
3 Nephi 11 — Behold, I Am Jesus Christ — The Descent of the Lord

3 Nephi 11: the supreme chapter of the Book of Mormon. A great multitude is gathered at the temple in Bountiful, marveling at the changed land and conversing about the Jesus Christ whose death the signs had marked. They hear a voice from heaven — not harsh, not loud, a small voice that pierces them to the very soul and makes their hearts burn — and only on the third hearing do they understand it: 'Behold my Beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased... hear ye him.' They look up and see a Man descending in a white robe; he stands in their midst, stretches forth his hand, and says: 'Behold, I am Jesus Christ, whom the prophets testified shall come into the world... I have drunk out of that bitter cup which the Father hath given me, and have glorified the Father in taking upon me the sins of the world.' The multitude falls to the earth. He bids them arise and come forth one by one to thrust their hands into his side and feel the prints of the nails in his hands and feet, that they may know he is the God of Israel slain for the sins of the world; and they go forth, every one, and know of a surety, and cry 'Hosanna!' and fall and worship him. He calls Nephi and others — twelve — and gives them power to baptize, and the exact words and manner, commanding that there be no disputations, for 'he that hath the spirit of contention is... of the devil.' He declares his doctrine: repent, believe, be baptized, become as a little child; whoso believes and is baptized shall be saved; whoso builds on this builds on his rock, and the gates of hell shall not prevail. The chapter is the descent of the risen Lord among the remnant of Joseph — the voice that pierces, the wounds that witness, the Hosanna of the worshipping multitude, and the doctrine of Christ given with his own mouth.

This is the chapter the whole Book of Mormon has been climbing toward — the descent of the risen Jesus Christ among the people of Nephi, the moment the voice in the darkness becomes a face in the light, the moment the God whose birth split the night and whose death plunged the world into three days of dark stands, in a white robe, in the midst of his gathered people and says, *Behold, I am Jesus Christ*. Mormon has been preparing this from the first chapter; every prophecy, every sign, every covenant statement has pointed here. And when it comes, it comes with a quietness that is almost unbearable in its tenderness. There is no army of angels, no blast of trumpets, no overwhelming display. There is a small voice that the people cannot at first even understand, and then a single Man, descending alone, who stretches out his hand and speaks his name. The greatest event in the book arrives not as spectacle but as *presence* — the Lord himself, come down to be among them.

Hebrew Word Studies

daqar (דָּקַר) — "to pierce, thrust through, run through" — **daqar**, to pierce, stab, thrust through with a weapon; the word for the wound of a spear or nail driven through flesh. In Zechariah, the word for the pierced One whom Israel will look upon and mourn vv. 14–15 (*thrust your hands into my side... feel the prints of the nails in my hands and in my feet*). When the risen Lord invites the multitude to *thrust their hands into his side* and *feel the prints of the nails*, he is making real, in his own resurrected flesh, one of the most haunting Messianic prophecies in the Hebrew Bible — the prophecy of the pierced One, built on the verb *daqar*. Zechariah, centuries before, foretold a strange and sorrowful day: *they shall look upon me whom they have pierced (daqaru), and they shall mourn for him, as one mourneth for his only son* (Zech. 12:10). *Daqar* means to pierce, thrust through, run through — the wound of a blade or a nail driven through the body — and Zechariah's prophecy is staggering because the One pierced is identified with God himself: *they shall look upon me whom they have pierced*. God pierced. The Lord run through. It was a prophecy that could not be fully understood until a Roman soldier pierced the side of the crucified Christ with a spear, and John, watching, recognized the fulfillment: *they shall look on him whom they pierced* (John 19:37). And here, in 3 Nephi 11, the prophecy reaches its most intimate fulfillment. The risen Christ does not merely show his wounds; he invites the people to feel them, to put their hands into the very place where the spear went in and where the nails went through. The pierced One stands among them, and they look upon him whom they have pierced — not the soldiers who drove the nails, but a whole people looking, touching, knowing. And the deep wonder is that the resurrection *did not erase the wounds*. The glorified, perfected, immortal body of the Lord still bears the marks of the *daqar* — the prints of the nails, the wound in the side — carried into eternity. Why would the resurrected Lord keep his wounds? Because the wounds are the witness, the permanent testimony of the love. They are the proof that *I have been slain for the sins of the world* (v. 14), the evidence written in his own flesh that cannot be argued away. When Thomas doubted, the Lord offered the same proof: *reach hither thy finger, and behold my hands; and reach hither thy hand, and thrust it into my side: and be not faithless, but believing* (John 20:27) — the identical invitation, the same wounds, the same thrusting of the hand into the side. The wounds are how the risen Christ proves his love and his identity, in Jerusalem and in Bountiful alike. And there is a tenderness beyond even this: that the marks of our cruelty become, in his risen body, the means of our faith. The very piercing that we (in our sin, for which he was pierced) inflicted, he keeps and offers back as the ground of our knowing him. *He was wounded (mecholal) for our transgressions... and with his stripes we are healed* (Isa. 53:5) — and the wounds remain, in glory, so that every doubting soul, like Thomas, like the multitude at Bountiful, might come and touch and know of a surety. The pierced God keeps his piercing, that the pierced might heal us still.

riv / madon (רִיב / מַדּוֹן) — "strife, contention, dispute, quarrel" — **riv**, a dispute, controversy, legal contention, quarrel; **madon**, strife, discord, contention. The stirring up of conflict, the spirit that loves dispute and provokes quarrels — set in scripture against the peace and unity of God vv. 28–30 (*there shall be no disputations among you... he that hath the spirit of contention is not of me, but is of the devil, who is the father of contention*). The risen Christ's command — *there shall be no disputations among you... he that hath the spirit of contention is... of the devil* — strikes at something the Hebrew Bible names with several sharp words, chief among them *riv*, "strife, dispute, quarrel," and *madon*, "contention, discord." And the wisdom literature is relentless in its warning against the *spirit* that loves these things. *He that is of a proud heart stirreth up strife (madon)* (Prov. 28:25); *a froward man soweth strife (madon); and a whisperer separateth chief friends* (Prov. 16:28); *as coals are to burning coals, and wood to fire; so is a contentious (midyanim) man to kindle strife (riv)* (Prov. 26:21). The contentious man is a man who kindles fire — who takes the coals of disagreement and blows them into a blaze, who loves the quarrel and feeds it. And among the seven things the Lord hates, the climactic one is *he that soweth discord (madon) among brethren* (Prov. 6:19). The Bible treats the *spirit of contention* not as a minor fault but as something God positively hates, because it is the opposite of everything God is — God is peace, unity, reconciliation; *riv* and *madon* are division, anger, the tearing apart of what should be one. This is exactly why the risen Christ traces it to its source: *the devil, who is the father of contention* (v. 29). The adversary's name, *Satan*, means *the accuser, the adversary* — the one who opposes, who contends — and his whole work is to *stir up the hearts of men to contend with anger, one with another* (v. 29). Contention is the devil's native element; he is its *father*, its originator, the one who delights when brethren quarrel. And here is the teaching that the religious world most needs and most resists: the Lord forbids contention *even over his own doctrine* (v. 28). It is not enough to be *right*; the *spirit* in which one holds the truth matters as much as the truth itself, because a truth contended for *with anger*, in the spirit of *riv*, has already been handed over to the father of contention. The Lord wants his doctrine believed and lived — but he will not have it *fought over*, because the fighting is of the devil regardless of who wins. This is the great safeguard the risen Christ builds into his church in nearly his first words: *let there be no disputations*. The unity of the believers, the peace among the brethren, the *doing away* of contention (v. 30) — these are not optional niceties but the very mark of belonging to Christ rather than to the father of contention. *Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called the children of God* (which he will say in the very next chapter) — and cursed, in effect, is the spirit of *riv*, the love of strife, which marks the children of

the devil. The deepest irony is that religious people are often the most contentious, kindling strife over *the things of God* — and the risen Lord names that exact thing, *disputations concerning the points of my doctrine*, as the devil's work. To contend with anger over Christ is to serve the father of contention in the name of the Prince of Peace. The doctrine is the rock; the *spirit of contention* is the flood that beats against every house, and the Lord commands, at the founding of his church, that it be done away.

From the Chapter's Architecture

```cross-references Zech. 12:10 (*they shall look upon me whom they have pierced — daqaru — and they shall mourn for him — the pierced One whom the multitude touches*, vv. 14–15); John 19:34, 37 (*the soldier pierced his side... they shall look on him whom they pierced — the wound the people thrust their hands into*); John 20:24–29 (*reach hither thy hand, and thrust it into my side: and be not faithless, but believing — Thomas and the identical invitation*, vv. 14–15); Isa. 53:5 (*he was wounded for our transgressions — the marks of the slaying kept in glory*, v. 14); Matt. 3:17; 17:5 (*this is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased... hear ye him — the Father's presentation*, v. 7); 1 Kgs. 19:11–12; Hel. 5:30 (*the still small voice that is not loud but pierces the soul — the voice of vv. 3–5*); Prov. 6:16–19 (*he that soweth discord — madon — among brethren among the things the Lord hates — the contention of v. 29*); Prov. 26:21; 16:28 (*a contentious man to kindle strife — riv... a froward man soweth strife — the spirit of contention*, vv. 29–30); James 4:1 (*from whence come wars and fightings among you? — the source of contention*); Matt. 7:24–27 (*the wise man on the rock and the fool on the sand — the doctrine as rock*, vv. 39–40, repeated at 3 Ne. 14:24–27); 3 Ne. 9:15–18 (*the voice naming itself the light and life — now the face that names itself Jesus Christ*, vv. 10–11); 3 Ne. 4:32 (*the Hosanna of the delivered from the robbers — now lifted to the Deliverer in person*, v. 17); 3 Ne. 18:1–11 (*the sacrament the Lord institutes — the second great ordinance after the baptism of this chapter*). ```