

Jacob Chapter 5

Of all the material Jacob could have adopted as his prophecy, his selection of Zenos' allegory of the Olive Tree is telling. The account is a journey through various dispensations of the Gospel, tracking a bloodline of chosen people. To Jacob's credit, he realized the work of salvation was devoted primarily to rescuing the descendants of a chosen line beginning with Abraham.

The allegory is a family story. The use of the Olive tree is a deliberate symbol of a family, and of the tree whose value was beyond question in the culture from which the allegory sprung. To understand the story, it is necessary to settle on meanings.

The tree is a family line belonging to the "house of Israel." (Jacob 5: 3.) The work of the Lord of the vineyard and his fellow laborers is designed to cause the chosen family line to produce fruit worthy of preservation. The "fruit" is people, or more correctly, children raised in righteousness who comprehend and accept the Gospel and abide by its teachings. The name "Israel" is the new name given to Jacob. Jacob was renamed by the Lord because the Lord took him into His own family. Naming signifies Fatherhood over Jacob, and the name Israel signifies the Family of God.

Not every descendant of Jacob is also a descendant of Israel. Blood is one thing, adoption into the Family of God is another. The allegory should be read with the proper context. It is about preserving the Family of Israel, or in other words, the Family of God.

To correct and instruct the chosen family, it was necessary for the Lord of the vineyard, in a desperate attempt to cause the family to produce fruit worthy of preservation, to disburse the children, scatter them throughout the vineyard, graft wild branches into the roots and tame branches into wild roots. In one sense the failure of the chosen family is to the world's great blessing. In the end, the world overcomes the chosen family and all those grafted into it, and in the final effort the work returns to the original roots and the original branches in a desperate final attempt to salvage something from the vineyard before it is burned.

Choosing this allegory as the great central theme of Jacob's book shows his comprehension of sacred history and prophecy, and his knowledge of the future. Unlike Nephi, whose muse was Isaiah, the fully mature prophet Jacob turned to Zenos to act as "second witness" to his prophecy. We have in Jacob Chapter 5 the great explanation of how we got where we are today, and what will unfold before the Lord's return to burn the vineyard. It is odd we spend so little time with the material. It is the central theme of all man's history (from God's point of view).

The family is scattered into several different parts of the vineyard:

First, the location of the original tree.

Second, an undisclosed number of "nethermost parts of the vineyard." (Verse 14.)

Third, a "poorest spot." (Verse 21.)

Fourth, a "poorer spot than the first." (Verse 23.)

Fifth, a "good spot." (Verse 25.)

However, there is no attempt to quantify the number of spots because the allegory

is intended to convey meaning apart from numbers. You can cross check the other prophecies from Nephi (2 Ne. 29: 3) and Christ (3 Ne. 17: 4) and find there is no definitive number given of how many separate groups are included in the “nethermost parts of the vineyard” where Israel was scattered.

What should leap out to you from this allegory is the nature of the Gospel and God’s work among mankind. It was and is related to preserving a single family line. The “God of Israel” is concerned with preserving the chosen line of heirs. The Gospel was and is a family matter, and the target of the Lord’s work is now and always has been the preservation of a specific group He intends to preserve.

This is an image we have trouble with in our current multiculturalism. We tend to view all mankind as the beneficiaries of God’s plans to save mankind. They are to some extent. After all, He provides the sun and rain to everyone regardless of their ethnicity. (Matt. 5: 45.) And every people are given according to His mercy some portion of truth calculated to benefit them. (Alma 29: 8.) However, Zenos and Jacob agree the Lord’s primary effort has been directed at preserving one family, and the world has been the incidental beneficiaries of this global effort to preserve them.

We will look at the history of this family as told through the allegory of the Olive tree.

1. Behold, my brethren, do ye not remember to have read the words of the prophet Zenos, which he spake unto the house of Israel, saying:
2. Hearken, O ye house of Israel, and hear the words of me, a prophet of the Lord.
3. For behold, thus saith the Lord, I will liken thee, O house of Israel, like unto a tame olive tree, which a man took and nourished in his vineyard; and it grew, and waxed old, and began to decay.
4. And it came to pass that the master of the vineyard went forth, and he saw that his olive tree began to decay; and he said: I will prune it, and dig about it, and nourish it, that perhaps it may shoot forth young and tender branches, and it perish not.

Jacob 5: 3-6
March 26, 2012 Denver

Israel was and is the only family which will be saved. It is the “tame olive tree” that the Lord “took and nourished in his vineyard.” (5: 3.) Despite all the Lord’s efforts, however, the actual family tree “waxed old, and began to decay.” (Id.) It lost its vitality. **It tired of the Lord.** His desire and “nourishment” was not able to overcome the tree’s indifference to what He offered them. It began to decay. The Lord was unwilling to abandon His tree even when there was no productivity in it. He intended to continue to create the Family of God, despite the failure by the family to respond to His invitation. He initially set about to “prune it” (that is, to cast away from the Family of God or Israel, those who failed to live worthily) and to “dig about it” and then to “nourish it.” In the initial work it is the Lord directly who does the work. He does not send a servant to perform the labor. (5: 4-5.) “Pruning” involves cutting away. It destroys. The goal is ultimately to bring about vigor and life. But the initial work requires destroying to clear away and make the growth possible. The result is harsh and violent in the short run, but there is

5. And it came to pass that he pruned it, and digged about it, and nourished it according to his word.
6. And it came to pass that after many days it began to put forth somewhat a little, young and tender branches; but behold, the main top thereof began to perish.

something important going on in the work of “pruning” away. The larger purpose is what the Lord has in mind. The short term sacrifices and difficulties are unavoidable and necessary. They must be endured.

“Digging about” the tree is also violent. It is threatening, and imposes upset and difficulties. The Lord’s benign intent is not understood when the pruning and digging are measured against short term standards. They must take a longer view. The Lord’s purpose is to “perhaps” produce “young and tender branches.” (5: 5.) It is “perhaps” because the Lord grants the tree agency to respond, not compulsion to force compliance. The Lord can coax, but the tree must grow.

The older branches are not intended to be preserved. They bear nothing but bad fruit. The young and tender branches are the goal. These, however, will not yield fruit for some time. They must have an opportunity to develop.

This description of ancient Israel shows how the Lord’s work was always purposeful and designed to preserve the tree and continue to create sons and daughters of God. However, despite all He did, the “little, young and tender branches” were comparatively small in the scheme of things. As to the “main top thereof” it “began to perish.” (5: 6.)

The infrastructure, the hierarchy, the temple, the priestly class, the learned Rabbis and the schools of thought were rotting. They were nothing like what would be required to produce fruit. They were religious but heretical. They were devoted, but not His sons and daughters. The family line was broken. They needed to be adopted back again, because they lacked the power to remain connected.

This is an odd juxtaposition: The “main top” is corrupt. The “young tender branches” are nothing like the great growth overshadowing them. Yet the Lord sees in the young growth what He seeks. As to the “main top” there is nothing but “perishing” and decay.

Israel is so often in this predicament. They despise the truth, but respond warmly to flattery telling them they are righteous. (Hel. 13: 27-28.) When someone is sent by the Lord of the vineyard calling for repentance, Israel rejects him, says he is a sinner and a false prophet. (Hel. 13: 25-26.) Ultimately, however, for the bloodline of Jacob to rise up and become fruit worthy of preservation, there must be a change from blood connection to Jacob to an adoption into Israel. Then they become sons and daughters of God, and fruit worthy of preservation. (Mosiah 27: 25.)

7. And it came to pass that the master of the vineyard saw it, and he said unto his servant: it grieveth me that I should lose this tree; wherefore, go and pluck the branches from a wild olive tree, and bring them hither unto me; and we will pluck off those main branches which are beginning to wither away, and we will cast them into the fire that they may be burned.
8. And behold, saith the Lord of the vineyard, I take away many of these young and tender branches, and I will graft them withersoever I

Jacob 5: 7-9
 March 27, 2012 Denver

As Israel decays, the Lord of the vineyard takes the dramatic step of cutting away the “main branches” or in other words the leading families, the recognized genealogical well-breds, or the families of rank and distinction. They were to be “burned” rather than further cultivated. (5: 7.) Their pride and arrogance disqualified them from preservation or further work. They were riddled with “decay” and unworthy of further effort. They were to be destroyed by fire. Fire is always a symbol of the Lord’s judgments designed to cleanse or purge. Killing the decayed and corrupt leading families was cleansing the tree of the decay that had taken hold in the lofty, inner-circles of the people of Israel.

Men may have respected, even admired the success and status of these “main branches” of the Israelites, but that was nothing to the Lord. All their great rank, position, support structure and apparent security were nothing once the Lord decreed they were to be burned. Invading conquerors would target these specific social leaders for removal as a precaution against further loyalty. These would have to be removed for the outside ruler from a foreign power to succeed. The very thing which made them secure was the reason they were targeted to be killed. In a natural political purge the “main branches” who seemed forever entrenched to rule were

will; and it mattereth not that if it so be that the root of the tree will perish, I may preserve the fruit thereof unto myself; wherefore, I will take these young and tender branches, and I will graft them withersoever I will.

9. Take thou the branches of the wild olive tree, and graft them in, in the stead thereof; and these which I have plucked off I will cast into the fire and burn them, that they may not cumber the ground of my vineyard.

10. And it came to pass that the servant of the Lord of the vineyard did according to the word of the Lord of the vineyard, and grafted in the branches of the wild olive tree.

11. And the Lord of the vineyard caused that it should be digged about, and pruned, and nourished, saying unto his servant: It grieveth me that I should lose this tree; wherefore, that perhaps I might preserve the roots thereof that they perish not, that I might preserve them unto myself, I have done this thing.

12. Wherefore, go thy way; watch the tree, and nourish it, according to my words.

13. And these will I place in the nethermost part of my vineyard, whithersoever I will, it mattereth

swept away. No more would they "cumber the ground of His vineyard." (5: 9.)

To replace the notable families of distinction, the Lord determined to bring in "wild olive tree" branches, or those who have no distinction, or even family connections with the roots of Israel. (Id.) There would be new blood brought in by the conquerors with resultant intermarriages.

Unlike the main branches, there were "young and tender branches" which were not to be destroyed, but were instead to be transplanted. From Assyria or Babylon, these dislocated tribes would be spread into the nethermost part of the vineyard, or in the words of the Lord of the vineyard: "I will graft them whithersoever I will." (5: 8.)

With the mixing of foreign blood in the remaining "root" of the tree, and grafting of the "young and tender branches" into "wild" trees throughout the vineyard, the Israelite bloodlines become fragmented, scattered and no longer purely either Jacobian (by blood) or Israelite (by adoption). It would not matter if you look to the main root, or to the many scattered branches, they were all mingled with the "wild" gentile stock to produce a hybrid people. The corruption of the family was too deeply entrenched. They would not be able to repent any longer because their arrogance and ignorance prevented them from seeing their true condition. They thought themselves so highly favored of God they could not fall. Therefore, it was altogether necessary for them to fall. Without such a traumatic message delivered to the entire family, they would continue to presume safety meant they were justified. Any sign of prosperity was interpreted to mean they were right with God.

The family of Jacob needed this trauma for the covenant with Israel to be preserved. They were dying and not noticing it. Though it was terrible to endure, the Lord of the vineyard had the ultimate best interests of the entire tree in mind. He did what was needed to restore health and vigor. The covenant had been broken anyway, and this would make possible a renewal of the covenant and restoration from scattered Jacob the Family of Israel.

Jacob 5: 10-13

March 28, 2012 Denver

The Lord caused his "servant" to perform all He determined to do for the vineyard. (5: 10.) The wild branches were grafted in and the covenant was suspended. The lines were broken. It would require a restoration of the covenant and adoption for the "natural fruit" to reappear. (5: 10.)

Labor was required from the Lord's servant as well as the Lord Himself. The vineyard required "digging about" and "pruning" and "nourishing" in an attempt to preserve the "root" to which it would be possible to one day to return. (5: 11.) These words tell us how constant the care has been, while scattered and wild remnants have apparently lay fallow without any fruit. Though the people have fallen, the Lord labors on.

Even when the digging, pruning and nourishing have been finished, and while the results are unknown, the Lord of the vineyard directs His servants to "watch" carefully, and to provide yet further "nourishment" when the damaged tree requires it. (5: 12.) Throughout, it is all done by the Lord's "words." He is not absent. He is diligent ever watchful. He owns the vineyard and everything that is located there. Because it is His, He wants the best for it.

As to the young branches He wants to preserve, so it may be possible at last to return to producing good fruit, He decided to move them "to the nethermost part of my vineyard." (5: 13.) This allegory contradicts the idea of Jehovah as Lord of Israel alone. The Lord claims the entire vineyard, the world itself, as His. The notion of Jehovah being only a local Diety, as is thought by many scholars to be the prevalent idea at the time of Zenos' prophecy, is destroyed by this assertion of ownership over the entire vineyard. Even "the nethermost part" of the world belongs to the Lord of the vineyard.

not unto thee; and I do it that I may preserve unto myself the natural branches of the tree; and also, that I may lay up fruit thereof against the season, unto myself; for it grieveth me that I should lose this tree and the fruit thereof.

14. And it came to pass that the Lord of the vineyard went his way, and hid the natural branches of the tame olive tree in the nethermost parts of the vineyard, some in one and some in another, according to his will and pleasure.
15. And it came to pass that a long time passed away, and the Lord of the vineyard said unto his servant: Come, let us go down into the vineyard, that we may labor in the vineyard.
16. And it came to pass that the Lord of the vineyard, and also the servant, went down into the vineyard to labor. And it came to pass that the servant said unto his master: Behold, look here; behold the tree.
17. And it came to pass that the Lord of the vineyard looked and beheld the tree in the which the wild olive branches had been grafted; and it had sprung forth and begun to bear fruit. And he beheld that it was good; and the fruit thereof was like unto the natural fruit.
18. And he said unto the servant:

Even as He relocates His people throughout the vineyard, He continues to view the scattered branches as part of the same, single "tree" He hoped to preserve. He explains: "It grieveth me that I should lose this tree and the fruit thereof." (5: 13.) His intent is to continue to have covenant people, part of His Family, His own sons and daughters. Even though they are unable to continue in that relationship during the scattering, it is hoped ultimately it will allow Him to yet "lay up fruit thereof against the season." (Id.)

This purposeful and attentive effort was reassuring to Jacob's people. Though they were long separated from Jerusalem, and although the rising generation had never been there, this allegory assures them of God's watchful eye. The covenant of Jehovah with Israel continued to be with the scattered branches though they had been transplanted across an ocean and were living in an island of the sea. (See 2 Ne. 10: 20.)

The history of the world is the history of Israel. The events are supervised by a Lord whose purpose is to lay up fruit against the season of the harvest. As we grow ever closer to the season of harvest, the plan will need to result in the appearance of natural fruit again. Otherwise, the entire vineyard will be gathered in bundles and burned.

Jacob 5: 14-18
March 29, 2012 Denver

When the Lord scattered Israel, He "hid" them "in the nethermost parts of the vineyard." (5: 14.) The word "hid" suggests the deliberate concealment of the people, their true origin, their blood relation to Jacob, their destiny to become part of the covenant Family of Israel, and their loss from the record of history and even their own memory of the earlier connections. The Lord of the vineyard intended for this part of His plan to remain concealed. He knew what He was doing. He was acting on a plan designed to produce preservable fruit, but mankind would be oblivious to His methods. His ways are not always shared or understood by man. (Isa. 55: 8-9.) The places are not numbered, but described as "nethermost." Nor is the design identified other than "some in one and some in another, according to his will and pleasure." This is an order which He keeps to Himself, but we are told it reflects His "will" and His "pleasure."

The Lord left the vineyard to continue in the ordinary course "that a long time passed away." (5: 15.) There is no haste involved. Men come and go across generations while the design of God unfolds. We are impatient and want to see God's plan unfold completely within our lifetime here, but His work is ageless and spans generations. Rarely does He promise a single generation will witness promised events. (See, e.g., JS-M 1: 32-34.)

When a "long time" had passed away, the Lord no longer stood watch, but took His servant and "went down" to "labor in the vineyard." (5: 15.) His presence and ministry among men took a more direct effort. He "went down into the vineyard to labor" for the souls of men. Behold the condescension of God, indeed!

The underlying "root" was able to give "nourishment" to the hybrid people living when the Lord came. The surviving prophetic warnings and limited practices supported this new Dispensation, making it a field white, already to harvest. (5: 17-18.)

There He found among those grafted into the natural root disciples willing to follow Him. Among them were those who were "good" and "like unto the natural fruit"- which would make them candidates to be adopted as sons and daughters of God, as the Family of Israel. The Lord rejoiced because He realized He could "lay up much fruit, which the tree thereof hath brought forth and the fruit thereof I shall lay up against the season, unto mine own self." (5: 18.)

Behold, the branches of the wild tree have taken hold of the moisture of the root thereof, that the root thereof hath brought forth much strength; and because of the much strength of the root thereof the wild branches have brought forth tame fruit. Now, if we had not grafted in these branches, the tree thereof would have perished. And now, behold, I shall lay up much fruit, which the tree thereof hath brought forth; and the fruit thereof I shall lay up against the season, unto mine own self.

19. And it came to pass that the Lord of the vineyard said unto the servant: Come, let us go to the nethermost part of the vineyard, and behold if the natural branches of the tree have not brought forth much fruit also, that I may lay up of the fruit thereof against the season, unto mine own self.
20. And it came to pass that they went forth whither the master had hid the natural branches of the tree, and he said unto the servant: Behold these; and he beheld the first that it had brought forth much fruit; and he beheld also that it was good. And he said unto the servant: Take of the fruit thereof, and lay it up against the season, that I may preserve it unto mine own self; for behold, said he, this long time have I nourished it, and it hath brought forth much fruit.
21. And it came to pass that the servant said unto his master: How comest thou hither to plant this tree, or this branch of the tree? For behold, it was the poorest spot in all the land of thy vineyard.

The Lord's personal ministry resulted in a great harvest of souls. There were many willing to accept His mission, respond to Him, and go through the process of changing into covenant Israel again. Sons and daughters of God returned to the earth by adoption into the Family of God. (See, e.g., Rom. 8: 16-17 Eph. 1: 5 2: 19, 1 John 3: 2 among many others.)

Jacob 5: 19-26
March 30, 2012 Denver

After establishing good fruit in the original root, the Lord of the vineyard visited the scattered branches in "the nethermost part of the vineyard." (5: 19-20; see also 3 Ne. 16: 1-3.) The Lord of the vineyard was satisfied that in each of the places where the natural branches were scattered, good fruit had returned. (5: 20, see also 2 Ne. 29: 12.)

Whether it was the "poorest spot in all the land of the vineyard" or another place "poorer than the first" it did not matter. The result was good fruit. (5: 20-21; 23.) The servant was dismayed at the locations to which the Lord had taken the scattered branches. In perplexity he inquired: "How comest thou hither to plant this tree, or this branch of the tree? For behold, it was the poorest spot...?" (5: 21.) The servant was surprised to know the Lord of the vineyard would go to visit these poor places. It seemed beneath the Lord to have ministered in such humble, far flung lands, among such woebegotten peoples. But the Lord has "descended below them all" (D&C 122: 7-8) and found no indignity in visiting with such humble people in diminished circumstances. It may well have been because of the difficulty of the circumstances that fruit was produced. (Alma 32: 12-13.)

As if to confirm that difficulties are a blessing to His vine, when they get to the "good spot of ground," the transplanted branches have produced conflicting fruit. In this most chosen land of all, the brothers were divided, and fought in continual ethnic-cultural-religious warfare for generations between themselves. Part of these branches produced good fruit, but part was corrupt and wild. (5: 25.) Although this was the best spot in the vineyard, and although the Lord of the vineyard had "nourished this tree like unto the others" it was still half corrupt. (Id.) This tree required pruning. The Lord decided to "Pluck off the branches that have not brought forth good fruit, and cast them into the fire." (5: 26.) Accordingly, nature itself removed the branches: "And thus the face of the whole earth became deformed, because of the tempests, and the thunderings, and the lightnings, and the quaking of the earth. And behold, the rocks were rent in twain; they were broken up upon the face of the whole earth, insomuch that they were found in broken fragments, and in seams and in cracks, upon all the face of the land. And it came to pass that when the thunderings, and the lightnings, and the storm, and the tempest, and the quakings of the earth did cease—for behold, they did last for about the space of three hours; and it was said by some that the time was greater; nevertheless, all these great and terrible things were done

22. And the Lord of the vineyard said unto him: Counsel me not; I knew that it was a poor spot of ground; wherefore, I said unto thee, I have nourished it this long time, and thou beholdest that it hath brought forth much fruit.

23. And it came to pass that the Lord of the vineyard said unto his servant: Look hither; behold I have planted another branch of the tree also; and thou knowest that this spot of ground was poorer than the first. But, behold the tree. I have nourished it this long time, and it hath brought forth much fruit; therefore, gather it, and lay it up against the season, that I may preserve it unto mine own self.

24. And it came to pass that the Lord of the vineyard said again unto his servant: Look hither, and behold another branch also, which I have planted; behold that I have nourished it also, and it hath brought forth fruit.

25. And he said unto the servant: Look hither and behold the last. Behold, this have I planted in a good spot of ground; and I have nourished it this long time, and only a part of the tree hath brought forth tame fruit, and the other part of the tree hath brought forth wild fruit; behold, I have nourished this tree like unto the others.

26. And it came to pass that the Lord of the vineyard said unto the servant: Pluck off the branches that have not brought forth good fruit, and cast them into the fire.

in about the space of three hours—and then behold, there was darkness upon the face of the land.” (3 Ne. 8: 17-19.)

The pruning then, like the Lord of the vineyard’s pruning at any time, was targeted and specific. It is designed to remove only the branches worthy of destruction. The righteous do not need to fear. Those who reject the prophets sent to them, reject the prophets’ message, and give no heed to the prophets, need to fear. (3 Ne. 10: 12-14.) The message of Jacob comes full circle. He returns to his earlier theme, when he promised the righteous they would be spared. (See 2 Ne. 6: 18, and the prior post Nephi’s Brother Jacob, Part 7.) He is consistent.

27. But behold, the servant said unto him: Let us prune it, and dig about it, and nourish it a little longer, that perhaps it may bring forth good fruit unto thee, that thou canst lay it up against the season.

28. And it came to pas that the Lord of the vineyard and the servant of the Lord of the vineyard did nourish all the fruit of the vineyard.

29. And it came to pass that a long time had passed away, and the Lord of the vineyard said unto his servant: Come, let us go down into the vineyard, that we may labor again in the vineyard. For behold, the time draweth near, and the end soon cometh; wherefore, I must lay up fruit against the season, unto mine own self.

30. And it came to pass that the Lord of the vineyard and the servant went down into the vineyard; and they came to the tree whose natural branches had been grafted in; and behold all sorts of fruit did cumber the tree.

31. And it came to pass that the Lord of the vineyard did taste of the fruit, every sort according to its number. And the Lord of the vineyard said: Behold, this long time have we nourished this tree, and I have laid up unto myself against the season much fruit.

32. But behold, this time it hath brought forth much fruit, and there is none of it which is good. And behold, there are all kinds of bad fruit; and it profiteth me nothing, notwithstanding all our labor; and now it grieveth me that I should lose this tree.

33. And the Lord of the vineyard said

Jacob 5: 27-33
April 2, 2012 Denver

The servant agreed with the pruning done by the Lord, but wanted to take the remaining branches after the pruning and to “nourish it a little longer, that perhaps it may bring forth good fruit.” (5: 27.) The Lord then visited with the remaining tree branches, established His covenant with them, and made it possible for them to reconnect with covenant Israel and the Family of God. (3 Ne. 11: 8-17.)

This ministry succeeded in establishing fruit-bearing in that and several succeeding generations. I gave a talk on the Nephite years of fruit-bearing which someone recorded and still distributes. I am not involved with that, having only given consent to allow it to happen. The CD’s are sold for a modest amount, and the proceeds are used for supporting missionaries (I don’t even handle any of the money). It is the “Zion” CD (I don’t recall the actual title used) and I think you can get it from Confetti Bookstore in Spanish Fork. I won’t repeat that information again, but mention it because it is relevant to the subject of the Nephite people producing fruit for the Lord of the vineyard.

In each of the places the Lord put the scattered branches, the Lord and His servants visited and labored. (5: 28.) This was a global post-resurrection ministry. He told the Nephites (3 Ne. 16: 1-3) and Jacob’s older brother, Nephi about it. (2 Ne. 29: 12-13). All of these places in the vineyard began to bear fruit.

Another “long time had passed away” in the vineyard. The end was drawing near, and so it was necessary to recheck the vineyard. The momentum of the Lord’s prior ministry needed to be checked again. When the natural tree root, with its grafted branches was checked, there was “all sorts of fruit” that “did cumber the tree.” (5: 30.) There were Catholics, Orthodox, Lutherans, Presbyterians, Methodists, Baptists, Campbellites, and an hundred other sorts of fruit on the tree root’s branches. But when the Lord “tasted the fruit” (5: 31) He found that “none of it was good.” (5: 32.) There was nothing left of the Family of Israel in the original root and its associated branches: “they were all wrong and the Personage who addressed me said that all their creeds were an abomination in his sight that those professors were all corrupt that: ‘they draw near to me with their lips, but their hearts are far from me, they teach for doctrines the commandments of men, having a form of godliness, but they deny the power thereof.’” (JS-H 1: 19.)

The Lord’s reaction is telling. He immediately wondered “What shall we do unto the tree, that I may preserve again good fruit thereof unto my own self?” (5: 33.) The Lord is neither an optimist nor a pessimist. He is a pragmatic laborer. It is not about blame, only about taking the required next step to rehabilitate the cumbered and unprofitable tree. God’s ways are indeed higher. (Isa. 55: 9.)

unto the servant: What shall we do unto the tree, that I may preserve again good fruit thereof unto mine own self?

34. And the servant said unto his master: Behold, because thou didst graft in the branches of the wild olive tree they have nourished the roots, that they are alive and they have not perished; wherefore thou beholdest that they are yet good.
35. And it came to pass that the Lord of the vineyard said unto his servant: The tree profiteth me nothing, and the roots thereof profit me nothing so long as it shall bring forth evil fruit.
36. Nevertheless, I know that the roots are good, and for mine own purpose I have preserved them; and because of their much strength they have hitherto brought forth, from the wild branches, good fruit.
37. But behold, the wild branches have grown and have overrun the roots thereof; and because that the wild branches have overcome the roots thereof it hath brought forth much evil fruit; and because that it hath brought forth so much evil fruit thou beholdest that it beginneth to perish; and it will soon become ripened, that it may be cast into the fire, except we should do something for it to preserve it.

38. And it came to pass that the Lord of the vineyard said unto his servant: let us go down into the nethermost

Jacob 5: 34-37
April 3, 2012 Denver

The servant observes that the original group of people have been preserved by the efforts of the Lord. There is still a “root” which “have not perished” (5: 34.) The bloodline remains. The covenant can be renewed with them. While it would require work, the potential for reviving the failed family remains possible. Despite the potential, the Lord of the vineyard has a more practical objective in mind. There must be actual saved souls, part of the Family of God, for the work of preserving souls to matter. “The tree profiteth me nothing, and the roots thereof profit me nothing so long as it shall bring forth evil fruit.” (5: 35.) They have been preserved to allow for the possibility for a return of covenant Israel. (5: 36.) However, it must result in an actual return, the living tree bringing forth good fruit, children of promise, raised in righteousness, schooled by parents who will raise them to keep the ways of God as His people, for the effort to have been worthwhile. (Id.) The root, and all the various manner of fruit which sprang from it, have “overrun the roots thereof” and only “evil fruit” was left. (5: 37.) Not just evil fruit, but “much evil fruit” was the result of this long apostasy from the original. (Id.) The overwhelming production of this vile product has overtaken the “root” so that the entire tree appears to “perish” and “it will soon become ripened, that it may be cast into the fire, unless” the Lord does something to alter the course it was following. (Id.) Christianity failed in its original purpose. No one was being saved when the Lord considered His vineyard. Left to its own, the result would be universal destruction at His coming. He would burn the vineyard and remove all the various Christian offshoots claiming to have originated in the New Testament stock. This allegory shows the need to separate ourselves from Historic Christianity. If we are part of it, then we are nothing worthy of being preserved. Like them, we should be gathered into bundles and cast into the fire. When the Lord declared that “they were all wrong” and “that all their creeds were an abomination in his sight” and “that those professors were all corrupt” (JS-H 1: 19) He was confirming the allegory of Zenos and the prophecy of Jacob. This was the condition of the vineyard. We should view the ambition of being considered part of that “abomination” and “wrong” “corruption” as an unworthy ambition. We are NOT (or at least should not) be part of the Historic Christian tradition. It is riddled with “much evil fruit” and the people who profess their creeds are “all corrupt.” Not in the sense that their hearts are vile, but in the sense that they do not comprehend what it means to be part of the Family of God, much less even occupy that association with Him. They are orphans, unconnected with the “living vine.” (John 15: 4-6.) Unless they occupy a family relationship with God, they are not His and will be gathered and burned at His coming.

Jacob 5: 38-41
April 4, 2012 Denver

The Lord’s inspection of the vineyard was global. Even the “nethermost parts of the vineyard” were examined for fruit. (5: 38.) Despite the opportunities given to the

parts of the vineyard, and behold if the natural branches have also brought forth evil fruit.

39. And it came to pass that they went down into the nethermost parts of the vineyard. And it came to pass that they beheld that the fruit of the natural branches had become corrupt also; yea, the first and the second and also the last; and they had all become corrupt.
40. And the wild fruit of the last had overcome that part of the tree which brought forth good fruit, even that the branch had withered away and died.
41. And it came to pass that the Lord of the vineyard wept, and said unto the servant: What could I have done more for my vineyard?

42. Behold, I knew that all the fruit of the vineyard, save it were these, had become corrupted. And now these which have once brought forth good fruit have also become corrupted; and now all the trees of

vineyard, "the fruit of the natural branches" which belonged to the original root and should have been able to bear fruit "had become corrupt also." (5: 39.) No matter where you looked, "the first and the second and also the last ...they had all become corrupt." (Id.) The apostasy was now universal. It was not possible for the Lord to find fruit worth preserving anywhere in His vineyard. The ordinances were changed. The covenant was broken. (Isa. 24: 5.)

Apostasy is always marked by a change of ordinances and breaking of the covenant. Then everything can continue to mimic the truth, but there can be no fruit. The apostates can keep the vocabulary, claim to have the truth and worship the God of Israel, use the same scriptures as were written by those who were in and kept the covenant, and assume they are either in or headed toward Zion and that "all is well" even as they are covered in chains and bound for hell. (2 Ne. 28: 23-25.) Then the apostasy can rule from the rivers to the ends of the earth, but no-one is capable of telling them to be afraid. While in Satan's power, they think themselves blessed. The "fruit" to be "laid up against the season" is highly specific. It is God's own family. Those who are bound to Him directly, in an unbroken covenant of adoption, where He recognizes them as His "sons and daughters" and has told them so in an unbreakable bond. (Mosiah 27: 25.) Those who receive Him receive this oath from Him. And through it, He covenants with them, in a bond which He cannot break, that they are His sons and His daughters and heirs to all the Father has. (D&C 84: 35-40.) It will not be an imitation, which does not create "fruit" but it will be Him and His covenant. For "all they who receive this priesthood receive me, saith the Lord." (D&C 88: 35.) He will come to and "comfort" those with this covenant. (John 14: 18.) This is not by proxy, or through an appearance "in the heart" through some feeling, but is an actual appearance leading to an actual bond that cannot be broken, and therefore comforts the sojourner in this lone and dreary world. (John 14: 23 D&C 130: 3.) Because there were no longer any who remained in the vineyard with this covenant, or who were adopted into the Family of God, or who were suitable to be preserved through the burning of the vineyard, the entire vineyard, from the first to the last, "had all become corrupt." (5: 39.) Even in the best spot in the vineyard, "the wild fruit of the last had overcome that part of the tree which brought forth good fruit, even that the branch had withered away and died." (5: 40.) The Nephite fall was complete. Nothing remained. All was wild and unsuitable, entirely corrupt. At this terrible state of man "the Lord of the vineyard wept." (5: 41.) The Lord's work and glory is to produce fruit from His vineyard. (Moses 1: 39.) The Lord of the vineyard is not able to withhold His tears at our dreadful plight. He is moved with compassion for us. (Heb. 4: 15, see also Matt. 14: 14.) As the Lord looked at the complete failure of the entire vineyard, He reflected with sorrow: "What could I have done more for my vineyard?" (5: 41.) The Lord does not fault us. He examines Himself. He begins His inventory of what went wrong with His own actions, not ours. We who rebel against Him are not faulted by Him. But He wonders how He might have been the better Lord. It ought to cause us to weep to realize who He really is, and what He really thinks.

Jacob 5: 42-47
April 5, 2012 Denver

There was no fruit being produced anywhere in the vineyard. The Lord recognized that. The separated branches that He had visited were able to produce covenant sons and daughters of God, only to fail to keep the covenant alive. "Now all the trees of the vineyard are good for nothing save it be to be hewn down and cast into the fire." (5: 42.) That does not mean they aren't going to be preserved. They will, but they will

my vineyard are good for nothing save it be to be hewn down and cast into the fire.

43. And behold this last, whose branch hath withered away, I did plant in a good spot of ground; yea, even that which was choice unto me above all other parts of the land of my vineyard.
44. And thou beheldest that I also cut down that which cumbered this spot of ground, that I might plant this tree in the stead thereof.
45. And thou beheldest that a part thereof brought forth good fruit, and a part thereof brought forth wild fruit; and because I plucked not the branches thereof and cast them into the fire, behold, they have overcome the good branch that it hath withered away.
46. And now, behold, notwithstanding all the care which we have taken of my vineyard, the trees thereof have become corrupted, that they bring forth no good fruit; and these I had hoped to preserve, to have laid up fruit thereof against the season, unto mine own self. But, behold, they have become like unto the wild olive tree, and they are of no worth but to be hewn down and cast into the fire; and it grieveth me that I should lose them.
47. But what could I have done more in my vineyard? Have I slackened mine hand, that I have not nourished it? Nay, I have nourished it, and I have digged about it, and I have pruned it, and I have dunged it; and I have stretched for my hand almost all the day long, and the end draweth nigh. And it grieveth me that I should hew down all the trees of

suffer the wrath of God. Then they will come forth at the end of the season, and be placed in a position of Telesstial Glory to dwell in the same condition as this fallen world. (D&C 76: 81-85.) From the Lord's perspective, that is undesirable. It is failure. It is tragic. This is the native condition this vineyard repeatedly lapses into, even with the Lord and His servant's continuing care. What more could He do, indeed! How often would He have gathered us, but we refuse. (3 Ne. 10: 5.)

Even when the Lord bestows peculiar advantages on the branches of His vineyard, the results are not dissimilar to what goes on elsewhere. Highly favored and greatly blessed people seem as indifferent to their salvation as those who inherit challenges and difficulties. (5: 43.) The Lord "cut down that which cumbered this spot of ground, that I might plant this tree in the stead thereof." (5: 44 see also, Ether 13: 1.) He provided the best spot in the vineyard by destroying the people inhabiting it. Then, as we shall see, He destroys the branches brought there once they also fail to produce suitable fruit.

The good spot was cleansed of the bad branches, yet the bad still overcame the good. (5: 45.) The Nephite civilization was, in the end, entirely overcome and destroyed because it failed to produce any more sons and daughters of God.

As the Lord surveyed the entire vineyard, He saw nothing but universal failure. There was no fruit able to be preserved against the coming season of judgment. The whole earth was worthy of destruction, because there were none whose hearts were sealed to the fathers in heaven, members of the Family of God, who could endure His presence at His return. In other words, there was no righteous branch living on the earth. All manner of fruit claimed to be good. All kinds of pretenders were claiming they were of God. They clamored "lo here!" and "lo, there!" and claimed they could deliver souls from hell. Yet no one was able to bring the living into contact with God, which was required in order for them to receive the "testimony of Jesus" promising them eternal life. (D&C 76: 51-55.) The Lord needed to begin over again. The vineyard was void of fruit-bearing trees. Despite this, the Lord reflected "it grieveth me that I should lose them." (5: 46.) The Lord takes the salvation of mankind seriously. It is His work. And when they fail, He grieves.

The Lord lists all He does to try to provoke His "tree" to bear fruit. He does not "slacken his hand" nor does he fail to "nourish" it. (5: 47.) He "digged," and He "pruned," and He "dunged" the tree. These efforts include sending the Light of Christ, the Holy Ghost, scriptures, prophets, angels, visions, dreams and signs in the heavens above and the earth beneath. He has done this continually for His vineyard. But these many gifts from God, and the great work He has done have failed to produce fruit. At last He poses the question to His servant: "Who is it that has corrupted my vineyard?" (Id.) A worthy question, indeed. The answer is surprising, because it does not require a devil to be involved.

my vineyard, and cast them into the fire that they should be burned. Who is it that has corrupted my vineyard?

48. And it came to pass that the servant said unto his master: Is it not the loftiness of thy vineyard—have not the branches thereof overcome the roots which are good? And because the branches have overcome the roots thereof, behold they grew faster than the strength of the roots, taking strength unto themselves. Behold, I say, is not this the cause that the trees of thy vineyard have become corrupted?
49. And it came to pass that the Lord of the vineyard said unto the servant: Let us go to and hew down the trees of the vineyard and cast them into the fire, that they shall not cumber the ground of my vineyard, for I have done all. What could I have done more for my vineyard?
50. But, behold, the servant said unto the Lord of the vineyard: Spare it a little longer.
51. And the Lord said: Yea, I will spare it a little longer, for it grieveth me that I should lose the trees of my vineyard.

Jacob 5: 48-51
April 6, 2012 Denver

The vineyard fails continually because of “the loftiness of the vineyard.” (5: 48.) That is, the pride and arrogance of Israel itself is the cause of continual failure. They run faster than they are able, reaching what they cannot attain, claiming to have what they do not have, and relying on their conceit rather than the Lord. As a result, the branches overcome the roots. They grew faster than could be accommodated, and took strength to themselves, which always defeats fruit production. (Id.)

The Lord’s exasperation with this complete failure results in the announcement that He was going to return to the vineyard, “hew down the trees” and then “cast them into the fire” so they no longer cumbered the land. (5: 49.) It was time to return and destroy everything. Or, to use a phrase from Malachi, to “smite the whole earth with a curse.” (Mal. 4: 6.) We see in this that the Lord does actually consider smiting the entire earth. The allegory reveals it. It is indeed possible for the Lord to consider that as an option.

The only way to prevent it is for the “vineyard” to again bring forth fruit worth laying up against the season of the harvest. It failed. There was a universal apostasy. The Lord announced it was His intention to destroy all the people of the earth. (5: 49.) But it was the “servant” who pleaded for the Lord to “spare it a little longer.” (Id.) In Zenos’ allegory, the Lord is the one wanting to destroy the vineyard. When He was in His mortal ministry, the Lord reversed these roles. He had the angels wanting to destroy, and the Lord being patient. (See, Matt. 13: 28-30.) In both, the judgment is postponed until something worthy of preserving can be brought into the harvest. The Lord agrees to spare the vineyard despite the universal failure to bring about “fruit” because it “grieveth” Him to see such a loss, so great a waste. (5: 51.)

Now all of this is about history. It has already happened. Zenos wrote in the unified kingdom, before the division into the Northern Kingdom, or Kingdom of Israel, and the Southern Kingdom, or Kingdom of Judah. He wrote before Isaiah, and before Jeremiah. His prophecy became a benchmark from which other, later prophets would draw in fashioning their own prophecies.

Using these allegorical themes and images (tree, branches, transplanting, grafting, laboring, gathering, burning, trimming, pruning, etc.), we can see what happened historically with the scattering of Israel. Now, however, we have reached a point in the allegory where the events are either current or future. They are underway. This part of the allegory relates to us. It is meant to warn us about the time we live. We think we’ve gotten the benefit of the Lord’s hand in the effort now underway. However, there is nothing going on at this time in the vineyard that should make us think we can relax. There is more pruning, gathering and yet more labor, before we yield fruit.

As we continue from this point forward, we must pay more attention. It is a blueprint for how the Lord is dealing with us. We should take every opportunity to consider how the prophecy may be intended to warn us against our own “loftiness” and ultimate failure.

52. Wherefore, let us take of the branches of these which I have planted in the nethermost parts of my vineyard, and let us graft them into the tree from whence they came; and let us pluck from the tree those branches whose fruit is most bitter, and graft in the natural branches of the tree in the stead thereof.

Jacob 5: 52
April 9, 2012 Denver

We reach our day. In it the Lord of the vineyard has a highly specific intention. He will take the various scattered branches, the far-flung and long lost descendants of Jacob who are in “the nethermost parts of His vineyard” and will “graft them into the tree from whence they came.” (5: 52.) This is the work Joseph Smith identified as the most critical work of the restoration of the Gospel. This is the only thing that will prevent the earth from being “utterly wasted” at the Lord’s coming. (D&C 2: 3 JS-H 1: 39.)

The manner of this gathering involves connecting the “children” who are disassociated with the House of Israel - and have altogether lost their status in that family back through an adoption by God into His House. In other words, to make them members of the Family of God again. The “fathers” to whom they are to connect are not their ancestors. Their ancestors will require vicarious work to be saved. Connecting to them in their fallen, disconnected condition will not save “the children.” Joseph taught the way this connection is to be accomplished. I would refer you again to the Elijah Talk which is available for download here. I won’t repeat it again. You can read it for yourself.

This leads to several side issues, including: Who are the gentiles and how do they fit into the plan of regrafting? Who are the remnant, and how do they fit into the regrafting? Who are the Jews and how do they fit into the latter-day scheme? What about the latter-day saint practice of identifying a Tribe of Israel in the patriarchal blessings and the effect that has on regrafting?

These questions require a specific reference point from which to answer. The Book of Mormon and Doctrine and Covenants provide answers. In the vocabulary of both, the “gentiles” are the members of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, and the unconverted European residents of “this land.” You should be able to see that for yourself just by reading the material. As a quick example, Nephi explains who the “gentiles” are in 1 Ne. 13: 14. Moroni explains who they are in the Title Page of the Book of Mormon written by him. Joseph Smith identifies the church as “gentiles” by identity. (D&C 109: 60.) We, the latter-day saints to whom the Book of Mormon was given, and who are among the very few readers of the text, are the “gentiles” of prophecy. Notwithstanding that status, there are many among the “gentiles” who have blood of Jacob in them. They are potentially candidates for restoration to the House of Israel. They are the intended targets of the restoration, but their restoration will not be completed until they are adopted back to the line of “the fathers” who are able to save them from the coming harvest.

The “remnant” are those who are descended from Lehi. They are still identifiable (to the Lord) as Nephites, Jacobites, Josephites, Lamanites, Lemuelites, and so forth. (D&C 3: 16-20.) They are known to Him, and are still here, but are without knowledge to save themselves. For that, they also must come to the knowledge of the truth and be restored. (D&C 3: 20 3 Ne. 5: 23, among many other places.)

The Jews are those from Jacob who have retained their original identification with Jacob, but who are also lost as members of the House of Israel, or members of the Family of God. Remember, the vineyard is utterly corrupt no matter which group the Lord considers. (Jacob 5: 39.) The status alone will not restore good fruit to the vine. There must be a direct connection, through “the fathers” by adoption into the Family of God, restoring them to “the living vine.” (John 15: 4-5.)

The identification of a Tribe of Israel in the latter-day saint patriarchal blessings does not restore the covenant, nor does it connect you to the “living vine,” nor does it alter the status of being “gentile” by identification. There is another group who are not identified as “gentile,” nor as “Jew,” nor as the “remnant” who are considered

“heathen.” These people are “remembered” by the Lord. (2 Ne. 26: 33.) Their inheritance is to come forth in the “first resurrection” where “it shall be tolerable for them.” (D&C 45: 54.) But these other people are not the target of the regrafting. The intended audience and the covenant people to be restored are the “scattered branches” who are unable to bear fruit because they have lost their identification with the original “root” or the “fathers in heaven” as Joseph explained it. (See Elijah Paper.) The Lord of the vineyard has a plan. It is His. He knows all of us and cares more about each of us than we can even understand. However, His ways are His and are reckoned from the vantage point of the one who owns the vineyard, and who has every intention of providing the highest and most exalted outcome for His vineyard. We would be much better off if we took counsel from Him instead of resisting and rejecting it. As Jacob, whose book we are now considering, put it: “Wherefore, brethren, seek not to counsel the Lord, but to take counsel from his hand. For behold, ye yourselves know that he counseleth in wisdom, and in justice, and in great mercy, over all his works.” (Jacob 4: 10.)

53. 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.

54. And, behold, the roots of the natural branches of the tree which I planted withersoever I would are yet alive; wherefore, that I may preserve them also for mine own purpose, I will take of the branches of this tree, and I will graft them in unto them. Yea, I will graft in unto them the branches of their mother tree, that I may preserve the roots also unto mine own self, that when they shall be sufficiently strong perhaps they may bring forth good fruit unto me, and I may yet have glory in the fruit of my vineyard.

55. And it came to pass that they took from the natural tree which had become wild, and grafted in unto the natural trees, which also had become wild.

56. And they also took of the natural trees which had become wild, and grafted into their mother tree.

Jacob 5: 53-56
April 10, 2012 Denver

The Lord is quite realistic about salvaging something from the vineyard. He does not state He can produce fruit again, only that “perhaps, I may preserve unto myself the roots thereof.” (5: 53.) The vineyard must respond. He respects our agency. He can encourage, invite and entice us, but we are always free to choose. (Moroni 7: 13.) It is that freedom to choose that results in the vineyard being condemned. They could have responded to the Lord’s invitation, but decided not to. (D&C 101: 78.) So this final dispensation is not a guaranteed success. Notwithstanding the optimism of many of our revelations, the Lord of the vineyard knows success (fruit reappearing) will only “perhaps” occur.

The bloodlines are still here. Though they are separated, mixed and disbursed throughout the nethermost parts of the vineyard, they are “yet still alive.” (5: 54.) The Lord has determined, and is now taking the steps, to graft back together the branches to the root in hopes of producing “fruit” again. (Id.) Notice it is not the restoration of the link, the regrafting of the branches, or the successful return of the Lord’s husbandry to the vineyard that matters. Despite all the coaxing and work, and even the regrafting of branch to root, the purpose is not fulfilled until there is “fruit” produced. The organizational structure of the reassembled tree is nothing. It is the “fruit” and the “fruit” alone which is the object of the effort. A Divine reconnection of branch and root is not and never has been the object of the Lord of the vineyard. Bragging about how you are part of a “restored branch” distracts you from the fact you are still unworthy to be laid up against the season. Lacking fruit, you are only worthy to be gathered in bundles and burned.

This restoration of branch to root does not bear and was never expected to bear any fruit at first. It was the preliminary step, intended to lead to a time when the restored branch takes its opportunity seriously and repents, finally returning to Him. “That when they shall be sufficiently strong perhaps they may bring forth good fruit unto me.” (5: 54.) It was always expected to take time. Generations, in fact, before there would be “fruit” in the vineyard.” No matter how millennial the first generation of the saints expected their faith to prove, no matter what prophecies and patriarchal blessings the first generation of latter-day saints shared with one another, and no matter what promises Joseph Smith obtained - everything was contingent on producing “fruit” which the Lord of the vineyard could lay up against the season. I’ve written the last book about the obvious conclusions we ought to reach regarding the

beginning of the restoration. It is my effort to explain where we are and how we got here. It is also intended to help us now produce "fruit" in the vineyard. The Lord began the process. (5: 55-56.) He and His servants took the wild branches and regrafted them. The potential covenant was restored. He returned again the pattern of covenant-making, the ordinances which testify to us of Christ's Atonement, the ritual return through the veil to the Lord's presence, and the ideas of a priesthood which is inseparably connected with heaven. He gave us the warning that when we undertake to assert the right to compel others to follow the priesthood, then we forfeit it. No power and no influence can or does exist by "virtue" or by reason of the priesthood. It exists because someone has humbled themselves, repented, come into the presence of Christ, and thereby been redeemed from the fall. (See, e.g., Ether 3: 13 D&C 84: 35.)

The Lord of the vineyard and His servants did the work. The graft was begun. Now it remains to see if it will bear fruit.

The Lord knows the end from the beginning. (Abr. 2: 8.) Everything He revealed to Zenos about the past has happened. We ought to respect that enough to allow the prophecy to inform our present and future.

57. And the Lord of the vineyard said unto 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.
58. And we will nourish again the trees of the vineyard, and we will trim up the branches thereof; and we will pluck from the trees those branches which are ripened, that must perish, and cast them into the fire.
59. And this I do that, perhaps, the roots thereof may take strength because of their goodness; and because of the change of the branches, that the good may overcome the evil.

Jacob 5: 57-59
 April 11, 2012 Denver

The restoration begins with an amalgamation of old and new. The only things removed are the bare essentials that are required to begin the transplanting or grafting. "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." (5: 57.) The restoration was not a wholesale affair at the start. There was and were a lot of wild, unredeemed and unredeemable participants in the work underway. There is a great deal of "loftiness" and "bitter fruit" left to be trimmed away.

As becomes apparent from the incidents in Nauvoo, Joseph Smith's death was as much a result of internal conspiracies to get him into the hands of the Illinois civil authorities as it was the result of outside fear and hatred. He could have left on June 22nd and never returned. When he lamented "if my life is of no value to my friends, it is of no value to me" he clarified the reason for his return. The accusation that he was a false shepherd because he was "fleeing" when "the flock was in danger" was enough to bring him back, surrender to arrest and incarceration, and ultimately be killed. It wasn't the mob that made the accusations which brought it about. It was the saints, his inner circle, his trusted friends.

So when we reflect on how the restoration was interrupted in its beginning states by the death of Joseph, we cannot lay the blame entirely on the mob that ultimately killed him. It began inside the church itself. If we are partly to blame, as I believe the record shows, then killing Joseph was not just an act of violence against the church, but also an act of treachery from within the church. Such things generally provoke a reaction from heaven which requires a third and fourth generation to pass away before the Lord of the vineyard begins anew to cultivate, water, dig and dung His tree again.

****That would make it about now when the Lord's work would resume.****

The work required to begin the restoration was not to produce fruit. It was to make it possible for fruit again to return to the vineyard. To that end, the work to "trim up the branches" and then to "pluck from the trees those branches which are ripened, that must perish" will be an ongoing process once the work begins. (5: 58.) There will be trauma. There will be casting away. There will be those who are "plucked" or removed. The patience required will endure for generations, as the Lord rids the tree of the many wild, unfruitful and unworthy growth found in the undisciplined, wild tree.

The Lord's commitment and understanding allows Him to foresee the possibility it will yet result in worthy fruit. He does this "that, perhaps, the roots thereof may take

strength because of their goodness and because of the change of the branches, that the good may overcome the evil.” (5: 59.) It is still a “perhaps” proposition. The tree has its own independence. It will need to respond.

Joseph Smith was attempting to explain some of this process when he taught: “The Holy Ghost has no other effect than pure intelligence. It is more powerful in expanding the mind, enlightening the understanding, and storing the intellect with present knowledge, of a man who is of the literal seed of Abraham, than one that is a Gentile, though it may not have half as much visible effect upon the body for as the Holy Ghost falls upon one of the literal seed of Abraham, it is calm and serene and his whole soul and body are only exercised by the pure spirit of intelligence while the effect of the Holy Ghost upon a Gentile, is to purge out the old blood, and make him actually of the seed of Abraham. That man that has none of the blood of Abraham (naturally) must have a new creation by the Holy Ghost. In such a case, there may be more of a powerful effect upon the body, and visible to the eye, than upon an Israelite, while the Israelite at first might be far before the Gentile in pure intelligence.” (TPJS, p. 149-150.) There is so much Joseph spoke about we no longer understand, but in the case of restoring the potential for “fruit” to return, the blood of Jacob matters. Even there, each individual is free to respond to the Lord.

Jacob 5: 60-63
April 12, 2012 Denver

The Lord of the vineyard wants to “have joy again in the fruit of my vineyard.” (5: 60.) This is an interesting connection by the Lord of “joy” in His “fruit” or joy in His posterity for the redeemed are the children of God and He dwells in them. (1 John 4: 4.) The purpose of having children is to have “joy” with them. In this instance, the Lord of the vineyard is describing not only His “work and glory” (Moses 1: 39) but also what pleases Him most. He explains that producing such fruit worthy of preserving would be so “that I may rejoice exceedingly that I have preserved” these souls. (5: 60.) It is a compelling thought: A Lord who would “rejoice exceedingly” at our success!

The effort required to accomplish this is not inconsequential. There will be many “servants” called to labor in the vineyard. It will require some to descend without disclosing their true identities and to “labor diligently with our might in the vineyard” to bring about the potential for fruit. (5: 61.) Servants sent into the Telestial condition to labor in the vineyard with their might is a careful description, I think. Perhaps it is worth careful thought to consider how such servants might come among us to do the labor needed to rescue us from the coming harvest.

The effort is to “prepare the way” for the vineyard to be able to “bring forth again the natural fruit” of the original, natural tree. The effort is the return of covenant, adopted Israel sealed to the fathers and able to endure the return of the Lord. Such a people are not only “good” but also “the most precious above all other fruit.” (Id.) This is because such people are not merely mortal, but also immortal, even infinite because they have no end. (D&C 132: 20.) It is through such rare “most precious above all other fruit” that the universe itself expands. The infinite itself grows.

The Lord, however, acknowledges that both He and His servants must “labor with our might this last time” to salvage some few. (5:62.) What an image comes to mind when you consider the Lord of the vineyard laboring with “His might” to bring again some natural fruit in His vineyard. How great an undertaking! How foolish it is for the saints to believe ourselves chosen. How foolish to think that our careless church activities will save us. How arrogant a proposition it is for the saints to point with pride at our institutions and think it reflects credit upon us. It is, in a word, fruitless.

Because the living must be redeemed for the dead to be saved, the labor begins with the last and goes to the first. The work begins with the living, who are last in the

60. And because that I have preserved the natural branches and the roots thereof, and that I have grafted in the natural branches again into their mother tree, and have preserved the roots of their mother tree, that, perhaps, the trees of my vineyard may bring forth again good fruit; and that I may have joy again in the fruit of my vineyard, and, perhaps, that I may rejoice exceedingly that I have preserved the roots and the branches of the first fruit—

61. Wherefore, go to, and call servants, that we may labor diligently with our might in the vineyard, that we may prepare the way, that I may bring forth again the natural fruit, which natural fruit is good and the most precious above all other fruit.

62. Wherefore, let us go to and labor with our might this last time, for behold the end draweth nigh, and this is for the last time that I shall prune my vineyard.

63. Graft in the branches; begin at the last that they may be first, and the

first 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.

64. Wherefore, dig about them, and prune them, and dung them once more, for the last time, for the end draweth nigh. And if it be so that these last grafts shall grow, and bring forth the natural fruit, then shall ye prepare the way for them, that they may grow.
65. And as they begin to grow ye shall clear away the branches which bring forth bitter fruit, according to the strength of the good and the size thereof; and ye shall not clear away the bad thereof all at once, lest the roots thereof should be too strong for the graft, and the graft thereof shall perish, and I lose the trees of my vineyard.

vineyard. (5: 63.) They must be grafted back to the fathers who are in heaven. (See, e.g., D&C 132: 29, 37.) God's children living today must be sealed to those who now sit upon thrones in the heavens. Then the deceased ancestors may be sealed to the living so the whole earth is not smitten with a curse at the return of the Lord. Joseph's instruction about adoption to the "fathers in heaven" was short lived. As I pointed out in *Passing the Heavenly Gift*, many of the surviving church leaders who were taught this by Joseph didn't believe it when he said it. Brigham Young said he never understood it. The allegory of Zenos makes it apparent that there must be a connection, and that connection must produce natural fruit. The thing that will be saved will be the "fruit" and not the roots, trees and branches. There must be children born into the covenant, raised in righteousness who will live an order that can bring to pass the Savior's great petition in prayer. The Lord's prayer instructed us how to pray and what to pray for: "Our Father who art in heaven, Hallowed be thy name. Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done in earth, as it is in heaven." (Matt. 6: 9-10.) Zion will return.

How can fruit be harvested and laid up against the day if we cannot endure His presence at His return?

Jacob 5: 64-65
April 13, 2012 Denver

When the regrafting begins there is still more work to be done. In addition to the initiation of the regrafting, there is also the need to "dig" about the tree. (5: 64.) There will be disturbance. The tree and the grafts will also need to be "pruned" because fruit will not come unless some considerable growth is cast away. (Id.) The Lord is interested in His "fruit" and not in the tree, mind you. Worshiping the tree, celebrating the tree and idolizing the tree are distractions. The result has always been focused on the "fruit" alone. But, of course, you cannot produce fruit if you lack a tree. Elder Hallstrom's talk was correct. There is a difference between the Gospel and the church, but you do not produce, protect or preserve the Gospel without the church. It is the church that preserves and publishes the Book of Mormon (the very text we are now considering). It is the church where we assemble together to edify and instruct one another. It is in the church we offer service, receive ordinances, fellowship, offer our tithes and offerings, bear testimony and discharge our obligations to God and one another. The tree is essential. But the tree can exist for a long time without producing fruit. And the Lord of the vineyard will destroy the tree if it fails to produce fruit, because it is then "good for nothing." (Jacob 5: 42.)

The Lord also provides "dung" or nourishment for the tree. Soil gets tired and its nutrients depleted, and therefore He must introduce more vitality to the environment of the tree to stimulate growth and vigor. This is designed to provoke the right kind of effort by the tree.

The Lord and His servants watch over the "grafts" to see whether they "shall grow, and bring forth the natural fruit." (5: 64.) This is a careful, deliberate work. Though it may take some time, eventually the great initial effort to restore the tree should result in some signs of life in the grafts. "And as they begin to grow ye shall clear away the branches which bring forth bitter fruit." (5: 65.) There will be trauma to the tree and to the grafts. Much of what remains after the initial restoration will still bring about "bitter fruit."

Paul wrote a letter about the difference between fruit coming from above, and the bitterness of the flesh:

"This I say then, Walk in the Spirit, and ye shall not fulfil the lust of the flesh. For the flesh lusteth against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh: and these are contrary the one to the other: so that ye cannot do the things that ye would. But if ye be led of

the Spirit, ye are not under the law. Now the works of the flesh are manifest, which are these Adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lasciviousness, Idolatry, witchcraft, hatred, variance, emulations, wrath, strife, seditions, heresies, Envyings, murders, drunkenness, revellings, and such like: of the which I tell you before, as I have also told you in time past, that they which do such things shall not inherit the kingdom of God. But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, Meekness, temperance: against such there is no law." (Gal. 5: 16-23.)

It is a matter of survival that we avoid the bitterness of these sins, and produce the kinds of things that will make us suitable for adoption as God's sons and daughters. At a minimum, this will require us to possess love, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, meekness and, in a word, to become godlike.

The patient work of the last days will not result in the Lord "clearing away the bad thereof all at once." (5: 65.) There will be bad, bitter fruit in the restoration. Generations will need to be removed from the vineyard before it will be possible for the natural fruit to return. If it were all corrected at once "the roots thereof should be too strong for the graft, and the graft thereof shall perish." (Id.) The doctrine Joseph was attempting to restore was confusing and offensive to many in the church. It seems a difficult thing even today, with generations entrenched in the traditions in which they were raised. The doctrinal roots of Mormonism are overwhelming, and even now tend to choke the grafts who find our beginnings riddled with difficult, challenging and offensive teachings. We have not humbly, meekly, faithfully or joyfully reexamined what was originally offered us. My last book attempts to discuss that origin and how it has fared in our history. The reaction to that retelling of our history has been hatred, wrath, strife, and anger.

The allegory suggests we have a good deal of work to do if we want to produce fruit. That work will necessarily require us to not only endure the roots of our faith, but to accept the nourishment which flows from it.

66. For it grieveth me that I should lose the trees of my vineyard; wherefore ye shall clear away the bad according as the good shall grow that the root and the top may be equal in strength, until the good shall overcome the bad, and the bad be hewn down and cast into the fire, that they cumber not the ground of my vineyard; and thus will I sweep away the bad out of my vineyard.
67. And the branches of the natural tree will I graft in again into the natural tree;
68. And the branches of the natural tree will I graft into the natural branches of the tree; and thus will I bring them together again, that they shall bring forth the natural fruit, and they shall be one.

Jacob 5: 66-70
 April 16, 2012 Denver

In order to develop and grow the tree, the Lord requires there to be good fruit growing before cutting away the bad. (5: 66.) The pruning and trimming away the bad will accelerate as good continues to grow. The good growth cannot be threatened by the bad, because the Lord will cut off, cut down, and discard the bad as the good develops.

Ultimately, the purpose is to have the good overwhelm the bad. When that happens, the bad will be cut down, thrown in the fire, and burned. (Id.) They will not be allowed to overcome the good, or "cumber the ground" of the Lord's vineyard. (Id.) It does not matter if the bad occupy positions of authority, or have been "called of God" into the lofty positions of the tree. They will be struck down when they attempt to overcome the good growth. (D&C 85: 7.) The intention of the Lord, and His prophetic promise is that His house will be set in order. (Id.) This, however, is still future.

The natural branches are to return to the natural tree (5: 67) to produce the natural fruit again. (5: 68.) That is the original doctrine, the covenant of adoption to God's family, the return of covenant Israel. Children suitable for Zion are the Lord's agenda. It hasn't changed. He will bring it to pass, and we cannot claim any credit when it comes, for it is the Lord alone who will "bring again Zion." (See, e.g., 3 Ne. 16: 18 Mosiah 12: 22, 15: 29 D&C 84: 99 Isa. 52: 8.) This is His work, after all. We get to participate in it, but the work is His.

Those who falsely claim to be the Lord's will be "cast away" from the tree, because they can never bring again the natural fruit. (5: 69.) This great last work, which will unfold over generations and result in a restored tree, will be the last time He will

69. And the bad shall be cast away, yea, even out of all the land of my vineyard; for behold, only this once will I prune my vineyard.

70. And it came to pass that the Lord of the vineyard sent his servant; and the servant went and did as the Lord had commanded him, and brought other servants; and they were few.

71. And the Lord of the vineyard said unto them: Go to, and labor in the vineyard, with your might. For behold, this is the last time that I

work in His vineyard. (Id.)

The Lord sent His servant to labor. There were to be others. But the numbers of the servants who would be sent were disproportionately small. The servant went, and there were "other servants and they were few." (5: 70.)

We do not get to choose who the Lord sends. He does. When He sends a servant we have the rare and infrequent opportunity to be invited back to the roots of the restoration again. There is no point in insisting that we are doing things right, and that we have no need to repent and return. We must respond, repent, regain whatever was offered, reconnect with the fathers, or risk being utterly wasted at His coming. I think the proposition is self-evident that this will always be in or near the church. The numbers may not be large in comparison to the world, but the work of the Lord has never created a great harvest. The last days vineyard is either filled with bad branches requiring trimming and burning, or in the Lord's parable, always mingled with tares needing gathering and burning. (See Matt. 13: 30 D&C 86: 7.) The field is always to be burned. (D&C 86: 7.)

Remember, however, that any fruit produced is infinite, eternal, and will produce forever in His House. (See D&C 132: 20.) Even if there were only one couple saved, from that single source there would be worlds without end, and seed like the sand of the sea or as the stars in heaven for their number. (See Gen. 22: 17.) Therefore, from this vantage point, you cannot look upon the harvest as meager. From the vantage point of the Lord in His vineyard it is infinite and eternal. Even if the harvest produced but one, how great would be the joy in heaven over that one. (See D&C 18: 15.) And if there were one, how much greater would it be if there were as great a number as seven? (D&C 18: 16.) Remember the first Zion was made of seven patriarchs and their families. (D&C 107: 53.)

The labor to produce fruit is great. The amount of humility and meekness required to repent and return is almost beyond the tolerance of mankind. Even those who learn a little think they know much more than they do. We tend to gather together, speak reassuring words to one another, and stop up our repentance by the mutual praise we lavish on each other. We interfere with our own repentance.

I've often reflected on our presumption that we can apply the words of scripture that were originally given when Joseph Smith was the church's presiding officer to all later times and individuals. Joseph, of course, stood in the presence of God the Father and His Son Jesus Christ. Therefore, the revelations to him - about him - have their veracity derived from that standing. Can we now apply statements to him, or about him to every situation we've encountered since then? Do we have the right to do that without some further revelation giving us that right? Is God's promise about His protection of the church from error, given while Joseph was living, still applicable when we have lost the man who communed with Jehovah? Are we to expect all successors to also act as if they too hold the keys to the mysteries and sealed truths (D&C 28: 7) even when some have told us they have never received any audience with angels or the Lord? Are we allowed to presume the Lord invariably "sends another" when we vote to fill Joseph's former office? (Id.) Our traditions gives us an answer that we heard again in last General Conference through President Eyring's Priesthood Session talk. (Families Under Covenant) That talk was reassuring indeed. I hope it is altogether correct. I hope it answers this question.

Jacob 5: 71-73
April 17, 2012 Denver

Once the decision is made to recover fruit from the vineyard, the Lord and His servants set to work, although there were only "few" sent. The laborers were told to work "with your might" because the "time which will soon come" will harvest only the

shall nourish my vineyard; for the end is nigh at hand, and the season speedily cometh; and if ye labor with your might with me ye shall have joy in the fruit which I shall lay up unto myself against the time which will soon come.

72. And it came to pass that the servants did go and labor with their might; and the Lord of the vineyard labored also with them; and they did obey the commandments of the Lord of the vineyard in all things.

73. And there began to be the natural fruit again in the vineyard; and the natural branches began to grow and thrive exceedingly; and the wild branches began to be plucked off and to be cast away; and they did keep the root and the top thereof equal, according to the strength thereof.

suitable fruit. This will be “the last time” for such labor before that day of harvest. (5: 71.)

When the servants appeared within the vineyard to labor, they “did go and labor with their might” because this is serious work, not to be idled away with distractions. (5: 72.) They will relentlessly seek to reclaim souls, preach repentance and faith in Jesus Christ. They have no time to set themselves up for a light, nor to practice priestcrafts. (2 Ne. 26: 9.) Getting gain, engaging in commerce, diverting attention from the Lord, becoming the object of adoration all these things cannot distract the true servants. Their only labor, which involves all their might, is to provide sufficient for their needs and then seek only the welfare of Zion. Zion’s welfare, of course, consists primarily in qualifying people to be called to Zion. That is no small feat.

The laboring servants are not left comfortless. The Lord of the vineyard “labored also with them.” (5: 72.) They will not be confused about whether He is laboring alongside them. He will, of course, take up His abode with them. (John 14: 23.) The Lord of the vineyard cannot “labor also with them” if He does not return to assist the laborers directly. He will not be an absentee landlord. He will be with them.

This process is not immediate. It is not automatic, nor is the outcome guaranteed. It may be generations before the work results in any fruit. But, at length, “there began to be the natural fruit again in the vineyard.” (5: 73.) We will see this. There will yet be sons of God, daughters of God, and a people who are “natural” and within the adopted family of God. They are coming. But, as they return, the first appearance is so small a matter that the only thing which can be said of them is they “began” to return.

These beginnings will be marked by something “peculiar” indeed. (1 Peter 2: 9.) The idea of a “royal priesthood” is apt. It captures the idea of nobility, or royalty, or, in other words, a connection with the Family of God. And the co-extensive proposition is that it will necessarily involve “priesthood” also. This is because one cannot receive the Lord without also receiving priesthood. (See, e.g., D&C 84: 35.)

When the Lord bestows this royalty on the individual, it is through His own voice. (JST-Gen. 14: 29.) This happened in the days of Joseph Smith. (See, e.g., D&C 52, when Joseph reported the Melchizedek Priesthood first appeared in the church.) This continued to be the case through March 1835, because the revelation reported there was yet Melchizedek Priesthood in the church at that time. (D&C 107: 1.) By January 1841, the fullness of that authority was taken away. (D&C 124: 28.) The Lord offered to restore it again, as discussed in Passing the Heavenly Gift. I won’t repeat that again here.

What is clear from the allegory is that no matter what labor is required, the servants who are sent will labor with their might to bring again some start to the return of “natural fruit.” They will gather those who are born to parents who have received the covenant, been sealed by the Lord, have a lively and warranted expectations of inheriting eternal life, and are acquainted with He whom they serve. (D&C 93: 1.)

When it begins, there will be no going back. The appearance of the “natural fruit” signals the beginning of pruning away the wild branches. As the one appears, the other begins to be destroyed, removed, plucked off and cast away. (5: 73.) The Lord is interested in preserving, producing and cultivating the branches producing natural fruit. For the rest, they will be destroyed because they cumber the ground and do not (indeed cannot) produce fruit. You cannot have Zion without qualified residents, and Zion must exist on the mountains before the Lord’s return. So the focal point of the Lord’s labors will shift from the initial cultivation, and grafting to those places where the natural fruit appears.

74. And thus they labored, with all diligence, according to the commandments of the Lord of the vineyard, even until the bad had been cast away out of the vineyard, and the Lord had preserved unto himself that the trees had become again the natural fruit; and they became like unto one body; and the fruits were equal; and the Lord of the vineyard had preserved unto himself the natural fruit, which was most precious unto him from the beginning.

75. And it came to pass that when the Lord of the vineyard saw that his fruit was good, and that his vineyard was no more corrupt, he called up his servants, and said unto them: Behold, for this last time have we nourished my vineyard; and thou beholdest that I have done according to my will; and I have preserved the natural fruit, that it is good, even like as it was in the beginning. And blessed art thou; for because ye have been diligent in laboring with me in my vineyard, and have kept my commandments, and have brought unto me again the natural fruit, that my vineyard is no more corrupted, and the bad is cast away, behold ye shall have joy with me because of the fruit of my vineyard.

76. For behold, for a long time will I lay up of the fruit of my vineyard unto mine own self against the season, which speedily cometh; and for the last time have I nourished my

Jacob 5: 74-75

April 18, 2012 Denver

When the final work in the vineyard begins, and the natural fruit reappears, the process of casting the bad branches producing bitter fruit accelerates. The bad is cleared away to make room for the good. (5: 74.) The remaining gentiles will be swept away and their cities will be inhabited again. This time they will be swept away by the natural fruit, to whom the land belongs. (3 Ne. 22: 3.)

Though there are two gatherings in the last days, when the natural fruit returns it will be to both. Servants will minister to both. They will all be gathered in, and Israel will gather together in Zion and the long dispersed of Judah will also be given their land in peace. (Isa. 11: 12.) The Lord will hasten His work when the natural fruit reappears. (D&C 88: 73.) Some will say it is like before and everything continues from day to day uninterrupted and the Lord delays His coming. (Luke 12: 45.) Some will think the Lord will allow everything to be destroyed and still not return. (D&C 45: 26.)

Then will be the time when "they became like unto one body" though gathered in both Zion and Jerusalem. (5: 74.) Zion will have her kings (D&C 133: 32) and Judah will have her prophets. (See Rev. 11: 3 D&C 77: 15 Isa. 51: 19-20 Zech. 4: 11-14.)

It begins with the regrafting. Joseph Smith began that process. The purpose was to establish a relationship where it is possible for natural fruit to return. It would take generations before the natural fruit would reappear.

In the work to reestablish the natural fruit, the Lord of the vineyard would send both servants, like Joseph Smith, and He would work alongside them. In other words He would appear to them. (See JS-H 1: 17-19 D&C 84: 35 D&C 93: 1.) The Lord will be present for the work of producing natural fruit in the last days. He will appear to them, and both He and the Father will take up their abode with them. (John 14: 23.) These will be those who are the natural branches, capable of producing the fruit for the final harvest. (John 15: 4-5.) This is the culmination of the final chapter in the vineyard. His work and glory is to bring this about. He knows the end from the beginning. His work has always pointed to this great, final labor.

Those who will be gathered will not need to tell one another to "know ye the Lord" for those who remain will all know Him, from the least to the greatest. (Jer. 31: 34 D&C 84: 98.) These are those who have been redeemed from the fall, for they have been back into His presence. (Ether 3: 13.) These are those who receive a testimony from Christ that they are saved. (D&C 76: 51.) Those who claim to follow prophets, but have not received the testimony of Christ that they have part with Him will be burned at His coming and appointed their place in sorrow and suffering. (D&C 76: 98-106.) There will be no lukewarm saints allowed to stand in that day. If they have received and followed the truth, they will be saved. If they have not, they will be gathered in bundles and burned. The result will be an era of peace in which the entire vineyard, as if one body, produces again natural fruit. (5: 75.) There will be joy at that day. The Lord and His servants will rejoice, and the Lord will give praise to those servants who labored with Him. (Id.) When He could take credit, instead He shares it. And He promises to those servants: "behold ye shall have joy with me because of the fruit of my vineyard."

Jacob 5: 76-77

April 19, 2012 Denver

Zenos wrote at the time of a united Kingdom, before the days of Isaiah, and in another dispensation than John. However, when it comes to the prophetic destiny of the vineyard, Zenos and John tell the same story, using different images to tell the tale. The allegory has a "long time" in which the vineyard produces natural fruit. (5: 76.)

vineyard, and pruned it, and dug about it, and dunged it; wherefore I will lay up unto mine own self of the fruit, for a long time, according to that which I have spoken.

77. And when the time cometh that evil fruit shall again come into my vineyard, then will I cause the good and the bad to be gathered; and the good will I preserve unto myself, and the bad will I cast away into its own place. And then cometh the season and the end; and my vineyard will I cause to be burned with fire.

This peaceful and productive era is Paradisiacal. (See Articles of Faith, 10.) The vineyard will allow the Lord to “lay up the fruit of His vineyard” because there will be an end to this era of the vineyard. (5: 76.) There will come a time for final accounting. The vineyard will need to be re-created, and a new one brought in its place. But before that day the vineyard will produce “for a long time, according to that which I have spoken.” (Id.) During that time Satan is bound and children grow up without sin.

The story of the end of this creation culminates in the last, great day, when Satan is loosed again for a season: “But when the time cometh that evil fruit shall again come into my vineyard” will happen after the period of Paradise. In the allegory, it is when “evil fruit” returns. In John’s vision it is when “the thousand years are expired.” (Rev. 20: 7.) John describes how “Satan shall be loosed out of his prison” at that time. (Id.) When he is, he “shall go out to deceive the nations which are in the four quarters of the earth.” (Rev. 20: 8.)

Despite all the Lord of the vineyard has done for His trees, the accuser will still find fault. The things of God will again be challenged, criticized, debated, accused and maligned. The Lord’s motives will be questioned, and His means will be derided. Why so little natural fruit? What right is there to discard the bitter fruit? Is not the worth of each soul great enough the Lord of the vineyard should have done more? Why should so much of the fruit have been gathered and burned? How can the Lord have the best interests of the vineyard in mind when there were so many who have not been gathered as natural fruit? What of those who came into the vineyard and were produced through wild branches, how can it be fair to leave them for the burning when they were given an unfair challenge? Their plight is not of their own making, and the Lord of the vineyard is unfair!

You see it is one thing to claim you believe in and follow the Lord when in your mistaken arrogance you assume His plan requires nothing from you and will exalt you to the sides of the north. (See Isa. 14: 12-13.) But it is another thing when you realize “the summer shall be past, and the harvest ended, and your souls not saved.” (D&C 45: 2.) Then will they lament: “O that I had repented, and had not killed the prophets, and stoned them, and cast them out. Yea, in that day ye shall say: O that we had remembered the Lord our God.” (Hel. 13: 33 see also 3 Ne. 8: 24.) When all men stand before God and realize He did expect obedience, sacrifice, consecration, chastity and a godly walk of all who are saved, then many who profess to follow Him when it was to their vanity and pride will find they cannot profess to follow Him when it is to their shame and condemnation. They will, with the accuser, join in denouncing the Lord. They will also compass the camp of the saints and make war against them and their Lord.

The Lord of the vineyard has done all He could, and respected the agency of men. The arguments at the end of the Millennial Day will prevail. John reports that the number of those who align with the accuser will be so much greater than the camp of the saints, that they will “compass the camp of the saints about” because their numbers so vastly exceed the mere “camp” of the righteous they will be able to entirely surround them. (Rev. 20: 9.)

These rebellious branches are “burned with fire” (5: 77) or, as John describes it, “fire came down from God out of heaven, and devoured them.” (Rev. 20: 9.)

This then leads back to the major themes of the allegory. It was included by Jacob for us so that when these things come to pass we are not left surprised or wondering why we were not warned by the Lord.