about it, and nourish it, that perhaps it may shoot forth young and tender branches, and it perish not.

5 And it came to pass that he pruned it, and digged about it, and nourished it according to his word.

6 And it came to pass that after many days it began to put forth somewhat a little, young and tender branches; but behold, the main top thereof began to perish.

Zenos likens Israel to a cultivated olive tree

Ralph E. Swiss

"The story opens at a time of growing decay, perhaps such a time as the period following the reigns of Saul, David, and Solomon when the glory of Israel was greatly lessened by growing wickedness and evil....

"Even in the midst of Israel's apostasy, such prophets as Isaiah, Jeremiah, and Lehi came to lead the people, and some of the Israelites turned to the Lord." ("The Tame and Wild Olive Trees", Ensign, August 1988)

But Israel's wickedness caused them to be captured by Gentile nations so the 2nd time period represents the history of Israel being conquered, ruled, and displaced by foreign nations (5:7-14)

Jacob 5:7,9-10

7 And it came to pass that the master of the vineyard saw it [the main top thereof began to perish], and he said unto his servant: It grieveth me that I should lose this tree; wherefore, go and pluck the branches from a wild olive tree, and bring them hither unto me; and we will pluck off those...

9 Take thou the branches of the wild olive tree, and graft them in, in the stead thereof; and these which I have plucked off I will cast into the fire and burn them, that they may not cumber the ground of my vineyard.

10 And it came to pass that the servant of the Lord of the vineyard did according to the word of the Lord of the vineyard, and grafted in the branches of the wild olive tree.

What examples do we have in Old Testament times of mixing Gentiles in with Israel?

Ralph E. Swiss

"After the death of King Solomon, the kingdom of Israel divided into two

kingdoms. First, the mighty nation of Assyria destroyed the Northern Kingdom, carrying off many of the inhabitants of Israel....

Similarly [the] Assyria brought non-Israelites into the Northern Kingdom, who adopted the religion of Israel. These people became known as the Samaritans." ("The Tame and Wild Olive Trees", Ensign, August 1988)

How do you think that the invasion of foreigners into Israel help keep Israel from dying out completely?

A purging which led to many evil Israelites being destroyed.
Destruction leads to humility and repentance.

The Lord scatters Israel

Jacob 5:8,13-14

8 And behold, saith the Lord of the vineyard, I take away many of these young and tender branches, and I will graft them whithersoever I will; and it mattereth not that if it so be that the root of this tree will perish, I may preserve the fruit thereof unto myself; wherefore, I will take these young and tender branches, and I will graft them whithersoever I will.

13 And these will I place in the nethermost part of my vineyard, whithersoever I will, it mattereth not unto thee; and I do it that I may preserve unto myself the natural branches of the tree; and also, that I may lay up fruit thereof against the season, unto myself; for it grieveth me that I should lose this tree and the fruit thereof.

14 And it came to pass that the Lord of the vineyard went his way, and hid the natural branches of the tame olive tree in the nethermost parts of the vineyard, some in one and some in another, according to his will and pleasure.

Why does the Lord of the vineyard scatter many of the young and tender branches?

(it mattereth not that if it so be that the root of this tree will perish, I may preserve the fruit thereof unto myself
I do it that I may preserve unto myself the natural branches of the tree)

The root of the tree is the gospel. If the root of the original tree dies (gospel forsaken) the gospel will still be with those who have been scattered

Joseph Fielding Smith

“In that parable the olive tree is the House of Israel... In its native land it began to die. So the Lord took branches like the Nephites, like the lost tribes, and like others that the Lord led off that we do not know anything about, to other parts of the earth. He planted them all over his vineyard, which is the world” (Answers to Gospel Questions, 4:204)

The 3rd time period represents the meridian of time (5:15-28)

Jacob 5:15-18

15 And it came to pass that a long time passed away, and the Lord of the vineyard said unto his servant: Come, let us go down into the vineyard, that we may labor in the vineyard.

16 And it came to pass that the Lord of the vineyard, and also the servant, went down into the vineyard to labor. And it came to pass that the servant said unto his master: Behold, look here; behold the tree.

17 And it came to pass that the Lord of the vineyard looked and beheld the tree in the which the wild olive branches had been grafted; and it had sprung forth and begun to bear fruit. And he beheld that it was good; and the fruit thereof was like unto the natural fruit.

18 And he said unto the servant: Behold, the branches of the wild tree have taken hold of the moisture of the root thereof, that the root thereof hath brought forth much strength; and because of the much strength of the root thereof the wild branches have brought forth tame fruit. Now, if we had not grafted in these branches, the tree thereof would have perished. And now, behold, I shall lay up much fruit, which the tree thereof hath brought forth; and the fruit thereof I shall lay up against the season, unto mine own self.

What was the result of grafting the wild branches into the tree?

(the root thereof hath brought forth much strength
the wild branches have brought forth tame fruit)

The Gentiles had accepted the gospel and lived their lives accordingly

But note that the tree had just “begun to bear fruit.” Initially the fruit was good but we’ll read the state of the fruit in later years

Now the lord and the servant go and see what has become of the natural branches that were scattered throughout the vineyard

Jacob 5:19-25

19 And it came to pass that the Lord of the vineyard said unto the servant: Come, let us go to the nethermost part of the vineyard, and behold if the natural branches of the tree have not brought forth much fruit also, that I may lay up of the fruit thereof against the season, unto mine own self.

20 And it came to pass that they went forth whither the master had hid the natural branches of the tree, and he said unto the servant: Behold these; and he beheld the first that it had brought forth much fruit; and he beheld also that it was good. And he said unto the servant: Take of the fruit thereof, and lay it up against the season, that I may preserve it unto mine own self; for behold, said he, this long time have I nourished it, and it hath brought forth much fruit.

21 And it came to pass that the servant said unto his master: How comest thou hither to plant this tree, or this branch of the tree? For behold, it was the poorest spot in all

the land of thy vineyard.

22 And the Lord of the vineyard said unto him: Counsel me not; I knew that it was a poor spot of ground; wherefore, I said unto thee, I have nourished it this long time, and thou beholdest that it hath brought forth much fruit.

23 And it came to pass that the Lord of the vineyard said unto his servant: Look hither; behold I have planted another branch of the tree also; and thou knowest that this spot of ground was poorer than the first. But, behold the tree. I have nourished it this long time, and it hath brought forth much fruit; therefore, gather it, and lay it up against the season, that I may preserve it unto mine own self.

24 And it came to pass that the Lord of the vineyard said again unto his servant: Look hither, and behold another branch also, which I have planted; behold that I have nourished it also, and it hath brought forth fruit.

25 And he said unto the servant: Look hither and behold the last. Behold, this have I planted in a good spot of ground; and I have nourished it this long time, and only a part of the tree hath brought forth tame fruit, and the other part of the tree hath brought forth wild fruit; behold, I have nourished this tree like unto the others.

How many different scatterings are mentioned and how are they described?

The “first” was in a poor spot but had brought forth much fruit
Another branch was in a spot poorer than the first but it still brought forth much fruit
Another branch had brought forth fruit
The last branch was in a good spot but part of the fruit was tame and part was wild

What scattered group do you think the “part tame and part wild fruit” (verse 25) refers to? Why?

The 4th time period represents the time just before the restoration of the gospel (5:29-51)

The lord and the servant check on the state of the original, tame tree

Jacob 5:29-32

29 And it came to pass that a long time had passed away, and the Lord of the vineyard said unto his servant: Come, let us go down into the vineyard, that we may labor again in the vineyard. For behold, the time draweth near, and the end soon cometh; wherefore, I must lay up fruit against the season, unto mine own self.

30 And it came to pass that the Lord of the vineyard and the servant went down into the vineyard; and they came to the tree whose natural branches had been broken off, and the wild branches had been grafted in; and behold all sorts of fruit did cumber the tree.

31 And it came to pass that the Lord of the vineyard did taste of the fruit, every sort according to its number. And the Lord of the vineyard said: Behold, this long time have we nourished this tree, and I have laid up unto myself against the season much fruit.

32 But behold, this time it hath brought forth much fruit, and there is none of it which is good. And behold, there are all kinds of bad fruit; and it profiteth me nothing, notwithstanding all our labor; and now it grieveth me that I should lose this tree.

What do you think is meant by "all sorts of fruit"?

Ralph E. Swiss

"This scene is much like the condition of the earth during the great apostasy. In many lands, including ancient America, the gospel was lost entirely; in others, Christianity had fragmented into a multitude of differing sects and doctrines." ("The Tame and Wild Olive Trees", Ensign, August 1988)

The lord and his servant investigates the branches scattered throughout the vineyard

Jacob 5:38-41

38 And it came to pass that the Lord of the vineyard said unto his servant: Let us go down into the nethermost parts of the vineyard, and behold if the natural branches have also brought forth evil fruit.

39 And it came to pass that they went down into the nethermost parts of the vineyard. And it came to pass that they beheld that the fruit of the natural branches had become corrupt also; yea, the first and the second and also the last; and they had all become corrupt.

40 And the wild fruit of the last had overcome that part of the tree which brought forth good fruit, even that the branch had withered away and died.

41 And it came to pass that the Lord of the vineyard wept, and said unto the servant: What could I have done more for my vineyard?

So all had become corrupt, as the Lord told Joseph Smith:

JS-H 1:19

I was answered that I must join none of them, for they were all wrong; and the Personage who addressed me said that all their creeds were an abomination in his sight; that those professors were all corrupt; that: "they draw near to me with their lips, but their hearts are far from me, they teach for doctrines the commandments of men, having a form of godliness, but they deny the power thereof."

Note He uses the same descriptive word, "corrupt"

Note He states, "they teach for doctrines the commandments of men" (from Sherem discussion)

What does it teach us about the importance doing the Lords work when we read that "the Lord of the vineyard wept"?

(What could I have done more for my vineyard)

Jeffrey R. Holland

“After digging and dunging, watering and weeding, trimming, pruning, transplanting, and grafting, the great Lord of the vineyard throws down his spade and his pruning shears and weeps, crying out to any who would listen, ‘What could I have done more for my vineyard?’

“What an indelible image of God’s engagement in our lives! What anguish in a parent when His children do not choose Him nor ‘the gospel of God’ He sent! How easy to love someone who so singularly loves us!” (CR, Oct. 2003)

Jacob 5:47-48

47 But what could I have done more in my vineyard? Have I slackened mine hand, that I have not nourished it? Nay, I have nourished it, and I have digged about it, and I have pruned it, and I have dunged it; and I have stretched forth mine hand almost all the day long, and the end draweth nigh. And it grieveth me that I should hew down all the trees of my vineyard, and cast them into the fire that they should be burned. Who is it that has corrupted my vineyard?

48 And it came to pass that the servant said unto his master: Is it not the loftiness of thy vineyard—have not the branches thereof overcome the roots which are good? And because the branches have overcome the roots thereof, behold they grew faster than the strength of the roots, taking strength unto themselves. Behold, I say, is not this the cause that the trees of thy vineyard have become corrupted?

The "loftyness of the vineyard" led to "the branches [overcoming] the roots." What do you think he means by "the branches [take] strength unto themselves"?

2 Nephi 9:28

...they hearken not unto the counsel of God, for they set it aside, supposing they know of themselves...

This is what happened shortly after the death of the early Apostles.

B. H. Roberts

"The force of heathen rage was aimed at the leaders and strong men of the body religious; and being long-continued and relentlessly cruel, those most steadfast in their adherence to the Church invariably became its victims. These being stricken down, it left none but weaklings to contend for the faith, and made possible those subsequent innovations in the religion of Jesus which a pagan public sentiment demanded, and which so completely changed both the spirit and form of the Christian religion as to subvert it utterly." ("A New Witness for God," pg. 47-48)

Resulting in "all sorts of fruits", but "none of them are good".

The 5th time period represents the gathering of Israel (5:52-72)

Jacob 5:52,65-68

52 Wherefore, let us take of the branches of these which I have planted in the nethermost parts of my vineyard, and let us graft them into the tree from whence they came; and let us pluck from the tree those branches whose fruit is most bitter, and graft in the natural branches of the tree in the stead thereof.

65 And as they begin to grow ye shall clear away the branches which bring forth bitter fruit, according to the strength of the good and the size thereof; and ye shall not clear away the bad thereof all at once, lest the roots thereof should be too strong for the graft, and the graft thereof shall perish, and I lose the trees of my vineyard.

66 For it grieveth me that I should lose the trees of my vineyard; wherefore ye shall clear away the bad according as the good shall grow, that the root and the top may be equal in strength, until the good shall overcome the bad, and the bad be hewn down and cast into the fire, that they cumber not the ground of my vineyard; and thus will I sweep away the bad out of my vineyard.

67 And the branches of the natural tree will I graft in again into the natural tree;

68 And the branches of the natural tree will I graft into the natural branches of the tree; and thus will I bring them together again, that they shall bring forth the natural fruit, and they shall be one.

Why is the Lord careful not to “clear away the bad” too quickly?

(graft will parish because the roots are too strong)

What do you think that means?

The process is slow because the Lord of the vineyard does not want the branches to become lofty again.

This is during our time.

Jacob 5:70-72

70 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.

71 And the Lord of the vineyard said unto them: Go to, and labor in the vineyard, with your might. For behold, this is the last time that I shall nourish my vineyard; for the end is nigh at hand, and the season speedily cometh; and if ye labor with your might with me ye shall have joy in the fruit which I shall lay up unto myself against the time which will soon come.

72 And it came to pass that the servants did go and labor with their mights; and the Lord of the vineyard labored also with them; and they did obey the commandments of the Lord of the vineyard in all things.

What blessing is promised to those who labor with the Lord in his vineyard?

(ye shall have joy in the fruit which I shall lay up unto myself)

How can we be numbered with His servants and receive these great blessings?

D&C 33

3 For behold, the field is white already to harvest; and it is the eleventh hour, and the last time that I shall call laborers into my vineyard.

4 And my vineyard has become corrupted every whit....

7 Yea, verily, verily, I say unto you, that the field is white already to harvest; wherefore, thrust in your sickles, and reap with all your might, mind, and strength....

9 Yea, open your mouths and spare not, and you shall be laden with sheaves upon your backs, for lo, I am with you.

The Millennium

The 6th time period represents The Millennium (5:73-77)

The Lord, his servant, and those who they had recruited worked diligently until there was no more corruption in the vineyard

Jacob 5:75-77

75 And it came to pass that when the Lord of the vineyard saw that his fruit was good, and that his vineyard was no more corrupt, he called up his servants, and said unto them: Behold, for this last time have we nourished my vineyard; and thou beholdest that I have done according to my will; and I have preserved the natural fruit, that it is good, even like as it was in the beginning. And blessed art thou; for because ye have been diligent in laboring with me in my vineyard, and have kept my commandments, and have brought unto me again the natural fruit, that my vineyard is no more corrupted, and the bad is cast away, behold ye shall have joy with me because of the fruit of my vineyard.

76 For behold, for a long time will I lay up of the fruit of my vineyard unto mine own self against the season, which speedily cometh; and for the last time have I nourished my vineyard, and pruned it, and dug about it, and dunged it; wherefore I will lay up unto mine own self of the fruit, for a long time, according to that which I have spoken.

77 And when the time cometh that evil fruit shall again come into my vineyard, then will I cause the good and the bad to be gathered; and the good will I preserve unto myself, and the bad will I cast away into its own place. And then cometh the season and the end; and my vineyard will I cause to be burned with fire.

What do we learn about the Millennium from these verses?

(his fruit was good, and that his vineyard was no more corrupt
the natural fruit, that it is good, even like as it was in the beginning
for a long time will I lay up of the fruit of my vineyard)

Then the battle of Gog and Magog:
(evil fruit shall again come into my vineyard)

Then the earths receives it's celestial glory:
(the end; and my vineyard will I cause to be burned with fire)

(Book of Mormon Student Manual - Religion 121–122, 2003)

Symbol	Meaning
The vineyard	The world
Tame olive tree	The house of Israel, the Lord's covenant people
Wild olive tree	Gentiles, or non-Israel (later in the parable, wild branches represent apostate Israel)
Branches	Groups of people
Tame olive roots children	The gospel covenants and promises the Lord makes with His children
Fruit of the tree	The lives or works of men
Digging, pruning, fertilizing	The Lord's work with His children, which seeks to persuade them to be obedient and produce good fruit
Transplanting branches	Scattering of groups throughout the world, or restoring them to their original position
Grafting	Spiritual rebirth through which one is joined to the covenant
Decaying branches	Wickedness and apostasy
Casting branches into fire	The judgment of God