
2 Nephi 32 — Feast Upon the Words of Christ — Angels, the Holy Ghost, and Pray Always

The three sustaining-graces of the disciple-life — angelic tutelage, scriptural feasting, unceasing prayer; nine verses, c. 559–545 BC.

The chapter is the BoM's most-concentrated articulation of post-baptismal-discipleship. Having given the doctrine of Christ in ch. 31, Nephi now answers what shall we do once we are on the way? Three movements: (1) the angelic-tutelage doctrine (vv. 1–3); (2) the feast-upon-the-words-of-Christ summary (vv. 4–6); (3) the pray-always-or-perish charge (vv. 7–9). The chapter is short — nine verses — but pastorally-dense. Master-claim: *angels speak by the power of the Holy Ghost; wherefore, they speak the words of Christ*. The Christological-test of every Spirit-utterance.

Ten Insights

- 1. Prophetic discernment of the unspoken question (v. 1).** *I suppose that ye ponder somewhat in your hearts.* Same prophetic-grammar as Lk. 7:39–40 and Lk. 24:38. The prophet perceives what the people have not yet asked.
- 2. Tongue of angels by the Holy Ghost (v. 2).** *How could ye speak with the tongue of angels save it were by the Holy Ghost?* Pre-Pentecostal articulation of the Acts 2:4 Spirit-as-source-of-angelic-tongue. The Spirit is the medium of charismatic-utterance.
- 3. Angels speak the words of Christ (v. 3).** *Angels speak by the power of the Holy Ghost; wherefore, they speak the words of Christ.* The chapter's master-equation. Every Spirit-utterance is Christological — the test 1 Jn. 4:1–3 will codify centuries later.
- 4. Feast on the words of Christ for all guidance (v. 3).** *Feast upon the words of Christ; for behold, the words of Christ will tell you all things what ye should do.* Scriptural-sufficiency for guidance (2 Tim. 3:16–17). Not snacking — feasting; not skimming — savoring.
- 5. Ask and you shall understand (v. 4).** *If ye cannot understand them it will be because ye ask not, neither do ye knock.* The verse-pattern Joseph Smith will instinctively apply at JS—H 1:11–14 — read Jas. 1:5 and act on it. The First Vision is shaped by this grammar.
- 6. Holy Ghost will show all things (v. 5).** *If ye will enter in by the way, and receive the Holy Ghost, it will show unto you all things what ye should do.* Personal-revelation-sufficiency (Jn. 14:26; 16:13; 1 Jn. 2:27). Scripture + Spirit = all things.
- 7. No more doctrine till he manifest himself (v. 6).** *This is the doctrine of Christ, and there will be no more doctrine given until after he shall manifest himself unto you in the flesh.* The flesh-manifestation reference is 3 Ne. 11–28. Doctrinal-stability of the pre-resurrection-Nephite-era.
- 8. The Spirit stoppeth utterance at resistance (v. 7).** *The Spirit stoppeth mine utterance, and I am left to mourn because of the unbelief, and the wickedness, and the ignorance, and the stiffneckedness of men.* Four-fold resistance-diagnosis. The prophet is Spirit-throttled by audience-disposition (Matt. 7:6).
- 9. The Spirit that teaches a man to pray (v. 8).** *If ye would hearken unto the Spirit which teacheth a man to pray, ye would know that ye must pray; for the evil spirit teacheth not a man to pray, but teacheth him that he must not pray.* Diagnostic-clarity — if you don't feel like praying, the prompting is not from God (Rom. 8:26).
- 10. Pray always; consecrate every performance (v. 9).** *Ye must pray always, and not faint; that ye must not perform any thing unto the Lord save in the first place ye shall pray unto the Father in the name of Christ, that he will consecrate thy performance unto thee, that thy performance may be for the welfare of thy soul.* Pre-Pauline articulation of Col. 3:17 / 1 Cor. 10:31.

Cross-References

Gen. 5:24 (Enoch walked with God); Ex. 29:38 (continual burnt offering — tamid); Deut. 30:11–14 (the word is very nigh unto thee); Ps. 1:2 (delight is in the law of the Lord); Ps. 5:3 (in the morning will I direct my prayer); Ps. 55:17 (evening, morning, noon will I pray); Ps. 119:11 (thy word have I hid in mine heart); Prov. 2:3–6 (yea, if thou criest after knowledge); Prov. 3:5–6 (in all thy ways acknowledge him); Isa. 30:21 (this is the way, walk ye in it); Isa. 55:1–3 (come, buy, and eat — feast — direct parallel v. 3); Jer. 15:16 (thy words were found and I did eat — direct parallel v. 3); Jer. 29:13 (ye shall seek me and find me); Ezek. 3:1–3 (eat this roll — direct parallel v. 3); Matt. 4:4 (live by every word — direct parallel v. 3); Matt. 6:5–13 (Lord's Prayer); Matt. 7:7–8 (ask, seek, knock — direct parallel v. 4); Matt. 26:41 (watch and pray); Lk. 11:9–13 (ask and it shall be given); Lk. 18:1 (ought always to pray and not to faint — direct parallel v. 9); Lk. 24:32 (did not our heart burn within us); Jn. 6:35 (bread of life); Jn. 6:63 (the words I speak unto you are spirit and life — direct parallel v. 3); Jn. 7:17 (if any man will do his will, he shall know of the doctrine); Jn. 14:13 (whatsoever ye shall ask in my name); Jn. 14:26 (Comforter shall teach all things — direct parallel v. 5); Jn. 16:13 (Spirit of truth shall guide — direct parallel v. 5); Acts 1:14 (continued in prayer); Acts 2:4 (filled with the Holy Ghost — direct parallel v. 2); Acts 7:51 (stiffnecked — direct parallel v. 7); Rom. 8:26 (Spirit helpeth our infirmities — direct parallel v. 8); Rom. 12:12 (continuing instant in prayer); 1 Cor. 10:31 (whether ye eat or drink — direct parallel v. 9); 1 Cor. 12:3 (no man can say Jesus is the Lord but by the Holy Ghost); 1 Cor. 13:1 (tongues of men and of angels — direct parallel v. 2); Eph. 6:18 (praying always — direct parallel v. 9); Phil. 4:6–7 (in every thing by prayer); Col. 3:17 (whatsoever ye do — direct parallel v. 9); 1 Thes. 5:17 (pray without ceasing — direct parallel v. 9); 2 Tim. 3:16–17 (all scripture is given by inspiration — direct parallel v. 3); Heb. 4:12 (word of God is quick and powerful); Heb. 13:2 (entertained angels unawares); Jas. 1:5 (if any of you lack wisdom — direct parallel v. 4); Jas. 4:8 (draw nigh to God); 1 Pet. 2:2 (newborn babes, desire the sincere milk); 1 Jn. 2:27 (anointing teacheth — direct parallel v. 5); 1 Jn. 4:1–3 (try the spirits — direct parallel v. 3); 1 Ne. 8:30 (continual feasting); 2 Ne. 4:15 (my soul delighteth in scriptures); 2 Ne. 25:26 (we talk of Christ); 2 Ne. 31 (doctrine of Christ — direct context); 2 Ne. 33 (Nephi's farewell — direct sequel); Mosiah 4:30 (watch yourselves — direct parallel v. 9); Alma 32:42–43 (feast); Alma 34:17–28 (Amulek on prayer — direct extended parallel v. 9); Alma 37:36–37 (counsel with the Lord — direct parallel v. 9); 3 Ne. 13:5–13 (Lord's Prayer); 3 Ne. 18:18–21 (pray always); Moro. 7:48 (pray with all energy of heart); Moro. 10:4 (ask God with a sincere heart); D&C 1:24 (after manner of their language); D&C 8:2–3 (in your mind and heart by Holy Ghost); D&C 9:7–9 (study it out in your mind); D&C 19:38 (pray always — direct parallel v. 9); D&C 50:23–24 (which is of God is light); D&C 88:63 (draw near unto me); D&C 90:24 (search diligently, pray always); D&C 121:45 (let virtue garnish thy thoughts unceasingly); JS—H 1:11–14 (Joseph reads Jas. 1:5 — direct parallel v. 4); Articles of Faith 7 (gifts of tongues, prophecy, revelation); Articles of Faith 9 (continuous revelation).

Apocryphal Correlations

Sirach 39:5–11. The wise man rises early, prays to the Most High — direct vv. 8–9 daily-prayer parallel.

Wisdom 7:7. I prayed, and understanding was given me — direct v. 4 ask-and-receive parallel.

4 Ezra 5:21–22. I prayed unto the Most High — direct vv. 8–9 covenant-prayer parallel.

2 Baruch 48:1–10. Hear my prayer, O Lord — direct v. 9 prayer-as-precondition parallel.

1 Enoch 9:1–11. Watchers' intercessory-prayer for humanity — direct angelic-Spirit-prayer parallel.

Damascus Doc (CD) 11:21–22. Whoever enters the house of prayer shall not come in defiled — direct v. 9 prayer-consecration parallel.

1QH 4:5–8. I will praise thee for thou hast taught me thy truth — direct vv. 4–5 Spirit-given-knowledge parallel.

Didache 8:1–3. Pray three times a day — direct v. 9 pray-always parallel.

Hebrew Word Studies

leshon malakhim (לְשׁוֹן מַלְאָכִים, **tongue of angels**) — v. 2. The prophetic-charismatic gift; 1 Cor. 13:1; the rabbinic *bat qol* — daughter-of-voice.

divrei Mashiach (דִּבְרֵי מֶשִׁיחַ, **words of Messiah**) — v. 3. Every Spirit-utterance is Christological; the test 1 Jn. 4:1–3 will codify.

hithpallel (הִתְפַּלֵּל, **to pray**, **hitpa'el reflexive of palal**) — v. 9. Self-mediating before God; the disciple as priest at his own altar.

tamid (תָּמִיד, **always, continually**) — v. 9. The temple-noun for the daily-burnt-offering (Ex. 29:38); prayer as spiritual-tamid-offering.

kesilim (כְּסִילִים, **fools** — **Wisdom-tradition pejorative**) — v. 7 (anti-revelation posture). Opposite of *chakhamim* (Prov. 1:7).

shenah ha-mavet (שְׁנַת הַמָּוֶת, **sleep of death — implied by v. 7**) — Ps. 13:3; the unrepentant are not dead but spiritually asleep — hithor'er-awakening still possible.

Personal Application

Three practices. First, test every prompting Christologically. Every prompting, impulse, felt-spiritual-influence — test it against the words of Christ as recorded in scripture (D&C 50:23–24). Second, feast on the words of Christ daily. Read scripture daily; not skim, not study-for-lesson, but feast — savor each phrase, chew on each verse, swallow each truth into the heart (Ezek. 3:1–3). Third, consecrate every performance by prior-prayer. Before each task — work, conversation, meal, journey — pause for prayer in Christ's name; ask that the performance be consecrated for the welfare of thy soul (D&C 19:38).