



3 Nephi 11.⁹⁻¹¹— Meditation

⁹*He stretched forth his hand and spake unto the people, saying:

¹⁰“Behold, I am Jesus Christ, whom the prophets testified shall come into the world. ¹¹And behold, I am the light and the life of the world; and I have drunk out of that bitter cup which the Father hath given me, and have glorified the Father in taking upon me the sins of the world, in the which I have suffered the will of the Father in all things from the beginning.”

With his departure from this world and his reemergence as a resurrected and glorified being, Jesus looks back at his mortal experiences and speaks of having “drunk out of that bitter cup.” This post-resurrection reminiscence reminds us of the words Jesus prayed in Gethsemane during the final hours of his mortal life: “Oh my Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me.”¹ We would invite the reader to consider why, in this most bitter of moments, Jesus abandoned all direct language and resorted to the language of symbolism and metaphor. What did he wish to communicate with his “bitter cup”?

The bitter cup is a potent and oft-used scriptural symbol for the most intense form of suffering. The “bitter cup” is characterized as having the intensity of a lake, not of water but of “fire and brimstone.” At the same time, the lake is swept by a “horrible tempest.” Drinking from this cup is like drinking “guilt,” “filthiness,” “dregs,” “fury,” “wrath,” “indignation,” “astonishment,” and “desolation.” Drinking from this cup is so overwhelming as to cause one to “tremble,” to “spue” and “fall down” as one drunk. Drinking the cup is so emotionally powerful and disruptive as to cause “madness.” Drinking from this cup causes one to feel “cast out” and to “shrink from the presence of the Lord.”

It seems likely that in this grievous hour, Jesus lacked the stamina to say all of this. It seems that what Jesus suffered in becoming mortal, living among the fallen race of humanity, suffering its hatred and contempt, and living a perfect, exalting life all the while is beyond words. And so he settled on these... “the bitter cup” to say more than he could say and humans understand. We join him, therefore, in feeling and saying, “glory be to the Father!”²

Even so, come, Lord Jesus!

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¹ Matthew 26.³⁹

² DC 19.¹⁹