

MOSAIC LAW AND MESSIANIC HOPE

(2 Nephi 1:59-128)

V59-128

Redemption cometh through the Holy Messiah. Freedom of choice (agency) is essential to existence. Adam fell that men might be. Men are free to choose liberty and eternal life.

V59-66 Lehi's comments to Jacob make use of the examples of his older brothers to characterize him:

Jacob has suffered afflictions because of the rudeness of Laman and Lemuel (v. 60)

Nevertheless Jacob knows the greatness of God (v. 61)

Jacob shall dwell safely with Nephi and serve God (v. 62)

Jacob has beheld in his youth the glory of God (v. 63)

Lehi's purpose in doing so is to set up the discussion about the necessity of opposition (v. 81-93) and of the Fall of man (v. 94-121). While Jacob has suffered as a result of the actions of his older brothers, this suffering has been a means of him coming to know the Lord. The result is he is more like Nephi than his other older brothers.

Jacob is thus held up as an example of one whose afflictions have caused him to draw closer to God.

Here is a person presented with two sharp dichotomies to choose from, and he chose the better part. The implications of Lehi's comments are that, at least in part, Jacob has Laman and Lemuel to thank for his religious zeal. Their bad examples served as a negative example.

V67-72 addresses the doctrine of Justification, which refers very specifically to the expiation of sin by the Grace of Christ (v. 71). In other words, the punishment justice demands of us for the sins we commit is mitigated by the mercy Jesus offers. It is free because it is not something we earn by repenting, but something that is granted by faith on Christ (v. 72). It is not obtained by obedience to the Law, as the Law only identifies sin and therefore condemns us rather than justify us (v. 67-70). This is the same thing Paul is speaking of when he says "ye are saved by grace, not by works", cf. Eph. 2:8-10.

V73-80 then address the resurrection, which brings us back into the presence of God. Jesus brings about the resurrection because he is the only one who did not sin against his mortal flesh. He therefore deserves to be resurrected because he earned it, and so is the first to rise from the dead with a perfected physical body (v. 73-75). And, having done so, may intercede with the Father in bringing about the resurrection of all men. This resurrection comes to all, and results in them being brought back into God's presence. This then results in them being judged and receiving either punishment or happiness (v. 78-80). Those who believe on him are "saved", meaning they obtain the first resurrection, or the resurrection of glory (v. 76).

V81-93 Lehi pauses for a moment from the main discussion to offer a rather philosophical parenthesis explaining the necessity of opposition. Lehi states moral opposites and their consequences must exist (v. 81-84) in order for there to be any point to Creation (v. 85-87). To say there are no moral opposites is to say there is no God, and if so then there is nothing (v.88-93). But, since Creation does exist, there must be God and therefore moral opposites, which is what Lehi picks up with in the subsequent v. 94-96.

V94-96 shows plainly how interconnected certain moral principles are in the human mind, and Lehi uses this to attack ethical relativists. If people are ethically relative, then they reject any kind of independent moral authority, such as God. They reject divine creation, looking for other explanations to Creation. We see this very issue being played out in our modern society as atheists use various scientific theories as a foil against religion, rather than leaving science to the scientists. If they can convince themselves life came upon the earth without any divine mover, then there is no need for a divine mover. If the universe came into existence spontaneously, then there is no need for God. If there is no God, then there are no

moral opposites; they are merely culturally dependant norms of behavior, which can be set as people wish. And thus a contemporary creation myth is generated by a secular society, and it permits them to do as they please. But, this line of thought is not new; it's as old as the human race.

V94-121 Lehi now addresses the earlier statement "the way is prepared from the fall of man" from v. 4 in considerable detail. Verse 14 responds to his own argument developed in v. 13 by saying that since Creation does exist, and therefore God exists, and so moral agency must exist as well.

Lehi then recounts the Creation story the Fall in standard fashion (v. 97-106), with some obscurities explained (v. 101-104), so as to set up his new exposition.

Using the Creation and Fall as the backdrop, Lehi explains the Fall was necessary in order to accomplish the salvation of man (v. 107-121). After the Fall, the human race was not immediately extinguished under the new curse of physical death. Rather, the Lord prolonged the lives of mortals so they would have an opportunity to be tested and repent according to the commands of the Lord (v. 107-109). Had the Fall not occurred, Adam and Eve would have remained childless in the Garden eternally in moral naivety (v. 111-113). But, fortunately for the human race, God had different plans (v. 114), and the Fall came about so that eternal progression might be offered to us (v. 115). And, so, the Messiah comes to redeem the human race from the effects of the Fall, and thus make them free (v. 116-118). They are free to choose eternal life through the Messiah, or eternal damnation through the devil (v. 119-121).

V122-128 Lehi closes this portion of the discussion by exhorting his sons to choose eternal life from the Messiah (v. 122-123) over eternal damnation at the hands of the devil (v. 124-125). He states at the end of his probation that he has chosen eternal life, and has no other purpose than to encourage his sons to do the same (v. 126-128).

V124-125 "I have chosen the good part, according to the words of the prophet", I am not sure what passage Lehi is referring to here, it might be Job 34:4.

1. What did Lehi teach about the role of (a) law and (b) grace in the salvation of humans?
2. What are the results of Christ's Aintercession for all?
3. What sort of opposition was Lehi talking about here? Why is it necessary?
4. What was Adam and Eve's life like before the fall?
5. Why, according to Lehi, are people free to choose and what are their basic choices?