
3 Nephi 27 — This Is My Gospel — The Name of Christ and the Definition of the Good News

3 Nephi 27: the disciples, journeying and preaching, are united in mighty prayer and fasting when Jesus shows himself again and asks what they desire. They ask the name by which the church should be called, for there are disputations about it. Christ answers: ye must take upon you the name of Christ, for by that name shall ye be called at the last day, and whoso takes his name and endures to the end shall be saved. A church called in his name, built upon his gospel, is his church; a church called in any other name is the church of a man. Then he defines the gospel itself: 'This is the gospel which I have given unto you — that I came into the world to do the will of my Father... that I might be lifted up upon the cross... that I might draw all men unto me,' that all should be judged of their works. Whoso repents and is baptized in his name shall be filled, and if he endures to the end shall be held guiltless at the judgment; no unclean thing can enter his kingdom; only those who have washed their garments in his blood. 'Repent, all ye ends of the earth, and come unto me and be baptized... that ye may stand spotless before me at the last day.' He charges them to write, for by the books shall the people be judged; they shall be judges of this people. 'What manner of men ought ye to be? Verily I say unto you, even as I am.' His joy is full in this generation, none lost — but it sorrows him for the fourth generation, who will sell him for silver. The chapter is Christ's own definition of his gospel — the name to take, the good news of the cross that draws all men, the call to be washed spotless and to become even as he is.

This is the chapter where Christ *defines his gospel* in his own words — and gives his church its name. After all the teaching, the sermon, the ordinances, the prophecies, the disciples ask a simple, practical question — *what shall the church be called?* — and the answer opens into the deepest things: the name of Christ that saves, the gospel that is the good news of the cross, the call to be washed spotless in his blood, and the staggering charge to become *even as he is*. If a reader wanted to know, in Christ's own words, *what the gospel actually is*, this is the chapter. It is the doctrinal summary of the whole Christophany — the name, the gospel, the judgment, and the goal.

Hebrew Word Studies

besorah (euangelion) (בְּשׂרָה) — "good news, glad tidings, the announcement of a victory or salvation" — **besorah, good tidings, the news a herald brings; the Greek euangelion (whence "gospel," "evangel") translates it — the good news of God's saving act, the joyful announcement that deliverance has come vv. 13–14, 21 (this is the gospel which I have given unto you... this is my gospel).** When Christ says *this is my gospel*, the word *gospel* renders the Greek *euangelion*, "good news," which in turn carries the sense of the Hebrew *besorah*, "good tidings" — and understanding the word transforms how we hear the definition that follows. A *besorah* is not a teaching or a philosophy or a code of laws; it is *news* — specifically, the joyful *announcement* that something has *happened*. In the ancient world, the *besorah* was the message a runner carried from the battlefield: *the victory is won; the enemy is defeated; you are saved*. It is the herald's cry of good news, the announcement of a deliverance already accomplished. *How beautiful upon the mountains are the feet of him that bringeth good tidings (mevasser), that publisheth peace... that publisheth salvation* (Isa. 52:7 — quoted by Christ in 3 Ne. 20:40) — the *besorah* is the proclamation that *God reigns, that salvation has come*. This is why Christ's definition of his gospel centers not on commandments but on an *event*: *that I came into the world to do the will of my Father... that I might be lifted up upon the cross... that I might draw all men unto me* (vv. 13–14). The gospel is *news* — the announcement of what Christ *did*: he came, he was lifted up on the cross, he draws all men. The *good news* is that the decisive thing has already *happened* — the victory over sin and death is *won* at the cross — and the herald's cry goes out to all the world: *come, be drawn, be saved*. This is crucial, because it locates the gospel in *grace before demand*. The gospel is not first *do this and live*; it is first *this has been done — now respond*. The cross comes first; the call to repent and be baptized (vv. 16, 20) comes second, as the *response* to the good news, not as the means of earning it. The runner does not say *win the battle*; he announces *the battle is won*. And then, on the basis of that announced victory, the gospel calls: *repent, all ye ends of the earth, and come unto me* (v. 20). The order is the heart of the matter. Because the good news is *true* — because Christ really was lifted up and really does draw all men — the response of repentance and baptism is not a desperate striving but a glad coming-home to a salvation already accomplished. And the word *euangelion* gathers up the joy of it: it is *good news*, the best news, the news that breaks the long anxiety of the human race with the announcement that God has acted, the cross has conquered, and all who will come may be washed spotless and made *even as he is* (v. 27). *This is my gospel* — not a burden laid on the world but a victory announced to it, the herald's cry of a deliverance won, the good tidings that the Lord has done it, and that the doors of his kingdom stand open to all who will hear the news and come.

shem (שֵׁם) — "name" — **shem, a name; but in Hebrew thought far more than a label — the name is the identity, character, authority, and reputation of the one who bears it. To act in a name is to act with that one's authority; to take a name is to take on that one's identity and belong to them vv. 5–9 (ye must take upon you the name of Christ... ye shall call the church in my name... then it is my church).** The whole question of the chapter — by what *name* the church shall be called — turns on the Hebrew *shem*, "name," and in Hebrew thought a name is never a mere label. The *shem* is the *identity* of a person — their character, their authority, their reputation, their very self made nameable. To know someone's name is to know who they *are*; to act *in* someone's name is to act with their *authority*; and to *bear* a name is to *belong* to and be identified with the one whose name it is. This is why the *name of God* is so sacred in scripture — for the name is the presence and identity of God: *the name of the Lord is a strong tower: the righteous runneth into it, and is safe* (Prov. 18:10). And it is why *taking upon oneself a name* is a profound act of identity and belonging. When Christ says *ye must take upon you the name of Christ* (v. 5), he is not asking the people merely to *label* themselves Christians; he is asking them to *take his identity upon them* — to become so identified with him that his name is *theirs*, his character their character, his belonging their belonging. *By this name shall ye be called at the last day* (v. 5) — at the judgment, the saved will be *called by Christ's name*, known as his, identified with him. And the logic of the church's name follows inevitably: *if a church be called in Moses' name then it be Moses' church... but if it be called in my name then it is my church* (v. 8). A name signifies *ownership and belonging* — the church bears the name of the one it *belongs to*. Christ's church bears *Christ's name* because it is *his*, identified with him, belonging to him. And there is a covenant depth to this *taking of the name*. The Nephites had heard, generations before, King Benjamin's great sermon on *taking upon you the name of Christ* (Mosiah 5:8–12) — becoming his *children*, called by his name, the name *written in your hearts*. And the sacrament Christ just instituted is itself the renewal of this name-taking: the disciples eat and drink in remembrance, *witnessing... that they are willing to take upon them the name of [the] Son* (Moro. 4:3). To take Christ's name is the great covenant act — at baptism, at the sacrament, at the last day — by which a soul is *identified with Christ*, made his, belonging to him, called by his *shem*. And the deepest meaning is that the name, taken truly, *saves*: *whoso taketh upon him my name, and endureth to the end, the same shall be saved* (v. 6). For to take Christ's name is to take Christ himself — his atonement, his righteousness, his belonging — so that the soul that bears his *shem*, washed in his blood and faithful to the end, stands at the judgment *called by his name*, known as his own, and saved. The name is not a label but a *belonging*; and to bear the name of Christ is to belong to Christ, now and at the last day.

nasa / *rum* (נָסָא / רָם) — "to lift up, raise, bear, exalt" — *nasa*, to lift, carry, bear, raise up; *rum*, to be high, to be lifted up, exalted. The words for raising something high — and, joined to the idea of bearing, for lifting up that which carries a burden; both senses meet in the One lifted up on the cross vv. 14–15 (that I might be lifted up upon the cross... that I might draw all men unto me... even so should men be lifted up by the Father). The center of Christ's gospel-definition is the *lifting up* — *I might be lifted up upon the cross... and... draw all men unto me... even so should men be lifted up by the Father* (vv. 14–15) — and the Hebrew words behind "lift up," *nasa* and *rum*, carry a rich double meaning that illuminates the whole gospel. *Nasa* means both to *lift up high* and to *bear, to carry* — and the two senses meet at the cross. The suffering servant *hath borne (nasa) our griefs, and carried our sorrows* (Isa. 53:4); *he bare (nasa) the sin of many* (Isa. 53:12) — Christ *lifted* our burden by *bearing* it, the same verb for raising and for carrying. And *rum* means to *be lifted up, to be exalted, to be high* — the word for exaltation. So when Christ speaks of being *lifted up upon the cross*, the Hebrew resonance is profound: he is *nasa*, lifted up high on the cross *and* bearing the sin of the world upon it; and that very lifting-up is his *rum*, his exaltation, for the cross is the throne from which he reigns and draws all men. This is exactly the paradox John records Christ teaching: *I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto me* (John 12:32) — the *lifting up* that is at once the crucifixion (lifted on the cross) and the exaltation (lifted to glory) and the drawing (lifting up the magnet that pulls all men). The cross is the great *lifting up*: Christ raised high on it, bearing the world's sin, exalted in the very act of dying, and from that height *drawing all men* to himself. And notice the second *lifting up* in verse 14: *even so should men be lifted up by the Father*. As Christ was *lifted up* on the cross, so *men shall be lifted up by the Father* — raised from the dead (the resurrection lifts the body from the grave), exalted to stand before Christ, the drawn ones *lifted* into the presence of God. The one lifting-up makes the other: because Christ was *lifted up* (crucified, exalted, bearing sin), men can be *lifted up* (resurrected, exalted, drawn home). The cross lifts the Savior; the Savior lifted up lifts the saved. And there is a tender depth in the *bearing* sense of *nasa*: the lifting up that saves us is a lifting up that *bears* us — Christ on the cross not only raised high but *carrying* the weight of all our sin and sorrow, lifting it by bearing it, so that we might be *lifted* free of it. *Surely he hath borne (nasa) our griefs* — and in bearing them, lifted them away. The whole gospel hangs on this lifting up: the Christ *lifted* on the cross, *bearing* the sin of the world, *exalted* in his dying, *drawing* all men to himself — and lifting up, at the last, all who come, to be raised by the Father and to stand, washed and spotless, in the presence of the One who was lifted up for them.

From the Chapter's Architecture

“cross-references John 12:32 (*I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto me — the cross that draws all*, v. 14); John 3:14–15 (*as Moses lifted up the serpent... even so must the Son of man be lifted up — the lifting up of* v. 14); Isa. 52:7 (*the feet of him that bringeth good tidings — besorah — the gospel as good news*, v. 13); Rom. 1:16 (*the gospel of Christ... the power of God unto salvation — the euangelion*, v. 13); Mosiah 5:8–12 (*take upon you the name of Christ... that ye should be called the children of Christ — the name-taking*, vv. 5–8); Prov. 18:10 (*the name of the Lord is a strong tower — the saving shem*, vv. 5–6); Acts 4:12 (*none other name under heaven... whereby we must be saved — the name of Christ*, v. 5); Rev. 7:14 (*washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb — washed their garments in my blood*, v. 19); Rev. 20:12 (*the dead judged out of those things which were written in the books — the books by which the world is judged*, vv. 25–26); Matt. 5:48; 3 Ne. 12:48 (*be ye perfect... even as I... am perfect — even as I am*, v. 27); 1 John 3:2 (*we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is — the goal of* v. 27); 3 Ne. 13:24; 27:32 (*the love of Mammon, sell me for silver and for gold — the fall of the fourth generation*, v. 32); Matt. 7:13–14 (*the strait gate that few... find — v. 33*).”