
3 Nephi 20 — In Thy Seed Shall All Be Blessed — The Miraculous Bread and the Covenant Renewed

3 Nephi 20: Jesus miraculously gives the sacrament again — though no bread or wine had been brought, he provides it, and feeds the multitude, declaring, 'He that eateth this bread eateth of my body to his soul... and his soul shall never hunger nor thirst, but shall be filled.' Filled with the Spirit, they cry out and give glory to Jesus. Then he turns to the great covenant discourse. He is fulfilling the Father's commandment concerning this people, a remnant of the house of Israel; when the words of Isaiah are fulfilled, the covenant with Israel will be fulfilled, and the scattered remnants gathered from the four quarters to the knowledge of their Redeemer. He warns the Gentiles: if they do not repent after receiving the blessing, the remnant of Jacob shall go through them as a lion among sheep, and the sword of justice shall fall on the nations of the Gentiles. He will establish his people in this land — a New Jerusalem — with the powers of heaven in their midst. He is the prophet Moses foretold, whom all must hear or be cut off; all the prophets testified of him; and the Nephites are children of the covenant God made with Abraham: 'in thy seed shall all the kindreds of the earth be blessed.' The Father raised Christ up to bless Israel first, then through the seed of Abraham to bless all nations — pouring out the Holy Ghost through Christ upon the Gentiles. He quotes Isaiah's vision of the gathering: the watchmen singing, the bared holy arm, 'Awake, awake... put on thy strength, O Zion.' The chapter renews the covenant — the bread that fills forever, the gathering of Israel, the New Jerusalem, and the Abrahamic promise that through the seed all the families of the earth shall be blessed.

This chapter does two things that belong together: it gives the bread that satisfies forever, and it renews the great covenant — the promise to Abraham that *in thy seed shall all the kindreds of the earth be blessed*. The miraculous sacrament at the start and the covenant discourse that fills the rest are bound by a single theme: that God *feeds* and *gathers* his people, body and soul, in this life and across the long sweep of covenant history. The Christ who provides bread from nothing and declares that the soul who eats it *shall never hunger nor thirst* is the same Christ who is fulfilling the covenant made to the fathers, gathering scattered Israel, and blessing, through the seed of Abraham, all the families of the earth. The chapter holds the intimate and the cosmic together — the soul filled at the sacrament, and the nations blessed through the covenant.

Hebrew Word Studies

barak (בָּרַךְ) — "to bless, to kneel" — barak, to bless; related to berek, "knee," so that to bless and to kneel share a root (one kneels to receive or bestow a blessing). To bless is to bestow favor, goodness, fruitfulness, and life; God's blessing is his active goodness poured out, making fruitful and prospering vv. 25–27 (in thy seed shall all the kindreds of the earth be blessed... to bless you in turning away every one of you from his iniquities). The covenant at the heart of this chapter — *in thy seed shall all the kindreds of the earth be blessed* — turns on the Hebrew *barak*, "to bless," one of the great words of the whole Bible. *Barak* means to bestow blessing — favor, goodness, fruitfulness, prosperity, life — and it is bound up with the word for *knee* (*berek*), since one *kneels* to receive a blessing or to bless. From the very beginning, *barak* is God's characteristic act toward his creation: *God blessed them, saying, Be fruitful, and multiply* (Gen. 1:22, 28) — blessing as the gift of life and fruitfulness. And the whole covenant story begins with a fivefold *barak* to Abraham: *I will bless thee... and thou shalt be a blessing... and in thee shall all families of the earth be blessed* (Gen. 12:2–3), repeated and sealed after the binding of Isaac: *in thy seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed* (Gen. 22:18) — the very words Christ quotes in verse 25. This is the foundational promise of the Old Testament, and its scope is *universal*: the blessing given to Abraham was never meant to stop at Abraham's family but to flow *through* his seed to *all the families of the earth*. The covenant was, from the start, missionary — a blessing chosen for one in order to reach all. And the deep theology of *barak* in the Abrahamic covenant is that *blessing flows outward*. Israel was *blessed* not to hoard the blessing but to *be a blessing*, a channel through which God's goodness would reach the nations. And Christ is the fulfillment, the *seed* of Abraham through whom the blessing finally reaches all the earth: *the Father having raised me up unto you first, and sent me to bless you in turning away every one of you from his iniquities* (v. 26) — the first and deepest blessing being the turning of people *from their sins*, for the truest blessing is not prosperity but redemption. And *then*, through the blessed seed, the blessing flows to the Gentiles: *unto the pouring out of the Holy Ghost through me upon the Gentiles* (v. 27). Paul makes the same connection explicit: *the scripture, foreseeing that God would justify the heathen through faith, preached before the gospel unto Abraham, saying, In thee shall all nations be blessed... that the blessing of Abraham might come on the Gentiles through Jesus Christ* (Gal. 3:8, 14). The blessing of Abraham is the gospel; the seed is Christ; and through Christ the blessing reaches every family of the earth. So when Christ tells the Nephites *ye are of the covenant... in thy seed shall all the kindreds of the earth be blessed*, he is naming them as part of the great river of *barak* that began at Abraham, flows through Christ, and reaches to all nations — and naming their place in it: blessed *first*, and through them (and the whole house of Israel) the blessing flowing onward to the Gentiles. The covenant is not a private possession but a *commission to bless*; and the deepest blessing, the turning from iniquity and the gift of the Holy Ghost, is the blessing Christ came to pour out — first on Israel, then through Israel on all the earth. *In thy seed shall all the kindreds of the earth be blessed*: the whole of God's purpose, from Abraham to the New Jerusalem, is the spreading of *barak* — his active, life-giving, redeeming goodness — to every family under heaven, through the one Seed in whom all the blessing is found.

From the Chapter's Architecture

``cross-references Gen. 12:2–3; 22:18 (*in thy seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed* — *barak* — the Abrahamic covenant quoted in v. 25); Gal. 3:8, 14, 16 (*in thee shall all nations be blessed... that the blessing of Abraham might come on the Gentiles through Jesus Christ... thy seed, which is Christ — the blessing fulfilled in Christ*, vv. 25–27); Deut. 18:15–19 (*a Prophet... like unto me; unto him ye shall hearken... whosoever will not hearken... I will require it of him — the prophet like Moses*, v. 23); John 6:35, 51 (*I am the bread of life: he that cometh to me shall never hunger... I am the living bread — the bread that fills the soul*, v. 8); Isa. 52:1–15 (*Awake, awake, put on thy strength, O Zion... how beautiful upon the mountains are the feet of him that bringeth good tidings... the Lord hath made bare his holy arm... his visage was so marred — quoted throughout vv. 32–45*); Isa. 55:1–3 (*come ye to the waters... buy wine and milk without money... eat ye that which is good — the redemption without money*, v. 38); Rom. 11:25–27 (*the fulness of the Gentiles... and so all Israel shall be saved... this is my covenant — the gathering and the covenant*, vv. 27–29); Ether 13:2–10 (*the New Jerusalem on this land — the city of v. 22*); 3 Ne. 16:18–20 (*the same Isaiah 52 prophecy of the bared arm — vv. 34–35*); 3 Ne. 21:22–24 (*the building of the New Jerusalem by the remnant and the Gentiles — the city of v. 22*); 1 Ne. 22:8–12 (*the Gentiles nursing-fathers to Israel and the covenant fulfilled — the gathering of vv. 13, 27*); 2 Ne. 6:6–7 (*they shall bring thy sons in their arms... kings thy nursing fathers — the Gentiles aiding the gathering*). ``