

**THE  
PROPHECY  
OF  
ZENOS**

## The Prophecy of Zenos Text – Jacob 3:30, 31 (p. 177)

1. This story is being related by Jacob, younger brother of Nephi. Jacob and Nephi felt deeply about this parable, for their father, Lehi, was a prophet in Jerusalem; a contemporary of Jeremiah, Ezekiel, Daniel and Uriah. (See **Jeremiah 26:20, 21**) and **1 Nephi 1:18 – 21** (p. 3);

a. In the dictionary we read: “**A story in which people, things and happenings have a hidden, or symbolic meaning.**” This is the definition of an **allegory**. So this prophecy of Zenos is an **allegory**.

b. This message was very *personal* to the family of Lehi! They surely felt that prophecies of Isaiah (**Isaiah 37:31, 32**) concerning the scattering of Israel related to their own exodus from Jerusalem. See **Jacob 5: 42 – 44** (p. 193)

2. This parable of Zenos contains a history of Israel, reaching down to our day, so parts of it should be very *personal* to us. We need to be as moved by it as were Jacob and Nephi.

a. This prophecy of Zenos has been lost to the Bible. That is not uncommon:

Let's read **2 Chronicles 9:29**

b. It is even true of some New Testament scriptures: See **Colossians 4:16**

3. Zenos was a prophet after the time of Abraham, Isaac and **Jacob**. He was probably a contemporary of Isaiah & Micah or perhaps of Jeremiah, Ezekiel and Daniel. His allegory spoke much about the descendents of Lehi because they were of his **seed**. (See **III Nephi 4:70, 71** {p. 630}. We know of his death. This is found in Helaman 3:53, where Nephi said, “**He testified boldly, for which he was slain.**”

4. We have seen that Zenos compared the House of Israel to an “**olive** tree”. Other prophets of the Bible who also made this analogy were Isaiah, Jeremiah, Hosea and the Apostle Paul.

a. Joseph Smith was once asked, “How can you understand the meaning of a parable?”

b. His response was, “You need to seek out the question that prompted the parable.”

c. This question is found in **Jacob 3:26 – 28** (p. 177) State the question in your words: How can Israel \_\_\_\_\_?

5. As Jacob 3 opens, he is instructing his people about the prophecies that relate to the coming of Christ. Now we begin the allegory of Zenos. Let's read **Jacob 3:30, 31**. He likens Israel to a **tame** olive tree. We remember from history that Israel had fallen into idolatry and apostasy.

a. Vs. **32**, The master of the vineyard ( **the Father** ) found that the tree had begun to decay. What do these words mean to you? \_\_\_\_\_

b. Vs. **33** – tells of God's efforts to save Israel. (See **Moroni 6:5** {p. 762}.) So this means that the Father sent \_\_\_\_\_.

Note: (The olive tree is a slow growing tree. Its first flowering is after eight years. Its most productive stage is between eight and thirty-five years. When it begins to die new branches begin to grow from the base of the tree, for its nourishment comes from the roots. The upper parts of the tree begin to die.)

c. Vs. **34** – We see his success was minimal. The **top** of the tree was withered and dying: (Let's read **Micah 3:9 – 11**.)

**6. Jacob 3: 35** – The Master of the vineyard directs his Servant ( Christ ) to take three major steps to try to preserve the Olive Tree ( Israel ):

**a. Step One: (Read verse 36 & 40)** They will graft in the branches of a wild olive tree. A custom of those times could have been the beginning of this grafting in of gentiles (the wild olive tree). When the Israelites were deported by Assyria and scattered among the nations, they were replaced by other peoples. This would lead to intermarriage with those Israelites remaining in the land. (But there is no evidence of much good fruit having been produced in Samaria.)

Of course, we know that during the Christian era the Gospel was taken to the Gentiles, and they were grafted into Israel through their belief in, and obedience to, Christ. (Let's read **Romans 11: 11, 13, 14, 16-19** and **II Nephi 12:77** {p. 158})

**b. Step Two: (Read Verse 36 & 41)** – The withered branches will be cast into the fire. In the days of Pekah, king of Israel (733 BC), Assyria invaded Israel and carried captive the northern and eastern part of Israel. (See **2 Kings 15:29** and **1 Chronicles 5:26**)

Then in 722 BC Assyria again invaded Israel and carried away the remaining part. (See **2 Kings 17:5, 6**)

In 598 BC and again in 586 BC, Babylonia carried Judah into captivity. (See **2 Kings 25:8 – 11.**)

**c. Step Three: (Read verses 37, 39, 46)** We see that the Master is going to remove from Israel some of the more righteous people and plant them in the nethermost ( distant ) parts of the vineyard ( the world ).

(His purpose can be seen in 2 Ne. 2:5-8 and Jacob 2:31 35.)

**d.** Now let's read **Jacob 3:47**. Here the Master of the vineyard says, “ *...that I may lay up fruit thereof, against the season, unto myself...*” This reference to “*laying up the fruit*” seems to refer to the “harvest time”, when the fruit shall be stored in the granary, the root cellar, etc. “*against*” that time ( the season ) when nothing more shall be harvested. My questions: ¿To what does the season refer? \_\_\_\_\_ and ¿Where shall the fruit be layed up? \_\_\_\_\_

**7. Jacob 3: 48** (p. 179) - Now we can see that these righteous branches of Israel will be placed in several different places in the world, far from Israel. (More about that later.)

**8. Jacob 3:49, 50** - We are told that a long time had passed away. This probably brings us to the second time period encompassed by this allegory; the first period having dealt only with Israel, the tame olive tree.

**9. Jacob 3: 52 – 57.** Time passes and the wild branches (gentiles) bring forth much good fruit. Of course this speaks of the early church and those Christians who remained faithful to the end. Their good fruit was a result of the nourishment from the root of the tree.

Now this root of Israel had its beginning with God's covenant with Abraham, repeated through the generations of Israel. Through the seed of Abraham “*shall all the families of the earth be blessed.*” This blessing come through Jesus Christ, out of the “*root of Jesse.*” It is a covenant looking toward the salvation of mankind. It is through obedience to Christ that the wild branches bore much good fruit. Verse 56 tells us that were it not for these gentiles grafted into the tree, the root would have perished.

**10.** Now the Master and His servant go down to inspect those tender branches that were transplanted into the nethermost parts of the world.

**a.** **Jacob 3: 60 – 63** (p. 180) - the first transplanting was in a poor place.

**b.** **Jacob 3: 65 – 66** - the second transplant was in yet a poorer location.

**c.** **Jacob 3:67** – It almost sounds as if this speaks of yet another transplanting that is seldom referred to by commentators. If so, it would be a third transplant.

Perhaps this is a reference to Mulek and the Mulekites. (See **Ezekiel 17:1 – 8.**)

(see Omni 1:24 – 34 for this story.)

**c.** **Read verse 68, 69** - the third/fourth planting was in a choice land. We do not know the identity, nor the geographical location of these first two plantings, but the last one refers to Lehi and his family who were brought out of Jerusalem shortly before the Babylonian conquest, and led to America. If this is any indication, the other two transplantings could have been two righteous groups that were led out of Samaria before the two invasions by Assyria.

Verse 68 informs us that this transplanted portion of Israel brought forth both good fruit (the believing Nephites) and wild fruit (Lamanites). Verse 69 shows us that only the righteous portion of the tree will be preserved. We remember during the three days of darkness, at the crucifixion of Christ, it was the more righteous who were spared.

**11.** In verses 52 – 57 we read that the gentile branches grafted in from the wild olive tree had brought forth much good fruit. But with the passage of time (verse 72 states, “**a long time had passed away**”) a great change had taken place.

Let’s read **Jacob 3: 73 – 78** (p. 181)

This obviously refers to the falling away of the various denominations of the Christian church after the great apostasy of the church in 570 A.D. Jacob 3:77 told us that the Christian church “**hath brought forth much fruit, and there is none of it which is good.**”

This is borne out in Joseph Smith’s first vision. When asking the Lord about which church he should join, he was told, “**...they were all wrong...**” and that “**...all their creeds are an abomination in my sight... they teach for doctrine the commandments of men...**” (Flint, *An Outline History*, page 16)

These verses bring the allegory of Zenos right up to our day. Verse 73 said, “**the end soon cometh...**”

**12.** **Jacob 3:80** (p. 182) – We see that because the gentiles (the Christian church) had been grafted into Israel, they had nourished the roots and kept the tree alive. Jesus said, “**the Gentiles, if they will not harden their hearts, that they may repent and come unto me, and be baptized in my name, and know of the true points of my doctrine, that they may be numbered among my people, O house of Israel:**” In this way was the root maintained and nourished. (See 3 Nephi 9:91, 92.)

**13.** Let’s now read **Jacob 3: 85 – 87** (p. 182) - The master of the vinyard desires to see all that has taken place in the vinyard. The original tree, or Israel, had become corrupt; The Christian churches (the wild tree) had become corrupt; Now He sees the three righteous branches that were transplanted had all become corrupt.

(No mention is made of the third transplant (verse 67, because by this time the Mulekites have united with the Nephite people and they are now one people.)

**14.** **Jacob 3:88** (p. 182) - Here in America (the last transplant) the wild fruit (Lamanites) had overcome the part of the tree which had produced good fruit (the Nephites). The story of their destruction is found in Mormon, chapters Two and Three.

**15. Jacob 3:93, 94** (p. 183) – The master of the vineyard is speaking about the good spot of ground (America) and said he had “...cut down that which cumbered this spot of ground...” This is a reference to the destruction of the Jaredites who had previously established their civilization in the same general area.

**16.** In Jacob 3:95 – 99 we find the master grieving because of the growth of wickedness in his vineyard and he had not burned the evil branches. Now let’s read **verses 100 and 101.** He asks himself, “*Have I slackened my hand?*” As a parent yourself, what do you think is meant by this question he asks himself?

I believe the nature of God can be seen in **Isaiah 9:16 – 21.** “*For all this his anger is not turned away, but his hand is stretched out still.*” (Isaiah 9:21)

**17.** His next question is also very important. It is found in Jacob 3:104. “*Who is it that hath corrupted my vineyard?*” And the servant answered, saying, “*Is it not the loftiness of thy vineyard?*” (verse 105) What is your idea about the meaning of this expression?

This is an Old Testament expression. Read **Isaiah 2:17.** (Is the Christian church today extolling many ideas of man above those of God? Pope John Paul II is quoted as saying that we are seeing the “*liberation from the very ideas of God in order to bolster man.*” That is the “*loftiness*” of the Christian church today that brought about the condition we discussed in paragraph 11, page 3, of this study.)

**18.** Let’s read **Jacob 3:109, 110.** The master of the vineyard is ready to “*hew down the trees of the vineyard, and cast them into the fire,*” but his servant, (Christ), pleaded with him, saying, “Spare it a little longer.” This patient, longsuffering nature of our Lord is attested to many times in the Scriptures. Let’s read **1 John 2:1** and **Moroni 7:28** (p. 766).

**19.** Now we shall read about the plan of the master of the vineyard to save that which appears to be lost: This is find this passage a little read it let’s back up and make this allegory:



found in **Jacob 3:116 and 117.** I difficult to envision, so before we an outline of the components of

**Vs. 52, 53** - The branches of the wild olive tree (the gentiles) are grafted into the the mother tree (Israel) which was dying.

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**This refers to the beginning of the Christian church. Its fruit was good.**

**Vs. 72 – 77** – A long time has now passed away and again we are discussing the olive tree into which the gentiles had been grafted.

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**The apostasy and decline of the the Christian has taken place and it bears no good fruit.**

**Vs. 86** – The master and the servant are examining the 3 Israelite transplants.

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**Referred to as the 1<sup>st</sup>, 2<sup>nd</sup> & the last.**

**Vs. 87 – 111** – The master’s meditations about the last branch that was planted in a good spot of the vineyard.

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**Referring to the Nephites and the Lamanites.**

**20.** Now let's read verses 112 – 115. Verse 112 says, **"let us take of the branches of these which I have planted in the nethermost parts of my vineyard,"** (these are the three transplants placed **far** from Israel.) **"...and let us graft them into the tree from whence they came;"** This refers to the "mother tree", which is now sustained by Christianity.

Verse 113 adds, **"And let us pluck from the tree those branches whose fruit is most bitter..."** (How do you understand this?) **"...and graft in the natural branches of the tree in the stead thereof."**

Verse 114 states, **"And this will I do, that the tree may not perish, that perhaps I may preserve unto myself the **roots** thereof, for mine own purpose."**

Verse 115 says, **"the roots of the natural branches of the tree which I planted whithersoever I would, (the three transplants) are yet alive;**

Verse 116 tells us, **"Wherefore, that I may preserve them also, for mine own purpose, I will take of the branches of **this** tree (the original house of Israel, the tame tree, now represented by the Christian church), and I will graft them in unto them."** \*To understand this we should read **Mormon 2:43** (page 699).

**21.** Read **Jacob 3:120**. The master said to the servant, **"Pluck not the **wild** branches from the trees, save it be those which are most bitter; and in them ye shall graft, according to that which I have said."** What would your understanding about "the most bitter branches"?

How do you imagine they will be pruned?

**22.** Let's read **Jacob 3:125, 126**. (The master is still explaining the plan: The actual labor will commence later with verses 136 – 138.) First, Christ is told, **"Go to and call **servants** that we may labor diligently ...in the vineyard."** The time period has been set: **"...this last time, for behold the end draweth nigh: and this is the last time that I shall **prune** my vineyard."** Now let's read **Book of Commandments 25:28 – 30** (p. 45). The definite relationship between these words of Zenos and the words of Christ in His revelation makes it obvious to me that these verses refer to our day, and to the restoration of the Church of Christ in this day.

**23.** Verse 127 of **Jacob 3** is crucial to this latter-day work. **"Graft in the branches; begin at the ( **last** ), that they may be first..."** Ever since verse 86 in the allegory the master has been referring to the three branches of Israel that were transplanted into the far parts of his vineyard, and that is still the reference point. ¿Which of them was the "last"? \_\_\_\_\_ This grafting in of the natural branches is explained in **1 Nephi 4:16** (page 44). Let's read this passage. This beginning point involves both the Gentiles and the descendents of the ( **Lamanites** ).

**24.** Through the restoration, the Gentiles and the Lamanites (the last branch transplanted) shall be first. Verse 127 goes on to say, **"...and that the first (Israel) may be ( **last** ), and dig about the trees, both old and young, the first and the last, and the last and the first, that all may be nourished once again for the last time."**

**25.** Now let's read **Jacob 3:129 – 131**. As these **"...last grafts (Lamanites) shall grow, ye shall clear away the branches which bring forth bitter fruit..."** ¿How do you envision this taking place?

**26.** Now the actual labor is to begin! Let's read **Jacob 3:136 – 138**. The servant ( **Christ** ) called other servants, **"...and they were ( **few** )."** ¿Who are these servants? This speaks of the Restoration of the Gospel and the authority of the priesthood

among those not bringing forth bad fruit (verses 77, 78.) The reality of that really strikes home, but it should be of comfort that the fewness of the laborers was prophesied over 2000 years ago. These servants were told, ***“Go to, and labor in the vineyard, with your (mights).*”** The time period is specified: ***“The end is nigh at hand, and the season speedily cometh.”***

Let's read ***Book of Commandments 46:31 – 35*** (p. 79). Can there be any doubt about the time in which we live or the work to which we are called?

**27.** Jacob 3:140 tells us, ***“And it came to pass that the servants did go, and labor with their (mights) ; and the Lord of the vineyard labored also with them...”*** We read a similar promise in the vision of Nephi, about this same time period: ***“And it came to pass that I, Nephi, beheld the power of the Lamb of God, that it descended upon the saints of the church of the Lamb, and upon the covenant people of the Lord, who were scattered upon all the face of the earth; And they were armed with righteousness and with the power of God in great glory.”*** (1 Nephi 3:230, 231)

Let's also read ***3 Nephi 10:1 – 8.***

**28.** Let's now read ***Jacob 3:141, 142.*** Verse 141 says that the ***“...natural branches began to grow and thrive...”*** Which ones are these? \_\_\_\_\_  
Then verse 142 said that ***“...the wild branches began to be plucked off and cast away.”*** Which branches are these that are cast away? \_\_\_\_\_.

**29.** Now let's read the promise of the master of the vineyard: ***Jacob 3:147, 148.***

**30.** Read ***Jacob 3:150 - 152.*** To understand the significance of these verses, we must read ***Revelation 20:1 – 10.***

**31.** Let's read ***Jacob 3:153*** and ***Revelation 20:11 – 15.*** After the things discussed in verses 150 – 152 take place, ***“...then cometh the season and the end; and my vineyard will I cause to be burned with fire.”***

This sounds as if the “season” were the \_\_\_\_\_. In order to understand the vineyard being burned with fire, let's read ***Revelation 21:1*** and ***2 Peter 3:10, 11.***

All the Components of the Allegory  
Jacob 3:30-69



Israel  
the mother tree  
vs. 30-33, 36



Tender  
Branches  
vs. 34,  
37-39,  
46-48



Gentiles  
the wild olive  
vs. 36, 40-45,  
51-57



vs. 60-64  
1st transplant  
poor spot



vs. 65-66  
2nd transplant  
poorer spot



vs. 68+69  
last transplant  
America  
(choice ground)

