This is one of the longer sets of notes, but even so I have left a great deal unexplored. There is a great deal of material in these chapters.

3 Nephi 12

**Verse 1:** Why does Jesus describe those he calls as ministers and servants? What sense does it make to tell people that they should pay attention to their servants? What is going on here?

**Verses 1–2:** Why are those who have not seen and heard more blessed than those who have?

**Verse 3:** This begins the parallel version of the Sermon on the Mount. It may help you to read the two versions of the sermon side by side. Sometimes the footnotes in Matthew will also help you understand the version of the sermon we have in 3 Nephi. What is the advantage of having two almost identical accounts in scripture?

When Jesus delivers the sermon as Matthew reports it, the setting is important to our understanding of it. Matthew 4:23 tells us, “Jesus went about all Galilee, teaching in their synagogues, and preaching the gospel of the kingdom.” Then Matthew 5–7 tells us the gospel that he preached. As Matthew tells the story, Jesus seems deliberately to give the Sermon on the Mount in a way that compares him to
Moses: he goes up on a mountain and delivers a “new” law for a multitude who are gathered at the base of the mountain waiting for his return.

What is the setting in the Book of Mormon, and how might it make the Nephites understand it differently than did those in Galilee? In Matthew, the Sermon on the Mount is partly a response to the Pharisaic focus on the law of Moses. To what Nephite problem or problems might the sermon in Zarahemla be a response?

Arthur Bassett has pointed out that we can understand verse 3 as a repetition of verse 2, as a kind of summary of the gospel. In that case, it isn’t one of the Beatitudes, and the next verses, which are the Beatitudes, have a chiastic pattern with mercy at its center:

A They that *mourn* shall be *comforted* (verse 4)

B The meek shall *inherit* the earth (verse 5)

C Those who hunger and thirst for righteousness will be *filled with the Holy Ghost* (verse 6)

D The merciful will obtain *mercy* (verse 7)

C' The pure in heart will *see God* (verse 8)

B' Peacemakers will be the *children of God* (verse 9)

A' Those who are *persecuted* for righteousness will *receive a great reward, the kingdom of heaven* (verses 10–12)

If you think that Bassett’s understanding of how these verses are related to each other is plausible, why might the beatitudes center on mercy? Why would mercy be an important...
lesson for the Nephites? Have recent events made the necessity of mercy clear? Which ones in particular, and how do they do that?

**Verse 3:** What are other words that mean the same as *blessed*?

What does it mean to be poor in spirit? It cannot mean that one has a spirit that is poor or wanting, so what does it mean? In the King James translation of the Bible (KJV), the phrase “theirs is the kingdom of heaven” translates a Greek phrase that could also be translated “the kingdom of heaven belongs to them.” If we understood the phrase that way here, would it give any additional meaning to the verse?

**Verse 4:** Compare this verse to Isaiah 61:2.

**Verse 5:** Who are the meek? In verses 39–42, the Savior will give examples of meekness. Note, too, that this verse is a quotation of Psalm 37:11. Why would Jesus quote from the Old Testament so much in this explication of his gospel?

**Verse 6:** What false understandings of righteousness have the Nephite and Lamanite prophets had to deal with? What does Jesus teach about righteousness? Where, specifically, do you find a Book of Mormon explanation of what it means to be righteous? The word translated “righteousness” in the KJV translation of Matthew could also be translated “justice.” Does that also make sense as a way of understanding righteousness here? Why or why not?

**Verse 7:** What does *mercy* mean? What does it take to be merciful? How are the requirement to be righteous (verse 6) and the requirement to be merciful related to each other?
Verse 8: The word translated “pure” in the KJV could also have been translated “cleansed.” Is that relevant? What does it mean to have a pure heart? What does it mean to see God? Where do we see God?

Verse 9: Whom do you think Jesus has in mind when he speaks of the peacemakers? (Does this have anything to do with 3 Nephi 11:28?) Do verses 21–26 give us an idea of what he means? What does it mean that the peacemakers will be called the children of God? Aren’t we already his children? Why might Jesus have associated being a peacemaker with being a child of God?

Verses 11: We can see a division in the sermon at verse 11: the Beatitudes (verses 4–10) give us the general description of the gospel, and the verses that follow expand on that general description.

Verses 13–16: Do verses 13 and 14 teach the same thing, or does each teach something different? Compare 3 Nephi 18:24 to verses 15–16; verse 16 seems to explain the other verses in this group. What does verse 16 teach us about good works?

Verses 17–20: What does it mean to say that Jesus did not come to annul the law? How does verse 19 explain the purpose of law? Does that explain why law cannot save us—why an atonement was required? Verse 20 tells us that obedience is required. How does that fit with the definition of his doctrine that the Savior gave in 3 Nephi 11:31–35, where obedience wasn’t mentioned and where the Savior said that nothing more could be added to his doctrine (3 Nephi 11:40)?

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Verses 21–26: Jesus seems to me to be giving examples of what he meant when he spoke of peacemakers in verse 9.

Verses 22: Notice that the Book of Mormon and the JST omit “without a cause” (Matthew 5:22 KJV) in verse 22—as do almost all Greek manuscripts. How does that change our understanding of the verse?

In verse 22, the word *raca* means the same thing as the Greek word translated “fool” at the end of the verse. It isn’t any stronger than the kinds of things we sometimes say to each other when we are angry, such as “You idiot!” What does Jesus mean, then, when he says (paraphrasing), “Whoever calls his brother a fool is in danger of the community’s judgment, but whoever says ‘You fool’ is in danger of hellfire”? Does it make a difference that the first case is about anger towards a brother and no one is specified in the second? What is the point of verses 21–22?

Verses 23–24: What is Jesus saying about reconciliation? Is it more or less important than worship? Notice that we begin with the prohibition of murder in verse 21, move to the prohibition of anger in verse 22, and find a prohibition of hard feelings in verse 23. We would usually begin with the least serious problem and work our way up to the most serious. Why do you think the Savior reverses the normal order?

Verses 25–26: Can you think of particular adversaries that Jesus might have in mind in verses 25–26? How do these examples apply to us?

Verses 27–28: In Galilee, these verses were directed at the Pharisees and their insistence on the formalities of the
Mosaic law. To whom do you think the verses would apply among the Nephites?

**Verses 29–30:** Jesus is obviously speaking hyperbolically. What is the point of his hyperbole? Does he here give us a definition of what it means to take up one’s cross?

**Verses 31–32:** The scripture to which Jesus refers (Deuteronomy 24:1) is unclear about the grounds for divorce. It says that a man can put away his wife if he finds something shameful in her (“some uncleanness” in the King James translation). In Galilee this was the basis for a major debate about the grounds for divorce. How might these words have been relevant to the Nephites? How are they relevant to us? It isn’t easy to understand the exception that Jesus allows here because in the KJV it isn’t clear what Matthew means by the word translated “fornication.” The Greek word that Matthew uses literally means “prostitution.” How do you understand these verses?

**Verses 33–37:** The part of the law that Jesus has in mind here seems to be that found in places such as Exodus 20:7, Leviticus 19:12, Numbers 30:3, and Deuteronomy 23:22. How might the teaching in these verses have applied to the Nephites? Can you think of specific problems to which this would have been a response? How does it apply to us?

**Verses 38–42:** It appears that in the Mosaic law “an eye for an eye” was not a directive as to how much punishment to inflict, but a limitation on the retribution one could seek: if someone puts out your eye, you have no right to demand more than the recompense for that eye.
A more accurate translation of the first part of Matthew 5:39 might be “resist not the one who troubles you [or the one who defies you].” Would that also be a reasonable way to understand the first part of verse 39 here? What do these verses teach us about how we are to respond to physical violence? How does this teaching compare to what we find in D&C 98:16–48? How does it compare to the way that the Book of Mormon prophets dealt with violence?

What do these verses teach us about how we should deal with others in legal contention? The demand of verse 41 is one dictated by Roman law: a Roman soldier could compel others to carry his baggage a mile, so the general topic seems to be something like “the demands of the government.” How would the Nephites have understood this verse?

What do these verses teach us about how we should respond to the demands of those who oppress us? Compare verse 42 to Mosiah 4:16–23. What obligation is Jesus giving us in verse 42?

**Verses 43–47:** The Old Testament teaches that we must love our neighbor. (See Leviticus 19:18.) But nowhere does it teach that we should hate our enemies. How do you think this idea of hating one’s enemies became part of the understanding of the commandment to love our neighbors? What particular enemies does verse 44 suggest Jesus had in mind? What reason does verse 45 give for loving our enemies?

What does verse 45 suggest that it means to be one of God’s children? Why might these verses have been even more important to the Nephites than they were to the Jews?
**Verse 48:** This verse marks a significant break in the sermon, the culmination to this point. As such, perhaps we should understand it as a restatement of verse 3. Can you think of ways in which those verses mean the same? In the corresponding verse in Matthew, notice the footnote that explains what the word *perfect* means: whole, complete, finished, developed. A better translation of the Matthew verse might be: “Be ye therefore whole, even as your Father in heaven is whole.” Does that tell us anything about how to understand this verse?

I believe that Jesus may be quoting or paraphrasing Leviticus 19:2 here: “Ye shall be holy: for I the Lord your God am holy.” What does it mean to be holy? The Hebrew word in Leviticus means “sacred” or “set apart.” Does that help us understand what it means to be holy? To be whole?

James speaks of the double-minded person (James 1:8). What does it mean to be double minded? In contrast, what does it mean to be whole?

Can we be whole in this life? If not, then why has Jesus commanded us to be whole?

Is wholeness something that pertains only to myself—I must be undivided—or is it something that also pertains to my relation with others, including God—my relations with others must be whole? What would it mean for a relation not to be whole?

How does the Sermon on the Mount teach us to be perfect, or whole? Assuming that the chiasm we saw in verses 4–12 is accurate, does it suggest anything about how we are to be perfect? Is it possible to use the concept of mercy
to restate or rethink each of the specific discussions that we saw in verses 11–47? What does mercy have to do with wholeness or perfection?

3 Nephi 13

**Verses 1–7:** Joseph Smith said, “I have a key by which I understand the scriptures. I enquire, what was the question which drew out the answer, or caused Jesus to utter the parable? . . . To ascertain its meaning, we must dig up the root and ascertain what it was that drew the saying out of Jesus” (*History of the Church*, 5:261–62). Though that is a method of interpreting parables, presumably the same principle applies to other teachings. The corresponding verses in Matthew answered particular questions that the saints in the areas of Jerusalem and Galilee had to deal with. What Nephite questions do they answer? Did these verses mean something different for the Nephites than they did for the Jews?

We probably have no difficulty condemning the behavior described in verses 1–2, but do we have difficulty living the principle taught in verses 3–4? What obstacles do we face in that regard? The teaching in these verses seems, on the surface, to conflict with the teaching in 3 Nephi 5:14–16, but since both are the teachings of the Savior, we must assume that they do not. How would you explain these teachings so that they do not conflict?

**Verses 3–4, 5–6:** These two proscriptions are parallel. Why do you think that is so? Against what is Jesus warning in them? To whom is he referring when he speaks of “the heathen”?
Verses 8–9: Verse 8 tells us that the Father knows before we ask what we need. Verse 9 says therefore we should pray in the manner to be described. Why does the Father’s knowledge of our needs mean that we should pray in that way?

Verses 9–13: Compare this version of the Lord’s Prayer to the version in Matthew 6:9–13, noting the differences (differences that remain if you compare the Joseph Smith revision of the Bible with the Book of Mormon).

What does it mean to pray that the Father’s name will be hallowed, in other words, holy? Why is the phrase “thy kingdom come” missing from this prayer, though we see it in the Matthew version? Why is the prayer for daily bread missing in the Book of Mormon version of the prayer?

How are sins like debts?

What does this verse say about the connection between our relation to others and our salvation?

Why does the Lord speak of the Father leading us into temptation in both versions of the prayer?

Paraphrased, verse 13 says “because the kingdom, the power, and the glory belong to thee forever.” How does the word for (“because”) connect the final part of the prayer to the rest? Does it relate only back to the immediately previous verse—forgive us as we forgive our debtors because the kingdom, power, and glory belong to thee forever—or does it relate back to something else?

Verses 14–15: Why does the Savior add this commentary on the prayer? Why is the only part of the prayer on which he comments the part about forgiveness?
**Verses 16–18:** Notice the parallel between these verses and verses 3–4 and 5–6. What do you make of that parallel? The Lord addresses signs of mourning and repentance that come from the early part of the Old Testament, and he seems to be saying, “You must go beyond these.” How would a person go beyond them? Is there anything similar in our own worship? What would it be, and how would we go beyond it?

**Verses 19–23:** Only righteousness results in anything of lasting value, and what we treasure tells us what we value. What is the Lord teaching here about righteousness? Do these verses help us understand better whom he was speaking of in 3 Nephi 12:6 when he spoke of those who hunger and thirst after righteousness?

**Verses 24–34:** Verse 24 provides a transition to a new theme: we cannot serve both God and possessions (Mammon). Verses 25–31 give various examples of what that means: we need not take thought for ourselves and our provisions because God will provide.

The Greek translated as “take no thought” in the KJV might be better translated “don’t be anxious” or “don’t worry.” Does that change your understanding of these verses and what Jesus commands?

President John Taylor once taught that these verses do not apply to people generally, but to those who serve in the church through the priesthood (Hyrum M. Smith and Janne M. Sjodahl, *Doctrine and Covenants Commentary*, rev. ed. [Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1965], 462–63). How do they apply to them? How does verse 33 explain verses 24–32?
What does “Sufficient is the day unto the evil thereof” (verse 34) mean? It isn’t a quotation from scripture but seems to be a Jewish proverb of Jesus’s time. What could it have meant to the Nephites who probably didn’t have the same proverb? What does it mean to us?

3 Nephi 14

Verses 1–5: When are we guilty of the kind of judgment of which Jesus speaks here? Notice that though the Matthew text and the 3 Nephi text are very similar here, they are both quite different from the text in the Joseph Smith Translation. (For some of the differences, see page 802 in your Bible.) How do you explain that?

Verse 6: What is Jesus teaching here? When would we be giving holy things to the dogs or casting our pearls before swine? How do we avoid doing so?

Verses 7–11: The Lord’s Prayer in Matthew keeps petition to only one line (daily bread) while the version of 3 Nephi omits it altogether. Here, however, we see that we are commanded to petition for our needs. Is there a contradiction between the Lord’s Prayer and these verses? Explain what you think. If the Father already knows our needs (3 Nephi 12:8, 32), why should we petition at all? In verse 11, Jesus calls those to whom he speaks evil. Is he being hyperbolic? Why does he use that term?

Verse 12: This is one version of the Golden Rule. Can a person who is not pure in heart use the Golden Rule as an accurate standard of his conduct? What problem might he encounter using it?
Verses 13–14: Remember that the word *strait* means “narrow”: the gate leading to destruction is wide and the road to destruction is spacious, but the gate leading to life—eternal life—is narrow. What does it mean to say that few find the strait gate?

Verses 15–20: We can recognize prophets by their fruits. Notice that verse 19 is a word-for-word repetition of John the Baptist’s teaching (Matthew 3:10). Does it make any difference that those in Galilee would probably have recognized that Jesus was speaking of John, while those in Zarahemla almost certainly would not? Why was this teaching particularly important in Jesus’s time? How is it important to us today? Where do we encounter false prophets?

Verses 21–23: To whom is Jesus referring when he speaks of those who say “Lord, Lord” to him? Of those who prophesy in his name? Of those who do miracles in his name? Why would some who did these things be excluded from his presence? How can prophesying in Jesus’s name and working miracles be iniquitous? Do any of the teachings that have come before this in the sermon answer that question?

Verses 24–27: What does it mean to hear the sayings of Christ and do them? What does it mean to hear them and not do them? As the Lord gives this parable, what do building on rock and building on sand have to do with doing and not doing? How do these verses relate to Deuteronomy 6:4–9? How do they relate to 3 Nephi 14:21–23?
3 Nephi 15

Verse 2: The Nephites respond to this sermon by wondering about the passing of the law of Moses. How was the response in Galilee different? Do those differences tell us anything about the two groups of people?

Verse 8: What specifically is Christ referring to when he says “the law which was given unto Moses”? Are the Ten Commandments part of that law? How do we know what has been fulfilled and what hasn’t? What covenant was made that has not been completely fulfilled?

The word *end* has various meanings, including “cessation of existence,” “final destination,” and “purpose.” Which meaning do you think the Lord means when he says “the law . . . hath an end in me”?

Verse 9: What does the Savior mean when he says, “I am the law, and the light”? How is he, a person, the law? How is that different from the law of Moses? What does he mean when he says, “Look unto me”? How do we look unto him? What is the significance of that metaphor?

Verse 11: What does this suggest about whom the Lord has been speaking to up to this point?

Verses 14–24: Why do you think the Father didn’t want those in Jerusalem to know about those on these continents or the “other tribes”? He says it is because of iniquity, but how does that explain it? Does this mean that even the apostles did not know? Does verse 18 also describe them?