
3 Nephi 23 — Search These Things Diligently — Great Are the Words of Isaiah

3 Nephi 23: Jesus, having quoted Isaiah, commands his people to search the scriptures. 'Ye ought to search these things. Yea, a commandment I give unto you that ye search these things diligently; for great are the words of Isaiah.' Isaiah spoke concerning all the house of Israel, and therefore must speak also to the Gentiles; and all things he spake have been and shall be. Christ charges the disciples to give heed to his words and write them, for in the Father's time they shall go forth to the Gentiles; and whoever hearkens, repents, and is baptized shall be saved. 'Search the prophets, for many there be that testify of these things.' Then, having expounded all the scriptures they had received, Jesus says he would have them write other scriptures they do not yet have. He asks Nephi to bring forth the record kept, examines it, and asks whether Samuel the Lamanite had not prophesied that at the day the Father glorified his name in Christ, many saints should arise from the dead and appear and minister to many. The disciples confirm Samuel prophesied it and it was fulfilled — but Nephi remembers that this thing had not been written. Jesus commands that it be written, and it is. And when he had expounded all the scriptures in one, he commands them to teach the things he had expounded. The chapter is Christ's charge to search the scriptures diligently — and his own care, as Lord of the record, to see that the scriptures are complete and accurate, commanding even an omitted fulfilled prophecy to be written down.

This short chapter does two important things: it gives Christ's direct command to *search the scriptures diligently*, and it shows the risen Lord acting as the *guardian of the record itself* — examining the Nephite scriptures, catching an omission, and commanding that it be corrected. Both reveal how much the *word of God* matters to Christ. He does not merely teach; he commands his people to *search* what is written, and he personally ensures that the record is *complete and accurate*. The chapter is a window into the seriousness with which the Lord regards scripture — both the searching of it by his people and the faithful keeping of it by his record-keepers.

Hebrew Word Studies

darash (דָּרַשׁ) — "to seek, search, inquire, study, investigate" — **darash**, to seek, inquire of, search out, study diligently; the word for seeking God, inquiring of the Lord, and searching the scriptures with care. The root behind *midrash*, the diligent study and interpretation of the sacred text vv. 1, 5 (search these things diligently... Search the prophets, for many there be that testify of these things). Christ's command — *search these things diligently... search the prophets* — rests on the idea carried by the Hebrew *darash*, "to seek, search, inquire, study." And *darash* is a rich and weighty word, for it names not casual reading but *diligent, earnest seeking*. Its root sense is to *seek after* something with care and effort — to *inquire*, to *investigate*, to *search out*. It is the word for *seeking God: if thou seek (darash) him, he will be found of thee* (1 Chr. 28:9); *seek (darash) the Lord and his strength, seek (darash) his face continually* (Ps. 105:4); *ye shall seek (darash) me, and find me, when ye shall search (darash) for me with all your heart* (Jer. 29:13). To *darash* God is to seek him with the whole heart, diligently, not half-heartedly. And by natural extension, *darash* becomes the word for *searching the scriptures* — for the diligent study of the sacred text is itself a way of seeking God, since God is found in his word. The later Hebrew tradition built the entire enterprise of scriptural study on this root: *midrash*, the careful interpretation and exposition of the text, comes from *darash*, "to search out" the meaning of the word. To *darash* the scriptures is to dig into them, to investigate them, to search out their meaning with diligent effort — exactly what Christ commands when he says *search these things diligently*. And the crucial thing about *darash* is the *diligence* it implies. Christ does not say *read* these things, or *glance at* them, or *be familiar with* them; he commands that they be *searched diligently* — *darash*, sought after with earnest effort, dug into, studied with care. The word of God yields its treasures not to the casual skimmer but to the diligent seeker. *If thou seekest her as silver, and searchest for her as for hid treasures; then shalt thou understand the fear of the Lord, and find the knowledge of God* (Prov. 2:4–5) — the scriptures are *hid treasures*, and only the one who *searches* for them as for silver finds them. This is why Christ's command matters so much, and why it is paired with his calling Isaiah's words *great*. The greatness of the word demands the diligence of the search; a *great* word casually read yields little, but searched diligently yields the knowledge of God. And there is a beautiful circularity in *darash*: to *search* the scriptures is to *seek* God, and to *seek* God is to *search* the scriptures, for the two are one act — the diligent pursuit of the Lord through his word. Jesus himself uses the word to the Jews: *Search (eraunate, the Greek for darash) the scriptures; for in them ye think ye have eternal life: and they are they which testify of me* (John 5:39) — the scriptures are to be *searched*, because they *testify of Christ*, exactly as Christ says here: *search the prophets, for many there be that testify of these things* (v. 5). To search the scriptures is to seek Christ, who is their testimony and their substance. The command to *darash* is therefore not a command to a dry academic exercise but to the diligent, whole-hearted seeking of the Lord himself through the great words of his prophets — *search these things diligently*, dig for the hid treasure, seek God in his word with all your heart, and ye shall find.

From the Chapter's Architecture

``cross-references John 5:39 (search the scriptures; for in them ye think ye have eternal life: and they are they which testify of me — the command to search, vv. 1, 5); Prov. 2:1–5 (if thou seekest her as silver, and searchest for her as for hid treasures; then shalt thou understand the fear of the Lord — the diligent searching, *darash*, of v. 1); Jer. 29:13 (ye shall seek me, and find me, when ye shall search for me with all your heart — seeking God through searching, vv. 1, 5); Ps. 105:4 (seek the Lord and his strength, seek his face continually — the *darash* that seeks God, v. 1); Isa. 34:16 (seek ye out of the book of the Lord, and read — the searching of the written word); Acts 17:11 (the Bereans who searched the scriptures daily — the diligent searching commanded in v. 1); Hel. 14:25 (Samuel's prophecy that many graves shall be opened, and shall yield up many of their dead; and many saints shall appear unto many — the prophecy whose fulfillment Christ commands to be written, vv. 9–13); Matt. 27:52–53 (the graves were opened; and many bodies of the saints which slept arose... and appeared unto many — the fulfillment in Jerusalem of the same prophecy, vv. 9–11); 1 Ne. 19:23 (Nephi did liken all scriptures unto us... for our profit and learning — the application of the searched word); 2 Ne. 25:1–8 (Nephi on the difficulty and the greatness of Isaiah's words, to be understood in the spirit of prophecy — great are the words of Isaiah, v. 1); 3 Ne. 16:4; 21:2–7 (the writing of Christ's words to go forth to the Gentiles — the command of v. 4); 3 Ne. 10:14 (whoso readeth, let him understand; he that hath the scriptures, let him search them — Mormon's own echo of the command to search). ``