

2 Nephi 9 — O the Wisdom of God — Jacob's Great Atonement Sermon

Jacob expounds the Atonement, the Resurrection, the awful monster of death and hell, and the gate of the Holy One, c. 559–545 BC.

Chapter 9 is the BoM's most concentrated soteriology. Fifty-four verses press on a single doctrine from every angle: physical death, spiritual death, the resurrection of body and spirit, the awful monster, the gate that is the Holy One, the ten woes, and the closing *come* of Isaiah 55. The chapter is theology sung in temple register — six *O*-exclamations, infinite atonement, unmediated gate-keeping, and the cup-transfer doctrine set in the language of liturgy.

Ten Insights

- 1. Merciful plan encloses the Fall (v. 6).** The Fall was not an accident the Lord patched; the merciful plan (*chesed*-plan) encompasses Fall, death, and resurrection in one architecture.
- 2. Infinite atonement (v. 7).** Save it should be an infinite atonement this corruption could not put on incorruption. Only a divine sufferer can suffer infinitely for finite creatures.
- 3. The awful monster (v. 10).** Death and hell as one monster with two heads. The monster is hungry, personal, and decapitated by one Christ-event.
- 4. Two resurrections (vv. 11–13).** The body delivered from the grave; the spirit delivered from hell. Both effected by Christ; both physical-and-spiritual; both bodily.
- 5. Christ suffers for every creature (vv. 21–22).** *The pains of all men, yea, the pains of every living creature.* The Atonement is infinitely personalized because the Atoner infinitely knows.
- 6. Spiritually-minded life is eternal (v. 39).** To be carnally-minded is death; to be spiritually-minded is life eternal. The disciple's orientation determines the kingdom inherited.
- 7. The gate is the Holy One (v. 41).** The keeper of the gate is the Holy One of Israel; *he employeth no servant there.* No priestly mediation at the threshold; Christ Himself meets the disciple.
- 8. Ten woes (vv. 27–38).** Rich, deaf, blind, uncircumcised of heart, liar, murderer, whoredom-doer, idolater, dying-in-sins. Catechetical exclusion-list — unrepentance carried to the threshold closes the gate.
- 9. Despising the shame (v. 18).** *Saints who have endured the crosses of the world and despised the shame of it.* Heb. 12:2's Christ-grammar applied to the disciple in 559 BC.
- 10. Come and partake (vv. 50–51).** The infinite-atonement chapter ends with the gentlest verb in the language: *come*. Theology in the service of invitation.

Cross-References

Gen. 2–3 (Fall); Ex. 34:6 (*chesed*); Lev. 3:14–16 (fat of the sacrifice); Deut. 21:19 (city gate); Job 19:25–26; Ps. 16:10; Ps. 49:15; Isa. 25:8; Isa. 26:19; Isa. 55:1–3 (cited); Ezek. 37; Dan. 12:2; Hos. 13:14; Matt. 7:13–14 (strait gate); Matt. 11:28 (*come unto me*); Lk. 24:39; Jn. 5:28–29; Jn. 10:9 (I am the door); Jn. 11:25 (resurrection and the life); Acts 24:15; Rom. 5:12–21; 1 Cor. 15; Eph. 4:9 (descended into lower parts); Phil. 2:6–11; Heb. 2:14–15; Heb. 9:27; Heb. 12:2 (despising the shame); 1 Pet. 3:18–20; 1 Jn. 3:2; Rev. 1:18 (keys of death and hell); Rev. 20:14; Rev. 22:17 (*come*); Mosiah 2:33–39 (Benjamin's woes); Mosiah 3:5–27 (Benjamin's atonement); Alma 7:11–13 (Christ takes pains); Alma 11:40–45 (resurrection detail); Alma 34:8–16 (Amulek's atonement); Alma 42 (plan of mercy); Hel. 14:15–18 (Samuel on death); 3 Ne. 9:14; Eth. 3:14; Moroni 7:41; D&C 19:16–19; D&C 76 (three degrees); D&C 88:14–32; D&C 138 (spirits in prison).

Apocryphal Correlations

Wisdom of Solomon 2:23–3:9. *God created man to be immortal... the souls of the righteous are in the hand of God* — closest Wisdom-tradition resurrection-doctrine.

4 Ezra 7:32–44. The earth shall give up those who sleep, the chambers shall restore the souls — resurrection-followed-by-judgment sequence.

2 Baruch 49–51. Risen body's *transfiguration into the splendor of glory* — parallel to v. 13's incorruptible immortal living souls.

Sirach 17:25–32. Repentance commanded *while there is yet life*; the dead do not give thanks — chapter's urgency at v. 38.

1 Enoch 22. Chambers of the dead, separated for righteous and wicked — grave-and-hell distinction of vv. 10–12.

Psalms of Solomon 3:11–12. *The sinner shall fall and rise no more... the righteous shall inherit life* — two-way resurrection doctrine.

Testament of Benjamin 10:6–8. *All shall rise* — Adam, the patriarchs, all the tribes, worshipping the King of heaven — universal resurrection.

2 Maccabees 7:9–14. Seven brothers' confession under torture — *the King of the universe shall raise us up* — earliest sustained Jewish bodily-resurrection profession.

Hebrew Word Studies

chesed (חֶסֶד, **covenant loving-kindness**) — v. 6 (the **merciful plan**). The **chesed-plan** — covenant-loyalty unbroken across the Fall. Ex. 34:6's defining attribute.

sheol (שְׁאוֹל, **the grave / realm of the dead**) — vv. 10–12. The grave-realm from which Christ delivers both body and spirit. Eph. 4:9's *lower parts*.

tannin (תַּנִּין, **sea-serpent / monster**) — v. 10. The awful monster of death-and-hell. Cf. 2 Ne. 8:9's Rahab. The chapter names the disciple's enemy as monstrous, personal, hungry.

shaar (שַׁעַר, **gate / threshold of the assembly**) — v. 41. *The keeper of the gate is the Holy One; he employeth no servant there.* Christ alone meets the disciple at the threshold.

chesed v'emet (חֶסֶד וְאֱמֶת, **grace and truth**) — v. 18 (echoed at 2 Ne. 11). The covenant-grace + covenant-truth pairing of Jn. 1:14 in 559 BC.

dashen (דָּשַׁן, **fatness / richest part of the sacrifice**) — v. 51. *Let your soul delight in fatness.* The richest part of the offering, previously reserved for the Lord, transferred to the disciple's portion. Heb. 13:10.

Personal Application

Three practices. First, let the binary press itself on your imagination. There is no third option between Christ's deliverance and Lucifer's subjection; daily, choose Christ; refuse the monster. Second, let v. 41 govern your ecclesiology. The Lord's ordinances are administered through delegated servants up to the gate; at the threshold itself, the Holy One meets the disciple alone. The relationship is unmediated. Third, come. The chapter ends with the gentlest verb in the language. The infinite-atonement chapter, the awful-monster chapter, the ten-woe chapter — all terminate in come. Today, what is your come? To the sacrament. To the temple. To the closet of prayer. To the offered hand of a neighbor. Each come is the chapter enacted.