
Jacob 7 — Sherem the Anti-Christ — Jacob's Final Confrontation, the Sign Demanded, and the Wandering People

The BoM's first anti-Christ confrontation; Sherem's flattery, demand, death, and recantation; Jacob's farewell, c. 544 BC.

The chapter is the BoM's first formal anti-Christ confrontation. After the temple-sermons (chs. 2–3), the allegory (ch. 5), and the exhortation (ch. 6), Jacob's-ministry meets a sophisticated, learned, eloquent opponent named Sherem who teaches no-Christ. Five movements: (1) Sherem's emergence (vv. 1–5); (2) the confrontation (vv. 6–14); (3) the sign — Sherem struck down (vv. 15–20); (4) his deathbed recantation and the people's return (vv. 21–24); (5) Jacob's farewell (vv. 25–27). Centerpiece: vv. 11–13 — *none of the prophets have written, nor prophesied, save they have spoken concerning this Christ, and what am I that I should tempt God to show unto thee a sign in the thing which thou knowest to be true?*

Ten Insights

- 1. Anti-Christ from within (v. 1).** *There came a man among the people of Nephi, whose name was Sherem.* The anti-Christ enters from within the covenant-people, not from without (Acts 20:29–30 — of your own selves shall men arise).
- 2. Flattery to overthrow the doctrine of Christ (v. 2).** *He preached many things which were flattering unto the people; and this he did that he might overthrow the doctrine of Christ.* The anti-Christ's-method (Rom. 16:18 — by good words and fair speeches deceive).
- 3. Learned, smooth-tongued (v. 4).** *He was learned, that he had a perfect knowledge of the language of the people; wherefore, he could use much flattery, and much power of speech, according to the power of the devil.* The anti-Christ is intellectually-credentialed (2 Cor. 11:13–15 — false apostles).
- 4. Could not be shaken (v. 5).** *I could not be shaken... for I truly had seen angels... and... heard the voice of the Lord speaking unto me in very word.* Seasoned-prophet's-immovability (1 Cor. 15:58; 2 Tim. 1:12).
- 5. Sherem's three charges (vv. 6–7).** Jacob has led the people from the law of Moses; converted the law into worship of a future-being; no man can know things to come. Conservative-traditionalist-anti-Christ-pattern (Acts 21:21–28's charge against Paul).
- 6. None of the prophets save they have spoken of Christ (v. 11).** *None of the prophets have written, nor prophesied, save they have spoken concerning this Christ.* The BoM's-master-Christological-hermeneutic-axiom (Lk. 24:27; Jn. 5:39; Acts 10:43). Christ-centered reading is the test of understanding.
- 7. What am I to tempt God? (v. 13).** *Show me a sign... What am I that I should tempt God to show unto thee a sign in the thing which thou knowest to be true?* Pre-Matthean articulation of Matt. 12:38–39's evil-and-adulterous-generation-seeketh-a-sign. Signs follow faith, not produce it.
- 8. Not my will but thine (v. 14).** *Not my will be done; but if God shall smite thee, let that be a sign... thy will, O Lord, be done, and not mine.* Gethsemane-anticipative submission (Lk. 22:42 — Father... not my will, but thine, be done).
- 9. I have lied unto God; the unpardonable sin (v. 19).** *I fear lest I have committed the unpardonable sin, for I have lied unto God; for I denied the Christ.* Pre-Matthean articulation of Matt. 12:31–32's blasphemy-against-the-Holy-Ghost. The deathbed-source-confession.
- 10. We did mourn out our days (v. 26).** *We being a lonesome and a solemn people, wanderers, cast out from Jerusalem, born in tribulation, in a wilderness, and hated of our brethren... wherefore, we did mourn out our days.* Pre-Hebrews articulation of Heb. 11:13–16's strangers and pilgrims on the earth.

Cross-References

Gen. 4:14 (vagabond on the earth — direct background v. 26); Gen. 22:1 (God did tempt Abraham); Gen. 23:4 (a stranger and a sojourner — direct background v. 26); Ex. 4:8 (believe the voice of the latter sign); Deut. 6:16 (ye shall not tempt the Lord — direct background v. 13); Deut. 13:1–5 (false prophet — direct background vv. 1–4); Deut. 18:20–22 (presumptuous prophet); 1 Sam. 28 (Saul and the witch of Endor — direct background vv. 17–18); 1 Ki. 18:36–37 (Elijah on Carmel — direct parallel v. 22); Ps. 12:2–4 (vain words; flattering lips); Ps. 18:2 (the Lord is my rock — direct parallel v. 25); Ps. 90:9 (we spend our years as a tale — direct parallel v. 26); Prov. 26:28 (flattering mouth worketh ruin — direct parallel vv. 2, 4); Isa. 5:20 (woe unto them that call evil good); Isa. 8:14 (a stone of stumbling); Isa. 30:9–11 (rebellious people, lying children); Jer. 5:31 (the prophets prophesy falsely); Jer. 14:14 (the prophets prophesy lies in my name); Jer. 23:14 (an horrible thing in the prophets); Ezek. 13:1–7 (woe unto the foolish prophets); Mic. 3:5 (concerning the prophets); Mal. 3:14 (it is vain to serve God); Matt. 4:7 (ye shall not tempt the Lord — direct parallel v. 13); Matt. 7:15–20 (beware of false prophets); Matt. 12:31–32 (blasphemy against the Holy Ghost — direct parallel v. 19); Matt. 12:38–39 (evil and adulterous generation seeketh a sign — direct parallel v. 13); Matt. 16:1–4 (sign-seeking); Matt. 23:37 (how often would I have gathered — direct parallel v. 24); Matt. 24:24 (false Christs); Mk. 8:11–12 (no sign be given — direct parallel v. 13); Lk. 11:29 (an evil generation seeketh a sign); Lk. 22:42 (not my will, but thine — direct parallel v. 14); Lk. 23:34 (Father, forgive them); Lk. 24:27 (Moses and all the prophets — direct parallel v. 11); Jn. 5:39 (search the scriptures — direct parallel v. 11); Jn. 8:44 (ye are of your father the devil — direct parallel v. 14); Jn. 9:29 (we know that God spake unto Moses — direct background vv. 7–8); Acts 2:37 (pricked in their heart — direct parallel v. 21); Acts 5:1–11 (Ananias and Sapphira — direct parallel vv. 15, 20); Acts 8:18–24 (Simon Magus); Acts 10:43 (to him give all the prophets witness — direct parallel v. 11); Acts 13:6–11 (Paul and Elymas — direct parallel vv. 15, 20); Acts 17:11 (Bereans — direct parallel v. 23); Acts 20:29–32 (grievous wolves — direct parallel vv. 1–4); Rom. 16:18 (good words and fair speeches — direct parallel v. 2); 1 Cor. 15:58 (be ye stedfast); 2 Cor. 11:13–15 (false apostles — direct parallel v. 4); Gal. 1:8–9 (though we, or an angel from heaven); Eph. 4:14 (tossed to and fro); 1 Thes. 5:21 (prove all things); 2 Thes. 2:9–10 (signs and lying wonders); 1 Tim. 4:1 (depart from the faith); 2 Tim. 1:12 (I know whom I have believed); 2 Tim. 3:5 (form of godliness but denying the power); 2 Tim. 4:3 (itching ears); Tit. 1:10 (vain talkers and deceivers); Heb. 6:4–6 (falling away — direct parallel v. 19); Heb. 10:26–29 (sin wilfully — direct parallel v. 19); Heb. 11:13–16 (strangers and pilgrims — direct parallel v. 26); 1 Pet. 5:8 (the devil, as a roaring lion); 2 Pet. 2:1 (false teachers); 1 Jn. 1:1 (heard, seen — direct parallel v. 12); 1 Jn. 2:18 (many antichrists); 1 Jn. 4:1–3 (try the spirits — direct parallel v. 14); Jude 1:4 (certain men crept in unawares); Rev. 13:1–18 (the beast); 1 Ne. 8:24–28 (great and spacious building); 2 Ne. 9:42 (proud, learned); 2 Ne. 28:21 (cunning plan of the devil); Jacob 1 (Jacob's commission); Jacob 4 (we knew of Christ — direct parallel v. 11); Jacob 6 (cleave unto God — direct context); Enos 1 (direct sequel); Mosiah 12 (Abinadi before Noah's priests); Mosiah 27 (Alma the Younger struck down — direct parallel vv. 15–20); Alma 1 (Nehor); Alma 30 (Korihor the anti-Christ — direct parallel chapter); Hel. 5:9–12 (rock of Redeemer); 3 Ne. 1:13–22 (sign of Christ's birth); Moro. 7:30–35 (angels minister); D&C 1:38 (whether by mine voice or servants); D&C 24:13 (signs come by faith); D&C 50:21–24 (preach by Spirit); D&C 63:7–12 (signs come by faith — direct parallel v. 13); D&C 76:31–48 (sons of perdition — direct parallel v. 19); JS—M 1:21–22 (false Christs); Articles of Faith 11 (worship how, where, what they may); Articles of Faith 13 (we believe all things).

Apocryphal Correlations

Sirach 6:1–4. Lying tongue creates many slain — direct vv. 2, 4 flattery-rebuke parallel.

Wisdom 1:11. A mouth that beliieth slayeth the soul — direct v. 19 lying-unto-God parallel.

4 Ezra 7:46–48. My soul is sorely troubled when I consider the multitude that shall perish — direct v. 18 hell-and-punishment parallel.

2 Baruch 53–74. Trial of the wicked at the appointed time — direct vv. 18–19 parallel.

1 Enoch 95:4–7. Woe unto you who utter words against the truth — direct vv. 17–19 deathbed-confession parallel.

Testament of Naphtali 8:6. Two spirits wait upon man — the spirit of truth and of error — direct vv. 14, 18 spirit-discernment parallel.

Damascus Doc (CD) 1:14–15. The man of scoffing who arose to deceive Israel — direct vv. 1–4 anti-Christ pattern.

1QpHab 2:1–10. The man of falsehood who led many astray — direct vv. 2–4 leader-as-deceiver parallel.

Hebrew Word Studies

chalaq lashon (חָלַף לָשׁוֹן; **smooth-tongue, flatterer**) — vv. 2, 4. Prov. 26:28 — a flattering mouth worketh ruin.

da'at sefat (דַּעַת שֶׁפֶּת, **knowledge of the language**) — v. 4. The technical-noun for rhetorical-mastery; Sherem's anti-Christ credential.

ot (אוֹת, **sign**) — v. 13. Ex. 4:8 — believe the voice of the latter sign; the OT's-prophetic-sign-noun.

nisayon (נִסְיוֹן, **testing, temptation**) — v. 13. Gen. 22:1's Akedah-grammar; Deut. 6:16's tempt-the-Lord prohibition.

ger ve-toshav (גֵּר וְתוֹשָׁב, **stranger and sojourner**) — v. 26. Abraham's self-designation (Gen. 23:4); Jacob's people as ger-ve-toshav.

nadod (נָדָד, **wandering, fugitive**) — v. 26. Cain's-curse-verb (Gen. 4:14); applied here pastorally, not punitively.

Personal Application

Three practices. First, test every smooth tongue against Christ. Whenever a smooth-tongued voice promises a religion-without-Christ or a knowledge-beyond-Christ, test it against the all-prophets-spoke-Christ doctrine; do not be impressed by credentials alone (1 Jn. 4:1's try the spirits). Second, do not demand signs; trust the witness already given. When tempted to ask the Lord for a dramatic-sign-to-confirm what He has already-witnessed-by-the-Spirit, repent of the demand and trust the witness (Matt. 12:38–39). Third, be a faithful pilgrim, even if you must mourn out your days. Do not require this life to be triumphant; the disciple's-life is pilgrim-mourner-life with sure-hope (Heb. 11:13–16). Mourning is honest; the hope is sure; both are compatible.