
2 Nephi 33 — Nephi's Farewell — The Power of the Words, the Face-to-Face Meeting, the Pleasing Bar

Nephi's closing testimony; weakness in writing vs. power in speaking; the appointment at the bar; c. 559–545 BC.

The chapter is Nephi's closing-signature on the small plates. After thirty-two chapters of vision, prophecy, doctrine, and exhortation, Nephi seals his record with a fourteen-verse-farewell that simultaneously confesses weakness and asserts authority. Three movements: (1) the writing-weakness vs. Spirit-power confession (vv. 1–2); (2) Nephi's prayer-for-his-people and the BoM's-witness-power claim (vv. 3–11); (3) the farewell-and-judgment-bar-appointment (vv. 12–15). The chapter is the BoM's first valedictory-signature; it establishes the pleasing-bar tradition that Jacob 6:13 and Moroni 10:34 will echo.

Ten Insights

- 1. Spirit carries words to hearts (v. 1).** *When a man speaketh by the power of the Holy Ghost the power of the Holy Ghost carrieth it unto the hearts of the children of men.* The Spirit is the distance-collapser between speaker and hearer (Acts 4:31; 1 Thes. 1:5).
- 2. Hardened hearts cast away (v. 2).** *Many... harden their hearts against the Holy Spirit... cast many things away which are written and esteem them as things of naught.* Pre-apostolic articulation of the scoffer-as-recipient-type (1 Cor. 1:18; 2 Pet. 3:3).
- 3. Eyes water my pillow by night (v. 3).** *Mine eyes water my pillow by night, because of them.* Same Davidic-grammar as Ps. 6:6 — I water my couch with my tears. The prophet bears his people's salvation in tears (Lk. 19:41).
- 4. Weakness made strong; persuade good (v. 4).** *The words which I have written in weakness will be made strong unto them.* Same doctrine as Eth. 12:27. Four purposes: persuade to good, make known the fathers, speak of Jesus, persuade to believe and endure.
- 5. Harsh against sin — diagnostic of receiver (v. 5).** *No man will be angry at the words which I have written save he shall be of the spirit of the devil.* Anger at the BoM is anger of the spirit of the devil (Jn. 7:7). Anger is self-revelation, not critique.
- 6. Glory in plainness, truth, and my Jesus (v. 6).** *I glory in plainness; I glory in truth; I glory in my Jesus, for he hath redeemed my soul from hell. My Jesus* — the most-intimate Christological-confession (Jn. 20:28; Phil. 1:21).
- 7. Spotless before the throne (v. 7).** *I have charity for my people, and great faith in Christ that I shall meet many souls spotless at his judgment-seat.* Pre-Pauline articulation of 1 Thes. 2:19 — souls as crown of rejoicing.
- 8. Charity for Jew and Gentile (vv. 8–9).** *I have charity for the Jew... I also have charity for the Gentiles.* Universal-charity-with-particular-affection (Rom. 1:16; 2 Ne. 26:33). Charity unconditional; hope conditional on reconciliation to Christ (v. 9).
- 9. Believe in Christ; believe these words (v. 10).** *If ye believe not in these words believe in Christ. And if ye shall believe in Christ ye will believe in these words.* Christological-test of BoM-reception. The BoM and Christ are mutually-confirming witnesses (Jn. 5:46).
- 10. Face to face before the bar (v. 11).** *You and I shall stand face to face before his bar.* The chapter's most-existentially-arresting promise. The prophet-author becomes a future-companion at the judgment (Heb. 12:1; Jacob 6:13; Moro. 10:34). Reading the BoM creates an appointment.

Cross-References

Gen. 32:30 (Peniel — face to face — direct parallel v. 11); Ex. 33:11 (Moses face to face); Num. 12:8 (mouth to mouth); Ps. 6:6 (water my couch with tears — direct parallel v. 3); Ps. 12:6 (words of the Lord are pure); Ps. 119:11 (thy word have I hid); Isa. 29:4 (voice of one crying from the dust — direct parallel v. 13); Isa. 55:11 (my word shall not return void — direct parallel v. 1); Jer. 1:9 (I have put my words in thy mouth); Jer. 9:1 (oh that mine head were waters — direct parallel v. 3); Jer. 20:9 (his word was in mine heart as a burning fire); Ezek. 2:3–5 (whether they will hear or forbear); Ezek. 33:30–33 (they hear thy words but do them not); Matt. 16:19 (whatsoever thou shalt bind — direct parallel v. 15); Matt. 18:18 (whatsoever ye shall bind); Matt. 24:13 (endure to the end); Matt. 25:31–46 (sheep and goats — direct parallel v. 7); Lk. 19:41 (Jesus wept over Jerusalem — direct parallel v. 3); Jn. 5:46 (had ye believed Moses — direct parallel v. 10); Jn. 7:7 (the world hateth me — direct parallel v. 5); Jn. 12:48 (the word shall judge him — direct parallel v. 14); Jn. 20:28 (my Lord and my God — direct parallel v. 6); Jn. 21:24 (this is the disciple); Acts 4:31 (spake with boldness); Acts 7:51 (resist the Holy Ghost — direct parallel v. 2); 1 Cor. 1:18 (preaching of the cross is foolishness); 1 Cor. 1:31 (he that glorieth, let him glory in the Lord — direct parallel v. 6); 1 Cor. 2:1–5 (came not with excellency of speech — direct parallel v. 1); 1 Cor. 4:5 (judge nothing before the time — direct parallel v. 11); 1 Cor. 13:12 (then face to face — direct parallel v. 11); 2 Cor. 5:10 (judgment seat — direct parallel v. 7); 2 Cor. 10:10 (his speech contemptible — direct parallel v. 1); 2 Cor. 12:9 (strength made perfect in weakness — direct parallel v. 4); Gal. 6:14 (God forbid I should glory save in cross — direct parallel v. 6); 1 Thes. 1:5 (gospel came in power — direct parallel v. 1); 1 Thes. 2:19 (crown of rejoicing — direct parallel v. 7); 2 Tim. 4:6–8 (time of my departure — direct parallel vv. 12–13); Heb. 3:8 (harden not your hearts — direct parallel v. 2); Heb. 4:12 (word is quick); Heb. 12:1 (cloud of witnesses — direct parallel v. 11); Jas. 1:21 (engrafted word); 2 Pet. 3:9 (not willing that any should perish — direct parallel v. 12); Rev. 20:12 (books opened); 1 Ne. 1:3 (I make a record); 1 Ne. 6:6 (fulness of mine intent); 2 Ne. 3:19–21 (writings shall cry from the dust — direct parallel v. 13); 2 Ne. 26:16 (whisper out of the dust — direct parallel v. 13); 2 Ne. 31 (doctrine of Christ); 2 Ne. 32 (pray always — direct context); Jacob 6:13 (pleasing bar of the great Jehovah — direct sequel-parallel v. 11); Jacob 7:27 (Jacob's farewell — direct sequel); Alma 5:14–35 (judgment-bar examination); Alma 11:43 (every limb restored); Eth. 12:23–27 (weakness made strong — direct parallel v. 4); Moro. 10:27 (I shall meet you before the pleasing bar — direct parallel v. 11); Moro. 10:34 (until that great day — direct parallel v. 13); D&C 18:34–36 (these words are not of men); D&C 50:21–22 (preach by Spirit); D&C 100:5–8 (open your mouths — direct parallel v. 1); D&C 110:13–16 (Elijah's keys); D&C 128:7–14 (records of the dead); D&C 132 (sealing); Articles of Faith 8 (Bible + Book of Mormon).

Apocryphal Correlations

Sirach 50:27–29. Closing valediction with appointment-to-meet — direct vv. 11–15 parallel.

Wisdom 3:1–9. Souls of righteous in hand of God — direct v. 7 spotless-at-judgment parallel.

4 Ezra 14:23–48. Ezra commissioned to write 94 books — direct prophet-sealing parallel to v. 15.

2 Baruch 84:1–11. I have proclaimed unto you a commandment — direct v. 14 last-warning parallel.

1 Enoch 91:1–10. Enoch's farewell to his sons — direct vv. 12–14 farewell parallel.

Testament of Levi 19:1–5. Choose ye light or darkness — direct vv. 14, 10 choice-grammar parallel.

Psalms of Solomon 17:38–46. Blessed are they who shall be born in those days — direct v. 7 spotless parallel.

4 Ezra 8:51–54. Day of judgment shall be without delay — direct vv. 11, 15 judgment-bar parallel.

Hebrew Word Studies

gevurah (גְּבוּרָה, **power, might**) — v. 1. One of the seven sefirot; the divine-power that carries the word.

lev (לֵב, **heart**) — v. 1. The deepest seat of will, mind, affection — the destination of the carried-word.

chazaq (חָזַק, **strengthen**) — v. 4. The Davidic-strength-imperative (1 Ki. 2:2); weakness made strong by chazaq.

kahed (כָּהַד, **grow dim, weaken**) — v. 4. The verb of Eli's dimming eyes (1 Sam. 3:2); the prophet's kahed becomes the Spirit's chazaq.

tachanun (תַּחֲנוּן, **supplication, plea**) — v. 3. The synagogue's daily-prayer-of-supplication grammar.

aman / Amen (אָמֵן, **fixity, firmness**) — v. 15. The chapter's-signature-of-fixity; the words are bound, the witness is sealed.

Personal Application

Three practices. First, speak by the Spirit, not by oratory. Before every conversation that matters — testimony, counsel, comfort — pray that the Spirit will carry your words to the listener's heart (D&C 100:6–8). Second, test your reception by your response to harsh-against-sin words. When scripture rebukes a behavior you hold, examine your response — if you feel resistance, examine the resistance rather than the scripture (Heb. 12:5–11). Third, live as one who will meet Nephi face-to-face at the bar. Read the BoM as a letter from a future-companion; live the BoM's principles in awareness that the prophet who wrote them will be at the bar with you (Heb. 12:1's cloud of witnesses).