

The Life And Teachings of Jesus & His Apostles



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COURSE MANUAL (Religion 211–212)

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INTRODUCTION

WHAT SHOULD BE THE GOAL OR PURPOSE IN TAKING THESE COURSES OF STUDY?

These courses are designed to give you the opportunity to come to know the Savior in an intimate, personal, and powerful way. Your goal upon completing these two courses should be to be able to proclaim, as did Peter, “Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God.” (Matthew 16:16.) Jesus’ disciples knew the way in which such a fervent testimony could be attained. It was John the Beloved who testified from the depth of his soul, “And we know that the Son of God is come, and hath given us an understanding, that we may know him that is true. . . .” (1 John 5:20.) You too can come to know him that is true.

How May I Most Effectively Accomplish This Goal?

It was the Savior who said, “I am the bread of life: he that cometh to me shall never hunger; and he that believeth on me shall never thirst.” (John 6:35.) Each lesson is designed to bring you closer to the Savior, that you might partake of the bread of life and be filled spiritually. Each lesson has a designated reading assignment from the New Testament. This will constitute the core of your study and should be read carefully with each lesson. If you do this, you will have read the entire New Testament by the time you finish these courses. (*Note:* For students in regular institute or Church college classes, the New Testament study is divided into two semester or three quarter classes. But for those students in individual study areas, the study of the New Testament constitutes one year’s study.)

Combined with sincere prayer, scripture study can become the source of personal revelation and an avenue to increased spiritual power in your daily life.

Why a Student Manual?

Some portions of the Gospels and the writings and letters of the early apostles are not easily understood by the student of today. What Peter said of some of Paul’s writings—that there are “some things hard to be understood” (2 Peter 3:16)—may also be applied to other writings in the New Testament. Corrupted texts, archaic language, and our lack of understanding of the doctrinal, historical, or geographical setting are a few reasons for some difficulty in reading and comprehending the New Testament. For these reasons,

this student manual was organized. It should assist you by providing the following:

1. Background material to help you understand the Greek, Roman, and Jewish world in which Jesus taught and from which the early church emerged.
2. Background information about key New Testament personalities as well as contemporary Roman and Jewish rulers.
3. Background information for each book of the New Testament.
4. Interpretive commentary on the more important passages as well as on some difficult passages.
5. A map section which helps to identify key places and which charts the journeys of Jesus and the apostle Paul.
6. A time line which shows either approximate or specific dates of the events being studied.

How the Manual Is Organized

The fifty-six lessons in the manual are divided in such a manner as to correlate with the probable chronological order of the New Testament as given in the “reading blocks.” Each of the lessons has been grouped into a section. There are twelve sections in this manual, each covering a specific period in the life of the Savior and the apostles. The section overview will provide specific information that will help you in your study of the lessons that follow. Sections 1 through 6 cover the life and teachings of Jesus (Religion 211), and sections 7 through 12 cover the ministry of the apostles (Religion 212.)

The manual is not designed to be a substitute for your reading of the New Testament; rather, it is only a guide to help you organize and get the most from your study of the scriptural passages. The following outline of the format used in each lesson indicates this purpose:

1. A theme, drawn from each particular reading block.
2. A short introductory section which sets the stage for the scriptures you will read.
3. The reading block assignment, which includes a map and a time line.

4. An interpretive commentary section. This contains commentary (primarily from Church leaders) that will help you with particularly difficult passages.
5. A “Points to Ponder” section calls your attention to some of the major doctrinal themes of that part of the New Testament and gives you the opportunity to thoughtfully consider how they can be applied in your life today.

Also, you will find items in the map section (found in the middle of the manual and also in the appendix section at the end of the manual) that will aid you in your studies.

How to Use Your Student Manual

The basic text for the course is the New Testament. This student manual is not designed to replace your reading of the scriptures, nor can it be a substitute for the inspired guidance of the Holy Ghost as you seek that guidance in humble prayer. Here are some suggestions on how the student manual may be most profitably used:

1. In each chapter you are given a reading assignment. The number of chapters you are asked to read for each class period may vary according to your instructor’s wishes and whether you are studying on the semester, quarter, or individual study systems. Whatever system you are in, you should be able to complete the reading of the New Testament in the chronological order in which the gospel message and the letters unfold, if you conscientiously fulfill your reading assignments.
2. Study the background information pertaining to key personalities and the book being considered before reading the New Testament text, and you will find you can better understand the scriptures as you read them.
3. Read the commentary on those passages that are difficult to understand.
4. Consult the map section in order to locate various places mentioned in the Gospel or the epistles which follow. Compare these biblical sites with the present-day locations.

WHICH VERSION OF THE BIBLE SHOULD I USE?

There are a large number of Bible translations now in existence. The translation recommended for Latter-day Saints has been clarified many times by the Church leaders. The following are examples of such counsel:

“ . . . none of these [other] translations surpasses the King James version of the English Bible in beauty of language and spiritual connotation, and probably in faithful adherence to the text available to translators. It is this version which is used by the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints in all of its official work both at home and abroad. The literature of the Church refers invariably to the King James’ translation. Other translations are used by the Church only to help explain obscure passages in the authorized version.” (Widtsoe, *Evidences and Reconciliations*, p. 120.)

“This King James or Authorized Version, ‘as far as it is translated correctly,’ has been the version accepted by this Church since it was organized.” (J. Reuben Clark, Jr., in *CR*, Apr. 1954, p. 38.)

“The Official Bible of our Church is the King James version.” (Editorial, *Church News*, 14 Nov. 1970, p. 16.)

This does not mean that the King James Version is a perfect translation. Elder James E. Talmage gave a reason for this when he wrote the following:

“There will be, there can be, no absolutely reliable translation . . . unless it be effected through the gift of translation, as one of the endowments of the Holy Ghost. The translator must have the spirit of the prophet if he would render in another tongue the prophet’s words; and human wisdom alone leads not to that possession.” (Talmage, *The Articles of Faith*, p. 237.)

Such an effort—to translate the Bible scriptures by the power of the Holy Ghost—was begun by the Prophet Joseph Smith under the direction of, and at the command of the Lord. (See D&C 45:60, 61; 93:53.) The following is instructive information concerning the status of the Inspired Version in the Church today:

“The Inspired Version [as it is called by its publishers] does not supplant the King James Version as the official church version of the Bible, but the explanations and changes made by the Prophet Joseph Smith provide enlightenment and useful commentary on many biblical passages.

“Part of the explanations and changes made by the Prophet Joseph Smith were finally approved before his death; and some of these have been cited in current church instructional materials or may be cited in future church instructional materials.

“Accordingly, these cited portions of the Inspired Version may be used by church writers and teachers,

along with the *Book of Mormon, Doctrine and Covenants, and Pearl of Great Price, in connection with Biblical interpretations, applying always the divine injunction that 'whoso is enlightened by the Spirit shall obtain benefit therefrom.'*" (D&C 91:5)

"When the Book of Mormon, Doctrine and Covenants, and Pearl of Great Price offer information relative to biblical interpretation, these should be given preference in writing and teaching. But when these sources of latter-day revelation do not provide significant information which is available in the Inspired Version, then this version may be used." (Editorial, *Church News*, 7 Dec. 1974, p. 16.)

References from the Inspired Version are used throughout this manual for clarification of particularly vague or faulty passages of the King James Version.

How May You Most Profitably Study This Course?

Read these passages of scripture and consider their significance to your personal study:

JOHN 7:16, 17

This passage "is a key that unlocks the door to knowledge of our eternal existence. If men will follow that instruction, they will know the truth, and they will realize that Jesus Christ is indeed the Son of God and the Redeemer of the world; that he arose from the dead and on the third day after his resurrection appeared to his disciples." (Smith, *Doctrines of Salvation*, 1:295.)

1 JOHN 2:3-5

"... these passages of scripture, I say, form a key by which the mysteries of eternal life are unlocked. . . .

"... *We may all know the truth; we are not helpless.* The Lord has made it possible for every man to know the truth by the observance of these laws, and through the guidance of the Holy Spirit. . . ." (Smith, *Doctrines of Salvation*, 1:295-96.)

2 TIMOTHY 2:15

In this passage you will find two reasons for your study: (1) to show yourself approved unto God (not merely to fulfill a credit), and (2) to become a student of the scriptures who can know and use the word of truth.

With these scriptures in mind, your study can be profitable to you.

1. Make the scriptures your main study in this course, using the manual as a supplement.
2. Combine your study with sincere and frequent prayer.
3. Strive to keep the commandments of God.

May you enjoy the personal blessings that always accompany prayerful study and obedience to the Lord's commandments.

"I AM THE WAY"

THEME

"How can we know the way?" asked Thomas, as he sat with his fellow apostles and their Lord at the table after the supper on the memorable night of the betrayal; and Christ's divine answer was: 'I am the way, the truth, and the life. . . .' (John 14:5-6.) And so he is! He is the source of our comfort, the inspiration of our life, the author of our salvation. If we want to know our relationship to God, we go to Jesus Christ. If we would know the truth of the immortality of the soul, we have it exemplified in the Savior's resurrection.

"If we desire to learn the ideal life to lead among our fellowmen, we can find a perfect example in the life of Jesus. Whatsoever our noble desires, our lofty aspirations, our ideals in any phase of life, we can look to Christ and find perfection. So, in seeking a standard for moral manhood, we need only to go to the Man of Nazareth and in him find embodied all virtues that go to make the perfect man." (David O. McKay in CR, Apr. 1968, pp. 6-7.)

(1-1) INTRODUCTION

This course will assist you personally to draw closer to the Savior of the world, the Lord Jesus Christ. It is hoped that you will gain a greater testimony and awareness of him as a living, personal Redeemer, and that you will feel more determined than ever to serve him and to partake of his great infinite atonement. Though a lofty goal, it is certainly within your reach. You can have a rich and spiritual experience if you will make this study a spiritual as well as an academic endeavor.

(1-2) How May This Goal Be Most Effectively Attained?

First, remember that the four Gospels are the basic text for the course. It will therefore be vital for you to read the scriptures in connection with the manual. Each lesson has a designated "reading block" assignment taken from Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John. These constitute the core of the course.

If you will read the entire reading block assigned for each lesson, you will have read all of the four Gospels

(Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John) by the time you finish the course. The passages designated are arranged in chronological order (insofar as it is known), and they do not always follow the sequence found in the New Testament. The unfolding drama of the mortal life of the Master will be more readily apparent to you as you read of it in its chronological sequence.

Second, along with reading the scriptures and studying in the manual, remember the importance of personal prayer and of living in such a way as to merit the inspiration of the Lord as you study.

Elder Ezra Taft Benson has said:

"To learn of Christ necessitates the study of the scriptures and the testimonies of those who know him. We come to know him through prayer and the inspiration and revelation that God has promised to those who keep his commandments." (CR, Oct. 1972, p. 53.)

(1-3) The Four Gospels

In this course you will be studying the Gospels, or, as they are titled in the Inspired Version (compare D&C 88:141), the "Testimonies" of Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John. Rather than reading each of them through one at a time, you will find that the reading block assignments largely blend the four Gospels into a chronological arrangement (this is called a "gospel harmony"), drawing on all four of the accounts.

Each of these inspired writers bears his own unique witness concerning the gospel of Jesus Christ as well as a testimony of the Master himself, but it is for the same ultimate purpose. For example, note the words of John: ". . . These are written, that ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, *and that believing ye might have life through his name.*" (John 20:31. Italics added.) While there is much in common in all four gospel accounts, each writer includes material not found in the others, and each bears his witness of the Savior in a slightly different way. Matthew, Mark, and Luke are very similar in their approach, although each seems to have written to a particular group of people, and thus are called the "Synoptic" gospels. (The word *synoptic* comes from the Greek word meaning "from

the same view.”) John’s materials and viewpoint differ more notably, but nevertheless still contain much of the same historical information as the other three.

(1-4) The Gospel of Matthew

Matthew’s gospel is characterized by a heavy emphasis on how the life of Jesus fulfilled Old Testament prophecy and includes many important discourses of the Master, such as the Sermon on the Mount (Matthew 5–7), a discourse on the parables of the kingdom (Matthew 13), and a long discourse critical of the scribes and Pharisees (Matthew 23). Matthew graphically portrays Jesus as the king and judge of Israel and one who teaches with great power and authority. His gospel would have particular power for Jewish readers.

(1-5) The Gospel of Mark

Mark’s is the shortest gospel and presents a picture of Jesus that is moving, full of action, and stresses the miraculous power of the Master. Because of this dynamic portrait, many scholars have thought Mark was writing with Roman readers in mind. Mark seems to have been closely associated with Peter after the death of the Savior, and many see influences of Peter’s narratives in Mark’s writing.

(1-6) The Gospel of Luke

Because of his highly polished Greek, and the compassionate picture of the Savior Luke portrays for us, many have thought he wrote to the Greeks of the ancient world. Luke’s gospel is characterized by an emphasis on forgiveness and love, pointing out through parables unique to his gospel (such as the Prodigal Son) that the sinner can find rest and peace in Jesus. Luke also gives important insights into the role women played during the ministry and life of Jesus. He alone tells of the visit of the angel to Zacharias and of Elisabeth, the mother of John the Baptist; he alone tells of the journey of Mary and Joseph to Bethlehem and of the actual birth of Jesus.

(1-7) The Gospel of John

While John’s gospel gives us a more intimate picture of the Master, emphasizing his relationship to the Father, his associations with the Twelve, and so on, John’s purpose seems to have been more to bear witness of Jesus as the Christ rather than to chronicle in some detail the places and events of his ministry. From his writings come a powerful witness of Jesus as the Son of God, of Jesus as the Messiah, of Jesus as the Good Shepherd, of Jesus as the Way, the Truth,

and the Life, and of Jesus as the Resurrection and the Life.

(1-8) A Historical Preface to Your Study of the New Testament

For a more extensive study of the historical background relating to the Palestine of Jesus’ time, you may find many fine commentaries and histories in your public and university libraries.

For our purpose, we shall here give a brief overview of conditions covering about four hundred years between the time of Malachi and the ministry of the Master. The land of Palestine, often called the Holy Land, was anciently given to Abraham by the Lord as an inheritance for him and his posterity through Isaac and Jacob on condition of their faithfully serving the Lord as a peculiar and covenant people.

However, strife and apostasy brought about a scattering of the house of Israel, and ten of the tribes were carried away captive into the north countries (about 722 B.C.). Also, the Jews were carried into Babylon in 587 B.C., with some returning about 530 B.C. At the time of Malachi’s writing (ca. 400 B.C.), only a remnant of the house of Israel remained in the land of Canaan—primarily the tribe of Judah, surrounded by gentile tribes and a scattering of apostate Hebrews. This point in history finds the people of promise living under the quasi-tolerant rule of the Medo-Persian empire.

Some hundred years later, a new power came on the scene: Alexander, son and successor of Philip, king of Macedonia, continued his father’s welding of the Greek city-states and with his armies successfully subjected the Persians, Syrians, Egyptians, Babylonians, and others, creating a new empire in that portion of the world where most of the action of the New Testament took place. The Jews now found themselves under a new master. The more faithful Jews were generally indignant at the alteration of their life-style by an encroaching gentile society.

With the death of Alexander, who left no heir, the empire was partitioned among his generals, with Ptolemy as ruler of Egypt and southern Syria, and Antigonus claiming the greater portion of northern Syria and west Babylonia. Seleucus I defeated Antigonus, and a struggle began for control of the strategically situated Palestine, placing the Jews in the tenuous position of being subject first to one of these powers and then to the other.

Not only did the Jews suffer under this condition of political turmoil, but there was considerable disunity

among themselves, some attempting to assuage their uncomfortable position by fully partaking of the very popular Greek culture, while others sought as zealously to retain their peculiarity and isolation at whatever cost. The result was a riven Jewry.

A century after the death of Alexander (ca. 200 B.C.), Syria was firmly in control of Palestine. Antiochus IV (Epiphanes), perhaps disgruntled by his inability to defeat Egypt, returned to Jerusalem with a determination to subject the Jews to the religious practices of his kingdom. Judaism was completely proscribed. The possession or reading of the Torah was made punishable by death; observance of the Sabbath and circumcision were forbidden; Jerusalem's walls were destroyed and thousands of her inhabitants slain, while other thousands were sold as slaves. The temple was plundered and converted into an Olympian shrine, with an image of Zeus placed upon the altar and a pig sacrificed in honor of the false god. These atrocities along with other outrages were calculated to embarrass the Jews, profane their religion, and discourage their observance of the Jewish law.

Yet the Lord had not forgotten his covenant people. In a miraculous manner the Jews and their religion survived. The abhorrent circumstances created by their oppressors were largely responsible for the rise of the Maccabees, a Jewish family providing a leadership to the people which successfully expelled the Syrians. The Jews then enjoyed a semblance of independence for about one hundred years (166 B.C.–63 B.C.). The Hellenizing pressure of the Syrians seems to have consolidated the Jews into a resistant group capable of preserving their identity among the nations into which they were scattered.

As the Maccabean leadership degenerated into a corrupt political entity, Palestine, through political intrigue, was again subjected to a gentile empire—Rome—whose tyranny soon began to settle upon the Jewish state through the appointment of ambitious and ruthless men. Herod the Great, successor to his father, Antipater, was an Idumean of gentile lineage and exerted strong leadership. He preserved his leadership often at the expense of the lives of many, including a wife and some of his children. It was he who ordered the massacre of Jewish children in Bethlehem shortly after the birth of the Savior.

Following the death of Herod the Great, his Palestinian dominion was divided into three parts. At the time of Jesus' ministry, these areas were governed by the following men:

1. Herod Philip (Ituraea and areas northeast of Galilee). He was a son of Herod the Great and was a rather tolerant ruler.
2. Pontius Pilate, the Roman procurator (Judea, Samaria, and Idumea). We read of him in connection with the trial of Jesus.
3. Herod Antipas (Galilee and Perea). He was also a son of Herod the Great, and is mentioned in the New Testament in connection with the trial of Jesus. Prior to that he had been responsible for the imprisonment and execution of John the Baptist.

The events of this period do much to explain the need that many of the Jews felt for the appearance of the predicted Messiah. They could foresee no hope for national dignity other than in a spectacular, political salvation at the hands of a mighty Savior.

As we shall see in this course, Jesus came to them offering something much more glorious than a national salvation. An unspeakable happiness and peace might have entered the heart of every Jew. Then they might have participated and rejoiced in the establishment of the kingdom of God on earth!

SECTION 1

THE GREAT JEHOVAH COMES TO EARTH

WHO IS THIS JESUS WHOM WE WORSHIP? BY PRESIDENT J. REUBEN CLARK, JR.

Who is this Savior, this man that we worship? We rather localize him and think of him as more or less belonging to us, that he is our Savior and perhaps not known very much.

I want to read you just a few words to begin with. I am going to read from the Book of Moses, from the first chapter, and I am going to begin with the 32nd verse. The speaker declared he was the “Lord God Almighty, and Endless is my name . . . And by the word of my power, have I created them. . . .”

He was showing Moses, as they stood and conversed “face to face,” the creation which the Father had made.

“And by the word of my power have I created them, which is mine Only Begotten Son, who is full of grace and truth.

“And worlds without number have I created; and I also created them for mine own purpose; and by the Son I created them, which is mine Only Begotten. . . .

“ . . . For behold, there are many worlds that have passed away by the word of my power [which is his Only Begotten Son]. And there are many that now stand, and innumerable are they unto man; but all things are numbered unto me, for they are mine and I know them. . . .

“And the Lord God spake unto Moses, saying: The heavens, they are many, and they cannot be numbered unto man; but they are numbered unto me, for they are mine.

“And as one earth shall pass away, and the heavens thereof even so shall another come; and there is no end to my works, neither to my words.” (Moses 1:2–3, 32–33, 35, 37–38.)

Not a Novice at Creation

It was not a novice, not an amateur, not a Being making a first trial, that came down in the beginning, after the Great Council, with other Gods, and searched out and found the place where there was “space” (for

so the record tells us in Abraham) and taking of the materials which they found in this “space” they made this world.

I want to suggest two or three things to you. I hope I will not confuse you too much. But we in this galaxy—and the heavens which we see are the galaxy to which we belong—we from this point where we stand or float, can see one billion light-years* all around us. A light-year is the distance which light, traveling at the rate of 186,000 miles a second, will travel in one year. The astronomers tell us that we now can peer out into space one billion light-years, we in the center.

Where we are moving, how we are moving, how rapidly we go, we do not know. As you look into the heavens you do not see the heavens as they are today. You see them as they were the number of light-years ago when the light therefrom began to come from them to us. If it is a hundred million light-years away, it was a hundred million years ago.

Our Galaxy—Shape and Size

It is said that there are one hundred million galaxies* within this radius that are the same as ours. (*Note: Since President Clark wrote this article, astronomy has greatly expanded its knowledge. The radius of the known universe is now believed to be sixteen billion light years across, and astronomers believe there are at least ten billion galaxies. See, for example, Herbert Friedman, *The Amazing Universe* [Washington, D.C.: National Geographic Society, 1975], p. 32.) They say that this galaxy in which we live, in which we float and have our existence, is one hundred thousand light-years in diameter. They say that it is shaped lenticular, as if two glass watch crystals were put together, ten thousand light-years through the thickest part, and I repeat, a hundred thousand light-years through.

Astronomers now yield what they did not formerly yield, that there may have been many, and probably were, many worlds like ours. Some say there were in this galaxy perhaps from its beginning, one million worlds like unto this one.

“Worlds without number have I created,” through “mine Only Begotten Son.” I repeat, our Lord is not a novice, he is not an amateur; he has been over this course time and time and time again.

And if you think of this galaxy of ours having within it from the beginning perhaps until now, one million worlds, and multiply that by the number of millions of galaxies, one hundred million galaxies, that surround us, you will then get some view of who this Man we worship is.

Purpose of Our Creation

He was a member of the Godhead—the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost. He participated in the Great Council of Heaven which decided that they should build a world, a world to which we might come as mortal beings and work out our salvation. I cannot but think that the same purpose had been present untold numbers of times for our Savior then to work out his world-creative work as he did for us. “Worlds without number have I created,” through “mine Only Begotten Son.”

From Throne to Manger

There was in Palestine a couple, Joseph and Mary. They lived in Nazareth. They had traveled, evidently, from Nazareth to Bethlehem in order to pay a tax that had been decreed by the Roman Emperor. That was the ostensible purpose. She, heavy with child, traveled all that distance on mule-back, guarded and protected as one about to give birth to a half-Deity. No other man in the history of this world of ours has ever had such an ancestry—God the Father on the one hand and Mary the Virgin on the other.

When they had reached Bethlehem, they could get no place, you remember, in the inn. Everything was taken. So they were forced to go into a stable, and the new-born infant, fresh from the throne of God, had to be laid in a manger, “descending below all things that he might rise above all things.” I have great sympathy for poor Joseph. He was the husband of Mary, but not the father of the Son she was to bear. Years afterwards the Jews twitted him on that fact. . . .

Conditions in Palestine

He came into a chaotic condition. Palestine was not a place of peace and love and brotherhood. It was the habitation of some of the most terrible passions that were loose in the world at that time. They were the constant companions of those who were around the Savior.

You remember his trip when he was twelve years old, when he apparently first indicated, at least, so far as Mary understood, who he was—where, after three days of search, they finally found him talking to the learned men of the nation and she reprovably said to him: “Thy father and I . . .” (she meaning Joseph, which indicates that in the household of Joseph and Mary, he was true to his relationship, presumed, to Joseph and to Mary)—she said to him, “Thy father and I have sought thee sorrowing.” And he replied in that great disclosure, “Wist ye not that I must be about my Father’s business?”

But he went back to Nazareth and dwelt with them, a carpenter, a carpenter’s son, until he took on his mission. Thereafter, when they found him doing wonderful things and displaying wonderful information and great knowledge, they said, “Is not this the carpenter’s son? . . . Is not this the carpenter?” He lived in a lowly home, the only man born to this earth half-Divine and half-mortal. He dwelt among the most lowly, taught among them, did his works among them.

He went on through life, I repeat, followed day by day by enmity that would have exterminated him, but escaping all because of the great mission which he had to perform.

Jewish Confusion

I can understand, in a way at least, the difficulty which the Jews had. They recognized in his miracles the same sort of miracle that had been done by their prophets all down through their history. He violated the laws of gravity by walking on the water; Elisha had caused an iron axe to float on the water. He raised them from the dead; so had Elisha of old. He fed them the loaves and the fishes; and so had the Prophet Elijah fed a hundred with little and supplied the widow with oil. They had seen all of these great principles manifested, they knew them, and they had hard work recognizing that there was something way and beyond that in Jesus.

I have thought of some of those miracles in the sense of their being the miracle of a Creator, demonstrating his creative power, particularly some that I call creative miracles: the turning of water into wine, how simple that must have been to a Deity who made universes; the feeding of the five thousand, how simple that was.

And I hope none of you will be disturbed by the pygmy-rationalizing which suggests that the multitude

was fed on lunches which they brought with them. This Creator of the universe, out of five loaves and two fishes, made food that fed them all. Perhaps, in order to silence the criticism which might be made, or the explanation, that he just hypnotized them and they were all just hypnotized, the record says, "and they took up of the fragments that remained twelve baskets full." Of equal importance and stature was the feeding of the four thousand at a later time.

Other miracles prove he had control of the elements: I am thinking of the night when he was sleeping in the prow of the boat and a great storm arose. The Apostles were terrified. They awakened him. He calmed the storm. And after this feeding of the five thousand, when he journeyed across the water, walking upon it, I recall how frightened were the Apostles in the boat, thinking he was a spirit.

You can almost hear him call to them: "It is I; be not afraid." Peter asked, "Bid me come unto thee on the water." Jesus answered: "Come." Peter stepped out upon the water and started to walk, but his heart and his faith failed him at the sight of the boisterous waves. He started to sink. Jesus stretched forth his hand and saved him, reproving him thus: "O thou of little faith, wherefore didst thou doubt?"

Control of the Animal Kingdom

Jesus had control of the animal kingdom. You remember the miraculous draft of fishes, when he first called Peter and James and John. They had been out fishing all night, but had caught nothing. He asked to get into their boat that he might speak to the multitude; he shoved out from the shore, so that the multitude could not press too much around him.

When he finished speaking he said, "Launch out into the deep, and let down your nets for a draught." They replied they had been fishing all night, and had caught nothing. Nevertheless, at his word they cast their net and it was filled with fish, so much so that the net brake and they had to call for James and John to come out in another boat. Peter, that great Peter, bowed before the Savior. "Depart from me," said he, "for I am a sinful man."

And later, a similar experience, on the shores of the same Galilee, after the resurrection, when Peter and the rest had gone fishing, not understanding there was work in the Lord's service for them to do. They had fished all night and caught nothing. In the early light of the morning they saw a man on the shore; there was

a little fire. A voice came from the shore: "Cast the net on the right side of the ship, and ye shall find." They did, and it was filled. John, perhaps recollecting the earlier experience, said, "It is the Lord." Peter, wrapping his cloak about him, for he was naked (he did not want to appear before the Lord nude), cast himself into the sea and waded to the shore. And there they ate, apparently the Savior eating with them. It was there that Peter got his command, "Feed my sheep."

The lowly Jesus thus had control of the animal life.

The Vegetable Kingdom

Finally, the vegetable kingdom came under his dominion, also, for he cursed the barren fig tree as he went by. Some scholars have a great deal of difficulty in understanding that miracle. It looks rather simple to me, maybe too simple. But I get from this miracle the principle that he who does not do the things which his Creator fitted him to do, stands in danger of a reprimand. You cannot be barren with the intelligence, the talents, which God has given to you.

How great to mortals are these and the other miracles of Jesus, but how incomparably simple to the Maker and Destroyer of universes. Shall we further doubt the power of Jesus to do the service he performed on earth?

He Indicates Who He Was

He began very early in his mission to indicate who he was. As he went north after the first Passover, he saw Nicodemus and to Nicodemus he indicated that he was the Christ. Nicodemus did not understand.

He journeyed north until he came to Samaria, and there he stopped at Jacob's Well and saw the woman of Samaria. He told her who he was. The Samaritans were hated by the Jews and the Jews were hated by the Samaritans, and this, I think, was the first time he indicated in his mission, that he came for all men and not for the chosen tribes alone. Thereafter from time to time he indicated that he was the Messiah.

On one occasion when he was attending the Feast of the Tabernacles in the temple at Jerusalem, he was being twitted regarding his ancestry. They were talking about their ancestry; they were the children of Abraham! There came a point in their discussion where they said, he having said he knew Abraham, "Thou art not yet fifty years old, and hast thou see

Abraham?” And his reply to them was: “Before Abraham was, I am.” So he declared his Messiahship.

And so on down through his long course of life, day after day proclaiming his truths.

His Great Mission

He had a great mission to perform. He had to break down, to fulfil, as he told us, the Law of Moses. If you want to know how far he had to go from the laws which had been given to ancient Israel, read the Sermon on the Mount, read the Sermon on the Plain, read the sermon at the second Passover, and see how he had to drive and drive and drive for the new law.

One illustration—he said:

“Ye have heard that it was said by them of old time, Thou shalt not commit adultery:

“But I say unto you, That whosoever looketh on a woman to lust after her hath committed adultery with her already in his heart.” (Matt. 5:27–28.)

That was the new law.

And so with thousands of other things. Those documents to which I have referred, and a few others, are the greatest revolutionary documents in the whole history of the world. They mark the turning away from, the fulfillment of, the Mosaic Law and the introduction and operation of the law of the Gospel he restored.

From Cross to Throne

Finally, at the last trial, having been before Annas, he was taken to Caiaphas, the [son]-in-law of Annas. Caiaphas was the high priest installed by the Roman government. Annas was the man who, under the law of Moses, should have been the chief priest. At the trial before Caiaphas and the Sanhedrin, Caiaphas said: “I adjure thee by the living God, that thou tell us whether thou be the Christ, the Son of God.” And Mark records that he said unto him, “I am.”

But they took him the next day and tried him before Pilate. Poor Pilate, torn because of his belief in the innocence of this Man, sought to release him, but without avail! They insisted on the death of the Christ. And so he was finally condemned and turned over to them.

Then he was taken out on Calvary, and he, a God, one of the Holy Trinity, he was crucified on a false charge of treason, between two common thieves. One of the Fatherhood, one of those belonging to the Godhead, come to earth, cradled in a manger, fresh from the throne of God, was crucified like a common criminal between two thieves!

Resurrected on the morning of the third day, seen by many, touched by many, he lived here for forty days as if loath to leave those among whom he had worked so long. Then, and even before then, he went back to the Holy Trinity, resumed his seat alongside the Father, sat again a member of the Godhead.

The Man We Worship

That is the Man we worship. That is the Man who gave us the law that will enable us to fulfill our destiny declared from the very beginning. That is the Man who sacrificed himself. “Behold the Lamb of God,” it was declared anciently, “slain from the foundation of the world.” He died to atone for the sins of Adam.

None of us has been born more lowly; none of us has died more ignominiously than he. But this he did for you and for me, that we, when we have finished our careers here, might be able, after going into the tomb and paying there whatever penalty there is for us to pay, we, too, may be resurrected and go back into the presence of him who sent us, good and bad alike.

That is the Man we worship—not a man of high degree, world-wise; not a man of power, and yet he said on one occasion: “Thinkest thou that I cannot now pray to my Father, and he shall presently give me more than twelve legions of angels”; never invoking his divine powers merely for his own selfish good, always for the benefit of others, for all humanity, always sacrificing, always trying to obey the will of the Father, telling us over and over again that he did nothing that he had not seen his Father do, that he taught nothing that he had not heard his Father teach.

The mystery of it all is beyond me. I can only take the record as it stands, and that record tells me that if I obey his commandments, if I live as he would have me live, then I shall fulfil and reach the destiny which he prescribed for me, a destiny of eternal progression,

a destiny of a life in his presence, so far as my work there will permit, a destiny that knows no limit to the power which I may receive if I live for it.

May the Lord grant that to each of and every one of us may come a determination to serve him and to keep his commandments. May the Lord give us a little better view of him, of who he was, of his great wisdom and experience and knowledge. Said he, "I am the way, the life, the light, and the truth." Over and over and over again he said that. They did not believe him then, the world at large does not believe him now. But it is our right, our duty, our prerogative to know these truths and make them part of our lives. (*Behold the Lamb of God*, pp. 15–25.)

THE PROMISED MESSIAH

	Matthew	Mark	Luke	John
Luke's Preface			1:1-4	
John's Testimony				1:1-18 17:1-5

THEME

Jesus was chosen from before the foundations of the world to be the Christ, the Anointed One, and his coming was heralded by all the prophets from the beginning.

INTRODUCTION

Jesus was the firstborn of the Father from the beginning. In a statement issued in 1916, the First Presidency and the Council of the Twelve said: "Among the spirit children of Elohim the firstborn was and is . . . Jesus Christ to whom all others are juniors." (Clark, Messages of the First Presidency [Joseph F. Smith, Anthon H. Lund, Charles W. Penrose], 5:33.) He was the birthright son, and he retained that birthright by his strict obedience. Through the aeons and ages of premortality, he advanced and progressed until, as Abraham described, he stood as one "like unto God." (Abr. 3:24.) "Our Savior was a God before he was born into this world," wrote President Joseph Fielding Smith, "and he brought with him that same status when he came here. He was as much a God when he was born into the world as he was before." (Doctrines of Salvation, 1:32.) In that premortal estate, Jesus was, under the Father, the Creator and Redeemer of the Father's worlds.

This lesson has been prepared to help you gain a greater vision of the all-inclusive mission of the Savior.

Before proceeding, read all the scriptural references in the reading block.

INTERPRETIVE COMMENTARY

(2-1) John 1:1. How Is Jesus the Word of God?

“. . . the Father operated in the work of creation through the Son, who thus became the executive through whom the will, commandment, or word of the Father was put into effect. It is with incisive appropriateness therefore, that the Son, Jesus Christ, is designated by the apostle John as the Word; or as declared by the Father ‘the word of my power.’ (Moses 1:32.)” (Talmage, *Jesus the Christ*, p. 33.)

(2-2) John 1:9–11. How Did the World Receive the Savior?

“After stating that the mission of the Baptist was to bear witness of the Light, John continues his testimony of Jesus: ‘That was the true Light, which lighteth every man that cometh into the world.

“‘He was in the world, and the world was made by him, and the world knew him not.

“‘He came unto his own, and his own received him not.’ (John 1:9–11.)

“Why was it at that time or why is it now that some will not receive him? No doubt they had expected something entirely different. They were looking for a leader in political and social reform and they had little interest in spiritual things. ‘The world was made by him, and the world knew him not.’ There are those today who pass him by without recognizing him.” (Howard W. Hunter in *CR*, Oct. 1968, p. 141.)

POINTS TO PONDER

WHAT DID JESUS DO IN THE PREMORTAL WORLD?

(2-3) Jesus Was the First Begotten in the Spirit and the Only Begotten in the Flesh

“The Father of Jesus [in the spirit] is our Father also. Jesus Himself taught this truth, when He instructed His disciples how to pray: ‘Our Father which art in heaven,’ etc. Jesus, however, is the firstborn among all the sons of God—the first begotten in the spirit and the only begotten in the flesh. He is our elder brother, and we, like Him, are in the image of God. All men and women are in the similitude of the universal Father and Mother, and are literally the sons and daughters of Deity.” (First Presidency [Joseph F. Smith, John R. Winder, Anthon H. Lund], *Messages of the First Presidency*, 4:203.)

(2-4) Jesus: The Creator of This Earth

“Under the direction of his Father, *Jesus Christ created this earth*. No doubt *others helped him*, but it was Jesus Christ, our Redeemer, who, under the direction of his Father, came down and organized matter and made this planet, so that it might be inhabited by the children of God.” (Smith, *Doctrines of Salvation*, 1:74.)

Note the following scriptures and relate them to the role of Christ before he came to earth:

Moses 1:31–33. How much experience as a creator has Jesus had?

3 Nephi 15:2–9. Who is it that spoke to the prophets of old? Who is the God of ancient Israel? (See also 3 Nephi 11:13, 14.)

JESUS WAS CHOSEN TO BE THE SAVIOR

(2-5) The Savior Was Appointed Before the Foundation of the Earth Was Laid

“... we believe that Jesus Christ is our elder brother—that he is actually the Son of our Father and that he is the Savior of the world, and *was appointed to this before the foundations of this earth were laid.*” (Brigham Young in *JD*, 13:235–36. Italics added.)

(2-6) We Witnessed and Approved the Selection of Christ

“At the first organization in heaven *we were all present, and saw the Savior chosen and appointed and the plan of salvation made, and we sanctioned it.*” (Smith, *Teachings*, p. 181. Italics added.)

I was there! The Prophet Joseph said I was there on that glorious day when the Father called all of his children into the great council. What a vast throng that must have been. The memory of that day is gone, obscured by the veil. But surely it must have been a time of great rejoicing, of overwhelming emotion. How did I feel, I wonder, when I watched Lucifer, son of the morning, step forward. “Here am I,” he said. “Send me, I will be thy son, and I will redeem all mankind.” Everyone? Could that be possible? “One soul shall not be lost,” he boasted; then he added the condition for such a feat. “Surely I will do it; wherefore give me thine honor.” (See Moses 4:1.)

What my reaction was to such terrible audacity I cannot help but wonder. And what thoughts filled my heart when our Eldest Brother stepped forward with marked contrast in attitude and bearing. “Father, thy will be done,” he said. And the condition for this? “The glory be thine forever.” (See Moses 4:2.) I was there and saw it all; and, according to the Prophet, I sanctioned it. I sanctioned the choosing and appointing of Jehovah as our Savior. When the rebellion erupted under Lucifer’s urging, how valiant was I in my stand? Did I sanction the Savior with heart as well as voice? The apostle John says the battle was won by the blood of the Lamb (i.e., the gospel plan which called for the sacrifice of the Son of God) and the word of their (the followers of Christ) testimony. (See Revelation 12:11.) Was my own testimony a weapon of power?

Oh, how I long to remember, to pierce the veil and see myself in those premortal days. But wait. I stand now in the present. What of this day? Do I sanction my Savior here? The war is not yet over but merely moved to mortal battlegrounds. What of the weapon of testimony here? Do I wield it with power in His cause? Of what worth is previous valiance if I falter here? He is God, the Son of God. I sanctioned his appointment then. What of now?

(2-7) The Great Pre-Earth Council

In solemn council sat the Gods; . . .

*Silence self-spelled; the hour was one
When thought doth most avail;
Of worlds unborn the destiny
Hung trembling in the scale.
Silence o'er all, and there arose,
Those kings and priests among,
A Power sublime; than whom appeared
None nobler 'mid the throng.*

*A stature mingling strength with grace,
Of meek though Godlike mien,
The love-revealing countenance
Lustrous as lightning sheen;
Whiter his hair than ocean spray,
Or frost of alpine hill.
He spake;—attention grew more grave,
The stillness e'en more still.*

*'Father!'—the voice like music fell,
Clear as the murmuring flow
Of mountain streamlet trickling down
From heights of virgin snow.
'Father,' it said, 'since one must die,
Thy children to redeem,
Whilst earth, as yet unformed and void,
With pulsing life shall teem;*

*'And thou, great Michael, foremost fall,
That mortal man may be,
And chosen Saviour ye must send,
Lo, here am I—send me!
I ask, I seek no recompense,
Save that which then were mine;
Mine by the willing sacrifice,
The endless glory, Thine!' . . .*

*Silence once more. Then sudden rose
Aloft a towering form,
Proudly erect as lowering peak
'Lumed by the gathering storm;*

*A presence bright and beautiful,
With eye of flashing fire,
A lip whose haughty curl bespoke
A sense of inward ire.*

*'Give me to go!' thus boldly cried,
With scarce concealed disdain;
'And hence shall none, from heaven to earth,
That shall not rise again.
My saving plan exception scorns;
Man's agency unknown;
As recompense, I claim the right
To sit on yonder throne!'*

*Ceased Lucifer. The breathless hush
Resumed and denser grew.
All eyes were turned; the general gaze
One common magnet drew.
A moment there was solemn pause;
Then, like the thunder-burst,
Rolled forth from lips omnipotent—
From Him both last and first:*

*'Immanuel! thou my Messenger,
Till time's probation end.
And one shall go thy face before,
While twelve thy steps attend.
And many more, on that far shore,
The pathway shall prepare,
That I, the First, the last may come,
And earth my glory share.' . . .*

*'T was done. From congregation vast
Tumultuous murmurs rose;
Waves of conflicting sound, as when
Two meeting seas oppose.
'T was finished. But the heavens wept;
And still their annals tell
How one was choice of Elohim,
O'er one who fighting fell.*

(Orson F. Whitney, "Elect of Elohim," *Elias: An Epic of the Ages*, pp. 30–34.)

Study the following scriptures in relationship to the event just described:

Abraham 3:24, 27. What seems to be the key reason why Jesus was selected of the Father?

Moses 4:1–4. What caused the war in heaven?

(2-8) What Is the Meaning of the Titles “Christ,” “Messiah,” and “Jehovah”?

Jesus was the given name of our Savior. As we spell it, the name is of Greek derivation. Its Hebrew equivalent was *Yehoshua* or *Jeshua*, or as we render it in English, *Joshua*. In its original form, the name literally meant “Help of Jehovah,” “Savior-Deliverer,” or “Jehovah Is Salvation.” The name was made known to Joseph by the angel who appeared to him. (See Matthew 1:21.)

“*Christ* is a sacred title, and not an ordinary appellation or common name; it is of Greek derivation, and in meaning is identical with its Hebrew equivalent *Messiah* or *Messias*, signifying the *Anointed One*. Other titles, each possessing a definitive meaning, such as *Emmanuel*, *Savior*, *Redeemer*, *Only Begotten Son*, *Lord*, *Son of God*, *Son of Man*, and many more, are of scriptural occurrence; the fact of main present importance to us is that these several titles are expressive of our Lord’s divine origin and Godship. As seen, the essential names or titles of Jesus the Christ were made known before His birth, and were revealed to prophets who preceded Him in the mortal state.” (Talmage, *Jesus the Christ*, pp. 35–36.)

The name Jehovah means the “Self-Existent One” or “The Eternal.” It is written in our Old Testament as Lord in capital letters. According to ancient Jewish practice, the name Jehovah or I Am (the Self-Existent One) was not to be spoken for fear of incurring divine wrath.

“Jesus, when once assailed with question and criticism from certain Jews who regarded their Abrahamic lineage as an assurance of divine preferment, met their abusive words with the declaration: ‘Verily, verily, I say unto you, Before Abraham was, I am.’ The true significance of this saying would be more plainly expressed were the sentence punctuated and pointed as follows: ‘Verily, verily, I say unto you, Before Abraham, was I Am’; which means the same as had He said—Before Abraham, was I, Jehovah. The captious Jews were so offended at hearing Him use a

name which, through an erroneous rendering of an earlier scripture, they held was not to be uttered on pain of death, that they immediately took up stones with the intent of killing Him.” (Talmage, *Jesus the Christ*, p. 37.)

Who followed ancient Israel in the wilderness? (1 Corinthians 10:4.)

What do we learn from D&C 110:1–4?

(2-9) WHAT WAS THE BASIS FOR THE MESSIANIC HOPE?

Jesus is unique on many counts. For example, explicit details of his life were given to the world in public documents centuries before his appearance. One would think that anyone familiar with the scriptures would have recognized him for what he was: the promised Messiah.

Each of the gospel writers in the New Testament, but particularly Matthew, loved to point out how literally Jesus fulfilled the Old Testament prophecies concerning himself. The same is true of Book of Mormon prophets.

(2-10) All Things Typify Christ

“And everything that has been given in the gospel and everything that has been in any way connected with it has been designed for the express purpose of bearing record of Christ and certifying as to his divine mission. . . .

“. . . In fact, as Jacob says:

“‘. . . all things which have been given of God from the beginning of the world, unto man, are the typifying of him.’ (II Nephi 11:4.)

“Every prophet that there has been in the world has borne record that he is the Son of God, because in its very nature that is the chief calling of a prophet. The testimony of Jesus is synonymous with the spirit of prophecy.” (Bruce R. McConkie in *CR*, Oct. 1948, p. 24.)

Below are two columns of scripture. The left-hand column contains Old Testament prophecies, and the right-hand column contains the New Testament fulfillment. In addition are some of the more prominent Book of Mormon prophecies concerning the Savior’s life.

**Old Testament
Messianic Prophecy**

1. Zechariah 9:9
2. Zechariah 11:12, 13
3. Micah 5:1; Isaiah 50:6
4. Isaiah 53:9, 12
5. Isaiah 26:19

**Book of Mormon
Prophecies**

1. 1 Nephi 11:31–34
2. 1 Nephi 19:7–10
3. Mosiah 3:5–10
4. Alma 7:9–12

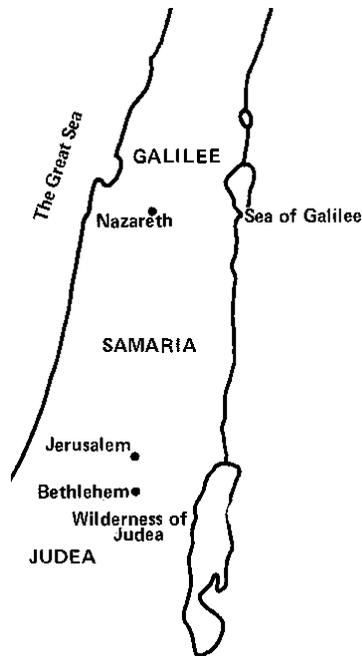
**New Testament
Fulfillment**

1. Matthew 21:1–5
2. Matthew 26:15; 27:7
3. Matthew 27:30
4. Matthew 27:38, 57–60
5. Matthew 27:52, 53

Read each column and compare the prophecies found there.

What difference does it make to know that Jehovah, God of the Old Testament and Book of Mormon peoples, is Jesus, God of the New Testament? Did it make any difference in the way he was received among the Jews? Although they had a hope in their hearts that he would come as promised, why did they err? We, likewise, have a hope in our hearts that he will come again. Does it make any difference to see him as more than just our Savior—to see him as our Creator and our God? Ponder John 17:3.

"THE SON OF THE ETERNAL FATHER"



BIRTH AND YOUTH OF THE MESSIAH	Matthew	Mark	Luke	John
Jerusalem, Judea Revelation to Zacharias Regarding the Birth of John			1:5–25	
Nazareth, Galilee Gabriel Reveals to Mary That She Is to Be the Mother of the Savior			1:26–38	
Hill Country of Judea Mary Visits Elisabeth			1:39–56	
John Is Born			1:57–80	
Nazareth, Galilee Revelation of Joseph Regarding the Birth of Jesus	1:18–25			
Bethlehem, Judea (Nisan/6 April) The Nativity of Jesus			2:1–20	
The Genealogies of Jesus	1:1–17		3:23–38	
Jerusalem, Judea Jesus Is Blessed and Circumcised			2:21–38	
Bethlehem, Judea Visit of Wise Men—Flight to Egypt	2:1–18			
Return from Egypt to Nazareth	2:19–23		2:39, 40	
Jerusalem, Judea (Nisan) Young Jesus in the Temple			2:41–50	
Nazareth, Galilee Boyhood and Maturity of the Savior			2:51, 52	

THEME

It is important that we know that Jesus Christ is literally the Son of the Eternal Father and that he had to overcome the trials and vicissitudes of mortal life.

INTRODUCTION

Jesus is Jehovah. He was the God of the Old Testament. He was born as a spirit son in premortality, the first so born. He grew in grace and power there until he stood as one “like unto God.” (Abraham 3:24.) He sustained the Father’s will and defended the Father’s plan. He was and is the Word, the Messenger of salvation, who was with God before the foundations of this world were laid (John 1:1, 14; D&C 93:7–9), and who was foreordained there to be the Lamb, the great and last sacrifice, the Redeemer and Savior of men.

Jehovah, Jesus, the Lamb appointed to atone before the foundation of the world (see Smith, Teachings, p. 181), was born into the world. He descended from his “throne divine” to walk among men. And his life among men began in a stable in an obscure Palestinian village, about two thousand years ago.

The story of Christ’s birth and youth includes references to many events. The references in the following reading block and the lesson material will enable you to inquire deeply into the divine sonship of Christ, and his early years.

Before proceeding, read all the scriptural references in the reading block.

INTERPRETIVE COMMENTARY

(3-1) Luke 2:1–20. A Decree from Caesar Augustus

Rome ruled much of the Mediterranean world at the time of Christ’s birth. Augustus was a capable and energetic ruler, and he spent his reign (31 B.C. to A.D. 14) establishing a certain tradition of lawfulness and honesty in the Roman bureaucracy, reorganizing the provincial governments and working at financial reform. His reign was marked by a degree of order.

Augustus ordered a general taxing of the Roman Empire in 1 B.C. This “taxing” was actually a registering of persons, as Elder James E. Talmage has explained:

“The taxing herein referred to may properly be understood as an enrollment, or a registration, whereby a census of Roman subjects would be

secured, upon which as a basis the taxation of the different peoples would be determined. This particular census was the second of three such general registrations recorded by historians as occurring at intervals of about twenty years. Had the census been taken by the usual Roman method, each person would have been enrolled at the town of his residence; but the Jewish custom, for which the Roman law had respect, necessitated registration at the cities or towns claimed by the respective families as their ancestral homes.” (*Jesus the Christ*, pp. 91–92.)

(3-2) Matthew 1:17, Luke 3:23–28. Jesus Descended from Kings

There are two genealogies in the four Gospels. Matthew’s account lists the legal successors to David’s throne. It is not necessarily a genealogical list in a strict father-to-son sense, for, as is true in many kingly histories, the eldest surviving heir may be a grandson, a great-grandson, or even a nephew or other relative of the reigning monarch. Luke’s record, however, is a father-to-son listing linking Joseph to King David. Of course, Jesus was not Joseph’s son, but Joseph’s genealogy is essentially Mary’s genealogy, for they were cousins; Jesus inherited from his mother, Mary, the blood of David and therefore the right to David’s throne. Jesus was born in the royal line, and as Elder James E. Talmage has explained, “Had Judah been a free and independent nation, ruled by her rightful sovereign, Joseph the carpenter would have been her crowned king; and his lawful successor to the throne would have been Jesus of Nazareth, the King of the Jews.” (*Jesus the Christ*, p. 87; see also pp. 83–86, 89–90; McConkie, *DNTC*, 1:94–95.)

(3-3) Matthew 1:18–25. Mary Was Espoused to Joseph

Mary was espoused to Joseph. They were not married but were promised to each other under the strictest terms. Mary was virtually regarded as the wife of Joseph, and unfaithfulness on her part during the espousal period was punishable by death (Deuteronomy 22:23, 24). During the espousal period, the bride-elect lived with her family or friends, and all communication between herself and her promised husband was carried on through a friend. When Joseph learned of Mary’s prospective maternity and knew he was not the father, he had two alternatives: (1) he could demand that Mary submit to a public trial and judgment, which even at that late point in Jewish history may have resulted in Mary’s death; or (2) he could privately sever the espousal contract before witnesses. Joseph obviously chose the most merciful

of the two alternatives. He *could* have reacted selfishly and with bitterness when he learned that Mary was expecting, and it is a profound witness to Joseph’s character that he chose to annul the espousal privately. Of this, Elder James E. Talmage has written:

“Joseph was a just man, a strict observer of the law, yet no harsh extremist; moreover he loved Mary and would save her all unnecessary humiliation, whatever might be his own sorrow and suffering. For Mary’s sake he dreaded the thought of publicity; and therefore determined to have the espousal annulled with such privacy as the law allowed.” (*Jesus the Christ*, p. 84.) It may be that the Lord designed such an experience to test Joseph, and if that be the case, Joseph proved faithful. *After* Joseph had made his decision, *then* the angel visited him and directed that he should proceed and take Mary as his wife. Mary’s high station was known before she was born (Mosiah 3:8; Alma 7:10; 1 Nephi 11:15, 18–21; Isaiah 7:14), and Joseph no doubt was foreordained to the honored station that he held, for the Prophet Joseph Smith taught that “*every man who has a calling to minister to the inhabitants of the world was ordained to that very purpose in the Grand Council of heaven before this world was.*” (*Teachings*, p. 365. Italics added.) Surely Joseph was a noble soul in premortality to be blessed with the signal honor of coming to earth and acting as the legal guardian of the Son of the Eternal Father in the flesh.

(3-4) Luke 2:1–2. Jesus Was Born in Bethlehem, April 6, 1 B.C.

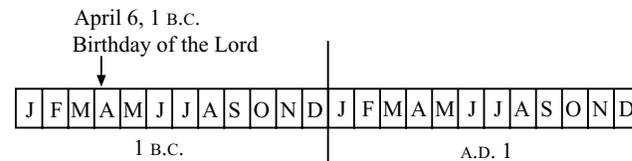
Joseph and Mary did not live in Bethlehem at the time of Christ’s birth. Rather, they lived in Nazareth (see map). But obedient to the dictum of prophecy, circumstances transpired that brought them to Bethlehem for the birth of Christ. (See Micah 5:2.)

After summarizing the opinions of various scholars in the matter of Christ’s birthday, Elder James E. Talmage compares their conclusions with modern revelation and then affirms: “We believe that Jesus Christ was born in Bethlehem of Judea, April 6, B.C. 1.” (*Jesus the Christ*, p. 104.) Of this President Harold B. Lee declared:

“This is the annual conference of the Church. April 6, 1973, is a particularly significant date because it commemorates not only the anniversary of the organization of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints in this dispensation, but also the anniversary of the birth of the Savior, our Lord and Master, Jesus Christ. [Quoted D&C 20:1]” (*CR*, Apr. 1973, p. 4.)

The following chart, which is based on our present calendar, may be helpful in understanding the birthday of the Lord.

(3-5) Matthew 2:13–23. Jesus and John Escape Herod’s Wrath



The wise men, familiar with the prophecies that foretold the birth of Christ, and recognizing the signs that had been given, came into Jerusalem saying: “Where is he that is born King of the Jews? for we have seen his star in the east, and are come to worship him.” (Matthew 2:1, 2.) Herod, thinking that the promised Messiah would be a threat to his kingdom, sent soldiers to destroy every child two years old and under in Bethlehem. But an angel had warned Joseph and he had taken Mary and the child Jesus to Egypt.

The wise men arrived in Jerusalem when Jesus was a young child. They were directed by Herod’s court to Bethlehem. “And when they were come into the *house* [Jesus was no longer in a stable], they saw the *young child* [no longer a babe] . . . and fell down, and worshipped him.” (Matthew 2:11.) Then the wise men, because an angel warned them not to return to Herod, departed into their own country by another way. When Herod saw that the wise men did not return, he sent his soldiers to kill every child “two years old and under.” (Matthew 2:7, 16.)

John the Baptist was a small child, just six months older than Jesus, who also lived with his parents in the vicinity of Bethlehem when Herod gave out the order to murder the babies. John escaped murder by the selfless courage of his father, Zacharias. The Prophet Joseph Smith taught:

“When Herod’s edict went forth to destroy the young children, John was about six months older than Jesus, and came under this hellish edict, and Zacharias caused his mother to take him into the mountains, where he was raised on locusts and wild honey. When his father refused to disclose his hiding place, and being the officiating high priest at the Temple that year, was slain by Herod’s order, between the porch and the altar, as Jesus said.” (*Teachings*, p. 261. Compare Matthew 23:35.)

Zacharias died, then, to save his son; he died a noble martyr, perhaps the first of the Christian era.

POINTS TO PONDER

Now that you have considered the circumstances surrounding His birth, take a moment to reflect deeply on these questions which Jesus asked the Pharisees: “What think ye of Christ? whose son is he?” (Matthew 22:42.) And as you reflect on these questions, remember Jesus’ own counsel to those who seek an answer: “This is life eternal, that they might know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom thou hast sent.” (John 17:3.) And as the Prophet Joseph Smith stated: “If any man does not know God, and inquires what kind of being he is,—if he will search diligently his own heart—if the declaration of Jesus and the apostles be true, he will realize that he has not eternal life; for there can be eternal life on no other principle.” (Teachings, p. 344.)

JESUS IS LITERALLY THE SON OF THE ETERNAL FATHER

(3-6) Because God Was His Father, Jesus Had Power Over Life and Death

When Gabriel came to Mary with the announcement that she would be the mother of the Lord, Mary was troubled. She had not as yet consummated her marriage to Joseph. She was sure of her virgin condition, and her question to Gabriel was as if she had said: “How can I be the mother of a son when I am yet unmarried?” The angel’s explanation to Mary is the clearest explanation of the fatherhood of God and the divine sonship of Christ available in holy writ. Gabriel declares: “The Holy Ghost shall come upon thee, and the power of the highest shall overshadow thee: therefore also that holy thing which shall be born of thee shall be called the Son of God.” (Luke 1:35.) This statement, clear enough as it stands, does not say Jesus was the son of the Holy Ghost, but he was the Son of God the Father. As Elder Bruce R. McConkie has explained, Jesus was the “‘Son of the Highest’ (Luke 1:32), and ‘the Highest’ is the first member of the godhead, not the third.” (DNTC, 1:83.)

Because Christ was the son of an immortal Father and a mortal mother, he had the capacity to live eternally if he chose, but also the ability to die. Elder James E. Talmage has written:

“That Child to be born of Mary was begotten of Elohim, the Eternal Father, not in violation of natural law but in accordance with a higher manifestation thereof; and, the offspring from that association of supreme sanctity, celestial Sireship, and pure though

mortal maternity, was of right to be called the ‘Son of the Highest.’ In His nature would be combined the powers of Godhood with the capacity and possibilities of mortality; and this through the ordinary operation of the fundamental law of heredity declared of God, demonstrated by science, and admitted by philosophy, that living beings shall propagate—after their kind. The Child Jesus was to inherit the physical, mental and spiritual traits, tendencies, and powers that characterized His parents—one immortal and glorified—God, the other human—woman.” (*Jesus the Christ*, p. 81.)

Jesus, then, had the powers of life and the ability to die. He had greater power than any man. (See Smith, *Teachings*, 181.) To further understand the significance of the divine sonship, complete the following exercise:

Who Was the Father of Jesus?

Recount some of the testimonies that demonstrate that Jesus is the Only Begotten Son of God, the Father, in the flesh. Note these verses: Luke 1:30–35; 1 Nephi 11:18–21; and Mosiah 3:8. Who was the father of Jesus? What did Jesus inherit from his Father that he could not have inherited from his legal guardian, Joseph?

You may have heard people try to justify their own weaknesses by saying, “Of course Jesus could live a perfect life because his Father was God. Look at the advantages he had that I don’t have.” Those who rationalize like this seem to forget that wherever there is a greater blessing there is a greater trial. The greatest Spirit in the premortal world could be tested only by submitting to greater trial.

(3-7) Jesus Had to Overcome the Veil

When Jesus was born, “the veil of forgetfulness common to all who are born to earth, by which the remembrance of primeval existence is shut off” was cast over him. (Talmage, *Jesus the Christ*, p. 111.) In the premortal world, Jesus had stood as “one like unto God” (Abraham 3:24), “more intelligent than they all” (Abraham 3:19), meaning all the other created spirits. But although his capacity was greater than that of any other, and he was designated to become the Only Begotten Son, still he was meek and humble; and he condescended to have a veil cast over him and to have the knowledge of his glory and power in premortality blocked from his mind at birth.

President Joseph Fielding Smith further explained:

“Without a doubt, Jesus came into the world subject to the same condition as was required of each of us—he forgot everything, and he had to grow from grace to grace. His forgetting, or *having his former knowledge taken away, would be requisite just as it is in the case of each of us*, to complete the present temporal existence.” (*Doctrines of Salvation*, 1:33. Italics added.)

Can you see that although Jesus was the greatest spirit to come to the earth, he also had greater trials than anyone in the earth?

It is improper to suppose that Jesus was not tested and tempted equal to his great capacity. The fact that he was sinless and that he resisted every temptation does not make it any less a fact that he was subject to temptations. He knows how difficult temptations are, because he experienced bitter temptations; but he resisted them all. Read what King Benjamin taught in Mosiah 3:7.

Jesus suffered temptations far beyond what men could endure; he confronted the powers of evil and won. But because he had to resist temptations, he understands the effort man must make to resist temptation. Again, as Paul said: “For in that he himself hath suffered being tempted, he is able to succor them that are tempted.” (Hebrews 2:18; 4:15.)

Jesus was perfectly obedient, and because he was, “he received all power, both in heaven and on earth.” (D&C 93:17. Emphasis added.) But Jesus did not receive this great power and glory all at once. He received it piecemeal, step by step, degree by degree, “line upon line, precept upon precept” (D&C 128:21) until he received a fulness of the glory of the Father (see D&C 93:11–17).

(3-8) As a Child, Jesus Sought to Learn from His Father

In the Inspired Version, the Prophet added the following verses to the recorded account of the Savior’s youth.

“And it came to pass that Jesus grew up with his brethren, and waxed strong, and waited upon the Lord for the time of his ministry to come.

“And he served under his father, and he spake not as other men, neither could he be taught; for he needed not that any man should teach him.

“And after many years, the hour of his ministry drew nigh.” (Matthew 3:24–26, Inspired Version.)

Although the word *father* in this passage perhaps refers to Joseph, yet the content of the passage certainly shows that Jesus was taught by his real father, God the Father.

It is, however, possible that Jesus attended the Jewish synagogues and was taught in the learning of the Jews by the rabbis. If so, much of what Jesus heard would have been a perversion of truth, for Judaism was in a state of apostasy. His most significant education, therefore, came through the Spirit from his Heavenly Father. Jesus testified of himself: “I do nothing of myself; but as my Father hath taught me, I speak these things.” (John 8:28.) And again: “The Father which sent me, he gave me a commandment, what I should say, and what I should speak.” (John 12:49.) Who taught Jesus what he knew? His Father, God the Father, taught him. That he was taught by wiser than mortal men is evident, and that he learned his lessons well, for the Prophet Joseph Smith said of him:

“When still a boy, He had all the intelligence necessary to enable Him to rule and govern the kingdom of the Jews, and could reason with the wisest and most profound doctors of law and divinity, and make their theories and practice to appear like folly compared with the wisdom He possessed; but He was a boy only, and lacked physical strength even to defend His own person; and was subject to cold, to hunger, and to death.” (*Teachings*, p. 392.)

What must you do to acquire power and glory? The Prophet Joseph Smith explained: “You have got to learn how to be Gods yourselves, and to be kings and priests to God, the same as all Gods have done before you, namely by going from one small degree to another, and from a small capacity to a great one; from grace to grace . . . until you . . . are able to dwell in everlasting burnings, and to sit in glory, as do those who sit enthroned in everlasting power.” (Teachings, pp. 346–47.)

To get a degree or level of glory, or grace, a man must obey the laws upon which that particular level of glory is predicated, and if he is more diligent and obedient than another, he will have that much more advantage in the world to come. (See D&C 130:18–21.) President Harold B. Lee explained:

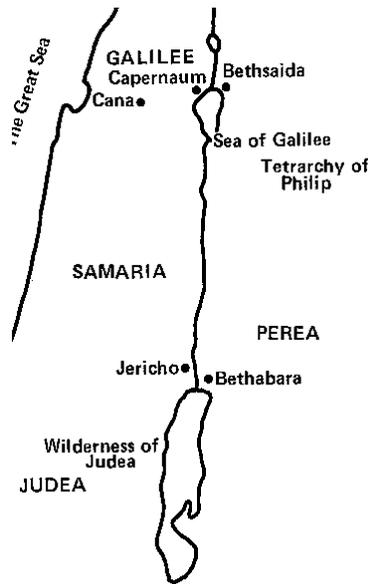
“The most important of all the commandments of God is that one that you’re having the most difficulty keeping today. If it’s one of dishonesty, if it’s one of

unchastity, if it's one of falsifying, not telling the truth, today is the day for you to work on that until you've been able to conquer that weakness. Then you start on the next one that's most difficult for you to keep." (Church News, 5 May 1973, p. 3.)

Thus, a man must take his temptations in their turn and conquer them. This is what Jesus did, step by step, degree to greater degree, grace by grace, and this is what Jesus would have you do.

Now what difference will it make for you? Could you, if you were called to stand before him now, testify as did Peter of old? "Thou art the Christ, the Son of the Living God." (Matthew 16:16.) You can know that he is the Son of God if you do his will. (See John 7:17.) As Jesus himself said: "My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me: And I give unto them eternal life. . . ." (John 10:27, 28.)

"BEHOLD THE LAMB OF GOD"



OPENING EVENTS IN JESUS' MINISTRY	Matthew	Mark	Luke	John
Wilderness of Judea John the Forerunner	3:1–12	1:1–8	3:1–18	
Near Bethabara, Judea Baptism of Jesus	3:13–17	1:9–11	3:21–23	
Wilderness of Judea Jesus Communes with God; Is Tempted Afterward	4:1–11	1:12, 13	4:1–13	
Bethabara, Judea John Testifies That Jesus Is the Christ				1:14–34
Bethabara, Perea and Bethsaida, Tetrarchy of Philip Calling of Andrew, Simon, Philip and Nathanael				1:35–51
Cana, Galilee Miracle of Wine at the Wedding Feast				2:1–11
Jesus Goes to Capernaum				2:12

THEME

John the Baptist held the keys of Elias as the forerunner of the Lord and was a witness to His faithfulness to the Father in all things.

INTRODUCTION

When the time arrived for Jesus to come to earth in the flesh, it was also time for the birth of one of the greatest prophets who ever lived—John the Baptist.

Who can determine the importance and eternal significance of John's mission in preparing the way for the Son of God? His task was not easy, for the covenant people of the Lord were in a state of apostasy. Little wonder he was described as a "voice . . . crying in the wilderness." (Luke 3:4.) But John fulfilled his mission in a manner that would cause Jesus to say of him, "Among those that are born of woman there is not a greater

prophet. . . .” (Luke 7:28.) Truly John is an example to us of what a witness of Christ should be.

To John, the forerunner, came Jesus, the Son of God, to be baptized. Of this occasion, Jesus said, “For thus it becometh us to fulfill all righteousness.” (Matthew 3:15.) This lesson will consider this important event and also the subsequent temptations which Satan used in an effort to thwart the mission of the Savior.

Before proceeding, read all the scriptural references in the reading block.

INTERPRETIVE COMMENTARY

(4-1) Matthew 3:1. How Important Was the Mission of John the Baptist?

“Few prophets rank with *John the Baptist*. Among other things, his ministry was foretold by Lehi (1 Ne. 10:7–10), Nephi (1 Ne. 11:27; 2 Ne. 31:4–18), and Isaiah (Isa. 40:3); Gabriel came down from the courts of glory to announce John’s coming birth (Luke 1:5–44); he was the last legal administrator, holding keys and authority under the Mosaic dispensation (D. & C. 84:26–28); his mission was to prepare the way before, baptize, and acclaim the divine Sonship of Christ (John 1); and in modern times, on the 15th of May, 1829, he returned to earth as a resurrected being to confer the Aaronic Priesthood upon Joseph Smith and Oliver Cowdery. ([Joseph Smith—History 1:66–75]; D. & C. 13.)” (McConkie, *Mormon Doctrine*, p. 393.)

(4-2) Matthew 3:1–3. How Was John an Elias?

When the angel came to Zacharias in the temple to foretell the birth of John, a promise was given, that he would prepare the way of the Lord “. . . in the spirit and power of Elias. . . .” (Luke 1:17.)

Though John was not actually named Elias, his mission was accomplished through the “spirit and power of Elias.” Joseph Smith explained it as follows:

“. . . for the spirit of Elias was a going before to prepare the way for the greater, which was the case with John the Baptist. He came crying through the wilderness, ‘Prepare ye the way of the Lord, make his paths straight.’ And they were informed, if they could receive it, it was the spirit of Elias; and John was very particular to tell the people, he was not that Light, but was sent to bear witness of that Light.

“He told the people that his mission was to preach repentance and baptize with water; but it was He that

should come after him that should baptize with fire and the Holy Ghost.

“If he had been an impostor, he might have gone to work beyond his bounds, and undertook to have performed ordinances which did not belong to that office and calling, under the spirit of Elias.

“The spirit of Elias is to prepare the way for a greater revelation of God, which is the Priesthood of Elias, or the Priesthood that Aaron was ordained unto. And when God sends a man into the world to prepare for a greater work, holding the keys of the power of Elias, it was called the doctrine of Elias, even from the early ages of the world.

“John’s mission was limited to preaching and baptizing; but what he did was legal; and when Jesus Christ came to any of John’s disciples, He baptized them with fire and the Holy Ghost.” (*Teachings*, pp. 335–36.)

Though John’s mission was short and his message was simple, the unselfish, fearless manner in which he carried out his work as an “Elias” brought from Jesus the solemn expression that *there had not been “a greater prophet than John the Baptist.”* (Luke 7:28. Italics added.)

(4-3) Matthew 3:9. What Did John Mean by Saying That God Was Able to Raise Up Children unto Abraham from the Stones?

“. . . Judaism held that the posterity of Abraham had an assured place in the kingdom of the expected Messiah, and that no proselyte from among the Gentiles could possibly attain the rank and distinction of which the ‘children’ were sure. John’s forceful assertion that God could raise up, from the stones on the river bank, children to Abraham, meant to those who heard that even the lowest of the human family might be preferred before themselves unless they repented and reformed.” (Talmage, *Jesus the Christ*, p. 123.)

(4-4) Matthew 3:16. What Is the Significance of the Holy Ghost Descending “like a Dove”?

“All four gospel authors record that the Spirit descended ‘like a dove’; Luke adds that he also came in ‘bodily shape’; and the Book of Mormon accounts say he came ‘in the form of a dove.’ (1 Ne. 11:27; 2 Ne. 31:8.) Joseph Smith said that John ‘led the Son of God into the waters of baptism, and had the privilege of beholding the Holy Ghost descend in the form of a dove, or rather in the *sign of the dove*, in witness of that administration.’

“Then the Prophet gives this explanation: ‘The sign of the dove was instituted before the creation of the world, a witness for the Holy Ghost, and the devil cannot come in the sign of a dove. *The Holy Ghost is a personage, and is in the form of a personage.* It does not confine itself to the *form* of the dove, but in sign of the dove. The Holy Ghost cannot be transformed into a dove; but the sign of a dove was given to John to signify the truth of the deed, as the dove is an emblem or token of truth and innocence.’ (Smith, *Teachings*, pp. 275–76. Italics added.) It thus appears that John witnessed the sign of the dove, that he saw the Holy Ghost descend in the ‘bodily shape’ of the personage that he is, and that the descent was ‘like a dove.’” (McConkie, *DNTC*, 1:123–24.)

(4-5) Matthew 4:1. Did Jesus Go into the Wilderness to Be Tempted?

Compare the Inspired Version account of these verses with the King James.

“Then Jesus was led up of the spirit, into the wilderness, *to be with God.*

“And when he had fasted forty days and forty nights, *and had communed* with God, he was afterwards an hungered, and was left to be tempted of the devil.” (Matthew 4:1, 2, Inspired Version. Italics added.)

“Jesus did not go into the wilderness to be tempted of the devil; righteous men do not seek out temptation. He went ‘to be with God.’ Probably he was visited by the Father; without question he received transcendent spiritual manifestations. The temptations came after he ‘had communed with God,’ ‘after forty days.’ The same was true in the case of Moses. He communed with God, saw the visions of eternity, and was then left unto himself to be tempted of the devil. After resisting temptation he again communed with Deity, gaining further light and revelation.” (McConkie, *DNTC*, 1:128; see also Mosiah 3:7.)

(4-6) Matthew 4:5, 8. Did the Devil Really Transport Jesus Up to a Pinnacle of the Temple and Later Show Him the Kingdoms of the World?

The Prophet Joseph Smith adds this insight:

“Then *Jesus was taken* up into the holy city, and the *Spirit setteth* him *on the* pinnacle of the temple.

“*Then the devil came unto him and said,* If thou be the Son of God, cast thyself down, for it is written, He shall give his angels charge concerning thee, and in their hands they shall bear thee up, lest at any time thou dash thy foot against a stone.

“*And again, Jesus was in the Spirit, and it taketh* him up into an exceeding high mountain, and *showeth* him all the kingdoms of the world and the glory of them.

“*And the devil came unto him again, and said,* All these things will I give *unto thee,* If thou wilt fall down and worship me.” (Matthew 4:5, 6, 7, 9, Inspired Version. Italics added.)

(4-7) John 1:18. What About John’s Statement “No Man Hath Seen God at Any Time”?

Of course there have been prophets who beheld Deity. Joseph Smith taught, however, that the Father manifests himself only in order to bear record of Jesus:

“And no man hath seen God at any time, except he hath borne record of the Son; for except it is through him no man can be saved.” (John 1:19, Inspired Version.)

Notice also how John further clarifies his own statement in John 6:46.

(4-8) John 1:42. Why Was It Significant That Simon Was Given Another Name?

Christ told Simon he would be called Cephas, or Peter, meaning a stone.

“Destined to stand as President of the Church of Jesus Christ and to exercise the keys of the kingdom in their fulness, Peter was to be a prophet, seer, and revelator. (D&C 81:2.) Foreshadowing this later call, Jesus here confers a new name upon his chief disciple, the name *Cephas* which means a seer or a stone.

“Added significance will soon be given this designation when, in promising him the keys of the kingdom, our Lord will tell Peter that the gates of hell shall never prevail against the rock of revelation, or in other words against seership. (Matt. 16:18.)” (McConkie, *DNTC*, 1:132–33.)

(4-9) JOHN 1:47–49. WHAT WAS NATHANAEL’S EXPERIENCE “UNDER THE FIG TREE”?

“Jesus here exercises his powers of seership. From the fragmentary account preserved in the scripture it is apparent that Nathanael had undergone some surpassing spiritual experience while praying, or meditating, or worshipping under a fig tree. The Lord and giver of all things spiritual, though absent in body, had been present with Nathanael in spirit; and the guileless Israelite, seeing this manifestation of seership, was led to accept Jesus as the Messiah.” (McConkie, *DNTC*, 1:134.)

(4-10) John 2:4. Did Jesus Willingly Respond to His Mother’s Request for Help at the Wedding Feast?

“Jesus said unto her, Woman, what wilt thou have me to do for thee? *that will I do*; for mine hour is not yet come.” (John 2:4, Inspired Version. Italics added.)

(4-11) John 2:4. What of Jesus’ Addressing His Mother as “Woman”?

“. . . The noun of address, ‘Woman,’ as applied by a son to his mother may sound to our ears somewhat harsh, if not disrespectful; but its use was really an expression of opposite import. To every son the mother ought to be preeminently the woman of women; she is the one woman in the world to whom the son owes his earthly existence; and though the title ‘Mother’ belongs to every woman who has earned the honors of maternity, yet to no child is there more than one woman whom by natural right he can address by that title of respectful acknowledgment. When, in the last dread scenes of His mortal existence, Christ hung in dying agony upon the cross, He looked down upon the weeping Mary, His mother, and commended her to the care of the beloved apostle John, with the words: ‘Woman, behold thy son!’ Can it be thought that in this supreme moment, our Lord’s concern for the mother from whom He was about to be separated by death was associated with any emotion other than that of honor, tenderness and love?” (Talmage, *Jesus the Christ*, pp. 144–45.)

(4-12) John 2:6. How Much Constitutes a “Firkin”?

A firkin is about nine gallons. Thus each of the six water-pots contained around 18 to 27 gallons of water, with the result that Jesus then created between 100 to 150 gallons of wine—a miracle showing that the wedding celebration was quite large.

POINTS TO PONDER

JESUS WAS TOTALLY OBEDIENT TO THE WILL OF HIS FATHER

Jesus Christ is a perfect example of what your attitude should be toward the commandments of our Heavenly Father. Consider for a moment the baptism of Jesus. Why was Jesus baptized when he was without sin? Read 2 Nephi 31:5–10. What does this teach you about Jesus? What symbolic significance do you see in Jesus’ baptism with regard to his burial and resurrection? What significance does this have for you?

THE ADVERSARY TESTED JESUS AND SOUGHT TO THWART HIS MISSION

(4-13) The Three Temptations Jesus Faced Are a Pattern for All Temptations

“Now, nearly every temptation that comes to you and me comes in one of those forms. Classify them, and you will find that under one of those three nearly every given temptation that makes you and me spotted, ever so little maybe, comes to us as (1) *a temptation of the appetite*; (2) *a yielding to the pride and fashion and vanity of those alienated from the things of God*; or (3) *a gratifying of the passion, or a desire for the riches of the world, or power among men.*” (David O. McKay in *CR*, Oct. 1911, p. 59.)

It was after the Savior had made his special covenants with the Father through baptism that the tempter confronted him. But why should such strong temptations beset the Lord after his baptism? And if the Lord received his most severe trials after he was firmly committed to the kingdom of God, what about other men of greatness? Did their trials also increase? Why would this be allowed to happen?

For an answer, consider what took place as the Lord prepared for his ministry. First, there was a deep sense of his sacred responsibility. Secondly, he received revelation and instruction from his Father. Thirdly, he was challenged by trials and temptations and through them proved his loyalty. Finally, because of them he developed strength to overcome all obstacles and proceeded in his ministry with increased light and revelation.

Now consider some of the experiences which befell the Prophet Joseph Smith. As you read keep in mind the four points listed above. Read Joseph Smith—History 1:8–19. If the Savior and the Prophet went through trials and temptations after they were firmly committed to the Church, what about you? Read thoughtfully President Lee’s statement in reading 4-14.

(4-14) All Will Be Tested

“As I have labored among the brethren here and have studied the history of past dispensations, I have become aware that the Lord has given tests all down through time as to this matter of loyalty to the leadership of the Church. I go back into the scriptures and follow along in such stories as David’s loyalty when the king was trying to take his life. He wouldn’t defile the anointed of the Lord even when he could

have taken his life. I have listened to the classic stories in this dispensation about how Brigham Young was tested, how Heber C. Kimball was tested, John Taylor and Willard Richards in Carthage Jail, Zion's Camp that received a great test, and from that number were chosen the first General Authorities in this dispensation. There were others who didn't pass the test of loyalty, and they fell from their places.

"I have been in a position since I came into the Council of the Twelve to observe some things among my brethren, and I want to say to you: *Every man my junior in the Council of the Twelve, I have seen submitted as though by Providence, to these same tests of loyalty, and I wondered sometimes whether they were going to pass the tests.* The reason they are here today is because they did, and our Father has honored them. . . .

"And so God has honored them, and it is my conviction that every man who will be called to a high place in this Church will have to pass these tests not devised by human hands, by which our Father numbers them as a united group of leaders willing to follow the prophets of the Living God and be loyal and true as witnesses and exemplars of the truths they teach." (Harold B. Lee in *CR*, Apr. 1950, p. 101. Italics added.)

Does this mean that there will be tests, trials, and temptations in your future? Yes! But do not fear. What was the result of overcoming the trials and temptations for the Savior and for the Prophet? Can you see that not only did they prove loyal to their stewardship but also they grew in spiritual power, light, and closeness to God? Can you see that as you become committed to the kingdom, you will have the opportunity to grow also, into a brilliant, scintillating child of God? Further, do you understand that through your covenant you will be supported by the Spirit in your trials? Look at the reassurance Alma gives in Alma 36:3–5, 27.

Do not look for temptation and trials, for they will come on their own, but determine to resist and overcome them as they do, that you may receive of the joy of the Lord.

(4-15) We Should Not Even Accommodate Temptation

"The importance of not accommodating temptation in the least degree is underlined by the Savior's example.

Did not he recognize the danger when he was on the mountain with his fallen brother, Lucifer, being sorely tempted by that master tempter? He could have opened the door and flirted with danger by saying, 'All right, Satan, I'll listen to your proposition. I need not succumb, I need not yield, I need not accept—but I'll listen.'

"Christ did not so rationalize. He positively and promptly closed the discussion, and commanded: 'Get thee hence, Satan,' meaning, likely, 'Get out of my sight—get out of my presence—I will not listen—I will have nothing to do with you.' Then, we read, 'the devil leaveth him.'" (Kimball, *Miracle of Forgiveness*, p. 216.)

AM I WILLING "TO DO THE WILL OF MY FATHER"?

There is no way to account for the way Jesus kept his covenants except through that grand purpose which he expresses in the touching passages below.

Read and cross-reference the following scriptures:

John 4:33, 34

Jesus' greatest satisfaction

John 6:38

Jesus' grand purpose in coming

3 Nephi 11:11 and 3 Nephi 27:13, 14

What it cost Jesus to do the Father's will

Luke 22:42–44

D&C 19:16–19

Jesus loved his Father. His devotion was unlimited. His poise, majesty, and flawless actions among men arose from his total submissiveness to the will of his Father. The mighty Shepherd among men was also the willing Lamb of God.

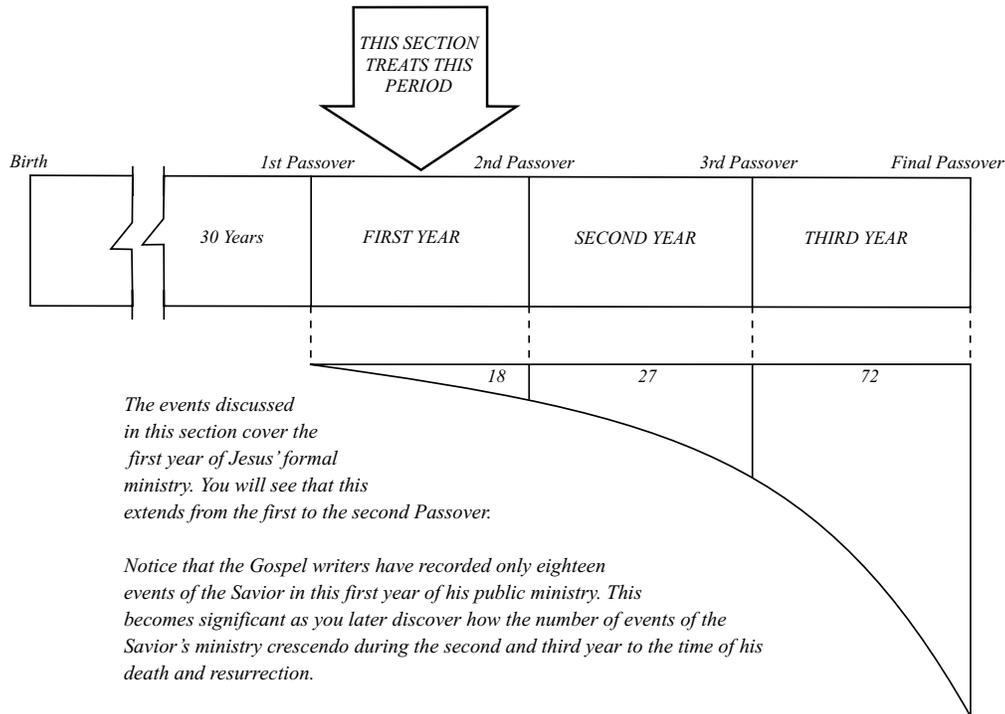
Though we can perhaps only begin to fathom the feelings that Jesus had for his Father, we should remember that his Father is also our Father in heaven. We can make the grand purpose of our lives the same as our Savior's grand purpose. Each of us can resolve "to do the will of my Father."

You may want to react to the following questions:

What do I see in the way Jesus approached his relationship with his Father that can help me? What specific things could I do to better keep my covenants and improve my relationship with my Father?

SECTION 2

THE FIRST YEAR OF JESUS' PUBLIC MINISTRY



LESSONS

5. Ye Must Be Born Again
6. This Is He of Whom It Is Written

Now let's consider a brief synopsis of this first year.

The first year opens in Jerusalem. It is the time of the Passover, which corresponds on our calendar to the last week of March and the first week of April. Jews from many nations had gathered to the Holy City to commemorate this event. The outer court of the temple had been set up as a place to exchange foreign money and to sell animals for offerings. With a great multitude present and the accompanying din and tumult, the temple place had taken on a carnival atmosphere. You will read how the Savior's reaction to this merchandising in his Father's house provoked the hostility of the Jewish leaders.

One Jewish leader, however, who wanted to understand further the source of Jesus' power—for he had already wrought many miracles—was Nicodemus.

You will read how Jesus more openly revealed his mission to Nicodemus by explaining how one becomes qualified for entrance into the kingdom of heaven. Following this interview with Nicodemus, Jesus left Jerusalem (in the province of Judea) to go to his hometown of Nazareth in Galilee. You will further read an interesting conversation he had with a Samaritan woman as he stopped along the way in Sychar (Samaria). The doctrine Jesus taught her is still his counsel to his disciples today.

Jesus' formal ministry really began in Galilee and specifically in Nazareth. What did he do there that would provoke his own townsmen to make an attempt on his life? His testimony there, which you will read, is most significant. Because of this rejection of his townsmen in Nazareth, Jesus went to Capernaum. During the next eighteen to twenty months this city became his home base. In this and surrounding cities, Jesus manifested many marvelous works. What great sermon did he give during this time, and why was the healing of a palsied man so significant?

And what was the importance of Jesus' answer to John's followers who inquired why Jesus' disciples did not fast, as did they and the Pharisees?

These will be some of the high points of consideration during the first year of our Lord's ministry. But before you commence this study, let's take a look at the province of Galilee where Jesus spent approximately two years of his ministry.

A Portrait of Galilee

As you can see, the region called Galilee is in northern Palestine. Study the accompanying map to note its boundaries on the north, east, south, and west.

This map has been simplified to show only the key cities during the time of Christ. A map of the region at the time of Jesus would show many more towns and villages. The population of Palestine was numerous and was concentrated in this area. Josephus, a Jewish general and historian who governed this province thirty-four years after Christ's ministry, reported a population of nearly three million.

Some Notable Places in Galilee

Some of the places in Galilee that will become familiar to you are Bethsaida, Cana, Capernaum, Chorazin, Magdala, Nain, Nazareth, Tiberias, and, of course, the Sea of Galilee. Here are some photographs of these places:

Nazareth

This was the hometown of the Savior, where he grew to manhood. Here he preached one of his earliest sermons but was rejected. Because of unbelief, only a few miracles were accomplished in Nazareth. Of his own city, Jesus was to say, "A prophet is not with honor, *but in his own country*, and among his own kin, and in his own house." (Mark 6:4. Italics added.)

Capernaum

After Jesus' first rejection in Nazareth, he went to Capernaum. This was later to be referred to as "his" city. And no wonder. According to the information recorded, here he performed more miracles than in any other city, and here he gave some of his greatest discourses. Here the Son of God labored for almost two years of his formal ministry. Yet despite his miraculous display of divine powers, Capernaum would not repent. Jesus prophesied concerning the fate of those in this city.

See Matthew 11:23, 24.

All that remains today at the traditional site of the ancient city are the ruins of an old synagogue built in the second century and stones from surrounding buildings. Here was once a city of some fifteen thousand inhabitants!

The Sea of Galilee

The region of Galilee appears to have been very fertile during the time of Christ, and what was general throughout the region was concentrated around the Sea of Galilee. Near this inland sea, sometimes called Lake Kinnereth, Lake Gennesaret, or Lake Tiberias, Jesus spent most of the time of his ministry.

Today, as in times past, the lake itself is a fishing haven. It is generally calm, but storms may suddenly arise, turning the sea into a raging tempest. You will read of one of these occasions when Jesus and the disciples were crossing the sea and encountered a great storm, causing the disciples to despair. After admonishing the disciples for their lack of faith, Jesus rebuked the wind and the sea, commanding, "Peace, be still." (Mark 4:39.)

Nine cities surrounded the lake in Jesus' time, each of which was said to have had a population of not less than fifteen thousand people.

It is interesting to remember that of Jesus' twelve apostles, eleven came from Galilee. Only Judas, who betrayed him, was not a Galilean. He was from Judea.

The River Jordan

The Significance of the Galilean Ministry

If this is your first opportunity to study the life and teachings of the Savior, you will probably experience some difficulty in discovering the pattern in his ministry. This brief overview may help you to discover this pattern.

What will be apparent to you in your reading is the Savior's ministry among the general populace. "Sheep without a shepherd" is the way Jesus labeled them. You will see how the masses became increasingly attracted to Jesus because of his miracles. Note the effect of the miracle of the feeding of the five thousand upon the people, and then sense the meaning of the drama that followed when Jesus announced that he was their "living bread." (John 6:51.) You will see that many of the people then withdrew from him because he told them that they were following him for the wrong reasons.

If the teaching of the masses is all you see in the ministry of Jesus, you will have missed its greater significance. You should also see something that is not so obvious at first glance—the Savior’s quiet training of his priesthood leadership. This will become apparent as you perceive the Galilean ministry as being divided into three phases of leadership training.

First Phase: The Calling of the Twelve Apostles

From among those disciples who followed him, the Savior chose by revelation twelve men whom he designated as apostles. These were to be his special witnesses.

Second Phase: The Sending Forth of the Twelve

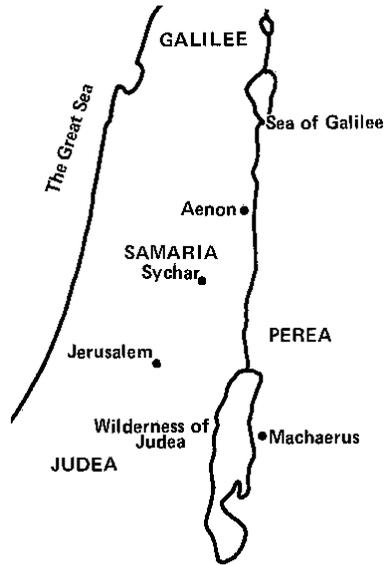
After witnessing the power of the priesthood in the many miracles done by Jesus, the Twelve were sent forth to teach and do what they had seen their Master do.

Third Phase: The Bestowing upon the Twelve the Keys of the Kingdom and the Sealing Power

Toward the end of the Galilean ministry (the third year of the ministry), Jesus took the Twelve north to the region of Caesarea Philippi. There he took Peter, James, and John to a “high mountain apart” and was glorified (transfigured) before them. (Mark 9:2.) Thus they became eyewitnesses of his majesty. Peter, James, and John received the keys of the priesthood there. Later all the Twelve were given the keys of the kingdom as well as the sealing powers, which gave them the right to legally administer the affairs of the kingdom of God. With the Twelve thus prepared the Savior returned to Jerusalem, where he would fulfill the greater purpose of his mortal calling, the atonement and the resurrection from the grave.

With this perspective in mind, you should now turn your attention to the specific events of the ministry of our Lord.

"YE MUST BE BORN AGAIN"



EARLY JUDEAN MINISTRY	Matthew	Mark	Luke	John
Jerusalem, Judea (Nisan) The First Passover of Jesus' Ministry				2:13–25
Nicodemus Visits Jesus				3:1–21
Jesus Goes into Wilderness of Judea				3:22
Aenon, Samaria John Teaches Belief in the Son				3:23–36
Machaerus, Perea John Is Imprisoned	14:3–5	6:17–20	3:19, 20	
Jesus Leaves Judea for Galilee	4:12	1:14	4:14	4:1–3
Sychar, Samaria Woman of Samaria				4:4–42
Jesus Goes into Galilee				4:43, 44

THEME

Because of his Messiahship, Jesus can provide the power that leads to spiritual rebirth.

INTRODUCTION

The years of preparation for Jesus were now passed. His first public miracle had been performed at Cana.

And his ministry, the greatest "sermon" of word and deed, would now begin. He would be despised and rejected (Mark 8:31). His course would take him to a cross and to burial in an obscure tomb, but it would also take him beyond that to glory at the right hand of his Father (Matthew 26:64). His ministry and sacrifice would redeem the repentant (Luke 24:46, 47), open the hitherto locked doors of the spirit

prison, and bring to pass the resurrection (John 10:9; 11:25). With certain knowledge of what lay before him (John 12:33; 18:32), Jesus began to proclaim himself the Messiah.

During his interviews with Nicodemus and the woman at the well, he testified that men must be born again, and that he himself was the “Living Water” of which all must partake if they would be born again and enter the kingdom of God.

Before proceeding, read all the scriptural references in the reading block.

INTERPRETIVE COMMENTARY

(5-1) John 2:13, 14. What Was the Passover?

“Ancient Israel, in the day of Moses, was freed from temporal bondage in Egypt by the Lord Jehovah. To commemorate this deliverance, they were commanded to keep the Feast of the Passover. This feast was designed to bring two things to their remembrance: (1) That the angel of death passed over the houses and flocks of Israel, while slaying the firstborn among the men and beasts of the Egyptians; and (2) That Jehovah was their Deliverer, the same holy being who in due course would come into the world as King-Messiah to work out the infinite and eternal atonement.

“All of the symbolisms of the feast centered around these two events. The feast (more so in the days of its inception than in the time of Jesus) was eaten in haste as though preparatory to flight; the sacrificial lamb was one without blemish, whose blood was shed, but whose bones were not broken; blood was sprinkled on the houses to be spared—all of which provided types and symbols for Messiah’s coming mortal sacrifice. (Ex. 12.)

“And now nearly a millennium and a half after Jehovah gave the Passover to Israel, he himself, tabernacled among men, was preparing to celebrate the feast, to fulfil the law given to Moses. . . .” (McConkie, *DNTC*, 1:704.)

(5-2) John 2:13–22. Jesus Defended the Sanctity of His Father’s House

“When Jesus cleansed the temple, he was filled with reverent indignation because men were desecrating his Father’s house, selling doves and lambs to be offered as sacrifice. Money changers were there for the convenience of those who came from other countries, so they could give in local currency their temple

contributions. Seemingly, in their own eyes, they were justified, but they were doing these things in the House of God. We are told that he overturned the money changer’s tables, and said to the sellers of doves, ‘Take these things hence. Make not my Father’s house a house of merchandise.’ [John 2:16.]

“‘Reverence,’ wrote Ruskin, ‘is the noblest state in which a man can live in the world. Reverence is one of the signs of strength; irreverence one of the surest indications of weakness. No man will rise high who jeers at sacred things. The fine loyalties of life must be revered or they will be foresworn in the day of trial.’” (David O. McKay in *CR*, Oct. 1950, pp. 163–64.)

(5-3) John 3:5. What Is the “Kingdom of God” That Jesus Referred To?

“The kingdom of God mentioned by the Savior in his conversation with Nicodemus points clearly to the fact that it is the celestial kingdom that is meant. This is also implied in the instructions given by our Savior to his apostles when he left them. They were to go into all the world and preach the gospel, all who accepted and were baptized should enter the celestial kingdom, but all others would be damned, or be assigned to one of the other kingdoms.” (Smith, *Answers to Gospel Questions*, 5:147–48.)

(5-4) John 4:1–3. Jesus Himself Performed Water Baptisms

“They sought more diligently some means that they might put him to death; for many received John as a prophet, but they believed not on Jesus.

“Now the Lord knew this, though he himself baptized not so many as his disciples;

“For he suffered them for an example, preferring one another.” (John 4:2–4, Inspired Version.)

“Contrary to the false teachings and traditions of sectarianism, Jesus personally performed water baptisms so that in all things he might be the great Exemplar. Without question he also performed all other ordinances essential to salvation and exaltation.” (McConkie, *DNTC*, 1:148.)

(5-5) John 4:9. Why Did the Jews Feel So Much Antipathy Towards the Samaritans?

“The direct route from Judea to Galilee lay through Samaria; but many Jews, particularly Galilaeans, chose to follow an indirect though longer way rather than traverse the country of a people so despised by

them as were the Samaritans. The ill-feeling between Jews and Samaritans had been growing for centuries, and at the time of our Lord's earthly ministry had developed into most intense hatred. The inhabitants of Samaria were a mixed people, in whom the blood of Israel was mingled with that of the Assyrians and other nations; and one cause of the animosity existing between them and their neighbors both on the north and the south was the Samaritans' claim for recognition as Israelites; it was their boast that Jacob was their father; but this the Jews denied. The Samaritans had a version of the Pentateuch, which they revered as the law, but they rejected all the prophetic writings of what is now the Old Testament, because they considered themselves treated with insufficient respect therein.

"To the orthodox Jew of the time a Samaritan was more unclean than a Gentile of any other nationality." (Talmage, *Jesus the Christ*, p. 172.)

(5-6) John 4:10. Of What Significance Was the Term "Living Water"?

Israel's prophets had repeatedly declared that the Lord was as a fountain of living water that Israel had rejected. (See Jeremiah 2:13; Isaiah 8:6.)

Jesus himself, as Jehovah, had pled with ancient Israel to repent and return to him so that he could nourish and sustain them. And in his pleading, Jehovah had used the word *water* as a figure of speech. (See Isaiah 58:11.)

POINTS TO PONDER

(5-7) Those Who Come unto Christ Need Never Thirst Again

"His solemn invitation, 'If any man thirst, let him come unto me, and drink,' was a plain and open claim of Messiahship. In making it he identified himself as the very Jehovah who had promised drink to the thirsty through an outpouring of the Spirit. After such a pronouncement his hearers were faced with two choices: Either he was a blasphemer worthy of death, or he was in fact the God of Israel." (McConkie, *DNTC*, 1:445-46.)

How did Jesus' discussion with the Samaritan woman influence her? Perhaps you could trace her conversion through a review of her interview with Jesus. In John, chapter 4, we see her addressing Jesus using three different titles. What do verses 9, 11, 14, 15, 19, and 29 indicate has happened to her understanding of the man to whom she is speaking?

BEING BORN TO "SEE" THE KINGDOM OF GOD IS A STEP IN BEING BORN TO "ENTER" THE KINGDOM

The following hypothetical interview should aid you in understanding what happened to the Samaritan woman and what must happen to you if you would enter the celestial kingdom of God.

QUESTION

Jesus explained to Nicodemus that a man must be "born again." In this world our first birth is when we enter the world as infants. But the word again in Jesus' phrase implies another, or second birth, doesn't it?

ANSWER

Yes, there is another, or second birth.

*"The first birth takes place when spirits pass from their pre-existent first estate into mortality; the second birth or birth 'into the kingdom of heaven' takes place when mortal men are born again and become alive to the things of the Spirit and of righteousness. The elements of water, blood, and Spirit are present in both births. (Moses 6:59-60.)" (McConkie, *Mormon Doctrine*, p. 101.)*

QUESTION

In John 3:3, Jesus said, "Except a man is born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God," and in John 3:5, Jesus said, "Except a man be born of water and of the spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God." It is one thing to see the kingdom, and it is a different thing entirely to enter the kingdom. Does this mean that the second birth, or spiritual rebirth, has two parts?

ANSWER

Yes, this second birth or spiritual rebirth has two general parts. In order to understand what it means to see the kingdom of God, it is necessary to perceive what the Holy Ghost will do for a man before that man is baptized into the Church, The Prophet Joseph Smith explained:

"There is a difference between the Holy Ghost and the gift of the Holy Ghost. Cornelius received the Holy Ghost before he was baptized, which was the convincing power of God unto him of the truth of the Gospel, but he could not receive the gift of the Holy Ghost until after he was baptized. Had he not taken this sign or ordinance upon him, the Holy Ghost which convinced him of the truth of God, would have left him." (Teachings, p. 199.)

When a nonmember sees the kingdom of God, it means that the power of the Holy Ghost is poured out upon him to teach him that the Church is true. He then has a testimony. He knows.

*“The Lord will reveal the truth once; then when this testimony has been given, the person should accept the truth and receive the gospel by baptism and the laying on of hands for the gift of the Holy Ghost. . . . Cornelius received a manifestation in strict conformity to the instruction given by Moroni, and had he turned away there would have been no further light or direction for him. The Spirit of the Lord will not argue with men, nor abide in them, except they yield obedience to the Lord’s commandments. (Smith, *Answers to Gospel Questions*, 3:29.)*

At the time a person sees the kingdom, he does not necessarily receive a remission of his sins. The Holy Ghost has merely taught him what he must do to receive a remission of sins. Of this the Prophet Joseph Smith said:

*“It is one thing to see the kingdom of God, and another thing to enter into it. We must have a change of heart to see the kingdom of God, and subscribe the articles of adoption to enter therein.” (Smith, *Teachings*, p. 328.)*

QUESTION

Does a person always see the kingdom before baptism?

ANSWER

No, this experience may occur in the life of a baptized member of the Church as well. Sometimes people are members of the Church even for many years before they “see” or gain a testimony that the Church is true.

QUESTION

It seems clear that seeing involves witness and testimony and conviction about the truthfulness of the Church. But what has to occur so that a person has the true change of heart so that he can enter the kingdom of God?

ANSWER

“Baptism by immersion symbolizes the death and burial of the man of sin; and the coming forth out of the water, the resurrection to a newness of spiritual life. After baptism, hands are laid upon the head of the baptized believer, and he is blessed to receive the

*Holy Ghost. Thus does the one baptized receive the promise or gift of the Holy Ghost or the privilege of being brought back into the presence of one of the Godhead, by obedience to whom and through his faithfulness one so blessed might receive the guidance and direction of the Holy Ghost in his daily walks and talks, even as Adam walked and talked in the Garden of Eden with God, his Heavenly Father. To receive such guidance and such direction from the Holy Ghost is to be spiritually reborn.” (Harold B. Lee in *CR*, Oct. 1947, p. 64.)*

QUESTION

Does a person always receive this spiritual rebirth at the time of baptism?

ANSWER

*“Mere compliance with the formality of the ordinance of baptism does not mean that a person has been born again. No one can be born again without baptism, but the immersion in water and the laying on of hands to confer the Holy Ghost do not of themselves guarantee that a person has been or will be born again. The new birth takes place only for those who actually enjoy the gift or companionship of the Holy Ghost, only for those who are fully converted, who have given themselves without restraint to the Lord. Thus Alma addressed himself to his ‘brethren of the church,’ and pointedly asked them if they had ‘spiritually been born of God,’ received the Lord’s image in their countenances, and had the ‘mighty change’ in their hearts which always attends the birth of the Spirit. (Alma 5:14–31.)” (McConkie, *Mormon Doctrine*, p. 101.)*

QUESTION

What blessings are available to someone who is born again?

ANSWER

*“Those members of the Church who have actually been born again are in a blessed and favored state. They have attained their position, not merely by joining the Church, but through faith (1 John 5:1), righteousness (1 John 2:29), love (1 John 4:7), and overcoming the world. (1 John 5:4.) ‘Whosoever is born of God doth not continue in sin; for the Spirit of God remaineth in him; and he cannot sin, because he is born of God, having received that holy Spirit of promise.’ (Inspired Version, 1 John 3:9.) (McConkie, *Mormon Doctrine*, p. 101.)*

BEING BORN AGAIN IS A GRADUAL PROCESS THAT IS ACCOMPANIED BY A CHANGE OF HEART

David's father was president of the stake. David had never been to the stake president's office; but last evening at dinner he had raised some questions about spiritual rebirth, and his father had invited him to come to the stake president's office to discuss the matter. As he settled into a chair, David noticed a picture on his father's desk. It was a picture of the stake presidency; there was his father, smiling and dignified. David was early for the appointment; and as he waited, the thought occurred to him that if ever anyone knew anything about spiritual rebirth, it must be his father.

David's father had worked in the mines most of his adult life. Nothing had ever really mattered to him beyond food and sleep. Seldom had he been much of a father until the day the missionaries knocked at their door. After weeks of questions, some patience on the part of the missionaries, and many prayers by David's mother (who herself had immediately accepted the gospel taught by the missionaries), David's father had joined the Church. The rest of the family joined within weeks after their father led the way.

David hadn't noticed it at first, but gradually his father had changed. There had been nothing spectacular—no visions, no outward manifestations—but just gradual change. First they had begun to attend church. Later David's father had announced at the dinner table that they would never eat another meal in their home without having a blessing on the food. That had been twelve years ago. Then they had commenced holding a regular home evening. David still remembered the family journey to the Los Angeles Temple, where they had been sealed together as a family for time and eternity. Later, when David and his brothers had spoken harshly about one of the leaders of their ward, he remembered his father's justified anger and instant rebuke, for although David's father had controlled his temper, he made it very clear to his sons that they must never say such things about any of the Church officers again. While his father's change had occurred quietly and gradually, it was nevertheless a powerful change. David had often wondered to himself what possibly could have taken a hard-headed man like his father and literally turned him around. And now that he was on the proper course, it

seemed that his dedication and zeal in the cause of the Master increased every day.

David's father had been called to serve in the ward MIA and later in the stake. Then just two years later he had been called as a counselor in the stake presidency. David noticed that his father was gone from home a great deal, but the time he did manage to spend at home with his wife and four sons was quality time. As a contrast to twelve years ago, their home was now truly a house of love, prayer, and order. David had listened to his father's testimony in conferences and as he had shared it with his sons and with others who had been in their home. During one home evening, he had told his sons: "I am not the father you used to have; I have been changed. And I want you to know that for whatever else I may say or do, I know that Jesus lives and is my Redeemer, because I have tasted of his goodness and I know of his love for me." David knew his father well enough to know that he testified of the reality of Jesus and of the truth of the gospel from the depths of his soul. And now his father was president of the stake.

As David sat there waiting, he suddenly realized that he lived in the very shadow of a man who had been born again! Hastily he scribbled a note to his father and then left. The note read: "Dad, I won't need to talk to you after all. I have the answers to my question. See you at dinner. David."

Why do you think David's father was one who had been born again?

Was his father's spiritual rebirth a sudden thing? Were sensational manifestations involved?

Elder Harold B. Lee said, "Knowing how this birth takes place is as impossible to explain as to explain where the wind comes from or where it goes." ("Born of the Spirit," Address to Seminary and Institute Faculty, BYU, 26 June 1962; compare John 3:7, 8.)

Sometimes people get the idea that to be born of the Spirit, they have to experience something sudden and spectacular. From your reading about David's father, do you think this is always necessary?

Consider the following statement by the Prophet Joseph Smith about the manifestations of the Spirit:

"We believe that the Holy Ghost is imparted by the laying on of hands of those in authority, and that the gift of the tongues, and also the gift of prophecy, are gifts of the spirit, and are obtained through that

medium; but then to say that men always prophesied and spoke in tongues when they had the imposition of hands, would be to state that which is untrue, contrary to the practice of the apostles, and at variance with holy writ; for Paul says, 'to one is given the gift of tongues, to another the gift of prophecy, and to another the gift of healing'—and again, 'do all prophecy [sic]? do all speak with tongues? do all interpret?' evidently shewing that all did not possess these several gifts; but that one received one gift and another received another gift—all did not prophecy [sic]; all did not speak in tongues; all did not work miracles; but all did receive the gift of the Holy Ghost; sometimes they spake in tongues and prophesied in the Apostles' days, and sometimes they did not.—The same in the

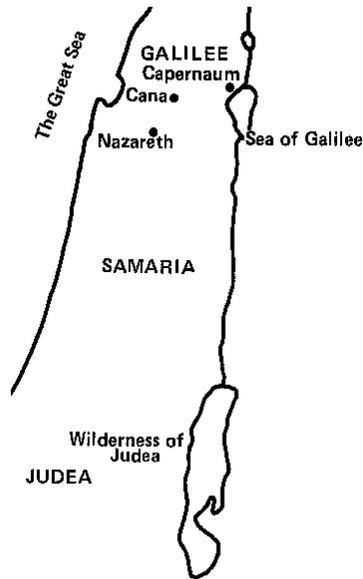
case with us also in our administrations, while more frequently there is no manifestation at all that is visible to the surrounding multitude.” (*Times and Seasons* 3:823–24 [15 June 1842]. Emphasis added.)

At this point, review the account of the interview between Nicodemus and the Lord. Especially note verse 5 in light of what you have learned about that verse in this lesson.

John 3:1–12

What would spiritual rebirth have made available to Nicodemus if he had accepted the Lord's sayings? What about the Samaritan woman? (See John 3:11, 12.) What is available to you if you accept the Lord's sayings and constantly strive to obey the Lord's commandments? (See John 3:13–15.)

"THIS IS HE OF WHOM IT IS WRITTEN"



THE GALILEAN MINISTRY	Matthew	Mark	Luke	John
Cana, Galilee Jesus Preaches Repentance	4:17	1:14, 15	4:14–15	4:45
A Capernaum Nobleman Seeks for the Healing of His Dying Son				4:46–54
Nazareth, Galilee Jesus' Own Community Rejects Him	4:13		4:16–31	
Capernaum, Galilee Preaching in the Synagogue	4:13–16		4:31, 32	
Sea of Galilee Near Capernaum Calling of Peter, Andrew, James, John	4:18–22	1:16–20	5:1–11	
Capernaum, Galilee Healing of Peter's Mother-in-Law and Others	8:14–17	1:21–34	4:31–41	
Preaching in Galilee	4:23–25	1:35–39	4:42–44	
Leper Healed	8:1–4	1:40–45	5:12–16	
Capernaum, Galilee Palsied Man Healed	9:2–8	2:1–12	5:17–26	
Matthew's Feast	9:9–13	2:13–17	5:27–32	
Discourse on Fasting	9:14–17	2:18–22	5:33–39	

THEME

Jesus Christ has the power to heal not only the physical body but, more importantly, the spirit.

INTRODUCTION

Returning to Nazareth, the place of his boyhood and early manhood, Jesus astonished the townsmen with his bold testimony that he was the promised Messiah. Using Isaiah 61:1, 2 as his text, Jesus declared: “The Spirit of the Lord God is upon me; because the Lord hath anointed me to preach good tidings unto the meek; he hath sent me to bind up the brokenhearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to them that are bound; To proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord, and the day of vengeance of our God; to comfort all that mourn.” As Jesus closed the book containing these words, He said: “This day is this scripture fulfilled in your ears.” (Luke 4:21.)

Had his own community been spiritually perceptive, Jesus would have been accepted for who he was, the Son of the Eternal Father. But, blinded to eternal realities, they saw him only as “Joseph’s son.” They had heard of the miracles he had performed in Capernaum, and inwardly they thought, “Show us a miracle also that we might see that thou art the Christ.” Hadn’t Jesus himself declared that “no prophet is accepted in his own country”? (Luke 4:24.) Angered by his testimony, they attempted to take his life.

Why didn’t Jesus perform a miracle in Nazareth? Have you ever wondered about the purpose of miracles? What is the meaning of miracles in your life?

Before proceeding, read all the scriptural references in the reading block.

INTERPRETIVE COMMENTARY

(6-1) Luke 5:1–11. Why Did Peter, Andrew, James, and John Forsake All to Follow Jesus?

Read Matthew’s account of Jesus’ call to Peter and Andrew (Matthew 4:18–20). The Prophet Joseph Smith made two important additions to these passages in his revision of the Bible:

1. The announcement by Jesus that “I am he of whom it is written by the prophets; follow me. . . .” (Matthew 4:18, Inspired Version.)

2. The fact that the disciples believed the announcement of Jesus. Hence the passage reads, “And they, *believing on his words*, left their net. . . .” (Matthew 4:17, Inspired Version; compare Matthew 4:18, 19, King James Version. Italics added.)

(6-2) Matthew 4:19, Mark 1:17. What Does It Mean to Become “Fishers of Men”?

“The process by which leaders become spiritual as those disciples were is set forth in a very simple admonition of the Master. The Savior called fishermen, and he called tax-collectors and others in various occupations to constitute his chosen twelve. He gave to each of them the same simple promise:

“‘Follow me, and I will make you fishers of men,’ or as another writer puts it, ‘I will make you to become fishers of men.’ (Matt. 4:19; Mark 1:17.)

“To ‘come after him’ is but another way of saying, ‘Keep my commandments,’ for thus he had explained it when he said to the Nephites: ‘Therefore, what manner of men ought ye to be?’ And then he answered his own question, ‘Verily I say unto you, even as I am.’ (3 Nephi 27:27.)

“To become ‘fishers of men’ is just another way of saying ‘become leaders of men.’ So in today’s language we would say to those who are so to teach: ‘If you will keep my commandments, I will make you leaders among men.’” (Harold B. Lee in *CR*, Oct. 1960, p. 15.)

(6-3) Mark 1:21–28. Can Evil Spirits Enter into a Person’s Body and Take Possession?

“Before we can understand the casting out of devils, we must have a knowledge of pre-existence and of the personal Fatherhood of God. As revealed in the gospel, God is an exalted and holy Man, a personal being in whose image man is created, a being for whom the family unit continues in the state of immortality. He is the personal Father of the spirits of all men; his spirit children began life as men and women whose bodies were composed of spirit rather than temporal element.

“These spirit offspring of Deity, endowed with agency and subject to law, had every opportunity to advance, progress, and gain the privilege of undergoing the probationary experiences of mortality. Two-thirds of them passed the tests of the pre-existent sphere and are now in process of being born into this world as mortal beings. The other one-third, failing to keep their first estate, finally came out in open rebellion against God

and his laws. As a result there was war in heaven, and the devil and his followers were cast down to earth. Those so rejected are denied, eternally, the right to have bodies of their own. In this dejected and damnable state they seek to house themselves unlawfully in the bodies of mortal men.” (McConkie, *DNTC*, 1:167–68.)

(6-4) Matthew 4:23–25. Did Jesus Heal All Afflicted People?

The Prophet Joseph Smith added to Matthew 4:23 this phrase, “which believed on his name.” Thus the healings performed by Jesus were reserved for those who had faith in him; they were not given to everyone, as the King James Version verse implies. (See Matthew 4:22, Inspired Version.)

As you focus attention on how the miracles were an evidence of Jesus’ messiahship, consider these ideas:

The miracles were occasioned because of the faith of those who believed on him.

They were performed out of compassion for the suffering.

They fulfilled the messianic prophecies.

Most significantly, the miracles testified to the divinity of the Son of God. The most vivid illustration of this was the healing of the paralytic man (Matthew 9:2–8). Elder Bruce McConkie comments on the significance of this miracle:

“Rightly understood, this event in the life of our Lord was visible and irrefutable proof that he was the Messiah; and it was so recognized by those among whom he ministered. He had borne frequent verbal testimony that God was his Father and had supported that personal witness with an unparalleled ministry of preaching and healing. Now it was his purpose to announce that he had done what no one but God could do and to prove that he had done it by a further manifestation of his Father’s power.

“Both Jesus and the ‘doctors of the law’ who were then present knew that none but God can forgive sins. Accordingly, as a pointed and dramatic witness that the power of God was resident in him, Jesus took (perhaps sought) this appropriate occasion to forgive sins. Being then called in question by the scripturalists who know (and that rightly) that the false assumption of the power to forgive sins was blasphemy, Jesus did what no imposter could have

done—he proved his divine power by healing the forgiven man. To his query, ‘Does it require more power to forgive sins than to make the sick rise up and walk?’ there could be only one answer! They are as one; he that can do the one, can do the other.” (*DNTC*, 1:177–78.)

Thus within the miracles you may see two kinds of healing: (1) the healing of physical maladies and (2) the healing of spiritual maladies.

(6-5) Matthew 4:23–25. Miracles Operate Through Law

“Miracles cannot be in contravention of natural law, but are wrought through the operation of laws not universally or commonly recognized.

“In the contemplation of the miracles wrought by Christ, we must of necessity recognize the operation of a power transcending our present human understanding. In this field, science has not yet advanced far enough to analyze and explain. To deny the actuality of miracles on the ground that, because we cannot comprehend the means, the reported results are fictitious, is to arrogate to the human mind the attribute of omniscience, by implying that what man cannot comprehend cannot be, and that therefore he is able to comprehend all that is.

“To comprehend the works of Christ, one must know Him as the Son of God; to the man who has not yet learned to know, to the honest soul who would inquire after the Lord, the invitation is ready; let him ‘Come and see.’” (Talmage, *Jesus the Christ*, pp. 148–49.)

(6-6) Matthew 8:2. What Was Leprosy?

“... Leprosy was nothing short of a living death, a corrupting of all the humors, a poisoning of the very springs, of life; a dissolution, little by little, of the whole body, so that one limb after another actually decayed and fell away. Aaron exactly describes the appearance which the leper presented to the eyes of the beholders, when, pleading for Miriam, he says, ‘Let her not be as one dead, of whom the flesh is half consumed when he cometh out of his mother’s womb.’ (Numb. 12:12.) The disease, moreover, was incurable by the art and skill of man; not that the leper might not return to health; for, however rare, such cases are contemplated in the Levitical law. . . .” (Talmage, *Jesus the Christ*, p. 200, quoting Trench, *Notes on the Miracles*, pp. 165–68.)

(6-7) Luke 5:17–24. The Remission of Sins Heals the Spirit

“From what Jesus said at the time he healed the man ‘sick with the palsy,’ it would seem that remittance of sins is the therapy which heals and that the two terms are synonymous. . . .

“In this instance there was a physical healing. Sometimes there is also a healing of the nervous system or of the mind. But *always the remittance of sins which attends divine forgiveness heals the spirit.* This accounts for the fact that in the scriptures conversion and healing are repeatedly associated.” (Marion G. Romney in *CR*, Oct. 1963, pp. 24–25. Italics added.)

(6-8) Matthew 9:11. What Is a Publican?

“Publicans were tax collectors, representatives of an alien power which held the Jews in subjection, and as such they formed a hated, despised, and derided social group. No doubt it was particularly offensive to the Jews for one of their own race, such as Matthew, to accept such employment.” (McConkie, *DNTC*, 1:181.)

(6-9) Mark 2:18–22. What Did Jesus Mean by the Phrase “New Wine in Old Bottles”?

“In such wise did our Lord proclaim the newness and completeness of His gospel. It was in no sense a patching up of Judaism. He had not come to mend old and torn garments; the cloth He provided was new, and to sew it on the old would be but to tear afresh the threadbare fabric and leave a more unsightly rent than at first. Or to change the figure, new wine could not safely be entrusted to old bottles. The bottles here referred to were really bags, made of the skins of animals, and of course they deteriorated with age. Just as old leather splits or tears under even slight strain, so the old bottle-skins would burst from the pressure of fermenting juice, and the good wine would be lost. The gospel taught by Christ was a new revelation, superseding the past, and marking the fulfilment of the law; it was no mere addendum, nor was it a reenactment of past requirements; it embodied a new and an everlasting covenant. Attempts to patch the Judaistic robe of traditionalism with the new fabric of the covenant could result in nothing more sightly than a rending of the fabric. The new wine of the gospel could not be held in the old time-worn containers of Mosaic libations. Judaism would be belittled and

Christianity perverted by any such incongruous association.” (Talmage, *Jesus the Christ*, pp. 196–97.)

POINTS TO PONDER

GREAT MIRACLES ARE STILL BEING PERFORMED TODAY

(6-10) Physical Healings Are Performed Today Among Humble People of Faith

“May I impose upon you for a moment to express appreciation for something that happened to me some time ago, years ago. I was suffering from an ulcer condition that was becoming worse and worse. We had been touring a mission; my wife, Joan, and I were impressed the next morning that we should get home as quickly as possibly, although we had planned to stay for some other meetings.

“On the way across the country, we were sitting in the forward section of the airplane. Some of our Church members were in the next section. As we approached a certain point en route, someone laid his hand upon my head. I looked up: I could see no one. That happened again before we arrived home, again with the same experience. Who it was, by what means or what medium, I may never know, except I knew that I was receiving a blessing that I came a few hours later to know I needed most desperately.

“As soon as we arrived home, my wife very anxiously called the doctor. It was now about 11 o’clock at night. He called me to come to the telephone, and he asked me how I was; and I said, ‘Well, I am very tired. I think I will be all right.’ But shortly thereafter, there came massive hemorrhages which, had they occurred while we were in flight, I wouldn’t be here today talking about it.

“I know that there are powers divine that reach out when all other help is not available. We see that manifest down in the countries we speak of as the underprivileged countries where there is little medical aid and perhaps no hospitals. *If you want to hear of great miracles among these humble people with simple faith, you will see it among them when they are left to themselves.* Yes, I know that there are such powers.” (Harold B. Lee, “Stand Ye in Holy Places,” *Ensign*, July 1973, p. 123. Italics added.)

Sometimes members of the Church are dismayed because it seems to them there are not many miracles such as healings, speaking in tongues, and visions manifest in the Church. While it is true that these types of manifestations are happening, why do we not hear more about them? Can you see why, in most cases, they are done privately? In spite of this, why do you think some of Jesus' miracles were done openly? Do you think that some were done to bear witness of him? What miracles are being performed today that bear witness of his divinity?

(6-11) The Greatest Miracles Today Are the Healing of Sick Souls

“The great call has come now in the sermons of the brethren to aid those who are in need of aid, not just temporal aid, but spiritual aid. *The greatest miracles I see today are not necessarily the healing of sick bodies, but the greatest miracles I see are the healing of sick souls, those who are sick in soul and spirit and are downhearted and distraught, on the verge of nervous breakdowns. We are reaching out to all such, because they are precious in the sight of the Lord, and we want no one to feel that they are forgotten. . . .*

“You cannot lift another soul until you are standing on higher ground than he is. You must be sure, if you would rescue the man, that you yourself are setting the example of what you would have him be. You cannot

light a fire in another soul unless it is burning in your own soul. You teachers, the testimony that you bear, the spirit with which you teach and with which you lead, is one of the most important assets that you can have, as you help to strengthen those who need so much, wherein you have so much to give. Who of us, in whatever station we may have been in have not needed strengthening?” (Lee, “Stand Ye in Holy Places,” p. 123. Italics added.)

Is it apparent from this statement by President Lee that the greatest miracle being performed today is the transformation of a “natural” man or woman (see Mosiah 3:19) into a son or daughter of God? Is there a greater witness of Christ's divinity than the testimonies of people who have given up a worldly way of life to follow him?

Think about the following:

Have you felt the healing power of Christ in your own life?

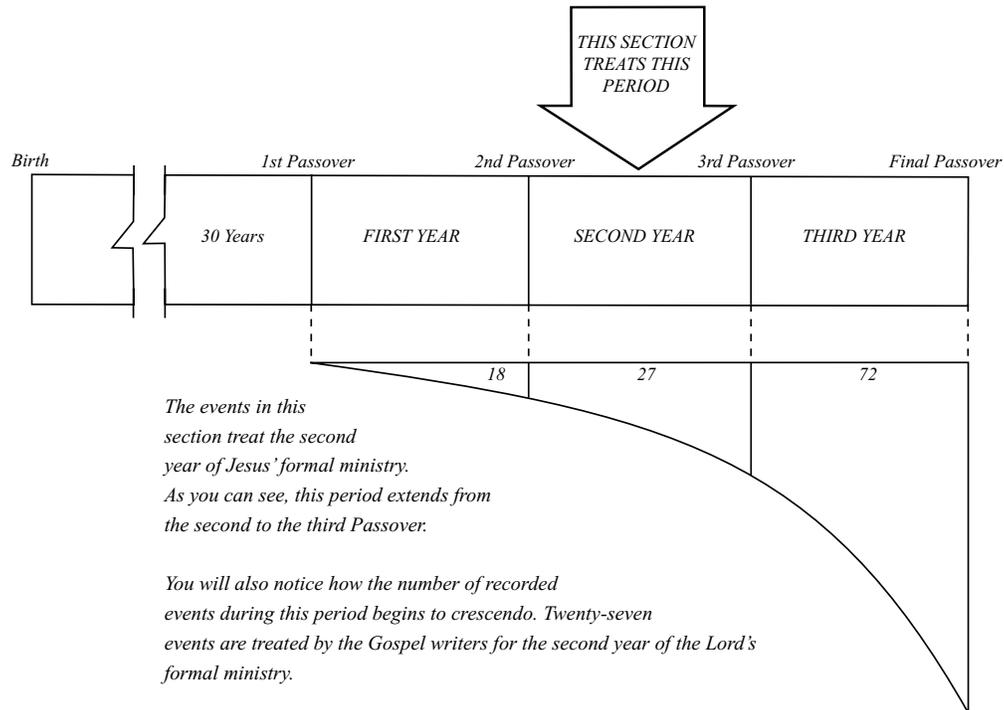
Have you felt a forgiveness for sins?

Are there still sins holding you back from lifting others to higher grounds?

Could you, through study, prayer, and fasting, obtain added strength from Jesus Christ to receive the miracle of forgiveness?

SECTION 3

THE SECOND YEAR OF JESUS' PUBLIC MINISTRY



LESSONS

7. The Calling of the Twelve
8. Be Ye Therefore Perfect
9. Whomsoever Shall Do the Will of My Father
10. He Spake Many Things unto Them in Parables
11. He That Receiveth Whomsoever I Send Receiveth Me

A Brief Summary of the First Year of the Savior's Ministry

The first year of the Savior's public ministry was opened by the dramatic event of the cleansing of the temple. Significant interviews with Nicodemus and the woman of Samaria followed, in which Jesus declared his identity and important doctrines for entrance into his kingdom. This period is referred to by scholars as his early Judean ministry.

This was followed by what is usually called his Galilean ministry, which included his visit to Nazareth, which is in the northern province of Galilee. Rejected there after the declaration of his messiahship to his townsmen, Jesus turned toward the cities that surrounded the Sea of Galilee. Peter, James, John, and Andrew were called to follow him. This period marked the beginning of Jesus' miracles and his preaching to the Jews.

An Overview of the Second Year

The second year opened as Jesus came down from Galilee to attend the feast of the Passover at Jerusalem. While there he healed a man on the Sabbath day. So reactionary were the Jewish leaders to a healing on the Sabbath that they sought to kill Jesus (John 5:16). You will read in this section how Jesus answered charges concerning the violation of the Sabbath and how he established his credentials before them.

The plot against Jesus caused him to withdraw again to Galilee, where he called and ordained twelve men, whom he designated as apostles. This ended the first of three phases of his Galilean ministry.

Highlights of the Second Phase of the Galilean Ministry

Some of the highlights of the second phase of the Galilean ministry are as follows:

1. Jesus' instructions to his disciples and to the Twelve (the Sermon on the Mount).
2. Further miracles in which the Twelve learned about the power of the priesthood. Among these miracles are two in which the dead were called to life again.
3. Mounting opposition against Jesus, causing him to use another teaching method—parables. These were sometimes designed to *conceal* his message from the unbelievers. You will receive some help in interpreting these parables and applying them to our time and circumstances.
4. Jesus' second rejection at his hometown, Nazareth!
5. The sending forth of the Twelve with a special commission, and their return and report.

Some Notable Places and Events During This Phase of the Galilean Ministry

Some of the places and events mentioned by the Gospel writers in this section are these:

Bethsaida, where Jesus retired with his apostles following their return from their missions (Luke 9:10, 11).

Capernaum, where, among others, the following miracles occurred: the centurion's servant healed; Jairus's daughter raised from the dead; a woman with an issue of blood healed.

Gadara (Gergesa), where Jesus healed a man afflicted with evil spirits, which then entered into a herd of swine (Mark 5:1–21).

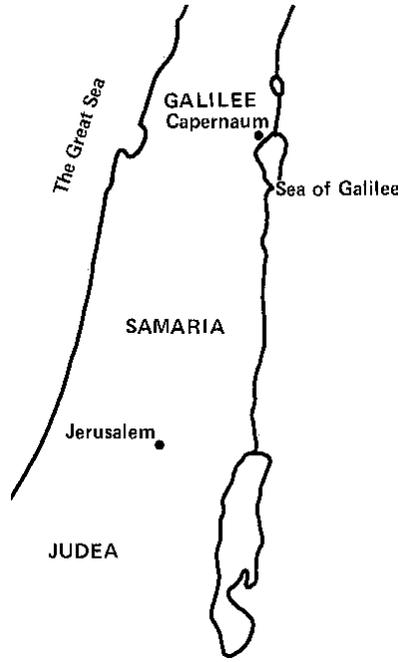
Nain, where Jesus raised the widow's son from the dead (Luke 7:11–17).

Nazareth, where Jesus was rejected a second time (Mark 6:1–6).

The introductory map illustrates these cities and their relationship to one another.

With this overview, turn now to the events of this portion of our Lord's ministry.

THE CALLING OF THE TWELVE



THE GALILEAN MINISTRY	Matthew	Mark	Luke	John
Healing at Pool				5:1-16*
Jesus Teaches of Himself				5:17-47*
Discourse on the Sabbath	12:1-14*	2:23-28 3:1-6	6:1-5	
Jesus Withdraws to the Sea	12:15-21*	3:7-12*		
Twelve Chosen	10:2-4	3:13-21	6:12-16*	
*Indicates emphasis				

THEME

Apostles are special witnesses of the Lord Jesus Christ.

INTRODUCTION

Even strong men of God are humbled when summoned to the high and holy office of apostle of

the Lord Jesus Christ. Ponder the words of one who had just been called to such a position:

“Since nine o’clock last night I have lived an entire lifetime in retrospect and in prospect. I spent a sleepless night. I never closed my eyes one moment, and neither would you if you had been in my place. Throughout the night, as I thought of this most

appalling and soul-stirring assignment, there kept coming to me the words of the Apostle Paul that he spoke in explanation of the human qualities that were to be found in the Lord and Savior:

“For we have not an high priest which cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities; but was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin.

“Let us therefore come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need.” (Hebrews 4:15, 16.)

“One could not have listened to the soul-stirring testimony of President Grant, in bearing testimony as to his feelings when he was called to the apostleship, or his experiences in calling others to similar positions, without realizing that he has been close to his Heavenly Father in this experience. Therefore I shall take the word of the Apostle Paul. I shall come boldly unto the throne of grace, and ask for mercy and His grace to help me in my time of need. With that help I cannot fail. Without it I cannot succeed.

“Since my childhood I have looked upon these men as the greatest men on the face of the earth, and now the contemplation of an ultimate association with them, is overwhelming and beyond my comprehension.” (Harold B. Lee in CR, Apr. 1941, pp. 119–20.)

In this lesson you will seek to understand the office and calling of the apostles during the ministry of Jesus Christ. As you study this section, consider the following questions: What makes the calling of an apostle different from that of other followers of Christ? What should be our attitude today toward those who are members of the Council of the Twelve Apostles?

Before proceeding, read all the scriptural references in the reading block.

INTERPRETIVE COMMENTARY

(7-1) John 5:31–34. What Did Jesus Say Concerning His Mission and the Witness Others Bore of Him?

Compare the following passages of scripture in the Inspired Version with John 5:31–34, 36–38 of the King James Version:

“32 Therefore if I bear witness of myself, yet my witness is true.

“33 For I am not alone, there is another who beareth witness of me, and I know that the testimony which he giveth of me is true.

“34 Ye sent unto John, and he bare witness also unto the truth.

“35 And he received not his testimony of man, but of God, and ye yourselves say that he is a prophet, therefore ye ought to receive his testimony. These things I say that ye might be saved. . . .

“37 But I have a greater witness than the testimony of John; for the works which the Father hath given me to finish, the same works that I do, bear witness of me, that the Father hath sent me.

“38 And the Father himself who sent me, hath borne witness of me. And verily I testify unto you, that ye have never heard his voice at any time, nor seen his shape;

“39 For ye have not his word abiding in you; and him whom he hath sent, ye believe not.” (John 5:32–35, 37–39, Inspired Version.)

(7-2) John 5:39. What Does It Mean to “Search the Scriptures”?

“Since we cannot ‘live by [the words which] proceedeth forth from the mouth of God’ unless we know what they are, it is imperative that we study them. This the Lord has directed us to do.

“As the Jews disputed with Jesus because he said that God was his Father, he pointedly responded: ‘Search the scriptures; for in them ye think ye have eternal life: and they are they which testify of me.’ (John 5:39.)

“In the Lord’s preface to his Book of Commandments, he said: ‘Search these commandments, for they are true and faithful, and the prophecies and promises which are in them shall all be fulfilled.’ (D&C 1:37.)

“We are under divine instruction to ‘teach the principles of [the] gospel, which are in the Bible and the Book of Mormon.’ (D&C 42:12.) This we cannot do unless we know what they are.” (Marion G. Romney in CR, Apr. 1973, 117.)

(7-3) Luke 6:9. “Is It Lawful on the Sabbath Days to Do Good, or to Do Evil?”

“Whether at home or in church, your thoughts and your conduct should be always in harmony with the spirit and purpose of the Sabbath. Places of amusement and recreation, while at proper times may serve a needed end, are not conducive of spiritual growth and such places will not keep you ‘unspotted

from the world' but will rather deny you the 'fullness of the earth' promised to those who comply with the law of the Sabbath. You who make the violation of the Sabbath a habit, by your failure to 'keep it holy,' are losing a soul full of joy in return for a thimble full of pleasure. You are giving too much attention to your physical desires at the expense of your spiritual health. The Sabbath breaker shows early the signs of his weakening in the faith by neglecting his daily family prayers, by fault-finding, by failing to pay his tithes and his offerings, and such a one whose mind begins to be darkened because of spiritual starvation soon begins also to have doubts and fears that make him unfit for spiritual learning or advancement in righteousness. These are the signs of spiritual decay and spiritual sickness that may only be cured by proper spiritual feeding." (Lee, *Decisions for Successful Living*, pp. 147–48.)

(7-4) What Is the Distinction Between a Disciple and an Apostle?

"Discipleship is general; any follower of a man or devotee to a principle may be called a disciple. The Holy Apostleship is an office and calling belonging to the Higher or Melchizedek Priesthood, at once exalted and specific, comprising as a distinguishing function that of personal and special witness to the divinity of Jesus Christ as the one and only Redeemer and Savior of mankind. The apostleship is an individual bestowal, and as such is *conferred only through ordination.*" (Talmage, *Jesus the Christ*, p. 227. Italics added.)

(7-5) Matthew 10:1. From Whom Did the Twelve Apostles Receive Their Special Endowment of Power?

"At the commencement of His ministry, the Master chose twelve men whom he separated from the rest by the name, Apostles. These were to be special witnesses of the sanctity of His life, and of His divine mission, and to be responsible for transmitting to the latest posterity, a genuine account of His doctrines, and principles, and ordinances essential to the salvation of the human soul. . . .

"True servants in the Kingdom of God, when properly authorized, received an endowment of holy power except for which their ministry would be as the 'tinkling of brass and the sounding of cymbals.' This heavenly endowment to His chosen Twelve, came as a result of three sacred experiences. First, they were baptized of water, maybe by John the Baptist, or possibly as the only ones He did baptize, by the Master, himself, for John records that He and His disciples were in Judea 'and there He tarried with

them and baptized.' (John 3:22) Then He 'breathed on them and said unto them, receive ye the Holy Ghost,' (John 20:22) which in all likelihood was the confirmation and the commission to receive the Holy Ghost, or the baptism of the Spirit, by the laying on of hands for that was the procedure followed thereafter by His disciples. . . .

"The third of the remarkable spiritual experiences to which the disciples were privileged is thus described by the Master, himself: 'Ye have not chosen me but I have chosen you and ordained you,—that whatsoever ye should ask the Father in my name He may give it you.' (John 15:16) Try to imagine if you can, being 'called' by the Master and 'ordained' under His hands. That these ordinations resulted in an endowment of power from on high as well as giving authority to act officially as the Lord's representatives, is well attested by the miraculous events that followed, which made of them, 'men different' because of that divine commission.

"Not alone were these special apostolic witnesses to receive and enjoy these heavenly gifts. They were commissioned to transmit them by ordinations to others who had received the witness of the divine mission of the risen Lord." (Harold B. Lee in *CR*, Apr. 1955, pp. 18–19.)

(7-6) Luke 6:13. What Is an Apostle?

One of the most important things to know about apostles is that they are called to be witnesses of the Savior. This witness may come in several ways. (See item 9-8.) Of this Elder Harold B. Lee has said:

"May I impose to bear my own testimony. I was visiting with one of the missionaries some years ago when two missionaries came to me with what seemed to be a very difficult question, to them. A young Methodist minister had laughed at them when they had said that apostles were necessary today in order for the true church to be upon the earth. And they said the minister said: 'Do you realize that when they met to choose one to fill the vacancy caused by the death of Judas, that they said it had to be one who companied with them and had been a witness of all things pertaining to the mission and resurrection of the Lord? How can you say you have apostles, if that be the measure of an apostle?' And so these young men said, 'What shall we answer?' I said to them: 'Go back and ask your minister friend two questions. First, how did the Apostle Paul gain what was necessary to be called an apostle? He didn't know the Lord; had no personal acquaintance. He hadn't accompanied the apostles. He hadn't been a witness of the ministry, nor the

resurrection of the Lord. How did he gain his testimony sufficient to be an apostle? Now the second question you ask him: How does he know that all who are today apostles have not likewise received that witness? I bear witness to you that those who hold the apostolic calling may, and do know of the reality of the mission of the Lord.” (“Born of the Spirit,” Address to Seminary and Institute Faculty, 26 June 1962.)

(7-7) What Do We Know About the Names of the Original Quorum of the Twelve?

The chart on page 56 summarizes New Testament statements about the names of the original twelve apostles. (Except where noted, this information is taken from Matthew 10:1–4, Mark 3:16–19, Luke 6:14–16, Acts 1:13, and John 21:2.)

POINTS TO PONDER

THE SPECIAL CALLING OF MEMBERS OF THE QUORUM OF THE TWELVE

What is the special calling of an apostle? Read the following scriptures and carefully think about the words or phrases that describe the calling of an apostle:

Acts 1:18. What is the significance of the phrases “witnesses unto me,” and “unto the uttermost parts of the earth”?

Matthew 28:18–20. What command is here given to apostles?

D&C 112:1–7. To whom are the Twelve to bear witness?

D&C 112:16–19. What keys do the Twelve have, and what doors can they unlock?

D&C 107:23, 24, 33–35, 58. What special calling sets the apostles apart from all other church callings?

The Prophet Joseph Smith explained the important calling of an apostle by asking a question and then giving the answer:

“... What importance is there attached to the calling of these Twelve Apostles, different from the other callings or officers of the Church? ...

“They are the Twelve Apostles, who are called to the office of the Traveling High Council, who are to preside over the churches of the Saints, among the Gentiles, where there is a presidency established; and they are to travel and preach among the Gentiles, until the Lord shall command them to go to the Jews. They are to hold the keys of this ministry, to unlock the door of the Kingdom of heaven unto all nations, and to preach the Gospel to every creature. This is the power, authority, and virtue of their apostleship.” (HC, 2:200.)

Now read Elder Boyd K. Packer’s testimony as he responded to his call as a member of the Council of the Twelve:

“I have heard one of my brethren declare: ‘I know from experiences, too sacred to relate, that Jesus is the Christ.’

“I have heard another testify: ‘I know that God lives; I know that the Lord lives. And more than that, I know the Lord.’

“It was not their words that held the meaning or the power. It was the Spirit. ‘... for when a man speaketh by the power of the Holy Ghost the power of the Holy Ghost carrieth it unto the hearts of the children of men.’ (2 Ne. 33:1.)

“I have come to know that the witness does not come by seeking after signs. It comes through fasting and prayer, through activity and testing and obedience. It comes through sustaining the servants of the Lord and following them. . . .

“Now, I wonder with you why one such as I should be called to the holy apostleship. There are so many qualifications that I lack. There is so much in my effort to serve that is wanting. As I have pondered on it, I have come to only one single thing, one qualification in which there may be cause, and that is, I have that witness.

“I declare to you that I know that Jesus is the Christ. I know that he lives. He was born in the meridian of time. He taught his gospel, was tried, was crucified. He rose on the third day. He was the first fruits of the resurrection. He has a body of flesh and bone. Of this I bear testimony.” (CR, Apr. 1971, pp. 123–25.)

APOSTLES ARE CHOSEN BY THE LORD

Now that you have reviewed briefly the calling of an apostle, perhaps you have wondered how a man is called to such a high and holy calling. Review Luke 6:12, 13. Why did Jesus spend all night in prayer and meditation before calling the Twelve? Is this same process used in calling an apostle today?

(7-8) Apostles Are Called by Revelation

An example which illustrates how apostles are called today is taken from the life of President Joseph Fielding Smith:

“For an hour or more the Church Presidency and Council of Twelve Apostles, meeting in the Salt Lake Temple in April, 1910, had discussed various men as possibilities to fill the vacancy in the council occasioned by the death of President John R. Winder on March 27, and the subsequent advancement of Apostle John Henry Smith to the presidency. But to every name suggested there was some exception taken. It seemed impossible to reach any unanimity of feeling in the matter. Finally President Joseph F. Smith retired to a room by himself and knelt in prayer for guidance. When he returned he somewhat hesitantly asked the 13 other brethren whether they would be willing to consider his son Joseph Fielding Smith Jr. for the position. He was reluctant to suggest it, he said, because . . . Church members, he feared, would be disgruntled to have another of his sons appointed as a general authority. Nevertheless he felt inspired to offer Joseph’s name for their consideration. The other men seemed immediately receptive to the suggestion and sustained President Smith in it. . . .

Years later Heber J. Grant, who by then was president of the Church and who was present in the council meeting in the temple the day Joseph was chosen in 1910, assured a group of the correctness of the decision: It was at a Smith family reunion. President Grant pointed to Joseph Fielding and said, ‘That man

was called by direct revelation of God. I am a witness to that fact.’” (Smith and Stewart, *The Life of Joseph Fielding Smith*, pp. 174, 177.)

THOSE WHO FOLLOW THE COUNCIL OF THE TWELVE WILL BE BLESSED AND SUSTAINED BY THE LORD

(7-9) The Lord Guides His Saints Through the First Presidency and the Quorum of the Twelve

“May I now say—very plainly and very emphatically—that we have the holy priesthood and that the keys of the kingdom of God are here. They are found only in The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. . . .

“Now, brethren, I think there is one thing which we should have exceedingly clear in our minds. Neither the President of the Church, nor the First Presidency, nor the united voice of the First Presidency and the Twelve will ever lead the Saints astray or send forth counsel to the world that is contrary to the mind and will of the Lord.” (Joseph Fielding Smith in *CR*, Apr. 1972, p. 99.)

Since each of the special witnesses of the Lord is chosen for his high post by divine revelation, in much the same way that Jesus chose those in his day, what should be our attitude toward such men? How well do you personally accept them in their appointed posts?

Do you sustain them in word and action, or do you at times criticize and find fault with their counsel?

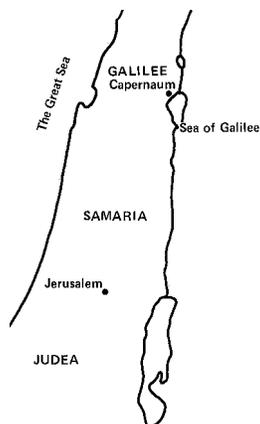
Would the Lord approve of the way in which you honor them?

Read Acts 2:42. How steadfast are you in the apostles’ doctrine?

What blessings come to you because the Lord has set apostles in the Church? (See Ephesians 4:11–14.)

GIVEN NAME	ALTERNATE NAMES OR SPECIAL MEANINGS	FAMILY FACTS
Simon	Given a special name by Jesus: Cephas (Syriac) or Petros (Greek) which means “stone or rock.” See John 1:42.	He was the son of a man named Jonah and brother to Andrew. (Matthew 16:17; John 1:42)
James	James is an English form of the Hebrew Jacob. The Hebrew means “supplanter.” He and his brother John were called Boanerges, meaning “sons of thunder.”	Son of Zebedee and brother of John. (Matthew 4:21)
John	The name means “Jehovah is gracious,” from the Hebrew Johanan.	Son of Zebedee and brother of James. (Matthew 4:21)
Andrew	The name means “manly.”	Son of Jonah and brother of Simon Peter. (Matthew 4:18)
Philip	The name comes from the Greek and means “lover of horses.”	He may have been a Jewish-Greek as he was approached by the Greeks in John 12:21.
Nathanael (Bartholomew)	<i>Nathanael</i> means “gift of God,” and is from the Hebrew.	He was likely the son of a man named Tholomew.
Thomas	He is also called Didymus, from the Greek, meaning “twin.” See John 11:16; 20:24.	Didymus may have been his surname.
Matthew	A Hebrew word meaning “gift of Jehovah”; he was also called “Levi” and “the Publican.”	He was the son of Alphaeus. (Mark 2:14) Brother of James the less.
James	Called “the less” to distinguish him from James above.	He was the son of Alphaeus and brother of Matthew.
Jude	This is the Hebrew form of the Greek Judas. He is also called “not Iscariot” to distinguish him from the traitor Judas (John 14:22), Lebbeaus (Arabic for “root”), and Thaddaeus (Hebrew root for “heart”).	
Simon	Called “the Canaanite” (Matthew 10:4) and “the Zealot” (Luke 6:15). The Hebrew word for zealots was <i>Kananim</i> . This would explain the title “Canaanite.”	He probably had been a member of the Hebrew group which advocated fierce allegiance to Israel and violent overthrow of Roman domination.
Judas	Called Iscariot, probably because he was from the village of Kerieth (Joshua 15:24).	He was the son of Simon. (John 6:71; 12:4).

"BE YE THEREFORE PERFECT"



THE GALILEAN MINISTRY	Matthew	Mark	Luke	John
Place and Audience	5:1, 2*		6:17-19	
Beatitudes	5:3-12*		6:20-26	
Obligation of Discipleship	5:13-16*			
Righteousness of Christ's Disciples to Exceed the Righteousness of Pharisees	5:17-20*			
The Law of Moses Fulfilled by the Law of Christ	5:21-48*		6:27-36	
Almsgiving	6:1-4*			
Prayer	6:5-13*			
Forgiving Others	6:14, 15*			
Fasting	6:16-18*			
Lay Up Treasures in Heaven	6:19-23*			
Ye Cannot Serve Two Masters	6:24*			
Special Instructions to the Twelve	6:25-34*			
Judge Righteous Judgment	7:1-6		6:37-42	
Earnestness of Prayer	7:7-11*			
Golden Rule	7:12*		6:31	
Two Gates and Two Ways	7:13, 14*			
Final Test of Character	7:15-27*		6:43-49	
Effects of the Sermon	7:28, 29*			
*Indicates emphasis				

THEME

Perfection is an ultimate goal that can be achieved as we draw upon the power of Christ.

INTRODUCTION

Perfection is a word that causes different reactions from many people. Some people say, "Perfection? Why, that is impossible!" Others say, "Perfection? I get discouraged just thinking about it!"

Yet, would the Lord give us a commandment that was impossible for us to keep? And when he gives a commandment, doesn't he, as Nephi said, prepare a way for us to accomplish what he commands? The Sermon on the Mount is the Lord's blueprint for perfection. Of this sermon Elder Harold B. Lee said:

"Christ came not only into the world to make an atonement for the sins of mankind but to set an example before the world of the standard of perfection of God's law and of obedience to the Father. In his Sermon on the Mount the Master has given us somewhat of a revelation of his own character, which was perfect, or what might be said to be 'an autobiography, every syllable of which he had written down in deeds,' and in so doing has given us a blueprint for our own lives." (Decisions for Successful Living, pp. 55–56.)

Before proceeding, read all the scriptural references in the reading block.

INTERPRETIVE COMMENTARY

(8-1) To Whom Was the Sermon Given?

It was given to members of Christ's church. In the opening verses of a parallel sermon delivered to the Nephites in America, the Lord is clearly addressing this sermon to members of the church. Cross-reference Matthew 5:1 with 3 Nephi 12:1–3.

As you study this sermon, you should remember that "some portions of this comprehensive address were expressly directed to *the disciples, who had been or would be called to the apostleship* and in consequence be required to renounce all their worldly interests for the labors of the ministry; *other parts were and are of general application.*" (Talmage, *Jesus the Christ*, p. 230. Italics added.)

(8-2) Clarifications Concerning the Sermon on the Mount

"One of the problems which sectarian gospel harmonists cannot resolve with certainty is whether Matthew's account of the Sermon on the Mount and Luke's version of the Sermon on the Plain are records of the same or of different sermons. It is clear that the Sermon on the Plain, as given by Luke, was delivered immediately following the selection and ordination of the Twelve. Those who maintain that two different sermons are involved assert that Matthew is recounting an occurrence prior to the call of the Twelve, and also that he is assembling from many different sermons some of Jesus' greatest ethical teachings, so that by presenting them as one continuous sermon a better concept of our Lord's teachings may be had.

"Actually Matthew does not tell of the call and ordination of the Twelve. He merely names them when he records the instructions which Jesus gave at the time they were sent forth to preach and heal the sick. (Matt. 10.) Further, with some major additions, corrections, and improvements, the Sermon on the Mount as preserved by Matthew was given over again by Christ to the Nephites (3 Ne. 12; 13; 14), showing that the material recorded in Matt. 5; 6; 7 is all one continuous discourse. The Nephite version was given after the call of the Nephite Twelve, and portions of the sermon are addressed expressly to those apostolic ministers rather than to the multitude in general. (3 Ne. 13:25.) In Matthew's account, as found in the Inspired Version, the Prophet adds a considerable amount of material that applies to those called to the Twelve rather than to people in general. (I.V. Matt. 5:3–4; 6:25–27; 7:6–17.)" (McConkie, *DNTC*, 1:213–14.)

(8-3) Matthew 5:29, 30. "If Thy Right Hand Offend Thee, Cut It Off"

"... When the Lord spoke of parts of the body, it is evident that he had in mind close friends or relatives who endeavored to lead us from the path of rectitude and humble obedience to the divine commandments we receive from the Lord.

"If any friend or relative endeavors to lead a person away from the commandments, it is better to dispense with his friendship and association rather than to follow him in evil practices to destruction. This use of

comparison or illustration was as common in ancient days as it is in the present age. We should not, in reading these ancient expressions in the New Testament, take such a statement as this referred to in the words of the Savior recorded by Mark in the literal interpretation. When properly understood it becomes a very impressive figure of speech.” (Smith, *Answers to Gospel Questions*, 5:79.)

(8-4) Matthew 6:1–4. How Can One Give Alms in Righteousness?

“*Almsgiving* is the contribution of free gifts to relieve the poor; the spirit that attends such a course is of God and finds its highest manifestation in the organized charitable enterprises of his earthly kingdom. . . . In modern times the major portion of the almsgiving of the saints is administered through the great Church Welfare Plan.” (McConkie, *Mormon Doctrine*, pp. 30–31.)

(8-5) Matthew 6:5–15. How Does One Pray in Secret?

“. . . go where you can be alone, go where you can think, go where you can kneel, go where you can speak out loud to him. The bedroom, the bathroom, or the closet will do. Now, picture him in your mind’s eye. Think to whom you are speaking, control your thoughts—don’t let them wander, address him as your Father and your friend. Now tell him things you really feel to tell him—not trite phrases that have little meaning, but have a sincere, heartfelt conversation with him. Confide in him, ask him for forgiveness, plead with him, enjoy him, thank him, express your love to him, and then listen for his answers. Listening is an essential part of praying. Answers from the Lord come quietly—ever so quietly. In fact, few hear his answers audibly with their ears. We must be listening so carefully or we will never recognize them. Most answers from the Lord are felt in our heart as a warm comfortable expression, or they may come as thoughts to our mind. They come to those who are prepared and who are patient.” (H. Burke Peterson, “Adversity and Prayer,” *Ensign*, Jan. 1974, p. 19.)

(8-6) Matthew 6:19–23. What Are Treasures in Heaven?

“Treasures in heaven are the character, perfections, and attributes which men acquire by obedience to law. Thus, those who gain such attributes of godliness as knowledge, faith, justice, judgment, mercy, and truth,

will find these same attributes restored to them again in immortality. (Alma 41:13–15.) ‘Whatever principle of intelligence we attain unto in this life, it will rise with us in the resurrection.’ (D&C 130:18.) The greatest treasure it is possible to inherit in heaven consists in gaining the continuation of the family unit in the highest heaven of the celestial world.” (McConkie, *DNTC*, 1:239–40.)

(8-7) Matthew 6:24. What Is Mammon?

“Mammon is an Aramaic word for riches. Thus Jesus is saying, ‘Ye cannot serve God and riches, or worldliness, which always results from the love of money.’” (McConkie, *DNTC*, 1:240.)

(8-8) Matthew 6:25–34. Should Members of the Church Really Take No Thought for Temporal Concerns?

“This portion of the Sermon on the Mount was delivered to the apostles and such of the disciples as were called to forsake their temporal pursuits and carry the message of salvation to the world. There is not now and never has been a call to the saints generally to ‘sell that ye have’ (Luke 12:33), give alms to the poor, and then to take no thought for the temporal needs of the present or future. Rather, as part of their mortal probation, the true followers of the Master are expected by him to provide for themselves and their families. (D&C 75.)

“However, a special rule applies to those who are called to go into the world without purse or scrip and preach the gospel. For the time and season of their missionary service they are to have no concern about business enterprises or temporal pursuits. They are to be free of the encumbering obligations that always attend those who manage temporal affairs. Their whole attention and all of their strength and talents are to be centered on the work of the ministry, and they have the Father’s promise that he will look after their daily needs.” (McConkie, *DNTC*, 1:243.)

(8-9) Matthew 7:1. Must True Disciples Follow the Injunction “Judge Not”?

The element of judging and discerning is a necessary part of life. Joseph Smith’s inspired revision of the Bible provides some guidelines in this regard.

“Now these are the words which Jesus taught his disciples that they should say unto the people.

“Judge not unrighteously, that ye be not judged; but judge righteous judgment.” (Matthew 7:1, 2, Inspired Version.)

See also Luke 6:37.

Some forms of judgment, however, must be rendered only by the Lord. President N. Eldon Tanner, using the calling of David (1 Samuel 16:7) as an example, said:

“The reason, therefore, that we cannot judge is obvious. We cannot see what is in the heart. We do not know motives, although we impute motives to every action we see. They may be pure while we think they are improper.

“It is not possible to judge another fairly unless you know his desires, his faith, and his goals. Because of a different environment, unequal opportunity, and many other things, people are not in the same position. One may start at the top and the other at the bottom, and they may meet as they are going in opposite directions. Someone has said that it is not where you are but the direction in which you are going that counts; not how close you are to failure or success but which way you are headed. How can we, with all our weaknesses and frailties, dare to arrogate to ourselves the position of a judge? At best, man can judge only what he sees; he cannot judge the heart or the intention, or begin to judge the potential of his neighbor.

“When we try to judge people, which we should not do, we have a great tendency to look for and take pride in finding weaknesses and faults, such as vanity, dishonesty, immorality, and intrigue. As a result, we see only the worst side of those being judged.” (“Judge Not, That Ye Be Not Judged,” *Ensign*, July 1972, p. 35.)

(8-10) Matthew 7:13, 14. “Enter Ye in at the Strait Gate.”

“The course leading to eternal life is both *strait* and *straight*. It is *straight* because it has an invariable direction—always it is the same. There are no diversions, crooked paths, or tangents leading to the kingdom of God. It is *strait* because it is narrow and restricted, a course where full obedience to the full law is required. Straightness has reference to direction, straitness to width. The gate is *strait*; the path is both strait and straight.” (McConkie, *Mormon Doctrine*, p. 769.)

POINTS TO PONDER

THE ULTIMATE GOAL FOR LATTER-DAY SAINTS IS TO BECOME LIKE GOD THE FATHER

Have you given much thought as to what your ultimate goal is? How does it make you feel when you read these words of Jesus: “Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect”? (Matthew 5:48.) Your divine potential is to become like your Father in heaven, perfect and without sin.

(8-11) The Doctrine of Becoming like God Has Been Taught by Prophets

“We have been promised by the Lord that if we know how to worship, and know what we worship, we may come unto the Father in his name, and in due time receive of his fulness. We have the promise that if we keep his commandments, we shall receive of his fulness and be glorified in him as he is in the Father. [See D&C 93:11–20, 26–28.]

“This is a doctrine which delighted President Snow, as it does all of us. Early in his ministry he received by direct, personal revelation the knowledge that (in the Prophet Joseph Smith’s language), ‘God himself was once as we are now, and is an exalted man, and sits enthroned in yonder heavens,’ and that men ‘have got to learn how to be Gods . . . the same as all Gods have done before. . . .’ [*Teachings*, pp. 345–46.]

“After this doctrine had been taught by the Prophet, President Snow felt free to teach it also, and he summarized it in one of the best known couplets in the Church in these words:

“‘As man now is, God once was;
As God now is, man may be.’”

(Address by Joseph Fielding Smith at Snow College, 14 May 1971, pp. 1–8.)

WE CAN BEGIN THE CLIMB TO PERFECTION HERE AND NOW, ONE STEP AT A TIME

(8-12) Perfection Is Compared to Climbing a Ladder

“When you climb up a ladder, you must begin at the bottom, and ascend step by step, until you arrive at the top; and so it is with the principles of the gospel—you

must begin with the first, and go on until you learn all the principles of exaltation. But it will be a great while after you have passed through the veil before you will have learned them. It is not all to be comprehended in this world; it will be a great work to learn our salvation and exaltation even beyond the grave.” (Smith, *HC*, 6:306–7.)

(8-13) Faithfulness to the Commandments Is the Key to Growth

“How can the saints receive of his fulness and be equal with the Lord and not be as he is, that is, gods?”

“The Father has promised through the Son that all that he has shall be given to those who are obedient to his commandments. *They shall increase in knowledge, wisdom, and power, going from grace to grace, until the fulness of the perfect day shall burst upon them.* They shall, through the glory and blessing of the Almighty, become *creators*. All power, and dominion, and might shall be given to them, and they shall be the only ones upon whom this great blessing shall be bestowed. . . .” (Smith, *Doctrines of Salvation*, 2:36.)

THE SERMON ON THE MOUNT TEACHES US WHAT WE MUST DO IN ORDER TO DRAW UPON THE POWER OF CHRIST IN OUR QUEST FOR PERFECTION

(8-14) The Sermon on the Mount Is Our Constitution for Perfection

“In that matchless Sermon on the Mount, Jesus has given us eight distinct ways by which we might receive this kind of joy. Each of his declarations is begun by the word ‘Blessed.’ Blessedness is defined as being higher than happiness. ‘Happiness comes from without and is dependent on circumstances; blessedness is an inward fountain of joy in the soul itself, which no outward circumstances can seriously affect.’ (Dummelow’s Commentary) These declarations of the Master are known in the literature of the Christian world as the Beatitudes and have been referred to by Bible commentators as the preparation necessary for entrance into the kingdom of heaven. For the purposes of this discussion may I speak of them as something more than that as they are applied to you and me. They embody in fact **THE CONSTITUTION FOR A PERFECT LIFE.**” (Lee, *Decisions for Successful Living*, p. 56.)

How can the Sermon on the Mount help you to become as your Father in heaven? Has it occurred to you as you read this sermon, that Jesus is actually describing the qualities of an exalted person? With this in mind, the Beatitudes become steps of perfection that enable us to truly love God and our fellowmen. Study the following commentaries on the Beatitudes:

Turning from the love of the world to the Love of God

1. Blessed Are the Poor in Spirit

“To be poor in spirit is to feel yourselves as the spiritually needy, ever dependent upon the Lord for your clothes, and your food and the air you breathe, your health, your life; realizing that no day should pass without fervent prayer of thanksgiving, for guidance and forgiveness and strength sufficient for each day’s need.”

2. Blessed Are They That Mourn

“To mourn, as the Master’s lesson here would teach, one must show that ‘godly sorrow that worketh repentance’ and wins for the penitent a forgiveness of sins and forbids a return to the deeds of which he mourns.”

3. Blessed Are the Meek

“A meek man is defined as one who is not easily provoked or irritated and forbearing under injury or annoyance. Meekness is not synonymous with weakness. The meek man is the strong, the mighty, the man of complete self-mastery. He is the one who has the courage of his moral convictions, despite the pressure of the gang or the club.”

4. Blessed Are They That Hunger and Thirst After Righteousness

“Did you ever hunger for food or thirst for water when just a crust of stale bread or a sip of tepid water to ease the pangs that distressed you seem to be the most prized of all possessions? If you have so hungered then you may begin to understand how the Master meant we should hunger and thirst after righteousness. It’s that hungering and thirsting that leads those away from home to seek fellowship with saints in sacrament services and that induces worship on the Lord’s Day wherever we are. It is that which prompts fervent prayer and leads our feet to holy temples and bids us be reverent therein.”

5. Blessed Are the Pure in Heart

“If you would see God, you must be pure. There is in Jewish writings the story of a man who saw an object in the distance, an object that he thought was a beast. As it drew nearer he could perceive it was a man and as it came still closer he saw it was his friend. You can see only that which you have eyes to see. Some of the associates of Jesus saw him only as a son of Joseph the carpenter. Others thought him to be a wine-bibber or a drunkard because of his words. Still others thought he was possessed of devils. Only the righteous saw him as the Son of God. Only if you are the pure in heart will you see God, and also in a lesser degree will you be able to see the ‘God’ or good in man and love him because of the goodness you see in him. Mark well that person who criticizes and maligns the man of God or the Lord’s anointed leaders in his Church. Such a one speaks from an impure heart.”

6. Blessed Are the Merciful

“Our salvation rests upon the mercy we show to others. Unkind and cruel words, or wanton acts of cruelty toward man or beast, even though in seeming retaliation, disqualify the perpetrator in his claims for mercy when he has need of mercy in the day of judgment before earthly or heavenly tribunals. Is there one who has never been wounded by the slander of another whom he thought to be his friend? Do you remember the struggle you had to refrain from retribution? Blessed are all you who are merciful for you shall obtain mercy!”

7. Blessed Are the Peacemakers

“Peacemakers shall be called the children of God. The troublemaker, the striker against law and order, the leader of the mob, the law-breaker are prompted by motives of evil and unless they desist will be known as the children of Satan rather than God. Withhold yourselves from him who would cause disquieting doubts by making light of sacred things for he seeks not for peace but to spread confusion. That one who is quarrelsome or contentious, and whose arguments are for other purposes than to resolve the truth, is violating a fundamental principle laid down by the Master as an essential in the

building of a full rich life. ‘Peace and goodwill to men on earth’ was the angel song that heralded the birth of the Prince of Peace.”

8. Blessed Are They Which Are Persecuted

“May youth everywhere remember that warning when you are hissed and scoffed because you refuse to compromise your standards of abstinence, honesty and morality in order to win the applause of the crowd. If you stand firmly for the right despite the jeers of the crowd or even physical violence, you shall be crowned with the blessedness of eternal joy. Who knows but that again in our day some of the saints or even apostles, as in former days, may be required to give their lives in defense of the truth? If that time should come, God grant they would not fail!”

9. Continuing Efforts to Acquire the Attributes of God

(All the above quotes are taken from Lee, Decisions for Successful Living, pp. 56–63.)

Can you see from this that the Beatitudes form the stairway to Christ by which you can receive power from him to become like him? But remember, it takes effort to climb this stairway. Some say it is impossible, but that is a false idea.

It was late one night when I was abruptly awakened out of my sleep by a telephone call. On the other end of the line was a voice of a distraught ward member. He indicated that there had been some problems in the home and wondered if I could come over.

When I walked into Richard and Jennifer’s home, the atmosphere was charged with tension. Richard spoke first. He was nearly in tears. Jennifer wanted to leave him and the children. He spoke vaguely of some problems she had had earlier during the day, obviously wanting to protect her. Jennifer then interrupted, “Why don’t you quit beating around the bush, Richard. Say it. Tell him that I struck one of the children. Tell him what I’ve said to you and the children! Or are you afraid what the bishop might think of our ‘model’ home!” Richard only looked at me.

“Suppose, Jennifer, you tell me what’s wrong,” I said.

“I’ve had it—that what’s wrong, Bishop. I’m fed up with my husband—my kids—and this house. I’m tired

of the pretense of being an ideal Latter-day Saint family when we're anything else but. I want out of this situation, the sooner the better."

And so I listened—from 1:00 A.M. until 3:00 A.M. in the morning—to a woman who had previously enjoyed the Spirit of the Lord but who was now filled with vindictive, accusing feelings. It is not necessary to attempt to recreate the sordid scene, nor the events of that day or days previous which brought about this nightmare. It is sufficient to say that the Spirit which had once attended this sister was now gone. All feelings of refinement, sensitivity, kindness, congeniality, and charity had disappeared. In their place were accusation, coarseness, abusiveness, and hatred. I prayed inwardly for the wisdom beyond my natural ability to help.

When she had finished her tirade, she said defiantly: "Now I suppose, Bishop, that you're going to try to dissuade me from leaving Richard."

"No, Jennifer, it appears to me that you have already made up your mind about what you're going to do. Neither I nor anyone else could dissuade you. So perhaps the thing for you to do is to leave." I paused and then added, "But, Jennifer, I want you know before I leave here tonight that there is a way out of your misery if you're willing to try." Though she didn't say anything, her eyes pled for help.

"Do you remember what the Savior taught those who sought to be his disciples? You have probably read or heard some of these teachings many times. You remember as a girl in Sunday School how you were asked to memorize the teachings of Jesus called the Beatitudes. Tonight as you were talking I couldn't help but think that they must apply here.

"'Blessed are the poor in spirit.' The first step, Jennifer, is to realize that you have need for the Lord's help. The Book of Mormon states: 'Blessed are the poor in spirit who come unto me.' This is the way you can solve this problem—by coming to the Lord for help. But how can you come unto him?

"'Blessed are they that mourn.' We come unto the Savior by manifesting a broken heart and a contrite spirit. In other words, we mourn about the condition which prevents us from becoming his friend and having his Spirit with us always. I'm not talking about self-pity, Jennifer. I'm talking about the kind of sorrow that purges ugly feelings and desires from the heart. The Savior then tells us how we may overcome this depression and despair that is such a burden for you right now.

"'Blessed are the meek.' To be meek is to humble ourselves before the Lord and ask and plead for his help to overcome our weakness. The Savior has also said, 'My grace is sufficient for the meek.' What does that mean? 'If men come unto me I will show unto them their weakness. I give unto men weakness that they be humble . . . for if they humble themselves before me, and have faith in me, then will I make weak things become strong unto them.' [Ether 12:26–27.]

"Now, Jennifer, you have discovered a weakness in your character that is preventing you from having the Spirit of the Lord. Don't you desire the blessings that will enable you to overcome your weaknesses? Don't you desire that joy and happiness that has been absent from your life during these past months?

"'Blessed are they who do hunger and thirst after righteousness, for they shall be filled with the Holy Ghost.' That's the blessing you need so desperately, Jennifer! Now let's consider the rest of the Savior's beatitudes.

"Do you want to be more kind? 'Blessed are the merciful.'

"Do you really desire to overcome hypocrisy? 'Blessed are the pure in heart.'

"Do you want peace in your own home? 'Blessed are the peacemakers.'

"And then there is the teaching about being able to bear persecution. But what about bearing up against stress and persecutions of the adversary in your own home?

"The point is, Jennifer, if you really want these attributes, they are available to you as you 'hunger and thirst' after them. This is the righteousness the Savior is referring to—these are the blessings that come as one is filled with the Holy Ghost. By recognizing your need to depend daily, even hourly, upon the Lord, by fasting and prayer you can overcome this problem that is now leading you to such misery. Here is the Savior's promise to you:

". . . remember, remember that it is upon the rock of our Redeemer, who is Christ, the Son of God, that ye must build your foundation; that when the devil shall send forth his mighty winds, yea, his shafts in the whirlwind, yea, when all his hail and his mighty storm shall beat upon you, it shall have no power over you to drag you down to the gulf of misery and endless wo, because of the rock upon which ye are built, which is a sure foundation, a foundation

whereon if men build they cannot fall.’ [Helaman 5:12.]

I then bore testimony to her of the truthfulness of these principles. Her tears, the first indication of the spirit of repentance, told me she also knew them to be true. There was a way out. There was a hope. Perhaps for the first time in her life, she began to sense how the gospel becomes a power to solve our problems, to refine our natures, and to help us become more Christlike in our disposition.

Before leaving that night we knelt in prayer together. As we arose from our knees, I knew that Jennifer would not be leaving her husband or her home.

It has been seven years since the incident of that evening. Jennifer and Richard have added three more children to their family. Overcoming her problems

has not been easy; in fact, it has been an intense struggle. Gradually, however, by applying the principles of the Savior on a daily basis, she has found a strength she did not previously know.

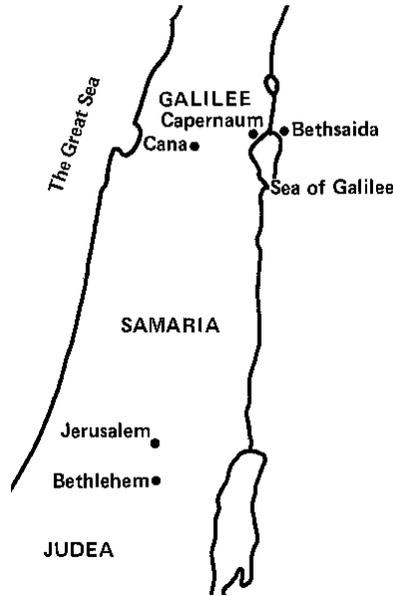
(Based on a true experience.)

As with Jennifer, you may find your weaknesses and problems difficult to overcome. But could you feel justified before God if you failed to make the effort to climb the stairway to perfection? Can you see that it is possible for you to progress a step at a time toward your ultimate goal of perfection?

Now you might wish to review the remainder of the Sermon on the Mount, asking yourself this question: How can I apply the qualities suggested by Jesus that will help me to grow toward perfection?

9

“WHOSOEVER SHALL DO THE WILL OF THE FATHER”



THE GALILEAN MINISTRY	Matthew	Mark	Luke	John
Capernaum, Galilee Centurion's Servant Healed	8:5-13		7:1-10	
Nain, Galilee Son of Widow Raised			7:11-17	
Galilee John Sends Investigators	11:2-24, 28-30		7:18-35	
Woman Anoints Jesus in Simon's House			7:36-50	
Another Tour Through Galilee			8:1-3	
Capernaum, Galilee Statement on Beelzebub	12:22-37	3:22-30		
Discourse on Signs and Testimony	12:38-45			
His Mother and Brethren Seek Him	12:46-50	3:31-35	8:19-21	

THEME

Through obedience to the commandments, we choose Christ as our Father and become his sons and his daughters.

INTRODUCTION

“And he stretched forth his hand toward his disciples, and said, Behold my mother and my brethren!”

“For whosoever shall do the will of my Father which is in heaven, the same is my brother, and sister, and mother.” (Matthew 12:49, 50.)

Have you considered the fact that you can become a member of Christ’s family and become a joint heir with him of all that our Heavenly Father has? How can you become his son or daughter?

In this lesson you will walk with Jesus as he heals the sick, raises the dead, and discourses on Satan. You will also read his teachings on how you can enter into a family relationship with him.

Before proceeding, read all the scriptural references in the reading block.

INTERPRETIVE COMMENTARY

(9-1) Matthew 11:2, 3. Did John Doubt That Jesus Was the Messiah?

“The question often arises why John would send his disciples to ask such a question of Jesus. Many have wondered if it was possible that John himself was not sure of Christ’s identity and divine calling. However, we must remember that John’s last recorded testimony was to his disciples when they were concerned about the growing popularity of Jesus. John reminded them that he himself was not the Messiah, and that they should leave him and follow Jesus. That was several months prior to the present event under discussion. It appears that one of the difficulties experienced by John was successfully persuading his disciples to forsake him and become the disciples of Jesus Christ, of whom he had borne witness. Now, months after the baptism of Jesus and after John’s repeated efforts to persuade them, John found some of his disciples still reluctant to detach themselves from him and to follow their true Master. It seems most consistent to identify John’s motive in sending the two disciples to Jesus as one of persuasion for them, rather than of reassurance for himself. *The question they were to put to Jesus was for their edification, not for his own.* John knew, as no one else knew, who Jesus was, and he had known it for a long time. He had had revelation from heaven to this effect: he had seen with his eyes, he had heard with his ears, and he had the testimony of the Holy Ghost. He even had received the ministry of angels while in the prison. The most satisfactory answer seems to be that John sent his disciples to question Jesus about his identity so that they themselves would at long last realize the truth of what John had been testifying for these many months. This approach

seems consistent with John’s sure knowledge of the Redeemer, his known testimony to his disciples, and the natural reluctance of his disciples to leave him.

“Perhaps a point should be made here that there was not an antagonism between Jesus and John. A man did not have to utterly forsake and reject John in order to accept Jesus. But Jesus was the Son of God, and John was his prophet. There is no equal comparison between the two, and John did not want any mistaken notions among his own associates about the relative stations of himself and his Master.” (Matthews, *A Burning Light: The Life and Ministry of John the Baptist*, p. 92.)

(9-2) Matthew 11:11. No Greater Prophet than John the Baptist

“How is it that John was considered one of the greatest prophets? His miracles could not have constituted his greatness.

“First. He was entrusted with a divine mission of preparing the way before the face of the Lord. Whoever had such a trust committed to him before or since? No man.

“Secondly. He was entrusted with the important mission, and it was required at his hands, to baptize the Son of Man. Whoever had the honor of doing that? Whoever had so great a privilege and glory?

“Thirdly. John, at that time, was the only legal administrator in the affairs of the kingdom there was then on the earth, and holding the keys of power. The Jews had to obey his instructions or be damned, by their own law; and Christ Himself fulfilled all righteousness in becoming obedient to the law which he had given to Moses on the mount, and thereby magnified it and made it honorable, instead of destroying it. The son of Zacharias wrested the keys, the kingdom, the power, the glory from the Jews, by the holy anointing and decree of heaven, and these three reasons constitute him the greatest prophet born of a woman.” (Smith, *Teachings*, pp. 275–76.)

(9-3) Matthew 11:11. Who Was Considered to Be “Least in the Kingdom”?

“Whom did Jesus have reference to as being the least? Jesus was looked upon as having the least claim in God’s kingdom, and [seemingly] was least entitled to their credulity as a prophet; as though He had said—‘He that is considered the least among you is greater than John—that is I myself.’” (Smith, *Teachings*, p. 276.)

(9-4) Matthew 11:20–24. Is There Such a Place as Hell?

“The Church does teach that there is a place called hell. Of course we do not believe that all those who do not receive the gospel will eventually be cast into hell. We *do not* believe that hell is a place where the wicked are being burned forever. The Lord has prepared a place, however, for all those who are to be eternally punished for the violation of his laws. . . .

“A place where those who cannot be redeemed and who are called sons of Perdition will go into outer darkness. This is the real hell where those who once knew the truth and had the testimony of it and then turned away and blasphemed the name of Jesus Christ, will go. These are they who have sinned against the Holy Ghost. For them there is no forgiveness, and the Lord said he had prepared a place for them. (D&C 76:31–37; 88:32–33.)

“All those who enter the telestial kingdom, which will be a place, as each of these kingdoms will be, will be punished for their sins. Satan for a time will have dominion over them until they have paid the price of their sinning, before they can enter into that telestial kingdom.

“This earth will become a celestial kingdom when it is sanctified. Those who enter the terrestrial kingdom will have to go to some other sphere which will be prepared for them. Those who enter the telestial kingdom, likewise will have to go to some earth which is prepared for them, and there will be another place which is hell where the devil and those who are punished to go with him will dwell. Of course, those who enter the telestial kingdom, and those who enter the terrestrial kingdom will have the eternal punishment which will come to them in knowing that they might, if they had kept the commandments of the Lord, have returned to his presence as his sons and his daughters. This will be a torment to them, and in that sense it will be hell.” (Smith, *Answers to Gospel Questions*, 2:208–10.)

(9-5) Matthew 12:30. “He That Is Not with Me Is Against Me”

“As he went about in his ministry, Jesus was met with varied reactions. There were some who gladly accepted him, followed him wherever he went and tried to live his teachings. There were some who were indifferent, and then there were others who openly opposed him. So the people of that day had before them a clear working example of the law of opposition

in all things. On the one hand was Jesus preaching the way of life; on the other were the Scribes and the Pharisees who fought him at every step. Then there were the indifferent ones. Can we say that they were for the Lord or against him, or were they merely, as we say, indifferent? I call to your mind that the indifferent ones did not keep the commandments, and by their indifference they encouraged others to be indifferent, and as the others became indifferent, they also refused to obey the commandments of the Lord their God.

“These indifferent ones built up a barrier against the Christ, and as they spread the example of disobedience they became a hindrance to him in his work, and for that reason the Lord said:

“He that is not with me is against me: and he that gathereth not with me scattereth abroad. (Matt. 12:30.)” (Mark E. Petersen in *CR*, Apr. 1945, pp. 41–42.)

(9-6) Matthew 12:31. What Is the Condition for Forgiveness?

“Wherefore I say unto you, All manner of sin and blasphemy shall be forgiven unto men who receive me and repent; but the blasphemy against the Holy Ghost, it shall not be forgiven unto men.” (Matthew 12:26, Inspired Version.)

(9-7) Matthew 12:31. What Is the Sin Against the Holy Ghost?

To sin against the Holy Ghost, a person must reject knowledge that he has received from the Holy Ghost. As the Prophet Joseph Smith wrote: “He has got to say that the sun does not shine while he sees it. . . .” (*Teachings*, p. 358.) Elder Joseph Fielding Smith wrote the following statement about the certainty of knowledge revealed by the Spirit and the seriousness of denying it:

“The testimony of the Spirit is so great, and the impressions and revelations of divine truth so forcefully revealed that there comes to the recipient a conviction of the truth that he cannot forget. Therefore, when a person once enlightened by the Spirit so that he receives knowledge that Jesus Christ is the Only Begotten Son of God in the flesh, then turns away and fights the Lord and his work, he does so against the light and testimony he has received by the power of God. Therefore, he has resigned himself to evil knowingly. Therefore Jesus said there is no forgiveness for such a person.

“The testimony of the Holy Ghost is the strongest testimony that a man can receive.” (Smith, *Answers to Gospel Questions*, 4:92.)

(9-8) Matthew 12:32. What Is the Difference Between Rejecting Jesus and Denying the Holy Ghost?

“A man who has not received the gift of the Holy Ghost and therefore who has never ‘tasted of the heavenly gift,’ may be guilty of blasphemy against Jesus Christ and be forgiven on his repentance, but so great is the testimony through the gift of the Holy Ghost, should he turn against the Lord and fight his work, there is no forgiveness. The shedding of innocent blood is not confined to taking lives of the innocent, but is also included in seeking to destroy the word of God, and putting Christ to open shame. Those who have known the truth and then fight against the authorized servants of Jesus Christ also fight against him, for they who fight against his servants also do it unto him, and thus are guilty of his blood.” (Smith, *Answers to Gospel Questions*, 1:63–64.)

POINTS TO PONDER

SATAN BECOMES THE FATHER OF THOSE WHO REJECT JESUS CHRIST

You have now read the account of the Pharisees’ blasphemous charge that Jesus cast out evil spirits by the power of Satan. (See Matthew 12:24.) Jesus used this occasion to bear witness that he was indeed the Son of God and to further indicate that the Pharisees were blind to his mission because they chose to serve Satan. In his denunciation of their blasphemous charge, Jesus used three arguments to testify of his messiahship.

First: Review Matthew 12:25, 26. What is his first argument?

Second: Review Matthew 12:27–29. To whom was Jesus referring when he asked, “By whom do your children cast them out”? Compare this with his answer as given in the Inspired Version. (Note that verse 27 in the King James Version is verse 23 in the Inspired Version.)

“But if I cast out devils by the Spirit of God, then the kingdom of God is come unto you. For they also cast out devils by the Spirit of God, for unto them is given power over devils, that they may cast them out.”

Commenting on this, Elder Bruce R. McConkie has said:

“Sectarian commentators, almost universally, have assumed that by exorcism, magic, or incantation of some sort the false religionists of Christ’s day were able to cast out devils. With nothing but the King James Version before them it should be evident that this conclusion is absurd and illogical, for the whole tenor of this passage is that Satan cannot cast out Satan. But from the Inspired Version we learn that those others of the Jews who were casting out devils were persons who had gained the Spirit of God, that is they had been baptized, were members of the Church, held the priesthood, and were walking uprightly and faithfully before the Father. False ministers have not, do not, will not, and cannot cast out devils.” (DNTC, 1:269.)

Third: Review Matthew 12:33–35. What is he asking of the Pharisees?

“Be consistent, you Pharisees; make the tree good or bad, if it is good to cast out devils, and I cast them out, then my work is good, for a tree is known by its fruits; but if I am evil, as you say, then it must be a wicked thing to heal those possessed of evil spirits, for a corrupt tree bringeth forth evil fruit.” (McConkie, DNTC, 1:275.)

As Jesus instructed the Pharisees as to his divinity, he was leveling an indictment at them. Later he told them that by rejecting him as the true Messiah, they had actually accomplished what they had accused him of doing: Choosing the devil as their father. (See John 8:44.)

“Whosoever Shall Do the Will of My Father”

If you had walked from Nazareth
Behind the older son,
Would you have testified of him,
The Lord’s anointed one?
Or would you have said to Him,
“I have no need of thee,
“For I can walk through heaven’s gate
Because of family!
“Your mother is the same as mine,
Our brethren, see them, three!
“Now what can be in you divine
That isn’t here in me?”
Proud head, bow down! For He is Lord,
And perfect; without sin.

The man who bore, by Mary, you,
Was not a sire to Him.
Brothers in flesh can lay no claim
To have their faults forgiven,
But must obey, as all the same,
To enter into heaven.
The water, blood, and Holy Ghost
May purge your heart, and change,
Then you'll not just a *brother* be,
But son to Him who reigns!
(Used by permission.)

THROUGH OBEDIENCE TO THE COMMANDMENTS, WE CHOOSE CHRIST AS OUR FATHER

Read again Matthew 12:49, 50 and then read the following, including the scriptures cited:

In the gospel sense, men have many fathers. Some of these father-son relationships are listed here.

The father of the spirit body *Romans 8:16*

The father of the physical body *Hebrews 12:9*

Fathers in the priesthood *“Faithful holders of the Melchizedek Priesthood, no matter what their natural lineage, become by adoption the sons of Moses and Aaron. (D. & C. 84:6, 31–34.)” (McConkie, Mormon Doctrine, pp. 745–46.)*

The Father who saves us *James 1:17, 18;
Mosiah 5:7*

All of these father-son relationships are vital, for if any one of them were omitted, progress toward perfection would be halted.

Each of these life relationships requires basic conditions. For example, physical life requires oxygen; and if oxygen is lacking, there will be no physical life.

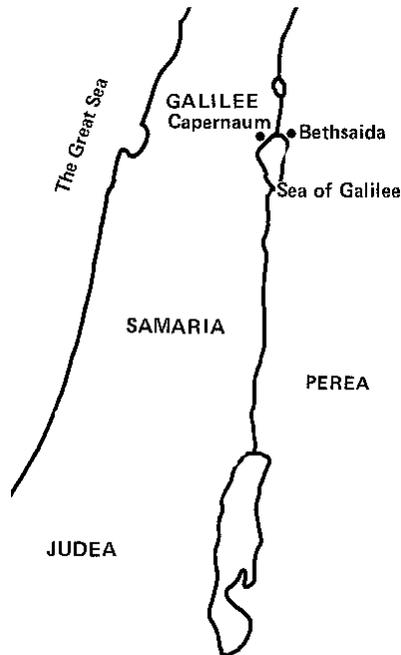
In the same way, becoming a member of the family of Christ (which is the ultimate and most glorious of all life relationships) involves certain conditions. And if these conditions are not met, then the candidate cannot be a member of the family of Jesus.

What did Mary and her other sons have to do, and what must you do, to become a member of the family of Jesus? (See Matthew 12:49, 50.)

(9-9) We Can Become Members of the Family of Jesus Christ

“This [the idea that we may become members of the family of Christ] is a special family relationship reserved for the faithful. It is over, above, and in addition to the fact that all men are the spirit children of the Eternal Father. . . . This is a glorious and wondrous doctrine. We are the sons and daughters of the living God, the children of the great Jehovah, the adopted offspring of the Lord Jesus Christ. We bear the name of Christ. We are members of his family. He is our father.” (McConkie, “The Ten Commandments of a Peculiar People,” *Speeches of the Year, 1975*, p. 30.)

“HE SPAKE MANY THINGS UNTO THEM
IN PARABLES”



THE GALILEAN MINISTRY A.D. 31 to A.D. 32	Matthew	Mark	Luke	John
Sea of Galilee Speaks of Sacrifice	8:18–22		9:57–62	
Stills Storm, ca. autumn, A.D. 31	8:23–27	4:35–41	8:22–25	
Gergesa, Tetrarchy of Philip Legion of Devils and Return to Other Side	8:28–34; 9:1	5:1–21	8:26–40	
Capernaum, Galilee Daughter of Jairus and the Woman with Issue of Blood	9:18–26	5:22–43	8:41–48	
Healing the Blind and Casting Out Devils	9:27–34			
Parables at the Sea of Galilee	13:1–53	4:1–34	8:4–18	
Second Rejection at Nazareth	13:54–58	6:1–6		

THEME

The parables of Jesus offer a special message to those who are spiritually in tune.

INTRODUCTION

In your reading, you have read Jesus' description of his great opponent, the devil, and you have heard him speak out against sensationalist sign seekers. You have also read of how Jesus felt about his loyal forerunner, John the Baptist, and you have learned that all those who do the will of His Father are members of the "family" of Jesus. Now as you go through the following reading block you will be able to further develop your knowledge of Jesus.

You may be interested to learn that the three-year ministry of Jesus is now at about its halfway mark. He has spent this time principally in his own homeland, Galilee. Though disfavor has mounted rather slowly, it has finally grown into outright opposition and rejection—all of this in spite of his mighty works. Even the favored people of Nazareth had rejected, and would do so again, this Messiah who had grown up in their midst.

With characteristic judgment and poise, Jesus meets the antagonistic crowds of listeners with a subtle teaching method that conceals his message from the unbelieving. He begins to teach in parables.

Before proceeding, read all the scriptural references in the reading block.

INTERPRETIVE COMMENTARY

(10-1) Matthew 8:28–34. Why does the Man Speak with Such Confusion: "My Name Is Legion, for We Are Many"?

"The fact of the man's dual consciousness or multi-personality is here apparent. So complete was his possession by wicked spirits that he could no longer distinguish between his individual personality and theirs." (Talmage, *Jesus the Christ*, p. 311.)

(10-2) The Significance of the Healings Performed by Jesus

"As performed by Jesus, healings followed this pattern: (1) They came because of the faith of the people among whom he ministered; (2) To the Jewish mind they were and should have been convincing evidence of the divine mission of the Lord of heaven who walked among them; (3) As acts of mercy and

compassion, they were of inestimable benefit and blessing to the suffering and diseased of the day; and (4) Their occurrences came in accordance with the Messianic utterances of inspired men of former ages. To King Benjamin, for instance, a holy angel in telling of Jesus' mortal ministry had said, he 'shall go forth amongst men, working mighty miracles, such as healing the sick, raising the dead, causing the lame to walk, the blind to receive their sight, and the deaf to hear, and curing all manner of diseases.' (Mosiah 3:5.)" (McConkie, *DNTC*, 1:158–59.)

(10-3) What Is a Key to Understanding the Parables?

"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?" (Smith, *Teachings*, pp. 276–77.)

(10-4) What Single Prophetic Message Is Developed by the Parables in Matthew 13?

"I shall now proceed to make some remarks from the sayings of the Savior, recorded in the 13th chapter of His Gospel according to St. Matthew, which, in my mind, afforded us as clear an understanding upon the important subject of the gathering, as anything recorded in the Bible." (Smith, *Teachings*, p. 94. Italics added.)

(*Note:* The gathering process, whereby the scattered descendants of Israel are gradually contacted in the nations of the earth and permitted to receive all the benefits of the gospel, is presently in progress. The keys to pursue and complete this great project were restored by Moses when he appeared to Joseph Smith and Oliver Cowdery in the Kirtland Temple [D&C 110:11]. The gathering will not be complete until all the tribes of Israel are finally situated in their own lands of inheritance [Jeremiah 16:14, 15]. The parables of Matthew 13 plot out the major steps and elements of this gathering process, starting with the planting of the gospel seed in the meridian of time [parable of the Sower], and culminating in the final severing of the wicked from the righteous [parable of the Net].)

(10-5) Matthew 13:3–8. What Was a Major Purpose of the Parable of the Sower?

"This parable was spoken to demonstrate the effects that are produced by the preaching of the word; and we believe that *it has an allusion directly, to the commencement, or the setting up of the Kingdom in that age. . . .*" (Smith, *Teachings*, p. 97. Italics added.)

(10-6) Matthew 13:9–17. Why Do Some Receive the Words of the Savior and Others Do Not?

“. . . the condemnation which rested upon the multitude that received not His saying, was *because they were not willing to see* with their eyes, and hear with their ears; not because they could not, and were not privileged to see and hear, but *because their hearts were full of iniquity and abominations*; ‘as your fathers did, so do ye.’ . . .

“We draw the conclusion, then, that the very reason why the multitude, or the world, as they were designated by the Savior, did not receive an explanation upon His parables, was because of unbelief. To you, He says (speaking to His disciples) it is given to know the mysteries of the Kingdom of God. And why? Because of the faith and confidence they had in Him.” (Smith, *Teachings*, pp. 96–97. Italics added.)

(10-7) Matthew 13:25. What are Tares?

“The writer of the article ‘Tares’ in Smith’s Dictionary says: ‘Critics and expositors are agreed that the Greek plural *zizania*, A. V. “tares,” of the parable (Matt. 13:25) denotes the weed called “bearded darnel” (*Lolium temulentum*), a widely-distributed grass, and the only species of the order that has deleterious properties. The bearded darnel before it comes into ear is very similar in appearance to wheat, and the roots of the two are often intertwined; hence the command that the “tares” should be left till the harvest, lest while men plucked up the tares “they should root up also the wheat with them.” This darnel is easily distinguishable from the wheat and barley when headed out, but when both are less developed, “the closest scrutiny will often fail to detect it. Even the farmers, who in this country generally weed their fields, do not attempt to separate the one from the other. . . . The taste is bitter, and, when eaten separately, or even when diffused in ordinary bread, it causes dizziness, and often acts as a violent emetic.”’ The secondary quotation is from Thompson’s *The Land and the Book*, ii. 111, 112. It has been asserted that the darnel is a degenerated kind of wheat; and attempts have been made to give additional significance to our Lord’s instructive parable by injecting this thought; there is no scientific warrant for the strained conception, however, and earnest students will not be misled thereby.” (Talmage, *Jesus the Christ*, p. 301.)

(10-8) Matthew 13:30. Which Is Gathered First, the Wheat or the Tares?

Matthew 13:30 indicates that tares are collected first, but note the Inspired Version:

“Let both grow together until the harvest, and in the time of harvest, I will say to the reapers, Gather ye together first the wheat into my barn; and the tares are bound in bundles to be burned.” (Matthew 13:29, Inspired Version; see also D&C 86:7.)

(10-9) Matthew 13:29, 30, 38. Do the Tares Represent Wickedness Outside the Church or Among Church Members Themselves?

“Now we learn by this parable, not only the setting up of the Kingdom in the days of the Savior, which is represented by the good seed, which produced fruit, *but also the corruptions of the Church*, which are represented by the tares, which were sown by the enemy, which His disciples would fain have plucked up, or *cleansed the Church of*, if their views had been favored by the Savior. But He, knowing all things, says, Not so. As much as to say, your views are not correct, the Church is in its infancy, and if you take this rash step, you will destroy the wheat, or the Church, with the tares; therefore it is better to let them grow together until the harvest, or the end of the world, which means the destruction of the wicked. . . .” (Smith, *Teachings*, pp. 97–98. Italics added.)

You may also want to carefully study D&C 86:1–7, where the Lord makes use of this parable again in our day and gives further keys of understanding.

(10-10) Matthew 13:31. The Mustard Tree

“It should be known that the mustard plant attains in Palestine a larger growth than in more northerly climes. The lesson of the parable is easy to read. The seed is a living entity. When rightly planted it absorbs and assimilates the nutritive matters of soil and atmosphere, grows, and in time is capable of affording lodgment and food to the birds. So the seed of truth is vital, living, and capable of such development as to furnish spiritual food and shelter to all who come seeking. In both conceptions, the plant at maturity produces seed in abundance, and so from a single grain a whole field may be covered.” (Talmage, *Jesus the Christ*, 291.)

(10-11) Matthew 13:31, 32. To What Stage of the Gathering Does the Parable of the Mustard Seed Refer?

“And again, another parable put He forth unto them, having an allusion to the Kingdom that should be set up, just previous to or at the time of the harvest, which reads as follows—‘The Kingdom of Heaven is like a grain of mustard seed. . . .’ Now we can discover plainly that this figure is given to represent the Church as it shall come forth in the last days.

“Let us take the Book of Mormon, which a man took and hid in his field, securing it by his faith, to spring up in the last days, or in due time; let us behold it coming forth out of the ground, which is indeed accounted the least of all seeds, but behold it branching forth, yea, even towering, with lofty branches, and God-like majesty, until it, like the mustard seed, becomes the greatest of all herbs. And it is truth, and it has sprouted and come forth out of the earth, and righteousness begins to look down from heaven, and God is sending down His powers, gifts and angels, to lodge in the branches thereof.” (Smith, *Teachings*, p. 98.)

(10-12) Matthew 13:31, 32. What Is Represented by the “Birds of the Air” Which Come Down to Lodge in the Branches of the Mustard Tree?

“The Kingdom of Heaven is like a *grain of mustard* seed. The mustard seed is small, but brings forth a large tree, and the fowls lodge in the branches. The fowls are the angels. Thus angels come down, combine together to gather their children, and gather them. We cannot be made perfect without them, nor they without us; when these things are done, the Son of Man will descend, the Ancient of Days sit; we may come to an innumerable company of angels, have communion with and receive instruction from them.” (Smith, *Teachings*, p. 159.)

(10-13) Matthew 13:33. The Parable of the Three Measures of Meal

“It may be understood that the Church of the Latter-day Saints has taken its rise from a little leaven that was put into three witnesses. Behold, how much this is like the parable! It is fast leavening the lump, and will soon leaven the whole.” (Smith, *Teachings*, p. 100.)

(10-14) Matthew 13:52. The Pattern of a Householder Bringing Forth Things Old and New

“For the works of this example, see the Book of Mormon coming forth out of the treasure of the heart. Also the covenants given to the Latter-day Saints, also the translation of the Bible—thus bringing forth out of the heart things new and old, thus answering to three measures of meal undergoing the purifying touch by a revelation of Jesus Christ, and the ministering of angels, who have already commenced this work in the last days, which will answer to the leaven which leavened the whole lump.” (Smith, *Teachings*, p. 102.)

(10-15) Matthew 13:54–58. What Was the Significance of the Second Rejection at Nazareth?

“These Nazarenes were witnesses against themselves, they had absolute knowledge that their fellow townsman excelled in wisdom and performed miraculous works beyond man’s power; yet they rejected him.

“According to the eternal laws which Jesus himself ordained in eternity, miracles are the fruit of faith. Where there is faith, there will be signs, miracles, and gifts of the Spirit. Where there is no faith, these things cannot occur.” (McConkie, *DNTC*, 1:322.)

POINTS TO PONDER

THE PURPOSE OF PARABLES

(10-16) Those Who Have Ears to Hear Will Hear

“Our Lord used *parables* on frequent occasions during his ministry to teach gospel truths. His purpose, however, in telling these short stories was *not* to present the truths of his gospel in plainness so that all his hearers would understand. Rather it was so to phrase and hide the doctrine involved that only the spiritually literate would understand it, while those whose understandings were darkened would remain in darkness. . . . The difference in receptiveness to the truth of the Jews, among whom our Lord ministered in mortality, and the Nephites, to whom he went after his resurrection, is nowhere better shown than in the fact that he gave at least 40 parables to the Jews, but he taught the Nephites, not in parables, but in plainness.” (McConkie, *Mormon Doctrine*, pp. 553–54.)

Now reread Matthew 13:10–13. What did Jesus say was the real intent of the parables?

Keeping these things in mind, use the following activity to study the varying responses to gospel truth demonstrated in the parable of the Sower:

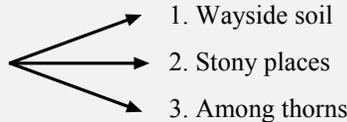
THE PARABLE OF THE SOWER SYMBOLIZES THOSE WHO ARE PREPARED FOR THE WORD VERSUS THOSE WHO ARE NOT

Let us now examine one parable in order to discover the interpretation thereof.

Jesus indicated that there are two general results when the gospel is preached. What are they? Read Matthew 7:24–27. Note how the parable of the Sower represents these two possibilities:

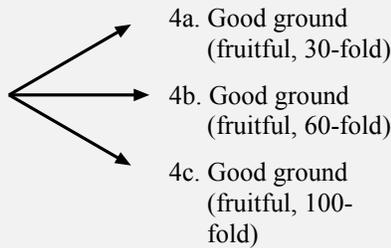
Disobedience

Those who hear these sayings of mine and do them not. (Matthew 7:26)



Obedience

Those who hear these sayings of mine and do them. (Matthew 7:24)



To better understand the teachings of this parable, review the meanings of some of its major symbols listed below:

- THE SEED = THE WORD OF GOD (Luke 8:11. See also Alma 32:28.)
- THE SOWER = ONE WHO PREACHES THE WORD OF GOD (Mark 4:14 and Alma 32:27, 28)
- THE FIELD = THE “WORLD” (Matthew 13:38)
- THE SOILS = THE VARYING HEARTS OF THE HEARERS OF THE WORD (Matthew 13:19 and Alma 32:28)
- THE FRUITS = THE RESULTS (WORKS) WHICH COME FORTH IN THE LIVES OF THE HEARERS OF THE WORD (Luke 8:15 and Matthew 7:16–19)

The columns of boxes to the left refer to the four kinds of soil. Indicate with a check mark the condition listed on the right that applies to each soil. (Answers are found at the end of the lesson.)

WAYSIDE SOIL	STONY PLACES	AMONG THORNS	GOOD GROUND	
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	A. The sower is willing to sow seed in this soil.
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	B. The soil (heart) is sufficiently soft that the seed (gospel) is “received” (belief, acceptance) into the soil.
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	C. The soil is sufficiently deep and fertile to allow the seed to take root (develop abiding faith), whereby it can remain alive under the heat of the sun (problems and tests of faith).
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	D. The soil is sufficiently deep and free of weeds (worldly philosophies, standards, and desires) that there is no competition with the roots, no choking of strength within, and no cutting off of light from above, so that the plant may grow and bring forth increase with regularity and abundance.

The commentary that follows should help your see how this great parable of Jesus is reflected in the personal lives of those who are “hearers of the word.”

(10-17) The Wayside Soil (Matthew 13:4, 19; Mark 4:4, 25; Luke 8:5, 12)

What is it that hardens the heart? This explanation was given by the Prophet Joseph Smith:

“Men who have no principle of righteousness in themselves, and whose hearts are full of iniquity, and have no desire for the principles of truth, do not understand the word of truth when they hear it. The devil taketh away the word of truth out of their hearts, *because there is no desire for righteousness in them. . . .*” (Smith, *Teachings*, p. 96.)

(10-18) The Stony Places (Matthew 13:5, 6, 20, 21; Mark 4:5, 16, 17; Luke 8:6, 13)

(*Note*: Just as the rootless sprout is unable to remain alive under the heat of the noonday sun, so there are those who, without real testimony and faith, lose conviction and even interest under the pressures of difficulties or ridicule. Though not commenting directly on the Savior’s parable, President Heber C. Kimball prophesied over a century ago of a condition that illustrates the need for a deeply rooted, living faith capable of enduring challenges. The prophecy has an increasingly important message for the Church in our day as it faces the unfolding future.)

“Let me say to you, that many of you will see the time when you will have all the trouble, trial and persecution that you can stand, and plenty of opportunities to show that you are true to God and his work. This Church has before it many close places through which it will have to pass before the work of God is crowned with victory. To meet the difficulties that are coming, it will be necessary for you to have a knowledge of the truth of this work for yourselves. The difficulties will be of such a character that the man or woman who does not possess this personal knowledge or witness will fall. If you have not got the testimony, live right and call upon the Lord and cease not till you obtain it. If you do not you will not stand.

“Remember these sayings, for many of you will live to see them fulfilled. The time will come when no man nor woman will be able to endure on borrowed light. Each will have to be guided by the light within himself. If you do not have it, how can you stand?” (Quoted by Harold B. Lee in *CR*, Oct. 1965, p. 128; see also Orson F. Whitney, *Life of Heber C. Kimball*, pp. 446, 449–50.)

(10-19) Among Thorns (Matthew 13:7, 22; Mark 4:7, 18, 19; Luke 8:7, 14)

Elder Bruce R. McConkie has said:

“If the seed falls among thorns, it is in good soil, as is evidenced by the growth of the undesirable plants. But the good plant is soon choked and dies because it cannot overcome the influence of the weeds and thistles. So it is with the members of the Church who know the gospel is true, but who are not valiant in the testimony of Jesus, who are not affirmatively and courageously striving to further the interests of the Church. So it is of the Saints who think more of the honors of men, the educational standards of the world, political preferment, or money and property, than they do of the gospel. They know the Lord’s work has been established on earth, but they let the cares of the world choke the word. And instead of gaining eternal life, they shall be burned with the tares which overcame them.” (*DNTC*, 1:289.)

(10-20) Good Ground (Matthew 13:8, 23; Mark 4:8, 20; Luke 8:8, 15)

Again from Elder McConkie:

“If the seed falls on productive, fertile soil, and if it is thereafter nurtured and cared for, it bringeth forth a harvest. But even here crops of equal value are not harvested by all the saints. There are many degrees of receptive belief; there are many gradations of effective cultivation. All men, the saints included, shall be judged according to their works; those who keep the whole gospel law shall bring forth an hundred fold and inherit the fulness of the Father’s kingdom. Others shall gain lesser rewards in the mansions which are prepared.” (*DNTC*, 1:289.)

NOW WHAT OF YOUR OWN HEART?

It is hoped that as you contemplate these teachings of the Master, you will consider your own soil—your own heart. Could it use some softening, some deepening, some cultivation—even, perhaps, some weeding?

*When gospel truth is gently sown
in my unlearned heart,
I hope it finds no hardened crust
on wayside paths apart.*

*Nor even drops on softer spot
with hardness just below,
Where faithless, poorly rooted sprouts
are doomed to never grow.*

*I pray it shall not fall in dirt
where thorns have made their bed.
Where choking plants, 'mid worldly cares,
grow fruitless, nearly dead.*

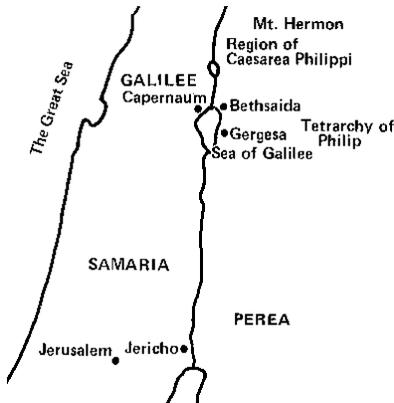
*But let that seed find fertile soil
in deep and clean abode,
And drawing life, yield true and full
to Him who gently sowed.*

—Anonymous

ANSWERS

√	√	√	√	A
	√	√	√	B
		√	√	C
			√	D

"HE THAT RECEIVETH WHOMSOEVER I SEND RECEIVETH ME"



THE GALILEAN MINISTRY	Matthew	Mark	Luke	John
Galilee Third Tour of Galilee	9:35–38	6:6		
The Twelve Sent Forth	10:1, 5–42; 11:1	6:7–13	9:1–6	
Machaerus, Perea Death of John	14:6–12	6:14–29	9:7–9	
Near Bethsaida, Tetrarchy of Philip The Twelve Return and Report	14:13	6:30–33	9:10	

THEME

Those who bear and honor the priesthood are the Lord's representatives and should be received as his ambassadors.

INTRODUCTION

Jesus taught profound doctrine and worked mighty miracles according to the faith of the people of Galilee. From this spreading of the kingdom, he turned a second time to the town of his youth, offering to Nazareth a second chance to hear his truth and acknowledge his ministry. He testified of his divinity by marvelous works; but his compassion for mankind, which had been manifest so often among the believers of Galilee, found few ready, receiving hearts in Nazareth. Jesus left Nazareth and commenced another journey into Galilee.

Jesus leads his church through authorized servants, holy men, who dispense his power and his will to the saints and to the world. John was a servant of the Lord, but John, as his master was later to be, was rejected by the Jews and slain by Herod's order.

Jesus called others, commissioned them, and sent them to labor in the cause of truth with a statement of the greatest possible earthly honor and approval: "He that receiveth you receiveth me." (Matthew 10:40.) As it was true for his servants then, it is true for his latter-day servants as well—an everlasting principle.

How did Jesus call his servants and commission them? What charge did he give to the Twelve Apostles? What did he say to them or what special instruction did he give to them before he sent them to labor? What does it mean to receive the servants of

the Lord? The references in this chapter will aid you in understanding these problems and will also lead you to a greater appreciation of the distinctive position of the servants of God in any age.

Before proceeding, read all the scriptural references in the reading block.

INTERPRETIVE COMMENTARY

(11-1) Matthew 10:1–5. How Did Jesus Appoint His Servants?

“The process follows a rather definite pattern:

“1st: The need for the new leader;

“2nd: The leader is chosen through the process of elimination by prophecy and revelation;

“3rd: The newly chosen one is officially called by one with unquestionable authority;

“4th: He is presented to a constituent assembly of the people, and

“5th: He is ordained or set apart by the laying on of hands by those who are fully authorized.

“And this is in keeping with our fifth Article of Faith:

““We believe that a man must be called of God, by prophecy, and by the laying on of hands, by those who are in authority to preach the Gospel and administer in the ordinances thereof. . . .”

“It is interesting to note that even in olden times much the same procedure was followed. Unfortunately, all the steps are not always recorded but there is considerable evidence that they were taken. The ‘anointing’ of ancient days seems to have been much the same and closely associated with the setting apart of today, with the accompanying blessings.

“The first apostles were called by the Lord: ‘Come follow me,’ he said, ‘and I will make you fishers of men.’ This was more than a *casual* statement. It was a definite call.

““And they straightway left their nets, and followed him.’ (See Matt. 4:19–20.) ‘For he taught them as one having authority.’ (*Ibid.*, 7:29.) ‘And when he had called unto him his twelve disciples, he gave them power. . . .’ (*Ibid.*, 10:1.) This included their commission to preach and perform ordinances. It included the *setting apart*, the *charge*, the *blessing*. The promise given these leaders was most spectacular. Full authority was given them as the Redeemer said: ‘He that receiveth you receiveth me.’ (*Ibid.*, 10:40.)

‘All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth: Go . . . teach all nations . . . to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you.’ (*Ibid.*, 28:18–20.)” (Spencer W. Kimball in *CR*, Oct. 1958, pp. 53–54.)

(11-2) Matthew 10:9, 10. Are Today’s Missionaries Supposed to Travel “Without Purse or Scrip”?

“In keeping with the social customs of the day, Jesus sent his disciples out without purse or scrip. They were to dress modestly, carry no money, food, or extra clothing, have only one staff, and rely on the hospitality of the people for food, clothing, and shelter. Shoes (made in that day of soft leather) were forbidden as too luxurious; sandals (of more rugged construction) were approved. A *purse* was a girdle in which money was carried; *scrip* was a small bag or wallet used to carry provisions. Later Jesus revoked the requirement to rely on the hospitality of the people and commanded instead, ‘Now he that hath a purse, let him take it, and likewise his scrip.’ (Luke 22:35–36.)

“Acting through his duly appointed representatives on earth, the Lord has now withdrawn this requirement that all modern missionary work should be done by laborers who go forth without purse or scrip. Legal requirements, and different social, economic, and industrial circumstances, have made such a change necessary—a fact which illustrates the need for continuous revelation so that the Lord’s affairs on earth always may be conducted as befit the existing circumstances. Instead of relying for food, clothing, and shelter upon those to whom they are sent, missionaries are now expected to support themselves or be supported by their family or friends. There is, of course, no paid missionary force in the Lord’s true Church.” (McConkie, *DNTC*, 1:325–26.)

(11-3) Matthew 10:16. What Does It Mean to Be “Wise as Serpents”?

We gain new understanding by reading the Prophet’s revision of this verse:

“Behold, I send you forth as sheep in the midst of wolves; be ye therefore wise servants, and as harmless as doves.” (Matthew 10:14, Inspired Version.)

(11-4) Matthew 10:28. Who are Those Who Seek to Kill the Soul?

“Apparently there were in the early church those who taught for doctrines the sophistries of men. There are those today who seem to take pride in disagreeing with the orthodox teachings of the Church and who present their own opinions which are at variance with the revealed truth. Some may be partially innocent in

the matter; others are feeding their own egotism; and some seem to be deliberate. Men may think as they please, but they have no right to impose upon others their unorthodox views. Such persons should realize that their own souls are in jeopardy. . . .

“The great objective of all our work is to build character and increase faith in the lives of those whom we serve. If one cannot accept and teach the program of the Church in an orthodox way without reservations, *he should not teach*. It would be the part of honor to resign his position. Not only would he be dishonest and deceitful, but he is also actually under condemnation, for the Savior said that it were better that a millstone were hanged about his neck and he be cast into the sea than that he should lead astray doctrinally or betray the cause or give offense, destroying the faith of one of ‘these little ones’ who believe in him. And remember that this means not only the small children, it includes even adults who believe and trust in God.” (Spencer W. Kimball in *CR*, Apr. 1948, pp. 109–10.)

(11-5) Matthew 10:28. What Posture Should the Saints Assume Toward Those Who Seek to Destroy the Soul?

“There are those, however, who act as though they do not believe in eternity or a resurrection. They cower at the thought of nuclear war, and to save their own bodies they would have peace at any price. Yet the best assurance of peace and life is to be strong morally and militarily. But they want life at the sacrifice of principles. Rather than choose liberty or death, they prefer life with slavery. But they overlook a crucial scripture ‘. . . fear not them which kill the body but are not able to kill the soul; but rather fear him which is able to destroy both soul and body in hell.’ (Matt. 10:28.) *The Lord could, I suppose, have avoided the war in heaven over free agency. All he needed to do was to compromise with the devil, but had he done so he would have ceased to be God.*

“While it is more difficult to live the truth, such as standing for free agency, some of us may in the not-too-distant future be required to die for the truth. But the best preparation for eternal life is to be prepared at all times to die—fully prepared by a valiant fight for right.” (Ezra Taft Benson in *CR*, Apr. 1964, p. 120. Italics added.)

(11-6) Matthew 10:38, 39. How Can You Save Your Life by Losing It?

“To say that his disciples must *hate* all *that* is dear to them is surely a hard saying. But we discover from

other interpretations of the doctrine (Matt. 10:37–38) that the meaning is that anyone who *loves* his father, mother, wife, and all that is dear to him, even his own life, *more* than he loves Christ, is not worthy of him and cannot be his disciple. The thought is very clear in this instruction that all who seek eternal life are required to come to Christ willing to give up all that they possess, if necessary. Should they be unwilling to do so, even to the laying down of life in his cause, then they are not worthy of his kingdom. This is reasonable; no unjust demand is made by our Savior, for he came and laid down his life for us that we might have life everlasting. He suffered for us; should we not love him more than we love our own lives?” (Smith, *The Way to Perfection*, pp. 272–73.)

(11-7) Matthew 14:1, 2. Why Was Herod Afraid of Jesus?

“The record states that the king was ‘exceeding sorry’ to issue an order for the death of John. The sorrow was probably genuine, for he feared that John was a prophet and he knew that John was very popular among the people. That Herod could not forget the deed is reflected in his later mistaking Jesus for John and thinking that John had risen from the dead. His conscience must have bothered and even haunted him to think that John had returned from the dead and that ‘mighty works’ were now manifest in him. John had done no miracles in his ministry (John 10:41), but as a man raised from the dead (as Herod supposed), he would quite possibly have had miraculous powers. This is probably why the emphasis is given to Herod’s statement that ‘therefore mighty works do shew forth themselves in him’ (Matthew 14:2). Herod’s apprehension in this instance is an illustration of the principle that the ‘wicked flee when no man pursueth: but the righteous are bold as a lion’ (Proverbs 28:1).” (Matthews, *A Burning light: The Life and Ministry of John the Baptist*, p. 96.)

POINTS TO PONDER

WE ARE TO GIVE HEED TO THE LORD’S SERVANTS

When Jesus told his apostles that they represented him (Matthew 10:40), he was expressing a principle that had been in force and had applied to the servants of God in every age. Jesus invoked that principle upon the Twelve in the meridian of time, just as he had done upon Moses centuries before and as he would do upon Joseph Smith centuries later.

As you read the following scriptures, ponder carefully the questions asked:

Deuteronomy 18:18, 19. For whom did Moses speak?

John 13:20. How could the people of Jesus' day receive him?

Matthew 23:34–37. Who sends the prophets to us?

Acts 3:22, 23. Who was this prophet?

Joseph Smith—History 1:40; D&C 1:14. How would people be “cut off” if they would not hearken to Christ?

D&C 1:14, 38. Who represents Christ to us today?

D&C 84:35–38 Who also are the Lord's representatives or servants?

“This statement is worth emphasizing. ‘He that receiveth my servants receiveth me.’ Who are his servants? They are his representatives in the offices of the Priesthood—the General, Stake, Priesthood Quorum, and Ward officers. It behooves us to keep this in mind when we are tempted to disregard our presiding authorities, bishops, quorum and stake presidents, etc., when, within the jurisdiction of their callings, they give us counsel and advice.” (Marion G. Romney in CR, Oct. 1960, p. 73. Emphasis added.)

The servants of the Lord are ambassadors of the Lord, sent by him to you. The way you treat his servants, the way you react to what they say, is the way you are treating the Lord.

Matthew 10:41

Luke 10:16

(11-8) The Lord's Servants Mark the Path to Eternal Life

“Karl G. Maeser was taking a group of missionaries across the Alps. As they reached a summit, he stopped. Gesturing back down the trail to some poles set in the snow to mark the way across the glacier, he said, ‘Brethren, there stands the Priesthood. They are just common sticks like the rest of us . . . but the position they hold makes them what they are to us. If we step aside from the path they mark, we are lost.’” (Boyd K. Packer in CR, Apr. 1971, p. 124.)

(11-9) A Man Who Says He Will Sustain the President of the Church but Not His Bishop Is Deceiving Himself

“Some of us suppose that if we were called to a high office in the Church immediately we would be loyal, and would show the dedication necessary. We would step forward and valiantly commit ourselves to this service.

“But, you can put it down in your little black book that if you will not be loyal in the small things you will not be loyal in the large things. If you will not respond to the so-called insignificant or menial tasks which need to be performed in the Church and kingdom, there will be no opportunity for service in the so-called greater challenges.

“A man who says he will sustain the President of the Church or the General Authorities, but cannot sustain his own bishop is deceiving himself. The man who will not sustain the bishop of his ward and the president of his stake will not sustain the President of the Church.

“I have learned from experience that those people who come to us for counsel saying that they cannot go to their bishops, are *unwilling to accept counsel from their bishops. They are unwilling or unable to accept counsel from the General Authorities.* Actually, the inspiration of the Lord will come to their bishop and he can counsel them correctly.” (Boyd K. Packer, “Follow the Brethren,” *Speeches of the Year*, 1965, pp. 4–5. Italics added.)

The following is a true story. As you read it, ask yourself this question: How do I receive the servants of the Lord?

It was a grey evening in Hong Kong, and the rain was heavy. The harbor waters were churning because of the storm, and around the crescent of the waterfront the scattered lights of resettlement blocks glowed like dull candles.

Hundreds of thousands of refugees had fled mainland China since 1949. The British colonial government of Hong Kong had extended itself nobly in a sincere attempt to relocate the homeless masses in comfortable apartments and steady jobs, but many thousands of them still lived in the Spartan quarters of the resettlement blocks.

Some of the resettlement blocks were ten and fifteen stories high. Most had no elevators, only stairs. Each level of a resettlement block was a long string of one-room concrete apartments, frequently with six to ten

people sharing a space equivalent to the average American living room.

The two missionaries visited quietly as they trudged up the stairwell of a resettlement building in Kwun tong, Hong Kong. They had been invited to dinner at the apartment of Brother and Sister Wong. They found the apartment, and Brother Wong greeted them with a broad grin on his face. As he opened the heavy steel door to admit them, he said he had been afraid the heavy rain would prevent them from coming. Two metal bunk beds, a wooden chest, a small kerosene burner, and little else made up the regular furniture of the room. But tonight a borrowed card table was set in the center of the small room. Four wooden stools were set around the table. They were different from one another—each had been borrowed from a different neighbor for the occasion. The table was set with an assortment of tin bowls and plates. There were also platters of shrimp and other Oriental delicacies, all far beyond the means of this humble refugee family. Brother Wong pronounced a blessing and the meal commenced; but Brother and Sister Wong held back, taking only token portions for themselves, but urging the food on the two elders. The elders could sense that the gesture was sincere, and while they recognized that they were eating up finer food than the Wongs could ever afford for regular meals—food that cost the Wongs probably the equivalent of a whole month’s salary—still the elders didn’t want to offend or hurt or refuse, where such evident sacrifice was involved.

It was a difficult meal to eat; wanting to accept the gift so obviously given from the heart, yet realizing that hardship and hungry days—sacrifice—made the gift possible. Brother and Sister Wong and their sons merely sampled the dinner. But when it was completed, they expressed their own satisfaction and were anxious to know if the elders had had enough. As everyone stood to allow Sister Wong to clear away the dishes, one of the elders took Brother Wong by the hand and with deep emotion said: “Why have you honored us in this way, at such great expense to yourselves?” With quiet gentleness that could only come from leaving his home and country and accepting the truth in a foreign land, Brother Wong said: “We do this for you because you hold the priesthood, and God has sent you here to teach us.” (A personal experience.)

Matthew 10:42

Matthew 25:40

What are you willing to sacrifice to receive the servants of the Lord? Yours may not be a sacrifice of food, but, rather, one of sacrificing personal desires to acquire an appropriate attitude. How do you receive God’s servants when they counsel you on music, grooming, or dating standards? Are you willing to sacrifice some of your personal desires in order that you might receive the Lord into your life through his chosen servants?

SECTION 4

THE THIRD YEAR OF JESUS' PUBLIC MINISTRY

LESSONS

12. "I Am the Bread of Life"
13. That Which Defiles a Man
14. The Transfiguration of Christ
15. "I Am the Light of the World"
16. The Two Great Commandments
17. Where Much Is Given, Much Is Required
18. Rejoice with Me: For I Have Found the Lost
19. "What Lack I Yet?"

THE THREE YEARS OF THE SAVIOR'S MORTAL MINISTRY

A Brief Summary of the First Two Years of Jesus' Ministry

You have now reviewed forty-five recorded events, each of which occurred during the first two years of Jesus' ministry. In the first year of his public ministry you reviewed how he gradually revealed his messiahship to the Jews. This was principally done through the miracles he performed, which attested to his godhood. You have read of the mounting opposition by Jewish leaders against Jesus during the second year because his teachings challenged the time-honored traditions of rabbinical authority. Because of the opposition encountered in Jerusalem, Jesus moved into Galilee and concentrated his efforts there. During this period he chose and ordained twelve men, whom he designated as apostles.

As you look back on these two periods, you should see two simultaneous occurrences in our Lord's ministry: first, his ascending popularity among the Jewish people primarily because of his miracles, and the resulting opposition brought against him, principally by the Pharisees and scribes, which caused Jesus to veil his message with parables; second, his quiet training of the Twelve as they came to understand the greatness of the authority which he conferred upon them. They sat at his feet, as it were, and received his teachings; then by his commission they went forth to

teach and warn the inhabitants of Israel concerning the gospel message. This ended the second year.

An Overview of the Third Year

The third year commences with a dramatic miracle—the feeding of five thousand. Because of this miracle, many of the Jews seek to make Jesus their king, but he refuses. He later tells the people that they have followed him, not because of his miracles, but because he has fed them. That is, not because they wished to obey his teachings, but for selfish, physical reasons. Jesus then delivers to them his great discourse on the Bread of Life, announcing openly his messiahship. With the miracle of the feeding of five thousand, it appears that Jesus reaches the highest point of his popularity with the masses. Following the open declaration of his messiahship and his refusal to become a worldly king, his popularity ebbs and many disciples walk no more with him.

The training and preparation of the Twelve reaches its climax during this period. Jesus tells them of his impending death and resurrection; then he takes Peter, James, and John to a "high mountain apart," where he is transfigured before them, and they are given the keys of the kingdom to administer the affairs of the church after Jesus' departure. Later, all of the Twelve receive the keys.

This closes the great Galilean ministry. From Galilee Jesus moves down to Judea, where he further testifies of his messiahship. Later he crosses over the Jordan River into Perea, where he spends the last three months of his public ministry. Once again indisputable proof of his godhood is manifest before the Jewish nation as he restores Lazarus to life. Because of a fear that "all men will believe on [Jesus]; and the Romans shall come and take away both our place and nation," the Jewish hierarchy determines that "Jesus should die for that nation." (John 11:48, 51.) Jesus then goes into a brief retirement; and when he has determined that his time has come, he resumes his journey to Jerusalem, where he has prophesied that he should meet his inevitable death but come forth in a glorious resurrection.

Highlights of the Year of Jesus' Third Public Ministry (Last Phase of the Galilean Ministry, and the Later Judean and Perea Ministry)

Some highlights of the last phase of the Galilean ministry are as follows:

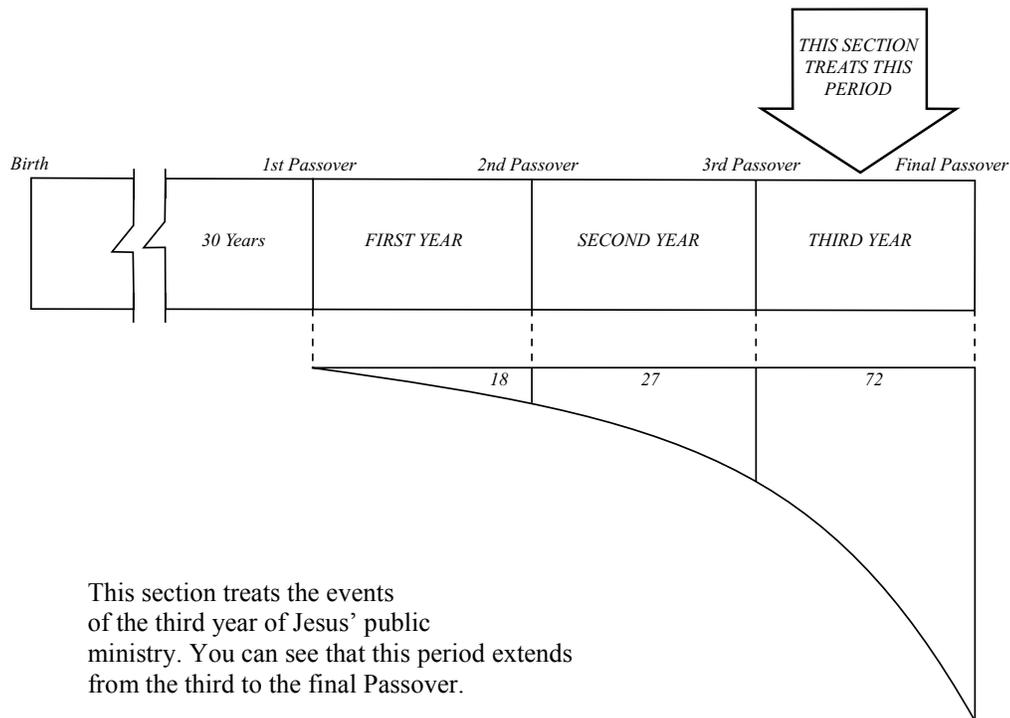
1. The miracle of the feeding of five thousand, and Jesus' great discourse on the Bread of Life.
2. Peter's testimony of Jesus. Jesus' prophecy of his own death and resurrection. The transfiguration of Jesus before Peter, James, and John. The keys of the priesthood given to Peter, James, and John and subsequently to all the Twelve.

Some highlights of the later Judean ministry are these:

1. Jesus' testimony of himself before the Jews: "I am the light of the world" (John 8:12); "I am the Good Shepherd" (John 10:11).
2. The parable of the Good Samaritan. Other parables and instructions to the disciples.

Some highlights of the Perea ministry are these:

1. Parables that deal with the way a disciple ought to be.
2. The raising of Lazarus from the dead.
3. Other instructions to his disciples and the resuming of his trek to Jerusalem.

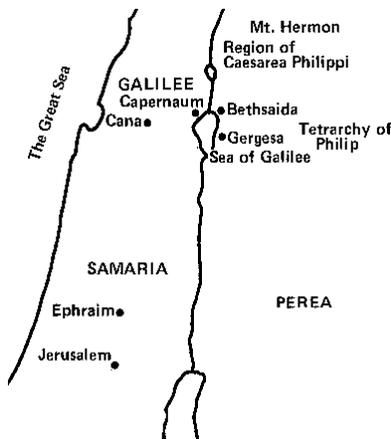


This section treats the events of the third year of Jesus' public ministry. You can see that this period extends from the third to the final Passover.

You will now begin to feel the impact of the gospel story by the crescendo of events during the last year of Jesus' ministry. Seventy-two events are treated, signifying the emphasis that the gospel writers placed on this time of our Lord's ministry.

Some Notable Places and Events During the Last Phase of the Galilean Ministry	
Capernaum	The city that Jesus adopted as his own following his rejection at Nazareth. This is the place where he gave some prominent discourses, among which was one of his most significant, the Bread of Life discourse.
Decapolis	This was an association of ten Greek cities which extended from the plains of Esdraelon and expanded eastward beyond the east side of the Sea of Galilee. Jesus fed the four thousand in this region and also passed through here on his way from Tyre and Sidon to the Sea of Galilee. (See Mark 7:31; 8:9.)
Plain of Gennesaret	A fertile plain on the northwest shore of the Sea of Galilee, where many diseased were healed by touching the hem of Jesus' garment. (See Matthew 14:34–36.)
Mt. Hermon	A 9,200-foot mountain in southern Lebanon. This is a possible site for the transfiguration, because the record says this event took place in a high mountain. (See Matthew 17:1–9.) Mt. Tabor is another possible site.
Region of Ceasarea Philippi	Located at the base of Mt. Hermon, this was the northern limit of the Lord's journeys on his second tour of northern Galilee. Peter's confession of Jesus' divinity and Jesus' prediction of his own death took place here. This is also a possible site of the transfiguration.
Tyre and Sidon	These are sister cities of ancient Phoenicia, renowned as maritime centers. Citizens of both cities heard Jesus preach. (See Mark 3:8; Luke 6:17.) Jesus healed a Syrophenician woman's daughter near here. (See Matt. 15:21–28.)
Some Notable Places and Events During the Lord's Perea Ministry and, Later, His Judean Ministry	
Perea	This is the region on the east side of the Jordan River. Jesus spent the last three months of his public ministry in this region.
Bethany	About two miles from Jerusalem on the east slope of the Mount of Olives, this city was the home of Mary, Martha, and Lazarus (John 11:1); Jesus lodged here when he was in Judea. (See Matthew 21:17.)
The introductory map illustrates these cities and their relationship to one another.	

"I AM THE BREAD OF LIFE"



THE THIRD YEAR OF JESUS' PUBLIC MINISTRY THE GALILEAN MINISTRY	Matthew	Mark	Luke	John
Near Bethsaida, Tetrarchy of Philip Five Thousand Fed	14:14–21	6:33–44	9:11–17	6:1–14
Near Sea of Galilee Jesus Prevents Their Making Him King	14:22, 23	6:45, 46		6:15
Sea of Galilee Jesus Walks on Sea	14:24–33	6:47–52		6:16–21
Capernaum, Galilee Bread of Life Discourse				6:22–71

THEME

Jesus is the bread of life to all who will accept him as their personal Savior.

INTRODUCTION

Jesus, having called and appointed his twelve apostles, charged them to go forth in his name, bearing witness to the truth. Attention has also been focused upon the vital principle of delegated authority, the means by which the Savior governs his church on earth in every age, including our own. Finally, we have discussed what it means to receive the servants of the Lord.

The calling of the Twelve concluded the second year of our Savior's formal ministry on earth. From this point on, Jesus' eyes are firmly fixed on Jerusalem

and on the prime purpose for his coming into the world: to make an atoning sacrifice for the sins of men. One gets an impression of increasing tempo leading to a climax—a crescendo, as it were—as Jesus' life approaches its most critical moments. As we study the third and final year of our Savior's ministry, we encounter one of Jesus' most impressive miracles: the feeding of more than five thousand people with the contents of a boy's lunch. The Jewish people were eagerly anticipating the appearance of a great king, one with such wondrous powers that he would disperse their political enemies right and left. Any man capable of such a miracle as Jesus had wrought (they appear to have reasoned) must surely be their long-awaited Messiah. So convinced were they that they tried to take Jesus by force and make him their king. But Jesus refused. He had not come to feed men's physical bodies nor to provide for their

temporal needs. His mission was far greater than that, a spiritual quest of greatest importance to all men. This may be said to represent a turning point of our Savior's ministry with the masses, for when these thousands discovered that Jesus would not provide for them in the manner that they anticipated their Messiah would, they turned from him in disappointment.

Before proceeding, read all the scriptural references in the reading block.

INTERPRETIVE COMMENTARY

(12-1) Mark 6:37. What Is Meant by the Phrase "Two Hundred Pennyworth of Bread"?

As used in the New Testament, the words *penny* and *pennyworth* mean the same thing. The coinage in use was that of Rome, and the penny, or *denarius*, was the chief Roman silver coin. It was worth about fifteen to seventeen of our cents. Two hundred pennyworth of bread would have cost approximately thirty-two dollars. (See Smith, *A Dictionary of the Bible*, rev. ed., s.v. "Penny, Pennyworth.")

(12-2) Matthew 14:25. What Is Meant by the "Fourth Watch of the Night"?

Probably because of the influence of their Mediterranean neighbors, the Greeks and the Romans, the Jews in New Testament times divided the night into military watches instead of hours. Each *watch* represented the length of time a given sentinel remained on duty. The first watch commenced at 6:00 P.M. and ended at 9:00 P.M.; the second went from 9:00 P.M. to 12:00 midnight; the third from 12:00 to 3:00 A.M.; and the fourth watch was from 3:00 A.M. to 6:00 A.M. (See Smith, *Dictionary*, s.v. "Watches of night.")

(12-3) Matthew 14:30, 31. How Is Peter's Experience of Walking on the Water like Our Own When Faith Wavers?

"The comparison the Lord makes between the wavering soul and the wave of the sea driven with the winds and tossed has touched the lives of many. Most of us have seen the calm seas, and at other times the damage caused when the winds become intense and the waves rise and become powerful, destructive forces. A parallel can be drawn to the buffetings of Satan. When we are serene and on the Lord's side, Satan's influence is not felt; but when we cross over and are deceived by the winds of false doctrine, by the

waves of man-made philosophies and sophistries, we can be drenched, submerged, and even drowned in the depths of disbelief, and the Spirit of the Lord driven completely from our lives. These deceived and wavering souls cannot, because of their incontinence, expect to receive anything of the Lord." (Delbert L. Stapley in *CR*, Apr. 1970, p. 74.)

(12-4) John 6:25. What Is a Rabbi?

The word *rabbi*, which literally means "my great one," was a term of highest respect among the ancient Jews. The local rabbi in any given village was one of the most educated men in the area, generally a graduate of a recognized rabbinical school, and one designated to teach the people. Jesus' followers appear to have felt that he was such a graduate, likely because he showed so much learning. A rabbi literally devoted himself to serving the common people by teaching them in their synagogues, by administering to their wants and needs by charitable means, and by continuing study and application of the law of Moses (Torah) as he understood it.

(12-5) John 6:31-32. What Is Manna?

During their forty-year sojourn in the wilderness, Moses and the children of Israel were fed with bread from heaven. A study of Old Testament passages indicates that manna came in the form of a small deposit found on the ground daily except on the Sabbath. According to the Lord's provisions it had to be gathered early in the day, before the heat of the sun could melt it, and only enough was to be taken as would prove sufficient for the day. On the day before the Sabbath, double quantities were gathered so the people could eat on the Sabbath. Manna had a taste like that of fresh oil or like wafers made with honey, and was used by the Israelites to sustain a population of about two million people for forty years. It was prepared for eating by grinding and baking and was always regarded as a miraculous gift from God rather than as a product of nature. (See Smith, *Dictionary*, s.v. "Manna.")

(12-6) John 6:14, 15. Why Did So Many of Jesus' Followers Seek to Make Him Their King?

Many of the Jews of Jesus' time were caught up in a feverish expectation for an imminent appearance of their long-awaited Messiah. The oppressive hand of Roman domination grew heavier day by day. It was only natural, therefore, that they thought they saw in Jesus the fulfillment of their earthly hopes and dreams. Did he not possess miraculous powers? Had he not changed ordinary water into wine, raised the dead,

healed the sick, and turned a few loaves of bread and fish into sufficient food to feed more than five thousand people? Could he not turn those same powers against Rome and free the Jews from foreign subjugation?

“The multitude, now fed and filled, gave some consideration to the miracle. In Jesus, by whom so great a work had been wrought, they recognized One having superhuman powers. ‘This is of a truth the prophet that should come into the world,’ said they—the Prophet whose coming had been foretold by Moses and who should be like unto himself. Even as Israel had been miraculously fed during the time of Moses, so now was bread provided in the desert by this new Prophet. In their enthusiasm the people proposed to proclaim Him king, and forcibly compel Him to become their leader. Such was their gross conception of Messianic supremacy.” (Talmage, *Jesus the Christ*, p. 335.)

(12-7) John 6:66. Why Did So Many of Jesus’ Disciples Turn from Him Following the Sermon on the Bread of Life?

Consider these words from President David O. McKay as they apply to all who would be disciples of our Savior:

“[The sermon on the Bread of Life as recorded by John] is highly spiritual, and contains references about Christ as the ‘Bread of Life,’ *which His followers could not believe.* They could not comprehend what He was saying, and many of them walked away. . . .

“. . . the twelve . . . slightly glimpsed the spiritual significance of that sermon. . . .

“. . . Those apostles had that day the power and privilege of making a choice—*whether they would walk with those who were impressed only with the physical favors, advantages, which nature could give, or whether their gifts heeded to the spiritual in man.* . . .

“. . . Such a decision may determine whether one responds to the call of one’s soul to rise, or yields to the tendency to grovel. . . .

“. . . the disciples of Jesus glimpsed a light that would enlighten their souls spiritually as the sun replaces darkness with beams of light. But *there are few persons who see that Light* or even believe in the fuller life, and *often after glimpsing it, they turn away to the grosser and more sordid things.*” (“Whither Shall We Go?,” *Speeches of the Year*, 1961, pp. 2–4. Italics added.)

POINTS TO PONDER

JESUS PROCLAIMED HIS MESSIAHSHIP IN THE BREAD OF LIFE SERMON

The day following the miracle of the five thousand, the same group of Jews appeared for another “handout.” They apparently were not concerned with Jesus’ message or his mission, except only as it satisfied their own physical desires. The sermon on the Bread of Life is highly spiritual. To be understood, its message must be carefully studied and pondered. Let us break it into segments and consider its deeper implications. In order to do this, it will be necessary to read again several important passages. As you do so, underline those verses in which Jesus speaks directly of his messiahship. Read and underline John 6:26, 27.

When the Jews discovered that Jesus was not going to provide for their physical needs again, how did they react? Why did they demand a sign? How did Jesus respond? (See John 6:32–35.)

As you consider the words of Jesus and the response thereto by the Jews, what questions arise in your mind? Did our Savior’s listeners not understand, or did they purposely misunderstand? Bread is the very staff of life, to the ancients as well as ourselves. Moreover, the Jews were skilled in allegory and verbal imagery. When Jesus said, “I am the bread of life,” any other interpretation than that which he intended was a mere twisting of his words. It was as if the Jews were saying, “Why, we know him. He is Jesus, son of Joseph the carpenter. How, then, can he say that he came down from heaven and that God is his father?”

Jesus was not content to drop the matter there. In order to seal his testimony in the hearts of his unbelieving listeners, he repeated it again, this time more forcefully. As you read and underline, note the strength of the following verses from John, chapter 6:47–51.

Once again the Jews pretended not to understand. “How can this man give us his flesh to eat?” they asked. But Jesus did not mean that men should literally eat his flesh and drink his blood. His language at this point, like that used throughout the sermon, was symbolic. Note his explanation of his words in John 6:63.

(12-8) The Jews, like Many Today, Lacked Spiritual Understanding of Christ's Mission

“This querulous, unbelieving attitude on the part of the Jews was, not only wholly unwarranted, but from Jewish lips it bordered on absurdity. Probably no people in all history understood better or had made more extensive use of symbolical and figurative language than they had. Further, Jesus had just taught them the doctrine of the Bread of Life. For them to pretend not to know that eating the flesh of Jesus meant accepting him as the Son of God and obeying his words could only mean that they were wilfully closing their eyes to the truth.” (McConkie, *DNTC*, 1:359.)

JESUS BECOMES THE BREAD OF LIFE TO ALL WHO ACCEPT HIM AS THEIR REDEEMER

How many times have you heard people ask, “Why do we partake of the sacrament so often? What is the purpose of the sacrament, anyway?” The answers to these and related questions are not hard to find. We partake of the sacrament in remembrance of Jesus, in token of our promise to always remember him, to keep his commandments, and to take upon us his sacred name. For many the experience is only a perfunctory exercise, a ritual to undergo because one has membership in the Church. For others, it is an opportunity for communion with Jesus Christ, an opportunity to partake of his Spirit. The following story, related by a girl who came to sense the meaning of how Jesus is the bread of life, will illustrate what is meant:

THE BREAD OF LIFE

I had never thought much about sacrament meetings prior to attending college. To me they were an opportunity to meet my friends and to discuss our plans for the week. I felt no particular spiritual uplift from them.

When I came to school, I took a class in New Testament. One day we were discussing the great sermon by Jesus called the Bread of Life, and I found myself unable to understand what the teacher was saying. After class I went to his office and asked for an interview. I said that I hoped he could enlighten me some. Specifically, I wished to know how Jesus could become the bread of life to me.

My teacher began patiently. He said that there were many ways to partake of the bread of life. He

referred to the great mission of our Savior, and spoke of the great gift which the Father offered us all in the person of the Son and of the offering of the Son in giving his life for men's sins. I had heard it all before, and it didn't stir my soul at all.

Finally my teacher asked, “Do you understand the atonement of Christ?” I replied that I knew he had taken upon himself the sins of men and had died for us. “Do you know what it cost him to make such an atonement?” I replied that I did not. He then began rehearsing for me the terrible suffering of our Savior, the suffering of both body and spirit to the extent that it caused him, even God, to bleed at every pore—a suffering which he willingly took upon himself, a suffering so intense that it covered the punishment due for the sins of all men. And to think that at any time our Savior could have withdrawn—he had the power; at any time he could have said, “Be gone,” and all of his accusers and tormentors would have withered as dried reeds. He could have saved himself but he did not.

I was impressed; who wouldn't be? But when the teacher said that my own sins and his were among those which gave the Savior pain, I looked within and did not like what I saw. And I began to weep—at my angry thoughts, my unholy thoughts, my backbiting, my greed. I wept because of them, not only because I was sorry—for I had been sorry before—but because I knew for the first time that I had been partly to blame for the Savior's terrible suffering. Before this time I had put all the blame upon those wicked Jews. “How could they have been so blind?” I had wondered. “Couldn't they see that this was the Son of God?” Now for the first time I saw the suffering of the Savior in relation to myself. The Jews were not alone responsible for the Savior's suffering. I was also to blame. It was I, and all of us, who had been the cause of his death.

My heart was sincerely touched with my new realization, and I cried. I found myself wishing that some great suffering might come upon me so that I could, in some way, rid myself of the torment and guilt I felt. For I did feel guilty—guilty of the blood of him who had died. I had been evil at times—happy to do wrong; yes, even glorified in my wickedness at times. Afterwards I had felt a little twinge of conscience and vowed that I would do better; then I pushed the wrong deed into the back of my mind. At no time did I realize that I was adding to the incomprehensible suffering of my Savior.

As I thought on these things, however, a flood of memories came rushing back to me, and I remembered my many wrongs. Not that I was evil as regards our civil or moral laws, for in these I knew that I had not erred. But in the light of this new thing I was painfully aware of my greatest sins—my carelessness; yes, even my blasphemy. I now realized how irreverent I had been in remembering the emblems of his death. I had gone my merry way, basking in his love; I had sinned and was flippantly sorry, and then I sinned again. And at none of these times did I realize that I, even in my slightest evils, was helping to crucify my Lord. How many times had I looked at his picture during the administration of the sacrament and said under my breath, “Yes, Lord, I do love thee.” Then I had taken the sacred emblems into my mouth and immediately begun wishing for a new hat like the one I saw in front of me. How many times had I prayed during the sacrament and said, “Dear Lord, I thank thee for all that I have, and now please give me this and give me that.” And never once did I truly thank him for his gift to me nor ask his forgiveness for my sins. Or how many times had I come to the sacrament table and asked forgiveness for my own transgressions, still holding a grudge against those who had transgressed against me.

All these things and many, many others stood bright and clear before me, and I was weak and sick with shame. How sad he must be for my hypocrisy! But even in my darkest moment I knew that he still loved me. Even then—in fact, then more than ever—I could feel the warmth and peace of his love. Then suddenly, the light flashed on bright and perfect and clear as crystal. “This is it!” I exulted. “This is the love of God—the love of God which sheddeth itself abroad in the hearts of the children of men. This is that bread of life, that living water which, if a man will eat or drink of it, he shall never hunger or thirst again.”

My heart leaped with joy, and I wept again. This time it was not with sorrow or shame, but with joy, for I had tasted of his love and forgiveness, and I knew what it was. It was the same thing I had felt on many occasions before but could not recognize. This time I knew that I knew. I had indeed felt of his Spirit and of the strength that comes through seeking a personal relationship with him.

(12-9) We Partake of the Sacrament to Satisfy Our Spiritual Hunger

“I have always looked upon this blessed privilege as the means of spiritual growth, and there is none other quite so fruitful in the achievement of that end as the partaking, worthily, of the sacrament of the Lord’s supper. We eat food to stimulate our physical bodies. Without the partaking of food we would become weak and sickly, and fail physically. It is just as necessary, for our spiritual body, that we should partake of this sacrament and by it obtain spiritual food for our souls.

“We must come, however, to the sacrament table hungry. If we should repair to a banquet where the finest of earth’s providing may be had, without hunger, without appetite, the food would not be tempting, nor do us any good. If we repair to the sacrament table, we must come hungering and thirsting for righteousness, for spiritual growth.

“How can we have *spiritual* hunger? Who is there among us that does not wound his spirit by word, thought, or deed, from Sabbath to Sabbath? We do things for which we are sorry and desire to be forgiven, or we have erred against someone and given injury. If there is a feeling in our hearts that we are sorry for what we have done, if there is a feeling in our souls that we would like to be forgiven, then the method to obtain forgiveness is not through rebaptism; it is not to make confession to man; but it is to repent of our sins, to go to those against whom we have sinned or transgressed and obtain their forgiveness and then repair to the sacrament table where, if we have sincerely repented and put ourselves in proper condition, we shall be forgiven, and spiritual healing will come to our souls. It will really enter into our being. You have felt it.

“I am a witness that there is a spirit attending the administration of the sacrament that warms the soul from head to foot; you feel the wounds of the spirit being healed, and the load being lifted. Comfort and happiness come to the soul that is worthy and truly desirous of partaking of this spiritual food.” (Ballard, *Melvin J. Ballard . . . Crusader for Righteousness*, pp. 132–33.)

HOW CAN THE SACRAMENT HELP YOU TO MORE FULLY ACCEPT THE LORD AS YOUR SAVIOR?

What can you personally do to ensure that this action is not just surface religion, to see that it literally becomes, as the blessing thereon states, sanctified to your soul? How can you make it a true spiritual experience?

Read 3 Nephi 18:28–32 and ask yourself this question: What is happening in my life if I do not partake of the sacrament with proper reverence and preparation?

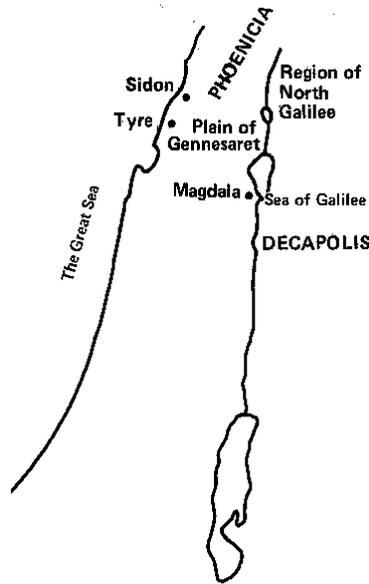
Carefully consider the following words of Elder Bruce McConkie as he writes concerning the meaning of the term “Bread of Life,” and how the sacrament relates to it.

To eat the flesh and drink the blood of the Son of God is, first, to accept him in the most literal and full sense, with no reservation whatever, as the personal offspring in the flesh of the Eternal Father; and, secondly, it is to keep the commandments of the Son by accepting his gospel, joining his Church, and enduring in obedience and righteousness unto the

end. Those who by this course eat his flesh and drink his blood shall have eternal life, meaning exaltation in the highest heaven of the celestial world. Speaking of ancient Israel, for instance, Paul says: They “did all eat the same spiritual meat; And did all drink the same spiritual drink: for they drank of that spiritual Rock that followed them: and that Rock was Christ.” (1 Cor. 10:3–4.)

In the waters of baptism the saints take upon themselves the name of Christ (that is, they accept him fully and completely as the Son of God and the Savior of men), and they then covenant to keep his commandments and obey his laws. (Mosiah 18:7–10.) To keep his saints in constant remembrance of their obligation to accept and obey him—or in other words, to eat his flesh and drink his blood—the Lord has given them the sacramental ordinance. This ordinance, performed in remembrance of his broken flesh and spilled blood, is the means provided for men, formally and repeatedly, to assert their belief in the divinity of Christ, and to affirm their determination to serve him and keep his commandments; or, in other words, in this ordinance—in a spiritual, but not a literal sense—men eat his flesh and drink his blood. (DNTC, 1:358.)

THAT WHICH DEFILES A MAN



THE GALILEAN MINISTRY	Matthew	Mark	Luke	John
Galilee Healing in Gennesaret	14:34–36	6:53–56		
Capernaum, Galilee The Discourses on Cleanliness	15:1–20	7:1–23		
Goes into Northern Galilee	15:21	7:24		7:1
Region of Tyre and Sidon, Phoenicia Gentile's Daughter Healed	15:22–28	7:25–30		
He Returns to Sea of Galilee	15:29	7:31		
Decapolis Deaf Man Healed		7:32–37		
Four Thousand Fed	15:29–38	8:1–9		
Jesus Goes to Magdala	15:39	8:10		

THEME

The pure in heart have faith to draw on the powers of heaven.

INTRODUCTION

As the ministry of Jesus progressed in power and testimony, the hatred of scribes and Pharisees for

Jesus increased. At this point in the life of Jesus, this hatred had grown to such a point that the Jews were plotting to take his life. Frustrated in an attempt to get Jesus to Jerusalem so that they might fulfill their plans, the Jews sent a delegation from Jerusalem to try to trap the Lord into saying or doing something that would give them license to seek his life. When these Jews saw some of the disciples of Jesus eating

without first washing their hands, they accused Jesus of not following the law of Moses. In his reply to their accusation, Jesus said, “Not that which goeth into the mouth defileth a man; but that which cometh out of the mouth, this defileth a man.” (Matthew 15:11.)

This was a stinging rebuke which offended and incensed these scribes and Pharisees. Why was this statement such a rebuke to them? The Savior was only speaking a simple and beautiful truth. What is there in this teaching which would offend those with dishonest and hypocritical hearts? As you study this chapter, strive to understand these words of the Savior and those of the Psalmist when he said, “Who shall ascend into the hill of the Lord? . . . He that hath clean hands, and a pure heart. . . .” (Psalm 24:3–4.)

Before proceeding, read all the scriptural references in the reading block.

INTERPRETIVE COMMENTARY

(13-1) Matthew 14:34–36. Those Whose Hearts Are Pure Can Draw Down the Powers of Heaven

The Savior and his disciples came into the land of Gennesaret, where “all that were diseased” were brought to the Lord “that they might only touch the hem of his garment: and as many as touched were made perfectly whole.”

“Perhaps they had knowledge of the woman who, plagued for twelve years with an issue of blood, had been healed by touching the hem of his garment (Mark 5:25–34); perhaps they considered the garment fringe as holy because of the divine command that garments be bordered in blue so that all Israel might ‘look upon it, and remember all the commandments of the Lord, and do them’ (Num. 15:37–41); or perhaps, overpowered in the divine presence, they sought even the slightest and least physical contact with him. But in any event, so great was their faith that all partook of his infinite goodness and were healed.” (McConkie, *DNTC*, 1:350–51.)

(13-2) Matthew 15:1–20. Those Whose Hearts Are Impure Are Offended by Spiritual Truth

The scribes and Pharisees, in their attempt to discredit the disciples of Jesus, asked him why his disciples transgressed the “tradition of the elders” by failing to wash their hands before they ate. Jesus in turn rebuked

the Pharisees and scribes with the words, “Ye hypocrites, well did Esaias prophesy of you, saying, This people draweth nigh unto me with their mouth, and honoureth me with their lips; but their heart is far from me” (Matthew 15:7, 8), because they abolished and made void the law of Moses by their traditions. In this rebuke, Jesus cut down an entrenched system of commentary and custom. Into oblivion were consigned the many legends and rules, the rabbinic wisdom, legalistic regulations, and what was at best an external religion. After shattering the basis of their external religion, he discredited the authority of the Pharisees and scribes with the people by calling the multitude to him and by speaking these powerful words: “Not that which goeth into the mouth defileth a man; but that which cometh out of the mouth, this defileth a man.” (Matthew 15:11.)

For his denunciation of their tradition, the Pharisees were offended. Especially were they offended by this one saying, for herein the Lord destroyed the allegiance of the masses for that which is merely ceremonial and without eternal spiritual significance. (See Farrar, *The Life of Christ*, pp. 337–41.)

(13-3) Mark 7:1. Who Were the Scribes?

A foremost actor in a New Testament list of characters is the scribe. He is found in Jerusalem, Judea, and Galilee and is not new to Jewish life and culture. Present in Babylon and also throughout the dispersion, he is spokesman of the people; he is the sage; he is the man of wisdom, the rabbi who received his ordination by the laying on of hands. His ability to cross-examine and to question is renowned. Dignified and important, he is an aristocrat among the common people who have no knowledge of the law. Regarding faith and religious practice, he is the authority and the last word; and as a teacher of the law, as a judge in ecclesiastical courts, is the learned one who must be respected, whose judgment is infallible. He travels in the company of the Pharisees, yet he is not necessarily a member of this religious party. He holds office and has status. His worth is beyond that of all the common folk and they must honor him, for he is to be praised by God and by angels in heaven. In fact, so revered are his words regarding law and practice that he must be believed though his statements contradict all common sense, or though he pronounce that the sun does not shine at noon day when in fact it is visible to the naked eye. (See Edersheim, *The Life and Times of Jesus the Messiah*, 1:93–94.)

(13-4) Matthew 15:2. What Were the Numerous Washings Required by Jewish Custom?

“The numerous washings required by Jewish custom in the time of Christ were admittedly incident to rabbinism and ‘the tradition of the elders’ and not in compliance with the Mosaic law. Under certain conditions, successive washings were prescribed, in connection with which we find mention of ‘first,’ ‘second’ and ‘other’ waters, the ‘second water’ being necessary to wash away the ‘first water,’ which had become defiled by contact with the ‘common’ hands; and so further with the later waters. Sometimes the hands had to be dipped or immersed; at other times they were to be cleansed by pouring, it being necessary that the water be allowed to run to the wrist or the elbow according to the degree of supposed defilement; then again, as the disciples of Rabbi Shammai held, only the finger tips, or the fingers up to the knuckles, needed to be wetted under particular circumstances. Rules for the cleansing of vessels and furniture were detailed and exacting; distinct methods applied respectively to vessels of clay, wood, and metal. Fear of unwittingly defiling the hands led to many extreme precautions. It being known that the Roll of the Law, the Roll of the Prophets, and other scriptures, when laid away were sometimes touched, scratched, or even gnawed by mice, there was issued a rabbinical decree, that the Holy Scriptures, or any part thereof comprising as many as eighty-five letters (the shortest section in the law having just that number), defiled the hands by mere contact. Thus the hands had to be ceremonially cleansed after touching a copy of the scriptures, or even a written passage therefrom.

“Emancipation from these and ‘many such like things’ must have been relief indeed.” (Talmage, *Jesus the Christ*, p. 366; see also Mark 7:1–23.)

(13-5) Mark 7:11. What Was “Corban”?

The word *Corban* means a gift, or sacrifice, to God. Its use permitted a man to take a vow to avoid or accept any obligation. Thus, a man would say, “I take a vow to God, or rather, Corban to me is, to abstain from wine for a certain length of time.” He might say, “Corban to me is this or that man’s hospitality.” He could decline to assist his parents by saying, “Corban to me for a time is to not assist my parents.” (See Dummelow, *A Commentary on the Holy Bible*, p. 678; see also Matthew 15:3–6.) In this way the intent of such laws as “honor thy father and thy mother” was frustrated. The Savior recognized this and chastised

the Pharisees and scribes for avoiding legitimate obligations in this manner.

(13-6) Matthew 15:13. Who Are the “Plants” That “Shall Be Rooted Up”?

False ministers who are offended by the truth “are corrupt and apostate, and in due course shall be rooted out” by the truths which the Lord and his prophets declare. (See McConkie, *DNTC*, 1:368.)

(13-7) Matthew 15:22. What Is Meant by “a Woman of Canaan”?

Read Mark 7:26.

“A woman, hearing of His presence within her own land, came asking a boon. Mark tells us she was a Greek, or more literally a Gentile who spoke Greek, and by nationality a Syro-Phoenician; Matthew says she was ‘a woman of Canaan’; these statements are in harmony, since the Phoenicians were of Canaanite descent. The Gospel historians make clear the fact that this woman was of pagan or heathen birth; and we know that among the peoples so classed the Canaanites were held in particular disrepute by the Jews.” (Talmage, *Jesus the Christ*, p. 354.)

(13-8) Matthew 15:24. Who Were the Lost Sheep of the House of Israel?

In this instance, Jesus is referring to the Jews. The gospel “was to be offered to the Jews before it went to the Gentiles. Jesus’ mortal ministry was with Israel, not with other nations. His healing of this or any Gentile person came by special dispensation because of great faith.” (See McConkie, *DNTC*, 1:371.)

(13-9) What Are the “Dogs” Spoken of in Matthew 15:26?

The Greek word which is translated as “dogs” here is *kunariois* which is the diminutive of the word and is better translated as “little dogs.” One commentator notes the significance of this.

“The rabbis often spoke of the Gentiles as dogs. . . .

“ . . . [Jesus] says not ‘dogs,’ but ‘little dogs,’ i.e. household, favourite dogs, and the woman cleverly catches at the expression, arguing that if the Gentiles are household dogs, then it is only right that they should be fed with the crumbs that fall from their master’s table.” (Dummelow, *Commentary*, pp. 678–79.)

POINTS TO PONDER

THE PURE IN HEART HAVE FAITH TO DRAW ON THE POWERS OF HEAVEN

Thus far in your study of the life and teachings of Jesus, you have read a number of incidents where Jesus performed miracles. You have also read of incidents where he refused to perform miracles, such as when he returned to his boyhood town of Nazareth. The Savior willingly, almost anxiously, blessed those who followed him. Yet there were those who never saw a miracle, never felt the Holy Spirit, and never received a testimony even though Christ was in their midst. Upon what principles are the powers of heaven manifest in the lives of people? How can they be manifest in your life?

Carefully read the following verses from section 21 of the Doctrine and Covenants. Though they specifically refer to those who bear the priesthood, they can be applied to all who would receive the blessings and powers of heaven.

Verses 34 and 35. Why are few chosen to receive the powers of heaven ?

Verse 36. How are the powers of heaven controlled?

You have previously read about the lady who touched the hem of Jesus' robe and was healed and the Canaanite woman whose daughter was cleansed of an evil spirit. How does D&C 121:36 relate to those people? Do you think that their exceptional faith was because of their own personal righteousness? How do faith, righteousness, and heavenly powers relate to each other?

Verse 37. How does this verse describe the root problem of the scribes and Pharisees? When did the Pharisees consider a man defiled? Do you see that the Pharisees were concerned with outward cleanliness and Jesus was concerned with inward purity? "Not that which goeth into the mouth defileth a man; but that which cometh out of the mouth, this defileth a man." (Matthew 15:11.) Review Matthew 15:17–20. To appreciate this saying of Jesus, and to see how this principle may apply to your life, consider the following quote by Elder Bruce R. McConkie:

To Be Clean Physically Is Not Enough

"There is an eternal law, ordained by God himself before the foundations of the world, that every man shall reap as he sows. If we think evil thoughts, our

tongues will utter unclean sayings. If we speak words of wickedness, we shall end up doing the works of wickedness. If our minds are centered on the carnality and evil of the world, then worldliness and unrighteousness will seem to us to be the normal way of life. If we ponder things related to sex immorality in our minds, we will soon think everybody is immoral and unclean and it will break down the barrier between us and the world. And so with every other unwholesome, unclean, impure, and ungodly course. And so it is that the Lord says he hates and esteems as an abomination, 'an heart that deviseth wicked imaginations. . . .' (Prov. 6:18.)

"On the other hand, if we are pondering in our hearts the things of righteousness, we shall become righteous. If virtue garnishes our thoughts unceasingly, our confidence shall wax strong in the presence of God and he in turn will rain down righteousness upon us. Truly as Jacob said, '. . . to be carnally-minded is death, and to be spiritually-minded is life eternal.' (2 Ne. 9:39.) And as Paul said, 'Be not deceived; God is not mocked: for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap. For he that soweth to his flesh shall of the flesh reap corruption; but he that soweth to the Spirit shall of the Spirit reap life everlasting.' (Gal. 6:7–8.)

"And yet again from Paul:

"'. . . whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report; if there be any virtue, and if there be any praise, think on these things.' (Phil. 4:8.)

"To enable us to keep our minds centered on righteousness, we should consciously elect to ponder the truths of salvation in our hearts. Brother Packer yesterday pleaded with eloquence that we sing the songs of Zion in order to center our thoughts on wholesome things. I would like to add that we can also—after we have had the opening song—call on ourselves to preach a sermon. I have preached many sermons walking along congested city streets, or tramping desert trails, or in lonely places, thus centering my mind on the Lord's affairs and the things of righteousness; and I might say they have been better sermons than I have ever preached to congregations.

"If we are going to work out our salvation, we must rejoice in the Lord. We must ponder his truths in our hearts. We must rivet our attention and interests

upon him and his goodness to us. We must forsake the world and use all our strength, energies and abilities in furthering his work.” (Bruce R. McConkie in CR, Oct. 1973, pp. 56–57.)

“As a man thinketh in his heart, so is he” is an eternal truth. Our thoughts mirror our character and the degree of inward purity we have obtained during our brief stay on earth. Our thoughts constitute an index of our inward purity. If our thoughts are noble and rich, if they focus on that which is virtuous, lovely, of good report, or praiseworthy, we may be assured that our character is built of virtue, beauty, love, that which is good, and that which the Lord and righteous men esteem to be of great worth. If men’s thoughts are ignoble and impoverished, if they focus on that which is immoral, ugly, worthy of condemnation, or not admirable, we may be assured that their character is likewise affected. What might you do to redirect and improve your thoughts? Will it make a difference to you to know this great truth and begin to apply it in your life?

Listed below are positive admonitions and results which are extracted from comments of Elder McConkie:

1. To do:
Ponder in your heart the things of righteousness.
Result:
You shall become righteous. (2 Nephi 9:39; Galatians 6:7, 8)
2. To do:
Let virtue garnish your thoughts unceasingly.
Result:
Your confidence shall wax strong in the presence of God and he in turn will rain down righteousness upon you (D&C 121:45).
3. To do:
Be spiritually minded.
Result:
(Read Romans 8:6.)
4. To do:
Sow to the Spirit.
Result:
(Read Galatians 6:7, 8.)

5. To do:
Think on things that are true, honest, just, pure, lovely, of good report, virtuous, and praiseworthy.
Result:
(Read Philippians 4:8, 9.)
6. To do:
Consciously elect to ponder the truths of salvation in your heart.
Result:
You will keep your mind centered on righteousness.
7. To do:
Sing the songs of Zion when you are tempted with unwholesome thoughts.
Result:
You will center your thoughts on wholesome things.
8. To do:
Call on yourself to preach a sermon when you are tempted with unrighteous thoughts.
Result:
You will center your mind on the Lord’s affairs and the things of righteousness.
9. To do:
Rejoice in the Lord; ponder his truths in your heart; rivet your attention and interests on the Lord and his goodness to you; forsake the world and use all your strength, energy, and ability to further his work.
Result:
You will work out your salvation.

How important is it for you to improve your thoughts?

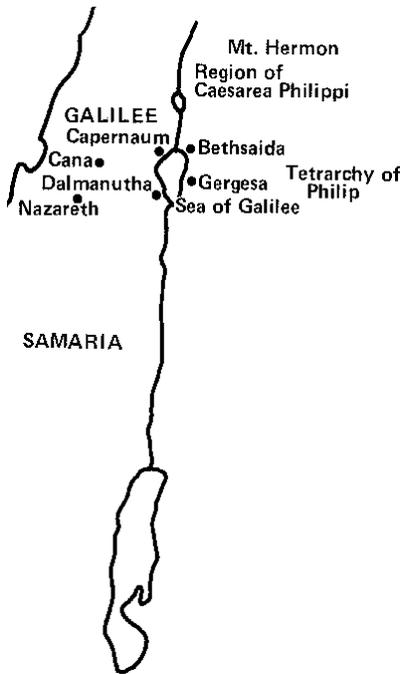
Mosiah 4:29, 30

Matthew 12:36

As you learn to control your thoughts and desires, you will experience an inward purity that will enable you to draw upon the powers of heaven. Read the following scripture:

D&C 121:45–46.

THE TRANSFIGURATION OF CHRIST



THE GALILEAN MINISTRY	Matthew	Mark	Luke	John
Capernaum, Galilee He Speaks Regarding Signs	16:1–12	8:10–21		
Bethsaida, Tetrarchy of Phillip		8:22–26		
Near Caesarea Philippi Peter's Testimony	16:13–20	8:27–30	9:18–22	
Jesus Foretells Death and Resurrection	16:21–28	8:31–38; 9:1	9:23–27	
Mt. Hermon, Syria, or Mt. Tabor, Galilee Transfiguration of Christ	17:1–13	9:2–13	9:28–36	
He Heals the Boy Possessed by an Evil Spirit	17:14–21	9:14–29	9:37–43	
Galilee He again Tours Galilee and Foretells Death and Resurrection	17:22, 23	9:30–32	9:43–45	
Capernaum, Galilee Tribute Money	17:24–27			
Discourses on Humility, Forgiveness, Sealing Power, Responsibility of Disciples, and Sacrifice	18:1–35	9:33–50	9:46–62	
Seventy Sent Forth			10:1–16	

THEME

On the Mount of Transfiguration, Peter, James, and John beheld the glory of Jesus Christ and received keys of the priesthood through holy visitations. These keys still reside in the Church.

INTRODUCTION

As part of his Galilean ministry Jesus fed the five thousand. He delivered the Bread of Life sermon. He declared that he is the true bread of life and that men ought to be more concerned for their spiritual rather than their physical needs. Because of his doctrine, many of his own nation left him and followed him no more. Later, in an act of compassion, he provided bread and fish for four thousand people.

Not long thereafter, Jesus traveled into Caesarea Philippi. To his disciples he asked this question: "But whom say ye that I am?" (Matthew 16:15.) Peter's answer and the Lord's subsequent comments to him and the other disciples are thoughts with which you will be concerned as you complete the readings in this lesson.

Six days later the Lord took Peter, James, and John onto a mountain where he was transfigured before them. The events on the Mount of Transfiguration and their significance to you is the major thrust of this lesson.

Of this event Elder Bruce R. McConkie has testified:

"Until men attain a higher status of spiritual understanding than they now enjoy, they can learn only in part what took place upon the Mount of Transfiguration." (DNTC, 1:399.)

What is the significance of the Transfiguration?

Before proceeding, read all the scriptural references in the reading block.

INTERPRETIVE COMMENTARY

(14-1) Matthew 16:17, 18. What Is the Solid Rock upon Which the True Church Stands?

"It is fruitless for uninspired scriptural exegesis to argue and debate about this passage in an attempt to sustain the particular leanings with which they chance to have encumbered themselves. What does it matter

that the name Peter in Greek happens to mean a rock or a stone? What difference does it make that Peter was promised the gift of seership, or anything else for that matter? And what bearing does it have on the problem to show that all of the Twelve held all of the keys of the kingdom? None of these things establish the divinity of any false church.

"But suppose it were true that the wholly untenable apostate view were correct, and that the Lord had set up his kingdom with Peter as the rock, still any church claiming to trace its authority back to Peter would be a false church unless it believed in and operated on the principles of modern revelation. Why? Simply because conditions are so different in the world today that a church without daily revelation cannot make the change necessary to meet those new conditions. How would the modern church know what stand to take with reference to the use of tobacco, or coffee, or the atomic bomb, or motion pictures, or television, or a thousand things that were not so much as known to men in Peter's day?

"Clearly it is only by revelation that the Lord establishes his work among men. In the final analysis, no person can have conclusive knowledge as to the true meaning of this passage without revelation from that God who is no respecter of persons and who giveth wisdom liberally to all who ask of him in faith. And how can those who deny the very existence of revelation for this age, and who deliberately refrain from seeking such for themselves, how can they, in their uninspired state, ever come to a sure knowledge of this or any other eternal, spiritual truth?" (McConkie, *DNTC*, 1:387.)

(14-2) Matthew 16:19. What Are the Keys of the Kingdom of Heaven?

"These keys include the *sealing power*, that is, the power to bind and seal on earth, in the Lord's name and by his authorization, and to have the act ratified in heaven. Thus if Peter performed baptism by the authority of the sealing power here promised him, that ordinance would be of full force and validity when the person for whom it was performed went into the eternal worlds, and it would then admit him to the celestial heaven. Again, if Peter used these sealing keys to perform a marriage, then those so united in eternal marriage would continue as husband and wife forever. When they attained their future heaven, they would find themselves bound together in

the family unit the same as they were on earth. (*Mormon Doctrine*, pp. 615–16.)” (McConkie, *DNTC*, 1:389–90.)

(14-3) Matthew 16:19. Is There a Special Significance to Jesus’ Statement That Peter Would Receive the Keys of the Kingdom?

“In other words, Peter, holding the keys of the kingdom, was as much the president of the High Priesthood in his day as Joseph Smith and his successors, to whom also these ‘keys’ were given in our day, are the presidents of the High Priesthood, and the earthly heads of the Church and kingdom of God on the earth.” (Harold B. Lee in *CR*, Oct. 1953, p. 25.)

(14-4) Matthew 16:24. “Take Up [Your] Cross and Follow Me”

The Inspired Version of the Bible says that “for a man to take up his cross, is to deny himself all ungodliness, and every worldly lust, and keep my commandments.” (Matthew 16:26, Inspired Version.)

(14-5) Matthew 17:1–9. Why Were Peter, James, and John Singled Out to Receive Special Privileges, Keys, and Blessings?

“They alone witnessed the raising of Jairus’ daughter from the dead. (Mark 5:22–24, 35–43.) They alone beheld the glory and majesty of the transfigured Jesus; they alone received from him, and from Moses and Elijah the keys of the kingdom, being prohibited from so much as telling the others of the Twelve of these transcendent events until after our Lord’s resurrection. They alone were taken to a spot in Gethsemane where they could behold his agony as he took upon himself the sins of the world. (Mark 14:32–42.) They were the ones who came to Joseph Smith and Oliver Cowdery in this dispensation to confer priesthood and keys. (D. & C. 27:12–13; 128:20.)

“Why always these three and not various ones or even all of the Twelve. The plain fact is that Peter, James, and John were the First Presidency of the Church in their day. . . . by latter-day revelation we know that they held and restored ‘the keys of the kingdom, which belong always unto the Presidency of the High Priesthood’ (D&C 81:2), or in other words, they were the First Presidency in their day. (McConkie, *DNTC*, 1:401–2.)

“In the days of Christ’s ministry he called the first apostles who were ever ordained to that office so far

as we have any knowledge. He conferred upon them all the power and authority of the priesthood. He also appointed three of these Twelve to take the keys of presidency. *Peter, James, and John, acted as the First Presidency of the Church in their day.*” (Smith, *Doctrines of Salvation*, 3:152. See also D&C 7:7; 27:12, 13.)

(14-6) Matthew 17:3, 4. What Was Important About the Appearance of Moses and Elijah?

“Moses, the great prophet-statesman whose name symbolized the law, and Elijah the Tishbite, a prophet of so great fame that his name had come to typify and symbolize the collective wisdom and insight of all the prophets. Moses held the keys of the gathering of Israel and the leading of the ten tribes from the land of the north; Elijah, the keys of the sealing power. These are the keys which they conferred upon Peter, James, and John upon the mount, and which they also conferred upon Joseph Smith and Oliver Cowdery in the Kirtland Temple nearly two thousand years later. (D. & C 110:11–16.) Both of them were translated beings and had bodies of flesh and bones, a status they apparently enjoyed so that they could confer keys upon mortal men. We have a detailed scriptural account of Elijah’s translation (2 Kings 2) and a number of scriptural references concerning Moses which can only be interpreted to mean that he too was taken to heaven without tasting death. (Alma 45:18–19; *Mormon Doctrine*, pp. 726–730; *Doctrines of Salvation*, vol. 2, pp. 107–111.) When these two holy men appeared in this dispensation to restore again their keys and powers, they came as resurrected personages. (D. & C. 133:55.)” (McConkie, *DNTC*, 1:402–3.)

(14-7) Matthew 18:15–17, 21–35. Are There Limits to Forgiveness? If So, How Is This Principle Applied to the Teachings of Jesus?

Regarding limitations placed on us to forgive our fellowmen, read these scriptures:

Matthew 18:21, 22; D&C 98:23–48; D&C 64:7–11.

(14-8) Matthew 18:6. What Is Meant by the Statement “Whoso Shall Offend One of These Little Ones”?

Little ones are children and those who have become as little children by conforming to the principles of the gospel. To “offend one of these little ones,” to cause to

stumble or falter because of false example or doctrine, is a grievous sin indeed. The Savior taught that in some cases it would have been better for a person never to have been born than for him to have blocked the eternal progress of another. (See McConkie, *DNTC*, 1:420.)

(14-9) Matthew 18:17. Is It Necessary to Discuss One’s Transgression with Church Leaders?

“The function of proper Church leaders in the matter of forgiveness is twofold: (1) to exact proper penalty—for example, to initiate official action in regard to the sinner in cases which warrant either disfellowshipment or excommunication; (2) to waive penalties and extend the hand of fellowship to the one in transgression. Whichever of the two steps is taken, either forgiveness or Church disciplinary action, it must be done in the light of all the facts and the inspiration which can come to those making the decision. Hence the importance of the repentant transgressor making full confession to the appropriate authority.” (Spencer W. Kimball, *The Miracle of Forgiveness*, pp. 325–26.)

POINTS TO PONDER

(14-10) THE IMPORTANCE OF PRIESTHOOD KEYS

Various priesthood keys were held by Adam, Noah, the heads of gospel dispensations, and other mighty

prophets. President Wilford Woodruff said that Joseph Smith told the Twelve Apostles that he had sealed upon them all keys, rights, authorities, and sealing powers. (See Durham, *Discourses of Wilford Woodruff*, pp. 71–73.)

At the time of his ordination as a member of the Quorum of the Twelve, each apostle is blessed with all of the keys of the priesthood which are currently available to man on the earth. Although each holds the keys, only the presiding officer of the Church can exercise them fully. Upon the dissolution of the First Presidency, the senior member of the Quorum of the Twelve, having been called and sustained prior to all other living members of the Twelve, may then exercise these keys in their fulness.

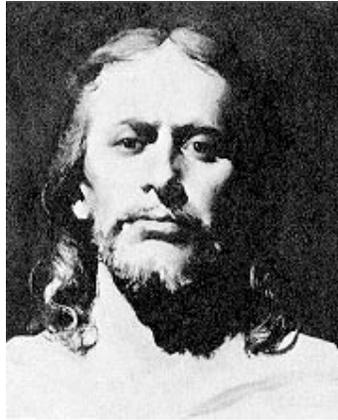
Read and mark D&C 132:7.

“ . . . we have the holy priesthood and . . . the keys of the kingdom. . . .” (Joseph Fielding Smith in *CR*, Apr. 1972, p. 99.)

As an example of how one of the apostles received the keys of the priesthood, consider how the keys were given to Spencer W. Kimball, a modern prophet.

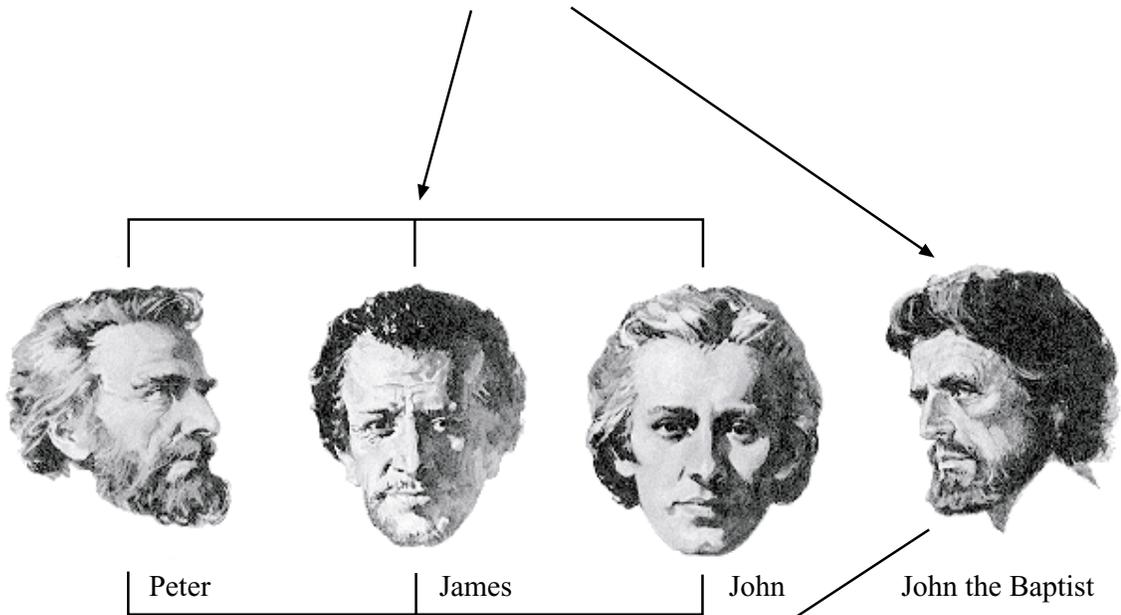
(see following pages)

(Keys of the sealing powers of the priesthood: the power to bind on earth and seal eternally in the heavens)

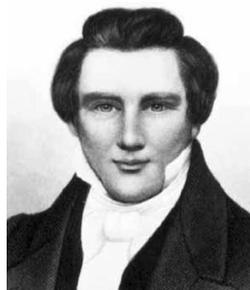


(Keys of the kingdom: all rights and powers of presidency)

The Savior



(Peter, James, and John were ordained by the Savior [Mark 3:14; Matthew 16:19].)



Joseph Smith

(Ordained under the hands of Peter, James, and John in 1829.)



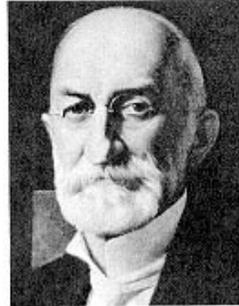
Brigham Young

(Ordained an apostle by the Three Witnesses, who were acting under the authority of Joseph Smith, February 14, 1835.)



George Q. Cannon

(Brigham Young ordained George Q. Cannon an apostle on August 26, 1860.)



Heber J. Grant

(George Q. Cannon ordained Heber J. Grant an apostle on October 16, 1882.)



Spencer W. Kimball

(Heber J. Grant ordained Spencer W. Kimball an apostle on October 7, 1943.)

Of what value to you is the fact that the keys of the priesthood are possessed by Church leaders today? How do these keys relate to such things as your baptism, your family, your marriage or future marriage, the priesthood, and so forth? Read D&C 132:13. Keys open doors. What doors are opened for you because the keys have been committed to the Church?

(14-11) SUMMARY

All things were done in proper order during the Savior's ministry. The experience on the Mount of Transfiguration marked, among other things, the granting of important revelation and keys to those who would soon preside over Christ's church of the meridian dispensation.

"I AM THE LIGHT OF THE WORLD"



THE LATER JUDEAN MINISTRY	Matthew	Mark	Luke	John
Galilee Jesus Is Urged to Attend the Feast of Tabernacles				17:2-9
Jesus Journeys Toward Jerusalem			9:51-56	7:10
Jerusalem, Judea Preaching During the Feast of Tabernacles				7:11-53
Woman Taken in Adultery				8:1-11
Jesus Testifies of Himself				8:12-30
Discourse to the Jews				8:31-59
A Man Born Blind Is Healed				9:1-41
Jesus Is the Good Shepherd				10:1-21

THEME

The light of Christ enables mankind to clearly choose between the kingdom of God or spiritual darkness.

INTRODUCTION

It was autumn in Galilee. The annual Feast of the Tabernacles was near at hand, and Jesus, like many of his Jewish countrymen, was planning to attend the

great celebration in Jerusalem. Some of his brethren felt that the festival presented an unusual opportunity for Jesus to make a public declaration of his divine mission. They said: "If thou do these things, shew thyself to the world." (John 7:4.) Jesus rejected the suggestion, and stayed his departure for a few days. "Go ye up unto this feast," he told his brethren. "I go not up yet . . . for my time is not yet full come." (John 7:8.) It was not his Father's plan that Christ be present until the festivities were well under way, for Jewish leaders sought his life.

At length, however, "when the time was come that he should be received up, [Jesus] stedfastly set his face to go to Jerusalem." (Luke 9:51.)

"Jesus was leaving Galilee forever; his great Galilean ministry was ended. In Judea and Perea his voice would yet be heard, his mighty works seen. But the course of his life was toward the cross, and he was steadfast and immovable in his determination to follow this very course, one laid out for him by his Father. He had said of himself through the mouth of Isaiah, 'I set my face like a flint, and I know that I shall not be ashamed.' (Isa. 50:7.) Clearly, there was to be no turning back." (McConkie, DNTC, 1:439.)

Before proceeding, read all the scriptural references in the reading block.

INTERPRETIVE COMMENTARY

(15-1) John 7:2. What Was the Feast of Tabernacles?

" . . . the fifteenth day of this seventh month shall be the feast of tabernacles for seven days unto the Lord." (Leviticus 23:34.) The Feast of Tabernacles was a time to rejoice and to express gratitude to the Lord for the rich harvest of the fertile lands of Palestine. Fields and vineyards were often some distance from Israelite villages, so families would build temporary living quarters for the harvest season and week-long celebration. These dwellings were decorated with fruits and garlands which represented the bountiful harvest received from the Lord. They also served to remind the occupants of the forty years their ancestors spent in the wilderness, encamped in makeshift tents of whatever materials that could be found. The Jews were never to forget that God redeemed their people from captivity and bondage.

The special animal sacrifices of rams, lambs, and bullocks were offered daily. The people also participated in a ceremony in which they waved branches of palm, myrtle, willow, and citron trees up and down toward the cardinal points of the compass, symbolizing the presence of God throughout the universe.

The eighth day, the Feast of Conclusion, was a time of solemn assembly—a day of prayer for rain, and a day commemorated in memory of the dead. (See Exodus 23:16, 17; Leviticus 23:39–43; Numbers 29:12–38; Deuteronomy 16:13–15; 31:10–13.)

(15-2) John 7:16, 17. What Test Did Jesus Prescribe to Know the Truthfulness of His Doctrine?

"In searching the record as it is given to us by men who associated daily with the Lord, we find that upon one occasion men who were listening to him cried out against him. They opposed his works, as men today oppose him. And one voice cried out and said in effect, 'How do we know that what you tell us is true? How do we know that your profession of being the Son of God is true.' And Jesus answered him in just a simple way (and note the test): '*If any man will do his will, he shall know of the doctrine, whether it be of God, or whether I speak of myself.*' (John 7:17. Italics added.)

"That test is most sound. It is most philosophical. It is the most simple test to give knowledge to an individual of which the human mind can conceive. *Doing a thing, introducing it into your very being,* will convince you whether it is good or whether it is bad. You may not be able to convince me of that which you know, but *you know it because you have lived it.* That is the test that the Savior gave to those men when they asked him how they should know whether the doctrine was of God or whether it was of man." (David O. McKay in CR, Oct. 1966, p. 136.)

(15-3) John 8:1–11. The Woman Taken in Adultery

"Did the Lord forgive the woman? Could he forgive her? There seems to be no evidence of forgiveness. His command to her was, 'Go, and sin no more.' He was directing the sinful woman to go her way, *abandon her evil life, commit no more sin, transform her life.* He was saying, Go, woman, and start your repentance; and he was indicating to her the beginning step—to *abandon her transgressions.*" (Kimball, *The Miracle of Forgiveness*, p. 165.)

(15-4) John 8:31, 32. “The Truth Shall Make You Free”

Elder Bruce R. McConkie has interpreted the foregoing expression to mean that we shall be made “free from the damning power of false doctrine; free from the bondage of appetite and lust; free from the shackles of sin; from every evil and corrupt influence and from every restraining and curtailing power; free to go on to the unlimited freedom enjoyed in its fulness only by exalted beings.” (*DNTC*, 1:456–57.)

(15-5) John 8:56–59. What Did Jesus Mean, “Before Abraham Was, I Am”?

“This is as blunt and pointed an affirmation of divinity as any person has or could make. ‘Before Abraham was I Jehovah.’ That is, ‘I am God Almighty, the Great I AM. I am the self-existent, Eternal One. I am the God of your fathers. My name is: I AM THAT I AM.’

“To Moses the Lord Jehovah had appeared, identified himself as the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, and said: ‘I AM THAT I AM: . . . Thus shalt thou say unto the children of Israel, I AM hath sent me unto you. . . . This is my name for ever, and this is my memorial unto all generations.’ (Ex. 2:1–15.)

“Of a later manifestation, the King James Version has Deity say: ‘I am the Lord: And I appeared unto Abraham, unto Isaac, and unto Jacob, by the name of God Almighty, but by my name JEHOVAH was I not known to them.’ (Ex. 6:2–3.) From latter-day revelation we know that one of our Lord’s great pronouncements to Abraham was: “I am the Lord thy God; . . . My name is Jehovah’ (Abra. 2:7–8), and accordingly we find the Inspired Version account reading: ‘I appeared unto Abraham, unto Isaac, and unto Jacob. I am the Lord God Almighty; the Lord JEHOVAH. And was not my name known unto them?’ (I.V. Ex. 6:3.)

“That the Jews understood Jesus’ plainly stated claim to Messiahship is evident from their belligerent attempt to stone him—death by stoning being the penalty for blasphemy, a crime of which our Lord would have been guilty had not his assertions as to divinity been true. But Jesus, evidently exercising divine powers, passed unknown out of their midst.” (McConkie, *DNTC*, 1:464.)

(15-6) John 10:1–15. The Symbolism of the “Good Shepherd”

“The shepherd in Palestine lived a lonely life and was noted for his faithfulness and protection to his sheep.

At night the sheep would be brought into an enclosure called a sheep-fold which had high walls to keep anything or anyone from getting in. At the top of the walls were placed thorns which prevented wolves from leaping into the enclosure. Proper entrance was at the door only. (John 10:1.)

“Often several flocks were brought into one fold and one shepherd, called a porter, would stand guard at the door during the night while the others would go home to rest. When they would return in the morning, they would be recognized by the doorkeeper, allowed to enter, and each call his own flock and lead them forth to pasture. (John 10:2–3.) The shepherd provided the food for the sheep.

“The shepherd walked ahead of his sheep and led them. The sheep knew the shepherd and trusted in him and would not follow a stranger. (John 10:4–5.) He generally had a name for each sheep and each knew its own name and would come when called. If a stranger called, the sheep became nervous and startled and would not obey the voice of the stranger, for they knew their master’s voice. (John 10:3–4, 27.)

“The true shepherd, the owner of the sheep, was willing to give his life for the sheep if need be. Sometimes a leopard or panther, when driven by hunger, would leap over the walls of the fold and into the midst of the frightened sheep. Then was the time when the nerve and heart of the shepherd was tried. A hireling, one who did not own the sheep, might at such a crisis flee from the danger and shrink from the duties of the shepherd. (John 10:11–13.) Unwatched, the hireling might not put the welfare of the sheep foremost in his life. Hirelings had been known to sell sheep and then pocket the money and account for the loss by saying that wolves came and destroyed the sheep. When this is applied to the gospel, it is seen what a ‘hireling’ might do with the care of human souls. But the true shepherd’s chief concern was the welfare of the sheep. (John 21:15–17.)

“Even the shepherd’s clothing was designed to aid him in his care of the sheep. The shepherd’s coat generally had a large pocket inside, suitable for carrying a weak or wounded lamb to safety. Isaiah made reference to this pocket when he ascribed to Christ the role of shepherd. (Isaiah 40:10–11.)

“Jesus’ station as the Good Shepherd is complete in every detail. He is the door of the fold, by which we must enter. There is none other. (John 10:9.) He is not a hireling but is the true shepherd of human souls, and ‘we are not our own’ (1 Corinthians 6:19–20),

but he has purchased us with his precious blood. (1 Corinthians 7:23; 1 Peter 1:18–19; 2 Peter 2:1; Acts 20:28.) The shepherd provided the pasture on which the sheep feed. Jesus has given us his word. We are warned against the doctrines of men. Only the ‘pasture’ that the Lord provides is proper food for his sheep, and no man can be saved in ignorance of his word or without his revelations. The true sheep know his voice. The true Shepherd knows and owns his sheep and he calls them. We thus take upon us the name of Christ, for he owns us; we are his sheep; and, if we have his name, we can enter ‘by the door.’” (Matthews, *The Parables of Jesus*, pp. 75–76.)

In the light of what you have just learned about the role of a “good shepherd,” what difference does it make to you to know that the Savior knows your name, that you are among those recognized as his sheep? On a separate sheet of paper answer this question: What does it mean for me when the Savior says, “My sheep know my voice”? For special insight see Mosiah 6:10–13.

(15-7) John 10:17, 18. [See also John 5:26, 27.] Why Is It That No Man Could Take Jesus’ Life from Him?

“Jesus had no father of the flesh, that is who was mortal and subject to death. Our Eternal Father to whom we pray is the Father of the body of Jesus Christ and from his Father he inherited life and death was always subject to him. He had the power to lay down his life, because he was the Son of Mary who was like us, mortal, and he had the power to take his life up again for that power was in him. In his teachings to the Jews and his disciples he frequently told them of this power and of his mission.” (Smith, *Answers to Gospel Questions*, 1:33.)

POINTS TO PONDER

(15-8) I Am the Light of the World

The celebration known as the Feast of Tabernacles was marked by a brilliant display of light which emanated from great golden candlesticks set up within the temple complex. Jesus apparently took advantage of the situation to declare, “I am the light of the world.”

“His hearers well knew that their Messiah should stand as a light to all men; that is, they knew that he as the very source of light and truth, would stand forth as a light, an example, a dispenser of truth; they knew

that his would be the mission to mark the course and light the way which all men should travel. (3 Ne. 15:9; 18:16, 24.) Messianic prophecies given to their fathers promised that he would be ‘a light to the Gentiles’ (Isa. 49:6), a light piercing the darkness of error and unbelief. (Isa. 60:1–3.) Jesus’ application of these prophecies to his own person was a clear proclamation of his own Messiahship and was so understood by his hearers.” (McConkie, *DNTC*, 1:452–53.)

The Woman Taken in Sin (John 8:3–12)

According to Mosaic Law, the physical penalty for adultery was death. What was (and is) the spiritual penalty? By what manner did the Savior save the life of the sinful woman? How did he become a light to her? to her accusers? How may he become a light to others who are guilty of sin?

The Healing of the Man Born Blind (John 9:1–41)

The real problem bothering the Pharisees was not whether it was proper for Jesus to heal on the Sabbath day. Nor did it concern them whether or not Jesus was truly the Messiah. The Pharisees felt that their very existence as interpreters of the Mosaic Law was threatened. They demanded that every Jew conform his life to a harsh set of ritual rules and laws, the breaking of which would make him unclean and, therefore, unacceptable to God.

In contrast, Jesus taught that God’s laws were based on love; that obedience brought freedom, happiness, and fulfillment. The essence of Christ’s teachings shed the light of truth upon those false and burdensome philosophies which kept men in the darkness of disbelief, ignorance, and sin. See John 9:39. Jesus clearly set forth the path by which men could achieve salvation and offered a choice: remain as you are, or transform your life and follow me. It was as though Jesus had said this:

*“I am come into the world to sit in judgment upon all men, to divide them into two camps by their acceptance or rejection of my word. Those who are spiritually blind have their eyes opened through obedience to my gospel and shall see the things of the Spirit. Those who think they can see in the spiritual realm, but who do not accept me and my gospel shall remain in darkness and be made blind to the true spiritual realities.” (McConkie, *DNTC*, 1:482.)*

How is it that a man born blind came to see with an eternal clarity which eclipsed the sight of those who professed the fullest vision of the law? There are

some powerful and profound insights in this story which can assist you in overcoming spiritual blindness. Look again at some key verses in John 9 which help explain how an individual can come to see the things of God. How many times did the man have to “bear testimony” of what happened? Note verses 11, 15, 17, and 25. Can you see, as he bears his testimony, the spiritual sight developing? Initially he only recounts what happened, but by the time he is through he is a committed disciple of Christ. Note verses 26 and 27. Now consider the power of his final testimony. Read verses 31–33.

What did discipleship cost the young man? Note verse 34. Was he willing to pay the price? Now consider the result. Study carefully verse 35. Who came looking for whom? Why? How would you feel if you knew the Savior was seeking you out; that he, because of your faith, even under trial, was feeling for you? He is, you know. Do you have eyes to see?

Christ Can Be a Light in Your Life

You have just read of two individuals whose lives were transformed by the light of Christ. The Savior can strengthen and enlighten your life as well. He has explained how that may be accomplished. In the Sermon on the Mount, the Lord taught that we may enjoy his light if we are single-minded in desiring to serve him and keep his commandments. (See Matthew 6:22, 23.) Being single-minded means that the interests and pleasures of the world do not become as attractive and important as our desires to strengthen the Lord’s kingdom. It means that we must be willing to put our own interests aside, when necessary, to care for the needs of others. It means that we are not

ashamed of the gospel of Jesus Christ—that our very beings may radiate and reflect its message of truth, love, and peace. “Verily, verily, I say unto you, I give unto you to be the light of the world. . . .” (Matthew 5:16, Inspired Version.) “Behold I am the light which ye shall hold up—that which ye have seen me do.” (3 Nephi 18:24.) “Therefore, let your light so shine before this world, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father who is in heaven.” (Matthew 5:18, Inspired Version.)

(15-9) The Light of Truth Is the Light of Christ

The Prophet Joseph Smith received a profound revelation in which he was given some of the most powerful truths ever revealed concerning the nature and mission of Jesus Christ as the light of the world.

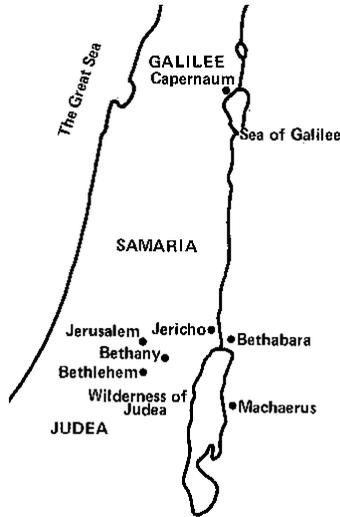
Read D&C 88:6–13.

One can scarcely begin to comprehend the depth and breadth of the majestic mission of our Lord and Savior to the earth and its inhabitants. But we can be certain of the following fact:

“Christ is the light to humanity. In that light man sees his way clearly. When it is rejected, the soul of man stumbles in darkness. No person, no group, no nation can achieve true success without following Him who said:

“‘I am the light of the world; he that followeth me shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life.’ (John 8:12)” (David O. McKay in *CR*, Apr. 1940, p. 115.)

THE TWO GREAT COMMANDMENTS



THE LATER JUDEAN MINISTRY	Matthew	Mark	Luke	John
Judea The Seventy Return	11:25–27		10:17–24	
The Two Great Commandments; Parable of the Good Samaritan			10:25–37	
Bethany, Judea Jesus Visits Mary and Martha			10:38–42	
Judea Instructions to Disciples on Prayer			11:1–13	
Accused Again of Casting Out an Evil Spirit by the Power of Satan			11:14–36	
Another Discourse on Cleanliness			11:37–54	

THEME

The Savior taught the singular importance of developing pure love, first for God and then for all others.

INTRODUCTION

At the Feast of Tabernacles, Jesus had again declared his divinity, emphasizing the distinct difference between himself and the rest of mankind. He knew the Father perfectly; they did not know him at all. He obeyed the Father completely; they did not.

They thirsted, but he was the very source of “living water.” His audience was greatly disturbed over the bold testimony.

Yet even as the day closed upon the departing throngs, the scene itself seemed to illustrate the distinction between the Messiah and his troubled listeners, for we read that “every man went into his own house,” but “Jesus went unto the mount of Olives.” (John 7:53; 8:1.)

Later, having before them the unimpeachable testimony of the former blind man, these Jews denied the undeniable. Self-made darkness persisted, and

they remained willfully blind to him who was the Light of the world.

Jesus told them too of the importance of his voice, for he was that Good Shepherd who had spoken from heaven to their wandering fathers. But they made themselves also deaf and at their hands he would soon be the sacrificial Lamb of God. “Ye seek to kill me,” he said, “because my word hath no place in you.” (John 8:37.)

From all of this we may see that Jesus was not then, nor is he now, accepted or rejected simply on technicalities. It is, after all, a matter of where your heart really is. Now, as you continue with Jesus in his later Judean ministry, you will read of those two great fundamentals suggested by the title of this lesson. It is hoped that you will obtain a greater understanding of these heartfelt rudiments of gaining eternal life: the two great commandments.

Before proceeding, read all the scriptural references in the reading block.

INTERPRETIVE COMMENTARY

(16-1) Luke 10:17. The Significance of the Calling of the Seventy

“The order of the Seventy is a special calling of Elders for the preaching of the Gospel in all the world, under the direction of the Twelve Apostles. A quorum consists of seventy members, of which seven are chosen as presidents. The difference between the Seventies and the Elders is that the former are ‘traveling ministers’ and the latter are ‘standing ministers’ to the Church.” (Widtsoe, comp., *Priesthood and Church Government*, p. 115; see also D&C 107:25.)

(16-2) Luke 10:21. Who Are the “Babes” to Whom the Father Gives Revelation?

“Compared with the learned men of the time, such as the rabbis and scribes, whose knowledge served but to harden their hearts against the truth, these devoted servants were as babes in humility, trust, and faith. Such children were and are among the nobles of the kingdom.” (Talmage, *Jesus the Christ*, p. 428.)

(16-3) Luke 10:27, 29, 36. How Did Many Jewish Leaders in the Day of Jesus Interpret the Term Neighbor?

Among the sacred laws left on record by Moses was the command to “love thy neighbour as thyself.” (Leviticus 19:18.) Centuries later, in laying

down for the people narrow and uninspired interpretations of this command, the rabbis wrote:

“We are not to contrive the death of the Gentiles, but if they are in any danger of death we are not bound to deliver them, e.g. if any of them fall into the sea you need not take him out, for such a one is not thy neighbour.” (Dummelow, *A Commentary on the Holy Bible*, p. 751.)

(16-4) Luke 10:38–42. The Devotion of Mary and Martha

“There was no reproof of Martha’s desire to provide well; nor any sanction of possible neglect on Mary’s part. We must suppose that Mary had been a willing helper before the master’s arrival; but now that He had come, she chose to remain with Him. Had she been culpably neglectful of her duty, Jesus would not have commended her course. He desired not well-served meals and material comforts only, but the company of the sisters, and above all their receptive attention to what He had to say. He had more to give them than they could possibly provide for Him. Jesus loved the two sisters and their brother as well. Both these women were devoted to Jesus, and each expressed herself in her own way. Martha was of a practical turn, concerned in material service; she was by nature hospitable and self-denying. Mary, contemplative and more spiritually inclined, showed her devotion through the service of companionship and appreciation.” (Talmage, *Jesus the Christ*, p. 433.)

(16-5) Luke 11:1–4. “Teach Us to Pray”

No doubt the apostles, being faithful Jews, were themselves men of prayer; yet as they watched Jesus in prayer, they were so humbled and impressed as to ask, when he had finished, “Lord, teach us to pray.”

Here he gave them a simple pattern, the same as had been given in the Sermon on the Mount. It taught them “how Deity might appropriately be addressed in prayer, of the praise and adoration that should be extended to him, and of the type and kind of petitions men should make to him. As far as it goes it is one of the most concise, expressive, and beautiful statements found in the scriptures. It does not, however, reach the heights of one of Jesus’ later prayers among the Jews, the great Intercessory Prayer (John 17), nor does it compare with some of the prayers he uttered among the Nephites. (3 Ne. 19.)” (McConkie, *DNTC*, 1:235.)

Perhaps even more helpful than the short sample itself were the pertinent guidelines and counsel he then gave them. (See Luke 11:5–13.)

(16-6) Compare Luke 11:4 with Matthew 6:12. A Lost Sentence in Luke

As you have noticed, the Lord's prayer as rendered in Luke is missing these great sanctifying words: "For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, for ever. Amen." President J. Reuben Clark, Jr., explained:

"The prayer as given in Luke has been considerably tampered with.

"Scholars affirm the changes . . . stem from the pen of Marcion, the heretic of almost 1800 years ago. (*CR*, Apr. 1954, p. 42.)

It is noteworthy that in the Inspired Version, the Luke account includes the expression of reverence and humility that is missing in the King James Version.

(16-7) Luke 11:5–13. The Parable of the Friend at Midnight

"The parable is regarded by some as a difficult one to apply, since it deals with the selfish and comfort-loving element of human nature, and apparently uses this to symbolize God's deliberate delay. The explanation, however, is clear when the context is duly considered. The Lord's lesson was, that if man, with all his selfishness and disinclination to give, will nevertheless grant what his neighbor with proper purpose asks and continues to ask in spite of objection and temporary refusal, with assured certainty will God grant what is persistently asked in faith and with righteous intent. No parallelism lies between man's selfish refusal and God's wise and beneficent waiting. There must be a consciousness of real need for prayer, and real trust in God, to make prayer effective; and in mercy the Father sometimes delays the granting that the asking may be more fervent. But in the words of Jesus: 'If ye then, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children: how much more shall your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to them that ask him?'" (Talmage, *Jesus the Christ*, p. 435.)

(16-8) Luke 11:24–26. "The Last State of That Man Is Worse than the First"

"Does this mean that the man who has quit smoking or drinking or had sex pollutions finds life empty for a time? The things which engaged him and caught his fancy and occupied his thoughts are gone, and better substitutions have not yet filled the void. This is Satan's opportunity. The man makes a start but may find the loss of the yesterday's habits so great that he is enticed to return to his evil ways, and his lot thus becomes infinitely worsened." (Kimball, *The Miracle of Forgiveness*, p. 172.)

(16-9) Luke 11:32. The Men of Nineveh Shall Rise Up in Judgment and Condemn This Generation

"It shall be as though heathen and Gentile nations, those without the law and the light which Israel had, shall rise up in judgment against the chosen seed, whose opportunities to do right were far greater. The heathens of Nineveh repented when a man preached to them, but God's covenant race, the chosen of the whole earth, refused to repent when the very Son of God came among them." (McConkie, *DNTC*, 1:278.)

(16-10) Luke 11:47–49. Are There Modern-Day Sepulchre Builders?

". . . do you also build sepulchres for the dead prophets and tombs for those who have passed away long ago and disregard the living ones?" (Spencer W. Kimball in *CR*, Oct. 1949, p. 123.)

"Even in the Church many are prone to garnish the sepulchres of yesterday's prophets and mentally stone the living ones." (Spencer W. Kimball, *Instructor*, Aug. 1960, p. 257.)

(16-11) Luke 11:52. Jesus Decries the Loss of the Fulness of the Scriptures

What did Jesus mean by the "key to knowledge"? The Prophet Joseph Smith gives this clarification:

"Woe unto you, lawyers! For ye have taken away the key of knowledge, *the fulness of the scriptures*; ye enter not in yourselves into the kingdom; and those who were entering in, ye hindered." (Luke 11:53, Inspired Version. Italics added.)

"The devil wages war against the scriptures. He hates them, perverts their plain meanings, and destroys them when he can. He entices those who heed his temptings to delete and discard, to change and corrupt, to alter and amend. . . .

"Accordingly, Jesus is here heaping wo upon those who have contaminated and destroyed scriptures which would have guided and enlightened the Jews." (McConkie, *DNTC*, 1:624–25.)

Do This and Thou Shalt Live

The mission of our Redeemer enables us to secure the kind of life that he and his Father possess—eternal life. Though we have many things to do in order to prepare for such life, we have fortunately been given the "master formula," which embodies every law and requirement leading to exaltation. Let us now consider some of these points regarding what we must do to "live."

At two different points in the ministry of Jesus we read of the two great commandments. It is the first of these two occasions that you have studied in the reading block for this lesson. (Luke 10:25–28.) Here, a lawyer asked what he should do to gain eternal life, and Jesus had the man answer his own question by reciting from the ancient scriptures. (Compare Deuteronomy 6:5 and Leviticus 19:18.) It was on the second occasion, however, that Jesus himself listed these two commands and gave them the place of preeminence among all the requirements of the gospel. Read Matthew 22:35–39.

Why is love of God the first commandment? (See D&C 64:34.) How does the second commandment naturally flow from the first?

Now continue and read Matthew 22:40.

The Ten Commandments might be used as a simple illustration of how all the requirements for salvation may be traced to our responsibility to love God and man. Read Deuteronomy 5:6–21, and identify those commandments which pertain primarily to our responsibilities to God and those relating to our relationship to our fellowmen. How does the Savior summarize the Ten Commandments in the first and second great commandments?

(16-12) Putting the First Commandments First

As you have seen, the Ten Commandments place devotion to the Lord at the top of the list. We find this same devotion first on other important lists as well. For example:

“We believe in *God, the Eternal Father*, and in *his Son, Jesus Christ*, and in the Holy Ghost.” (First Article of Faith. Italics added.)

Blessed are the poor in spirit, who *come unto me*, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.” (First of the Beatitudes as recorded in the Book of Mormon [3 Nephi 12:3]. Italics added.)

“We believe that the first principles and ordinances of the Gospel are: first, Faith in *the Lord Jesus Christ* [first principle of the gospel]. . . .” (Fourth Article of Faith. Italics added.)

With this idea in mind, you will begin to notice, if you have not already done so, that the primary message of the scriptures is that we should love the Lord with all our hearts. Elder Ezra Taft Benson, speaking of this greatest of all blessings and responsibilities, pointed out:

“The world largely ignores the first and great commandment—to love God—but talks a lot about loving their brother. . . .

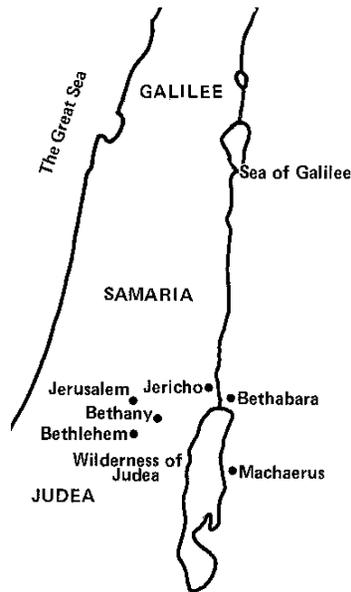
“. . . But only those who know and love God can best love and serve his children, for only God fully understands his children and knows what is best for their welfare. Therefore, one needs to be in tune with God to best help his children. . . .

“Therefore, if you desire to help your fellowmen the most, then you must put the first commandment first.

“When we fail to put the love of God first, we are easily deceived by crafty men who profess a great love of humanity. . . . (CR, Oct. 1967, p. 35.)

17

WHERE MUCH IS GIVEN,
MUCH IS REQUIRED



THE LATER JUDEAN MINISTRY	Matthew	Mark	Luke	John
Judea The Leaven of the Pharisees—Hypocrisy and Courage			12:1–12	
Parable of the Foolish Rich Man			12:13–21	
Disciples Seek Kingdom of God Before Earthly Treasures			12:22–34	
Preparation for the Lord’s Second Coming			12:35–59	
Slaughter of the Galileans; Parable of the Barren Fig Tree			13:1–9	
Jerusalem, Judea Feast of Dedication (Hanukkah) Jesus Proclaims His Messiahship				10:22–39
THE PEREAN MINISTRY				
Perea Jesus Goes Beyond the Jordan				10:39–42
Woman Healed on the Sabbath			13:10–17	
Parable of the Mustard Seed			13:18–21	
Jesus’ Journey to Jerusalem Begins			13:22–30	
Warning About Herod Antipas			13:31–35	

THEME

True discipleship requires a willingness to sacrifice one's personal desires in order to be true to the teachings of the Master.

INTRODUCTION

True Discipleship—a Choice Between the Kingdom of God and the World

What does it mean to be a true disciple of Christ? What things must a man avoid and what must he do if he would truly follow the Son of God? These and related questions will be answered by your study of this chapter. You will see how Jesus warns his disciples to beware of the sin of hypocrisy. You will also see that he requires us to make a choice between two alternatives: the kingdom of God and the world. Only by heeding the admonitions of our Savior can we truly respond to the call he gave: "Come, follow me!" (Luke 18:22.)

As you study the following passages of scripture, notice the many times that Jesus emphasized the element of personal choice in his conversations with his disciples. As you read, you may wish to ask yourself the following question: How could my choices make me a better disciple?

Before proceeding, read all the scriptural references in the reading block.

INTERPRETIVE COMMENTARY

(17-1) Luke 12:49–53. What Did Jesus Mean When He Said, "I am Come to Send Fire on the Earth"?

"When honest truth seekers accept the gospel, they forsake the world and gain its hatred. The sword of persecution, of domestic dissention, and of family bitterness is often unsheathed by their closest relatives. Thousands of devout converts, in this dispensation alone, have been driven from their homes and denied their temporal inheritances, for accepting Joseph Smith and the pure, primitive gospel restored through his instrumentality." (McConkie, *DNTC*, 1:335.)

(17-2) Luke 13:6–9. What Does the Parable of the Fig Tree Mean?

"A certain husbandman (God) had a fig tree (the Jewish remnant of Israel) planted in his vineyard (the world); and he came (in the meridian of time) and sought fruit thereon (faith, righteousness, good works,

gifts of the Spirit), and found none. Then said he unto the dresser of his vineyard (the son of God), Behold, these three years (the period of Jesus' ministry) I come seeking fruit on this fig tree, and find none: cut it down (destroy the Jewish nation as an organized kingdom); why cumbereth it the ground (why should it prevent the conversion of the world by occupying the ground and preempting the time of my servants)? And he (the Son of God) answering said unto him (God, the husbandman), Lord, let it alone this year also till I shall dig about it, and dung it (preach the gospel, raise the warning voice, show forth signs and wonders, organize the Church, and offer every opportunity for the conversion of the Jewish nation). And if it bear fruit, the tree is saved (the Jewish nation shall be preserved as such and its members gain salvation), and if not, after that thou shalt cut it down (destroy the Jews as a nation, make them a hiss and a byword, and scatter them among all nations)." (McConkie, *DNTC*, 1:477.)

(17-3) John 10:22. What Was the Feast of Dedication, and Why Was It Held?

Nearly two hundred years before the public ministry of Jesus began, Antiochus Epiphanes, a Selucidian king who controlled Palestine, attempted to destroy Judaism by compelling his subjects to accept the Greek culture. In a show of utter contempt for the Jewish faith, Antiochus sacrificed a pig (the filthiest of animals, according to the Jews) upon a small Greek altar built for the occasion within the temple confines. Following this, Antiochus prohibited all religious ordinances enjoined by the law of Moses and ordered the burning of all known copies of the Jewish law. Finally, he ordered that heathen altars be constructed throughout Palestine and that the Jews worship the heathen gods or suffer death. This suppression of the Jewish religion precipitated what is known as the Maccabean revolution.

Judas Maccabaeus, together with his four brothers, gathered about him a number of devout Jews who refused to honor the demands of Antiochus. They formed a guerilla army and waged relentless war against the troops employed by Antiochus to enforce his religious policies. Eventually, the Maccabees seized control of Jerusalem. Judas then proceeded to purify the temple (which for three years had been used to make offerings to Zeus) and restore the worship of Jehovah. *The Feast of Dedication, sometimes called the Feast of Lights, or Hanukkah, was inaugurated to celebrate the recovery and rededication of the Jewish*

temple. The feast takes place in the month of Chislev, corresponding to portions of our months of November and December, and lasts for eight days. It is marked by elaborate meals, special synagogue services, and extra illumination in all homes. Hence its title, “Feast of Lights.” (See *Harper’s Bible Dictionary*, pp. 133, 406–7.)

(17-4) John 10:22–38. What Is the Significance of Jesus’ Appearance at the Feast of Dedication?

The Feast of Dedication, occurring some two months following the Feast of Tabernacles, gave Jesus another opportunity to declare his messiahship openly. The Jews, haughty in their challenges, were anxious to have Jesus declare plainly that he was the Christ. Jesus replied to their entreaties, “I told you, and ye believed not.” (John 10:25.) He told the Jews that the reason they did not accept his words was that they were not his sheep. “My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me.” (John 10:27.) (Note the similarity of his testimony here to that given earlier at the Feast of the Tabernacles [John 10:14–16].) Jesus then concluded his declaration of messiahship by referring to his power to give men eternal life and by announcing his relationship with his Father: “I and my Father are one.” (John 10:30.)

As on a similar occasion (John 8:58, 59), Jesus’ plain statement of identification with God angered the Jews, and they took up stones to throw at him. But Jesus simply replied, “Many good works have I shewed you from my Father; for which of those works do ye stone me?” (John 10:32.) They replied that they were not stoning him for righteous works but because, as they said, “Thou, being a man, makest thyself God.” (John 10:33.) Plainly the Jews understood whom Jesus claimed to be.

(17-5) John 10:39, 40. Where Did Jesus Go Following His Encounter with the Jews at the Feast of Dedication?

Once again the Jews sought to take Jesus by force but did not succeed, because the time for his death and atoning sacrifice had not yet arrived. Instead, Jesus “went away again beyond Jordan into the place where John at first baptized; and there he abode.” (John 10:40.) This area beyond Jordan was known as Perea, a word which literally means “the land beyond.” Elder Talmage writes:

“The duration of this sojourn in Perea is nowhere recorded in our scriptures. It could not have lasted more than a few weeks at most. Possibly some of the discourses, instructions, and parables already treated

as following the Lord’s departure from Jerusalem after the Feast of Tabernacles in the preceding autumn, may chronologically belong to this interval. From this retreat of comparative quiet, Jesus returned to Judea in response to an earnest appeal from some whom He loved. He left the Bethany of Perea for the Judean Bethany, where dwelt Martha and Mary.” (Talmage, *Jesus the Christ*, p. 490.)

POINTS TO PONDER

CHARACTERISTICS OF TRUE DISCIPLES

True disciples of Jesus Christ are committed by covenant to the standards that Jesus has revealed, but they face many obstacles from the temporal world. As you consider some of the barriers to the spiritual life, you may wish to understand in greater depth Jesus’ feelings in these matters:

Avoiding Hypocrisy

Jesus warned his disciples to beware of the leaven of the Pharisees. What did he mean? When Jesus used these words, his disciples construed them to be a simple reference to bread, a possible rebuke since they had neglected to bring any nourishment for lunch. According to Luke, what did Jesus have in mind? (See Luke 12:1.)

Hypocrisy is defined as pretending to do or believe something while, in fact, practicing something else. Compare Paul’s statement concerning leaven in 1 Corinthians 5:7, 8 with the scriptures cited above. Why did Paul urge the saints at Corinth to purge themselves of the “old leaven”? What did he mean?

How can you avoid the “leaven of the Pharisees” in your own day? As you formulate your answer, consider the following statement from Elder James E. Talmage:

“These instances [i.e., the scriptures cited above], . . . are illustrative of the contagion of evil. In the incident of the woman using leaven in the ordinary process of bread-making, the spreading, penetrating, vital effect of truth is symbolized by the leaven. The same thing in different aspects may very properly be used to represent good in one instance and evil in another.” (Jesus the Christ, pp. 302–3.)

Faith in God Rather than Man

More to be feared than those who have power to take our lives is he who has power to destroy both soul and body in hell, meaning the Lord. (See Luke

12:4, 5; see also McConkie, DNTC, 1:334.) Some of the Lord's agents will lose their lives in his service; nevertheless, why fear the wicked?

Read and underline D&C 99:13, 14.

The true disciple has faith in the Lord and in his watchful providence. He knows that not even a hair of our heads falls to the ground without notice. (See Luke 12:7.)

The powers of man are limited and finite; the powers of God are infinite and eternal.

Laying Up Treasures on Earth

Among the many who followed Jesus, there was one who urged the Savior to serve as mediator between himself and his brother in matters strictly temporal. This Jesus refused to do. As in the case of the woman taken in adultery, the Savior refused to intervene in matters involving legal administration. Instead he warned the disciple, if disciple he was, to "take heed, and beware of covetousness." (Luke 12:15.) He said that a man's life consists of more than the amount of property he possesses.

To illustrate his point, Jesus told a story about a "certain rich man" whose ground produced so plentifully that he ran out of places to store his goods. The man decided to tear down his old barns and build bigger ones. His wealth grew until at length he thought to himself, "Soul, thou hast much goods laid up for many years; take thine ease, eat, drink, and be merry." (Luke 12:19.) But the man had forgotten one important thing: the transitory nature of this life. He died that very night. Then what of his possessions? Elder Talmage comments thus:

"His plans for the proper care of his fruits and goods were not of themselves evil, though he might have considered better ways of distributing his surplus, as for the relief of the needy. His sin was twofold; first, he regarded his great store chiefly as the means of securing personal ease and sensuous indulgence; secondly, in his material prosperity he failed to acknowledge God, and even counted the years as his own. In the hour of his selfish jubilation he was smitten. Whether the voice of God came to him as a fearsome presentiment of impending death, or by angel messenger, or how otherwise, we are not informed; but the voice spoke his doom: 'Thou fool, this night thy soul shall be required of thee.' He had used his time and his powers of body and mind to sow, reap and garner—all for himself. And what came of it all? Whose should be the wealth, to amass which he had jeopardized his soul? Had he been

other than a fool he might have realized as Solomon had done, the vanity of hoarding wealth for another, and he perhaps of uncertain character, to possess." (Jesus the Christ, pp. 439–40.)

Is it possible for a man to become wealthy and still maintain high standards of spirituality and unselfishness? How?

Preparation for the Lord's Second Coming

According to Elder Bruce R. McConkie, the parable given in Luke 12:36–39 refers to the apostles of Jesus, those special sentinels set to watch for the return of the Savior and to guide the saints.

"A little parable peculiar to Luke, warning the apostles to be ready for Christ's Second Coming, which will be sudden. The apostles are compared to slaves left to watch the house (the Church) while the master (Christ) goes to a wedding feast (i.e. ascends into heaven). Their loins are girded because they have housework to do (preaching the gospel and ruling the Church), and they have lighted lamps, because their task is to enlighten a dark and sinful world by their shining example. Christ's return from the marriage feast is his Second Advent, or it may mean his judgment of each individual soul at death. The 'marriage feast' here is not the final joy of the blessed, as in the parable of the Ten Virgins, but Christ's session at the right hand of God between the Ascension and the Second Advent. (Dummelow, *The One Volume Bible Commentary*, pp. 754–55, as quoted in McConkie, DNTC, 1:676.)

As a disciple of Christ who is preparing for the second coming, what is your relationship to the Lord's appointed servants? How will heeding their counsel help you to prepare?

Men approach what they think is discipleship in many different ways. Some give up all worldly possessions and spend their lives living and working among the poor. Others sacrifice marriage, family, and friends for a life of study, contemplation, and prayer. Still others strive to live "normal" lives while devoting time whenever possible to acts of service. Given the teachings of prophets, scriptures, and modern revelation, how do you view the responsibilities of discipleship? Is it possible to remain in the mainstream of life, or should we retreat? Can one rightfully seek after wealth and yet be of value to the Lord? Must one be willing to give all to be counted among the faithful who are prepared for the Second Coming? Ponder these questions and then continue to the next section.

(17-6) Must a True Disciple Make a Choice Between the Kingdom of God and the World?

Running like a thread through our mortal probations is the element of personal choice. While none may compel us to choose one way in preference to another, we cannot escape decision making. True disciples of Jesus Christ place the kingdom of God before all else. As one prominent church leader has expressed it, “The kingdom of God or nothing!” (John Taylor in *JD*, 6:19.)

There are several reasons why this is so. The first is suggested by the following scriptural passages: Luke 12:48; D&C 82:3.

When we place other things ahead of the kingdom of God, we run the risk of losing that which we have been given. This, then, becomes the basis for one’s eternal judgment. Here is the principle and how it works: Matthew 25:29; 2 Nephi 28:30.

Finally, when we seek *first* the things of the world, as the foolish rich man did, we place that which matters most at the mercy of that which matters *least*. We may die possessed of great temporal riches but still be poor toward God.

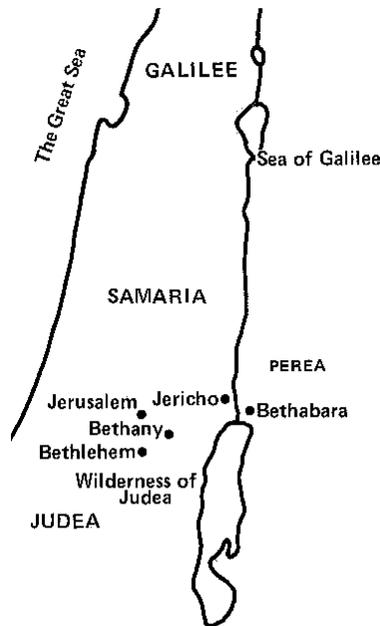
Concerning the need to choose, Elder Neal A. Maxwell of the First Quorum of the Seventy, has written the following:

“There is a special sense of urgency infusing itself into many Church members everywhere that says, quietly,

but insistently—this is the time for us to choose! It is not just that God will insist that we choose for our own sake, but that those who depend upon us, or use us as a reference point, need and deserve to know which way we are going. It is no good posing as a lifeguard if one is a non-swimmer. It is no good being a guide if one leaves his post and wanders with the multitude in search of another way, ‘for there is none other way,’ especially at a time when there is a sharper and sharper divergence in the way of the world and the straight and narrow way. The disciple must not only stand in ‘holy places’ but on holy issues and ‘not be moved.’

“In short, the events of our time and spiritual decay in the world have produced for us the equivalent situation faced by many of the disciples who followed Jesus. They followed him until he began to preach the ‘hard sayings’—the doctrines that really demand not only belief, but performance; doctrines which would distinguish them from their contemporary society. The Lord wants us to put some distance—behaviorally—between ourselves and the world, not because we love mankind less, but precisely because we do love men. It is for the world’s sake that we must sanctify ourselves. When Jesus’ followers faced their moment of truth, John records, ‘From that time many of his disciples went back, and walked no more with him.’ Jesus turned to the remainder and queried them, ‘Will ye also go away?’ (John 6:66–67.)” (*A Time to Choose*, pp. 39–40.)

“REJOICE WITH ME; FOR I HAVE FOUND
THE ... LOST”



THE PEREAN MINISTRY	Matthew	Mark	Luke	John
Perea The Message That Lazarus Was Sick				11:1-16
Meal with the Chief Pharisees; Man with Dropsy Healed			14:1-24	
Discourse on Sacrifice			14:25-35	
A Series of Parables			15:1-32; 16:1-13	
Discourse on Covetousness			16:14-18	
Parable of Rich Man and Lazarus			16:19-31	
Offences, Duty, and Truth			17:1-10	
Bethany, Judea Lazarus Raised				11:17-46
Jerusalem, Judea The Plot Against Jesus				11:47-53
Retirement to Ephraim				11:54

THEME

Disciples of Jesus Christ should have a constant love and concern for their fellowman.

INTRODUCTION

As shown by the previous lesson, one must pay a high price to be a true disciple of Jesus Christ. Where much is given, much is required, and only those who are willing to sacrifice their personal desires in order to be true to the teachings of the Savior shall merit his benediction, “Well done, thou good and faithful servant.”

We have seen also that true disciples of Christ are under solemn obligation to make a conscious, deliberate choice in favor of the kingdom of God and against the forbidden enticements of this fallen world. One cannot enjoy membership in the kingdom of God and the kingdom of Satan at the same time. To attempt to do so is to partake of that leaven—hypocrisy—that Jesus so strongly condemned. Ordinarily it is difficult to amass huge treasures both on earth and in heaven at the same time because obtaining earthly riches often diverts one from his spiritual interests. However, some have done it successfully because the Lord blessed them for their faithfulness first to his commandments. Abraham seems to be an example of this. Unless one learns to seek the kingdom that is not of this world, he will fail to be prepared against the day when the Lord Jesus comes again.

Men may die in two ways: spiritually and physically. When the spirit leaves the physical body, that is temporal death. When men are separated from God through sin or careless neglect, that is spiritual death. With reference to spiritual death, Jesus used the figures of a lost sheep, a lost coin, and a lost son to illustrate his message. You will see how in each instance things which were lost were found because someone cared.

In regard to physical death, John calls our attention to the death of Lazarus. Why did Jesus allow him to die and then to remain four days before restoring him to life? What was the significance of Lazarus’ physical restoration to life? Answers to these and related questions will be found in the reading assignment which follows. Read the passages carefully, and as you do so, take time to ponder and mark in your own standard works those principles and ideas which have the greatest personal meaning for you.

Before proceeding, read all the scriptural references in the reading block.

INTERPRETIVE COMMENTARY

(18-1) Luke 14:12–24. What Is the Meaning of the Parable of the Great Supper?

“Explication of the parable was left to the learned men to whom the story was addressed. Surely some of them would fathom its meaning, in part at least. *The covenant people, Israel, were the specially invited guests.* They had been bidden long enough aforetime, and by their own profession as the Lord’s own had agreed to be partakers of the feast. When all was ready, on the appointed day, they were severally summoned by the Messenger who had been sent by the Father; He was even then in their midst. But the cares of riches, the allurements of material things, and the pleasures of social and domestic life had engrossed them and they prayed to be excused or irreverently declared they could not or would not come. *Then the gladsome invitation was to be carried to the Gentiles, who were looked upon as spiritually poor, maimed, halt, and blind.* And later, even the pagans beyond the walls, strangers in the gates of the holy city, would be bidden to the supper. These, surprised at the unexpected summons, would hesitate, until by gentle urging and effective assurance that they were really included among the bidden guests, they would feel themselves constrained or compelled to come. The possibility of some of the discourteous ones arriving later, after they had attended to their more absorbing affairs, is indicated in the Lord’s closing words: ‘For I say unto you, That none of those men which were bidden shall taste of my supper.’” (Talmage, *Jesus the Christ*, p. 452. Italics added.)

(18-2) Luke 14:28–30. “Which of You, Intending to Build a Tower, Sitteth Not Down First, and Counteth the Cost?”

“. . . converts should count the cost *before* joining the Church; . . . they should come into the kingdom only if they are prepared to make the sacrifices required; . . . they should go the whole way in the gospel cause, or stay out entirely; . . . they should ‘not . . . follow him, unless’ they are ‘able to continue’ in his word, to ‘do the things’ which he teaches and commands.

“Lukewarm saints are damned; unless they repent and become zealous the Lord promised to spue them out of

his mouth. (Rev. 3:14–19.) Only the valiant gain celestial salvation; those saints ‘who are not valiant in the testimony of Jesus’ can ascend no higher than the terrestrial world. (D&C 76:79.)” (McConkie, *DNTC*, 1:504.)

(18-3) Luke 15:11–32. Some Comments on the Parable of the Prodigal Son

“I think it is significant that the Lord made it clear in the parable that the younger son had lost much by his wayward course, but in a measure, at least, he paid for it, with his suffering and degradation. Justice requires that. But when the penalty had been exacted, the fond father’s heart was gladdened by the repentance and the return of his son. What an encouragement for repentance! How good to know of the mercy and forgiveness of the Father! Better not to have transgressed, but wonderful to be taken back!” (Stephen L Richards in *CR*, Apr. 1956, p. 93.)

(18-4) Luke 15:11–32. What Are Some of the Consequences of Sin?

“I have always felt that the Savior intended the father in the parable to typify the Eternal Father of all of us. He knew the rigidity of the Jewish law. He knew what a terrible offense it was to renounce one’s patrimony—an unforgivable offense, I assume, in the Jewish household. So he had this wayward son come back to his father, not to be rejected, but to be received and loved. *He did not have the younger son restored to all the privileges he had forfeited.* The older, more dutiful son, complained of the feast that had been made on the return of his younger brother, but the father consoled him with the statement: ‘Son, thou art ever with me, and all that I have is thine.’ And then he repeated to his older boy the words he had said to the younger: ‘It was meet that we should make merry, and be glad; for this thy brother was dead, and is alive again; and was lost, and is found.’ (Luke 15:31–32.)

“Every choice one makes either expands or contracts the area in which he can make and implement future decisions. When one makes a choice, he irrevocably binds himself to accept the consequences of that choice.

“Jesus, in his Prodigal Son parable, gives a classic illustration of this truth. You will remember that in it a young man, exercising his inherent right of choice, makes a decision to take his portion of his father’s estate and go and see the world. This he does, whereupon nature follows its uniform course. When the prodigal’s substance is squandered, he makes

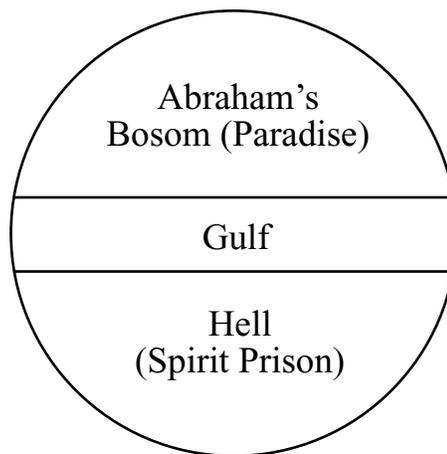
another choice, which takes him back home where he meets ‘the ring, and the robe, and the fatted calf.’ His felicitous father gives him a welcome. But the consequence of his earlier decision ‘is following him up, for the farm is gone. The “father” himself cannot undo the effect of the foregone choice.’ (Collins, *Such Is Life*, pp. 85–88.)” (Marion G. Romney in *CR*, Oct. 1968, p. 65.)

(18-5) Luke 16:8. “The Children of This World Are in Their Generation Wiser Than the Children of Light”

On first reading, the parable of the Unjust Steward would seem to be an endorsement for malfeasance in office. Careful study will show, however, that it was given to teach the care with which the saints of God should approach the task of preparing for their eternal future. Knowing that he had but a short time left in his appointed post, the steward wisely tried to secure his future by winning some friends.

“It was not the steward’s dishonesty that was extolled; his prudence and foresight were commended, however; for while he misapplied his master’s substance, he gave relief to the debtors; and in so doing he did not exceed his legal powers, for he was still steward though he was morally guilty of malfeasance. The lesson may be summed up in this wise: Make such use of your wealth as shall insure you friends hereafter. Be diligent; for the day in which you can use your earthly riches will soon pass. Take a lesson from even the dishonest and the evil; if they are so prudent as to provide for the only future they think of, how much more should you, who believe in an eternal future, provide therefor!” (Talmage, *Jesus the Christ*, p. 464.)

(18-6) Luke 16:19–31. What Do We Learn About the Spirit from the Parable of the Rich Man and Lazarus?



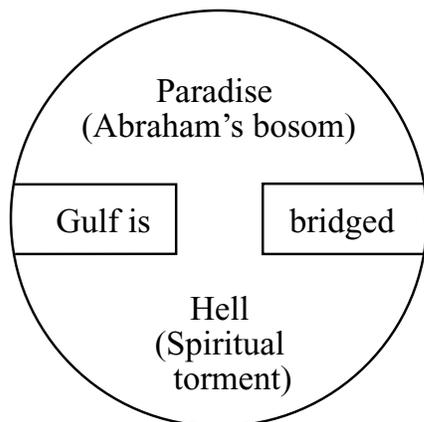
In the famous parable of the Rich Man and Lazarus we are exposed to two different conditions in the postmortal world: “Abraham’s bosom” and “hell.” The former is depicted as a place of rest, the latter a place of torment. Between the two “is a great gulf fixed” which prevents social interchange between the two. Such was the condition prior to Christ’s visit to the spirit world between the time of his death and his resurrection:

What is Abraham’s bosom? Read Alma 40:11, 12.

What is hell? Read Alma 40:13, 14 and 2 Nephi 9:12.

The Savior’s visit to the spirit world bridged the gulf between paradise (Abraham’s bosom) and hell, making it possible for the spirits in prison to receive the message of the gospel by authorized ministers.

“There was no intermingling by the spirits in paradise and hell until after Christ bridged the ‘great gulf’ between these two spirit abodes. (Alma 40:11–14.) This he did while his body lay in the tomb of Joseph of Arimathaea and his own disembodied spirit continued to minister to men in their spirit prison. (1 Pet. 3:18–21; 4:6; Joseph F. Smith, *Gospel Doctrine*, 5th ed., pp. 472–476.) ‘Until that day’ the prisoners remained bound and the gospel was not preached to them. (Moses 7:37–39.) The hope of salvation for the dead was yet future.” (McConkie, *DNTC*, 1:521.)



The Savior’s visit to the spirits in prison was but the fulfillment of his own words. (See Luke 4:18.)

“But now, since our Lord has proclaimed ‘liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to them that are bound’ (Isa. 61:1), the gospel is preached in all parts of the spirit world, repentance is granted to those who seek it, vicarious ordinances are administered in earthly temples, and there is a hope of salvation for the spirits of those men who would have received the gospel with all their hearts in this life had the

opportunity come to them. (*Teachings*, p. 107.) At this time, as Joseph Smith explained it, ‘Hades, sheol, paradise, spirits in prison, are all one: it is a world of spirits.’ (*Teachings*, p. 310.)” (McConkie, *DNTC*, 1:521–22.)

(18-7) Luke 16:31. “If They Hear Not Moses and the Prophets, Neither Will They Be Persuaded, Though One Rose from the Dead”

“Two great and eternal truths are here taught:

“(1) Deity chooses and sends his own agents and witnesses to mortal men to cry repentance and preach the gospel of salvation; unless men heed their message they are damned; and

“(2) Those who refuse to hear the living oracles sent to them in their day, and to believe the recorded teachings of the ancient prophets, would not be converted by a display of miracles that even included the raising of the dead.

“Lazarus rose from the dead at Jesus’ command and mingled again among men as a mortal being. Instead of being converted, many of the rebellious Jews sought to put him to death to prevent receptive persons from believing in Jesus and his divine power. (John 11:1–52; 12:10–11.) Our Lord himself rose from the dead in glorious immortality, appeared to many, and sent witnesses into all the world to testify of his resurrection and yet men did not believe.” (McConkie, *DNTC*, 1:522.)

(18-8) John 11:1–46. What Is the Significance of the Death and Restoration to Life of Lazarus?

When Jesus received word that Lazarus was ill, he did not depart immediately for Bethany as Mary and Martha had hoped. Instead, “he abode two days still in the same place where he was.” (John 11:6.) Jesus had a purpose in permitting Lazarus to die. Read John 11:4, 11, 15. When Jesus and his apostles arrived, Lazarus’ body had already lain in the tomb four days. The Jews entertained the common belief that the spirit of the deceased lingered around the body for three days, hoping to be able to enter it once again. After that decay began to set in, and the spirit departed forever. (See McConkie, *DNTC*, 1:533.) Jesus may have had this belief in mind in waiting four days to restore Lazarus to life. According to the scriptural record, Jesus had twice before raised the dead, in both instances soon after the body and spirit had separated. On these occasions Jesus shunned any publicity for what he had done. (See Luke 7:11–17; 8:41, 42, 49–56.)

“But with ‘our friend Lazarus’ it was different. Jesus with full knowledge of Lazarus’ sickness, did nothing to prevent his death; allowed his body to be prepared for burial; waited until the funeral was over and the entombment accomplished; permitted four days to pass so that the processes of decomposition would be well under way; tested the faith of Mary and Martha to the utmost; came to the rock-barred tomb under circumstances which attracted many skeptics and unbelievers; conducted himself in every respect as though he were courting publicity; and then—using the prerogative of Deity to give life or death according to his own will—commanded: ‘Lazarus, come forth.’

“Why this studied buildup, this centering of attention upon one of the mightiest miracles of his ministry? Two reasons in particular stand out. (1) As our Lord neared the climax of his mortal ministry, he was again bearing testimony, in a way that could not be refuted, of his Messiahship, of his divine Sonship, of the fact that he was in very deed the literal Son of God; and (2) He was setting the stage, so as to dramatize for all time, one of his greatest teachings: That he was the resurrection and the life, that immortality and eternal life came by him, and that those who believed and obeyed his words should never die spiritually.” (McConkie, *DNTC*, 1:530–31.)

In this manner our Savior left his Jewish unbelievers without excuse for rejecting him as the Son of God. He had clearly and effectively demonstrated his divinity in a manner which could not be controverted.

“No question as to the actual death of Lazarus could be raised, for his demise had been witnessed, his body had been prepared and buried in the usual way, and he had lain in the grave four days. At the tomb, when he was called forth, there were many witnesses, some of them prominent Jews, many of whom were unfriendly to Jesus and who would have readily denied the miracle had they been able. God was glorified and the divinity of the Son of Man was vindicated in the result.” (Talmage, *Jesus the Christ*, 496.)

POINTS TO PONDER

BY THE USE OF THREE PARABLES, JESUS TAUGHT THE IMPORTANCE OF HIS DISCIPLES’ BEING CONCERNED ABOUT THE SALVATION OF THEIR FELLOWMEN

(18-9) The Lost Sheep: It Strayed Without Intending To

Sheep go where grass is. It seems apparent that the sheep in the parable was not lost through willful

disobedience or careless neglect; it simply strayed away in search of greener pastures and soon was lost.

“I ask you tonight, how did that sheep get lost? He was not rebellious. If you follow the comparison, the lamb was seeking its livelihood in a perfectly legitimate manner, but either stupidly, perhaps unconsciously, it followed the enticement of the field, the prospect of better grass until it got out beyond the fold and was lost.

“So we have those in the Church, young men and young women, who wander away from the fold in perfectly legitimate ways. They are seeking success, success in business, success in their professions, and before long they become disinterested in Church and finally disconnected from the fold; they have lost track of what true success is, perhaps stupidly, perhaps unconsciously, in some cases, perhaps willingly. They are blind to what constitutes true success.” (David O. McKay in *CR*, Apr. 1945, p. 120.)

(18-10) The Lost Coin: It Was Lost Through the Carelessness and Neglect of Another

“In this case the thing lost was not in itself responsible. The one who had been trusted with that coin had, through carelessness or neglect, mislaid it or dropped it. There is a difference, and this is the one-third, which I think applies to us tonight. Our charge is not only coins, but living souls of children, youth, and adults. They are our charges. . . . Someone may be wandering because of the careless remark of a girl of her age in Mutual (and I have in mind a case), and the president of the Mutual lets her go, fails to follow her next Tuesday night and invite her to come. Another may be lost because of the inactivity of the Sunday School teacher, or the indifference of the Sunday School teacher who is satisfied with the fifteen people there that morning, instead of thinking of the fifteen who are wandering because of neglect.” (David O. McKay in *CR*, Apr. 1945, pp. 121–22.)

(18-11) The Lost Son: He Was Lost Through His Own Willful Disobedience and Self-Concern

“The third parable is the prodigal son, the ‘younger son, we are told, so he was immature in his judgment. He was irking under the restraint, and he rather resented the father’s careful guiding eye. He evidently longed for so-called freedom, wanted, so to speak, to try his wings. So he said, ‘Father, give me my portion, and I will go.’ The father gave him his portion, and out the lad went.

“Here is a case of volition, here is choice, deliberate choice. Here is, in a way, rebellion against authority.

And what did he do? He spent his means in riotous living, he wasted his portion with harlots. That is the way they are lost.

“Youth who start out to indulge their appetites and passions are on the downward road to apostasy as sure as the sun rises in the east. I do not confine it to youth; any man or woman who starts out on that road of intemperance, of dissolute living will separate himself or herself from the fold as inevitably as darkness follows the day.

“‘My spirit shall not always strive with man’ (Gen. 6:3), says the Lord. ‘My spirit will not dwell in an unclean tabernacle.’ He who tries to live a double life, who does live a double life in violation of his covenants, to quote one author, ‘is either a knave or a fool.’ Often he is both, because he himself is using his free agency to gratify his passions, to waste his substance in riotous living, to violate the covenants that he has made in the house of God.

“In such cases there is little we can do but warn and plead until the recreant, as the prodigal son, at last ‘comes to himself.’” (David O. McKay in *CR*, Apr. 1945, pp. 122–23.)

THE DISCIPLES OF JESUS TODAY ARE TO BE CONCERNED ABOUT THEIR “LOST” BROTHERS AND SISTERS

*Consider now for a moment the following story: “A few years ago there appeared in one of our magazines, the story of a little lad who wandered from his mother’s lap in the Badlands of the Dakotas and was lost. As night came on, the mother was distracted and the neighbors alarmed. The next morning, on the public square of the town near there, the sheriff met a group of farmers, teachers, office men, citizens of all ranks. He organized them for a systematic search. Before they started out he said, ‘Little Ronald is somewhere out in those Badlands. We must organize and search every bush, every crevasse, every water hole. We must not come back without that little boy. Pray God that we are not too late.’ They started out that Wednesday, but it was not until Thursday, and at about three o’clock in the afternoon that a mighty shout went up. They had found the boy.” (McKay, *Gospel Ideals*, pp. 404–5.)*

Why is it that people generally will do everything possible to rescue a person who is physically lost, but seldom put forth a similar effort to rescue one who is spiritually lost?

(18-12) We Are Commissioned to Remember the Worth of Souls

“Perhaps we don’t all of us understand and apply this principle effectively, but there are those who do.

“Recently a stake president told of his visit, with others, to a Junior Sunday School class. When the visitors entered they were made welcome, and the teacher, seeking to impress the significance of the experience for the youngsters, said to a little child on the front row, ‘How many important people are here today?’ The child rose and began counting out loud, reaching a total of seventeen, including every person in the room. There were seventeen very important persons there that day, children and visitors!

“That is how Christ feels, and so should we.” (Marion D. Hanks in *CR*, Oct. 1972, p. 167.)

What, then, is your responsibility as a disciple of Christ to help your brothers and sisters? Ponder the following questions:

*The Lost Sheep
(those who stray
away)*

Do you have friends who are straying from the Church? What are you doing to see that your influence and testimony is felt by all with whom you associate?

*The Lost Coin
(those who are
neglected)*

What is your responsibility toward your brothers and sisters on earth? Are there some within the Church who need your attention? Are there those who could profit from your consideration? Do your present Church assignment and those you are called upon to lead receive more than casual time and effort? Do you make an effort to friendship people at Church meetings and on other occasions?

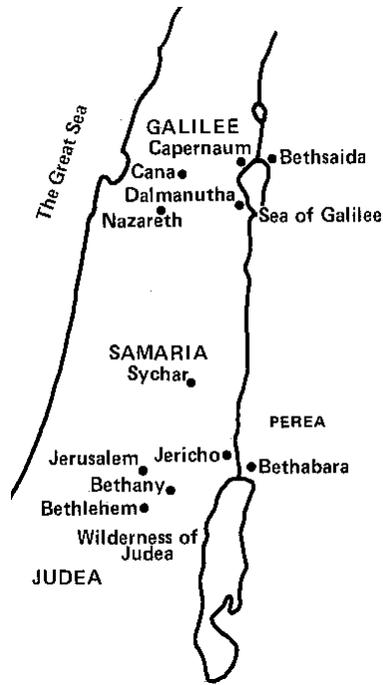
*The Prodigal Son
(those who willfully
disobey the
commandments)*

How quick are you to search out and rescue those who have been gone for a time into the world of sin or welcome them back when they return? Do you find it easy to gossip about them, or do you feel a sincere love for them?

“Joy . . . abounds in heaven over the recovery of a soul once numbered among the lost, whether that soul be best symbolized by a sheep that had wandered afar, a coin that had dropped out of sight through the custodian’s neglect, or a son who would deliberately sever himself from home and heaven. There is no justification for the inference that a repentant sinner is to be given precedence over a

*righteous soul who had resisted sin. . . . Unqualifiedly offensive as is sin, the sinner is yet precious in the Father’s eyes, because of the possibility of his repentance and return to righteousness. The loss of a soul is a very real and a very great loss to God. He is pained and grieved thereby, for it is His will that not one should perish.” (Talmage, *Jesus the Christ*, p. 461.)*

"WHAT LACK I YET?"



THE PEREAN MINISTRY	Matthew	Mark	Luke	John
Samaria, Galilee Beginning of the Final Journey to Jerusalem Jesus Heals Ten Lepers			17:11–19	
Galilee Discourse on the Kingdom of God			17:20–37	
Two Parables: The Widow and the Unjust Judge The Pharisee and the Publican			18:1–14	
Perea Across the Jordan into Perea Headed Toward Jerusalem	19:1, 2	10:1		
Jesus Speaks of Marriage and Divorce	19:3–12	10:2–12		
He Blesses Little Children	19:13–15	10:13–16	18:15–17	
Rich Young Ruler Seeks Eternal Life Parable of Laborers in Vineyard	19:16–30; 20:1–16	10:17–31	18:18–30	
Jesus Goes Before the Twelve Toward Jerusalem	20:17–19	10:32–34	18:31–34	
Near Jericho, Judea James and John Aspire to Greatness	20:20–28	10:35–45		
Bartimaeus Healed of Blindness	20:29–34	10:46–52	18:35–43	

THE PEREAN MINISTRY	Matthew	Mark	Luke	John
Jericho, Judea Salvation Comes to Zacchaeus the Publican			19:1–10	
Jericho, Judea Parable of the Ten Pounds			19:11–28	
Jerusalem, Judea Many Seek Jesus				11:55–57
Bethany, Judea Jesus Is Anointed by Mary at Simon’s Supper	26:6–13	14:3–9		12:1–11

THEME

A willingness to place all on the altar in the service of the Master is critical in the process of perfection.

INTRODUCTION

Jesus’ ministry was drawing to a close. One final journey, a few days in Jerusalem, and it would be finished. The Atonement would be complete. Yet this last journey was to be of great significance. This was a time when very important doctrines of the kingdom were emphasized—the kingdom of God, eternal marriage, the concept of true service. This was a time when Jesus blessed young children, gave instructions to the Twelve, and taught how one attains eminence in the kingdom of God. Then he visited Bethany, where he was anointed by Mary at Simon’s supper.

In our Savior’s life we witness the perfect example of the totally committed life—a life completely disciplined to the will of the Father.

In this lesson you will read the tragic account of one, loved of the Savior, who went away sorrowing because he could not follow his Lord in the way of complete commitment. Surely all must be willing to ask of God, as did the young ruler, “What lack I yet?” But more importantly, we must be prepared to act.

Before proceeding, read all the scriptural references in the reading block.

INTERPRETIVE COMMENTARY

(19-1) Luke 17:14. Why Were the Ten Lepers to Show Themselves to the Priests?

For a leper, “in the day of his cleansing,” the prescribed means of obtaining permission to reenter society required him to show himself to the priests of the people. (Read Leviticus 14:2, 3.)

Jesus also told the lepers to show themselves to the priests as a test of their faith. When all ten believed and complied with the terms of the cure, all were healed “as they went” to visit the priests. (See McConkie, *DNTC*, 1:536.)

(19-2) Luke 17:17, 18. “Were There Not Ten Cleansed?”

The one who returned to give thanks was a Samaritan, and “perhaps this exhibition of gratitude by a Samaritan was another evidence to the apostles that all men are acceptable to the Lord and that the Jewish claim to exclusive superiority as a chosen race was soon to be replaced with a command to take the gospel of peace to all races.” (McConkie, *DNTC*, 1:537.)

(19-3) Luke 17:20. Why Did Jesus Say “The Kingdom of God Cometh Not with Observation”?

“Prophecies foretelling the events incident to the first and second comings of the Messiah were confused in the minds of the Jews. They falsely assumed that at his first coming he would come with an outward display of power which would overthrow and destroy all earthly kingdoms. Accordingly, basing their inquiry on a false premise, and with some apparent sarcasm, they demand an answer to this mocking question: ‘If thou art the promised Messiah, as you have repeatedly claimed to be, when will thy power be manifest, when will the Roman yoke be broken, when will the kingdom of God actually come?’” (McConkie, *DNTC*, 1:539.)

(19-4) Luke 17:21. What Is Meant by “the Kingdom of God Is Within You”?

“One of the heresies which prevails in a large part of modern Christendom is the concept that Jesus did not organize a Church or set up a formal kingdom through which salvation might be offered to men. This poorly translated verse is one of those used to support the erroneous concept that the kingdom of God is wholly spiritual; that it is made up of those who confess Jesus with their lips, regardless of what church affiliation

they may have; that the kingdom of God is within every person in the sense that all have the potential of attaining the highest spiritual goals; and that baptism, the laying on of hands, celestial marriage, and other ordinances and laws are not essential to the attainment of salvation.

“It is true that men have the inherent capacity to gain salvation in the celestial world; in a sense this power is within them; and so it might be said that the kingdom of God is within a person, if it is understood that such expression means that a person can gain that eternal world by obedience to the laws and ordinances of the gospel. But it is also true that Jesus did organize his Church and did give the keys of such kingdom to legal administrators on earth. (Matt. 16:13–19.)

“Even the marginal reading in the King James Version changes the language here involved to read, ‘The kingdom of God is in the midst of you,’ meaning ‘The Church is now organized in the midst of your society.’ The Prophet’s rendering of Jesus’ thought, as such is recorded in the Inspired Version, is of course the best of all. Its essential meaning is: ‘The Church and kingdom has already been organized; it is here; it has come unto you; now enter the kingdom, obey its laws and be saved.’” (McConkie, *DNTC*, 1:540.)

“Neither shall they say, Lo, here! or Lo, there! For, behold, the kingdom of God has already come unto you.” (Luke 17:21, Inspired Version.)

(19-5) Luke 18:1–8. Why Did the Lord Give the Parable of the Unjust Judge?

“The judge was of wicked character; he denied justice to the widow, who could obtain redress from none other. He was moved to action by the desire to escape the woman’s importunity. Let us beware of the error of comparing his selfish action with the ways of God. Jesus did not indicate that as the wicked judge finally yielded to supplication so would God do; but He pointed out that if even such a being as this judge, who ‘feared not God, neither regarded man,’ would at last hear and grant the widow’s plea, no one should doubt that God, the Just and Merciful, will hear and answer. The judge’s obduracy, though wholly wicked on his part, may have been ultimately advantageous to the widow. Had she easily obtained redress she might have become again unwary, and perchance a worse adversary than the first might have oppressed her. The Lord’s purpose in giving the parable is specifically stated; it was ‘to this end, that men ought always to pray, and not to faint.’” (Talmage, *Jesus the Christ*, p. 436; read also D&C 101:81–92.)

(19-6) Luke 18:9–14. Why Did the Lord Give the Parable of the Pharisee and Publican?

“We are expressly told that this parable was given for the benefit of certain ones who trusted in their self-righteousness as an assurance of justification before God. It was not addressed to the Pharisees nor to the publicans specifically. The two characters are types of widely separated classes. There may have been much of the Pharisaic spirit of self-complacency among the disciples and some of it even among the Twelve. . . . The parable is applicable to all men; its moral was summed up in a repetition of our Lord’s words spoken in the house of the chief Pharisee. . . .” (Talmage, *Jesus the Christ*, pp. 472–73; read also Luke 18:14.)

(19-7) Matthew 19:6. “What Therefore God Hath Joined Together, Let Not Man Put Asunder”

“As here recorded, our Lord’s teachings about marriage and divorce are fragmentary and incomplete. They can only be understood when considered in connection with the law of celestial marriage as such has been revealed anew in modern times. These same general principles governing eternal marriage were known to and understood by the disciples in Jesus’ day and also, in part at least, by the Pharisees. But the accounts here preserved by both Matthew and Mark of the Master’s discussion on marriage and divorce are so condensed and abbreviated that they do not give a clear picture of the problem. Modern scriptural exegetes need the same background and knowledge possessed by those who engaged in the original discussion.

“To have a correct understanding of the part marriage and divorce play in the divine scheme of things, at least the following principles must be known:

“Marriage and the family unit are the central part of the plan of progression and exaltation. All things center in and around the family unit in the eternal perspective. Exaltation consists in the continuation of the family unit in eternity. Those for whom the family unit continues have eternal life; all others have a lesser degree of salvation in the mansions that are prepared. . . .

“Celestial or eternal marriage is the gate to exaltation. To fill the full measure of his creation and obtain eternal life a man must enter into this order of matrimony and keep all of the covenants and obligations that go with it. If a couple is so sealed, the two persons become husband and wife in this life and continue in the same relationship in the world to come. (D&C 131:1–4; 132.) . . .

“Divorce is not part of the gospel plan no matter what kind of marriage is involved. But because men in practice do not always live in harmony with gospel standards, the Lord permits divorce for one reason or another, depending upon the spiritual stability of the people involved. In ancient Israel men had power to divorce their wives for relatively insignificant reasons. (Deut. 24:1–4.) Under the most perfect conditions there would be no divorce permitted except where sex sin was involved. In this day the divorces are permitted in accordance with civil statutes, and the divorced persons are permitted by the Church to marry again without the stain of immorality which under a higher system would attend such a course.” (McConkie, *DNTC*, 1:546–47.)

(19-8) Matthew 19:27. “Behold, We Have Forsaken All, and Followed Thee; What Shall We Have Therefore?”

“The sorrowful departure of the rich young ruler, whose great possessions were so much a part of his life that he could not give them up at the time, though we may hope that he afterward did, brought forth from Peter an abrupt question, which revealed the course of his thoughts and aspirations: ‘Behold, we have forsaken all, and followed thee; what shall we have therefore?’ Whether he spoke for himself alone, or by his use of the plural ‘we’ meant to include all the Twelve, is uncertain and unimportant. He was thinking of the home and family he had left, and a longing for them was pardonable; he was thinking also of boats and nets, hooks and lines, and the lucrative business for which such things stood. All these he had forsaken; what was to be his reward? Jesus answered: ‘Verily I say unto you, That ye which have followed me, in the regeneration when the Son of man shall sit in the throne of his glory, ye also shall sit upon twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel.’ It is doubtful that Peter or any other of the Twelve had ever conceived of so great a distinction. The day of regeneration, when the Son of Man shall sit on the throne of His glory, as Judge and King, is even yet

future; but in that day, those of the Lord’s Twelve who endured to the end shall be enthroned as judges in Israel. The further assurance was given that ‘every one that hath forsaken houses, or brethren, or sisters, or father, or mother, or wife, or children, or lands, for my name’s sake, shall receive an hundredfold, and shall inherit everlasting life.’ Rewards of such transcendent worth could scarcely be reckoned or their meaning comprehended. Lest those to whom they were promised might count too surely upon successful attainment, to the neglect of effort, and become proud withal, the Lord added this profound precept of caution: ‘But many that are first shall be last; and the last shall be first.’” (Talmage, *Jesus the Christ*, p. 478–79.)

(19-9) Luke 19:11–28. Why Did Jesus Give the Parable of the Pounds?

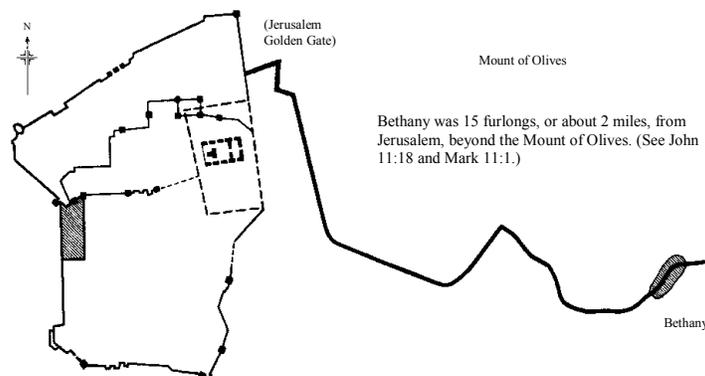
“Jesus was enroute to Jerusalem for the last time. In about ten days he would die upon the cross, and to the Jews generally it would appear that he had failed to set up the promised Messianic kingdom. To correct the false concept that ‘the kingdom of God’—meaning the political kingdom, the kingdom which should rule all nations with King Messiah at its head, the millennial kingdom—‘should immediately appear,’ Jesus gave the *Parable of the Pounds*. Compare: *Parable of the Talents*. (Matt. 25:14–30.)” (McConkie, *DNTC*, 1:571.)

(19-10) Matthew 26:6. How Far Was Bethany from Jerusalem?

Bethany was 15 furlongs, or about 2 miles, from Jerusalem, beyond the Mount of Olives. (See John 11:18 and Mark 11:1.)

(19-11) Matthew 26:6–13; John 12:2–8. What of the Anointing of Jesus with Spikenard?

“To anoint the head of a guest with ordinary oil was to do him honor; to anoint his feet also was to show unusual and signal regard; but the anointing of head



and feet with spikenard, and in such abundance, was an act of reverential homage rarely rendered even to kings. Mary's act was an expression of adoration; it was the fragrant outwelling of a heart overflowing with worship and affection." (Talmage, *Jesus the Christ*, p. 512.)

POINTS TO PONDER

TO FOLLOW THE SAVIOR, "WHAT LACK I YET?"

(19-12) Matthew 19:16–20. "What Good Thing Shall I Do, That I May Have Eternal Life?"

"There came to Jesus, on a certain occasion, a rich young man who asked: 'What good thing shall I do, that I may have eternal life?'

"Our Lord's answer was the obvious one, the one given by all the prophets of all the ages. It was: 'If thou wilt enter into life, keep the commandments.'

"The next question was: 'Which commandments?'

"Jesus listed them: 'Thou shalt do no murder, Thou shalt not commit adultery, Thou shalt not steal, Thou shalt not bear false witness, Honor thy father and thy mother: and, Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself.'

"Then came this response and query—for the young man was a good man, a faithful man, one who sought righteousness: 'All these things have I kept from my youth up: what lack I yet?'

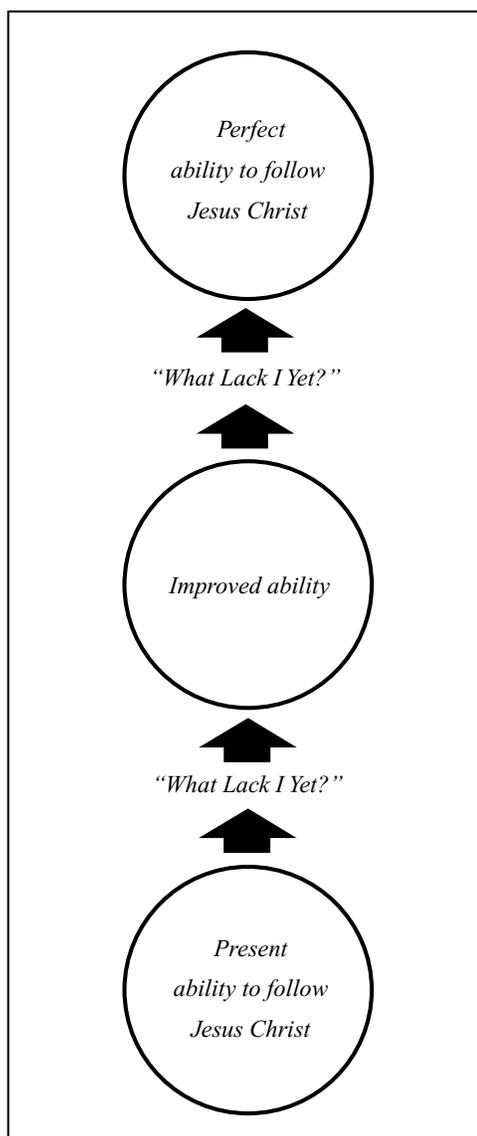
"We might well ask, 'Isn't it enough to keep the commandments? What more is expected of us than to be true and faithful to every trust? Is there more than the law of obedience?'

"In the case of our rich young friend there was more. He was expected to live the law of consecration, to sacrifice his earthly possessions, for the answer of Jesus was: 'If thou wilt be perfect, go and sell that thou hast, and give to the poor, and thou shalt have treasure in heaven: and come and follow me.'

"As you know, the young man went away sorrowful, 'for he had great possessions.' (Matt. 19:16–22.) And we are left to wonder what intimacies he might have shared with the Son of God, what fellowship he might have enjoyed with the apostles, what revelations and visions he might have received, if he had been *able* to live the law of a celestial kingdom. As it is he remains nameless; as it might have been, his name could have been had in honorable remembrance among the saints forever.

"Now I think it is perfectly clear that the Lord expects far more of us than we sometimes render in response. We are not as other men. We are the saints of God and have the revelations of heaven. Where much is given much is expected. We are to put first in our lives the things of his kingdom." (Bruce R. McConkie in *CR*, Apr. 1975, pp. 75–76.)

The following diagram indicates the significance of the question "What lack I yet?" as applied in our lives. It points out the steps we must take if we are to follow the Master.



(19-13) "The Lord Wants You to Give the Balance of Your Life to the Church"

"We were in Canada. I was . . . an attorney for an oil company and a manager of it. We were drilling wells and making money. I was at the moment up in the

Canadian Rockies, way back from the highways. We were drilling there. Everything looked very prosperous. I woke very early one morning before daylight. I was troubled in my mind, and I didn't know the source or the reason for the trouble. And I began to pray, but didn't seem to get an answer. And I remembered that the Savior was wont to go into the mountain tops frequently. You remember, his life was punctuated by mountain peaks. There is the mountain peak of the temptation, there is the mountain peak of the transfiguration, there is the mountain peak of the Beatitudes, there is the mountain peak from which he took flight into heaven. So thinking about this, I arose before daylight and went back up into the hills where I knew no one would be near. And when I got up on an advantageous point, I began to talk out loud. I was talking to God! Now, I do not mean that he was standing there listening to me or replying to me. But I mean from the center of my heart I was calling to him.

"Now my family were all in good health, all quite prosperous, and it looked as for myself that within a few days I would be a multimillionaire. And yet, I was depressed. And up there on that mountain peak I said to him, 'O God, if what it seems is about to happen will happen, and if it is not to be for the best good of myself and my family and my friends, don't let it happen. Take it from me.' I said, 'Don't let it happen unless in your wisdom it is good for me.' Well, I left the mountains and came down to the camp. I got into my car and drove to the city of Edmonton. It was a Friday, and while I was driving I was thinking of what had happened. And I felt that there was something impending that I couldn't understand. When I arrived home, and after a bite to eat, I said to Sister Brown, 'I think I'll occupy the back bedroom because I'm afraid I'm not going to sleep.' Now I went in the bedroom alone and there, through the night, I had the most terrible battle with the powers of the adversary. I wanted to destroy myself. Not in the sense of suicide; but something within me was impelling me to wish that I could cease to be. . . . It was terrible. The blackness was so thick you could feel it.

"Sister Brown came in later in the night, toward morning in fact, wanting to know what was the matter. And when she closed the door, she said, 'What's in this room?' And I said, 'Nothing but the power of the devil is in this room.' And we knelt together by the bedside and prayed for release. We spent the night together, the balance of it. And in the morning I went down to my office. It was Saturday now and there was

no one at the office. And in going into the office, I knelt by a cot and asked God for deliverance from the darkness that had enveloped me. And coming from somewhere there was an element of peace, the kind of peace that rests on the souls of men when they make contact with God. And I called her and said, 'Everything is all right, or is going to be!'

"That night at 10:00 o'clock, October 1953—the telephone rang. Sister Brown answered. She called me and said, 'Salt Lake's calling,' and I wondered who could be calling me from that far away. I took the phone and said, 'Hello.' 'This is David O. McKay calling. The Lord wants you to give the balance of your life to Him and His Church. We are in a conference of the Church. The concluding session will be tomorrow afternoon. Can you get here?'

"I told him I couldn't get there because there were no planes flying, but I would get there as soon as possible. I knew that a call had come. And the call came after this awful conflict with the adversary. And when he said, 'The Lord wants you to give the balance of your life to the Church,' I knew that it meant giving up the money; it meant that I'd turn everything over to someone else and go to Salt Lake without monetary remuneration.

"Since that time, I've been happier than ever before in my life. The men with whom I was associated have made millions. And yet, when one of them was in my office not long ago in Salt Lake, he said, 'I am worth at least seven million dollars. I would gladly give every dollar of it to you if you could give me what you have. I can't buy it with money, but I'd like to have what you have. What you have is peace of soul, and I cannot buy that with money.'" (Hugh Brown, "Eternal Progression," Address to the student body, Church College of Hawaii, 16 Oct. 1964, pp. 8–10.)

(19-14) Going On to Perfection

The gospel of Christ is the power of God unto salvation (Romans 1:16), but that power can be fully released only for the perfection of the individual as he is willing to sacrifice all earthly things in the service of the Master. Elder Bruce R. McConkie concludes:

"It is our privilege to consecrate our time, talents, and means to build up his kingdom. We are called upon to sacrifice, in one degree or another, for the furtherance of his work. Obedience is essential to salvation; so, also, is service; and so, also, are consecration and sacrifice." (CR, Apr. 1975, p. 76.)

SECTION 5

THE WEEK OF THE ATONING SACRIFICE TO THE RESURRECTION

LESSONS

20. The Triumphal Entry
21. “Woe unto You . . . Hypocrites!”
22. What Shall Be the Sign of Thy Coming?
23. “As I Have Loved You”
24. “My Peace I Give unto You!”
25. “Not My Will, but Thine, Be Done”
26. “I Find No Fault In This Man”

The Three-Year Ministry Was About to End

The public ministry of Jesus was soon to come to an end. He had pursued his ministry by two bold thrusts. His first thrust was the clear, bold pronouncement of his messiahship. He left no doubt of who he was when in Bethany he restored the dead Lazarus to mortal life. That miracle, more than anything else, had led the Jewish rulers to plot that Jesus “should die for that nation.” (John 11:51.) They could not refute the evidence—to stop his mission, they would have to destroy Jesus. Second, Jesus had trained leadership in his apostles, who would carry the torch of his cause after his ascension. This leadership surfaced when they saw that Jesus was resurrected. Although dormant through the trial and crucifixion, later the apostles were commissioned by Jesus to preach to all nations; and after his ascension, they were endowed with the Holy Spirit. They had the keys; they had been called; and under the leadership of Peter, James, and John, they began their great task.

Jesus Goes to Jerusalem

And so Jesus turned to Jerusalem and to the people of that noble city whom he would have gathered “even as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, and ye would not!” (Matthew 23:37.) He well knew that to go there was to face an inevitable, cruel death. But he went to the Holy City, for had he not himself said: “It cannot be that a prophet perish out of Jerusalem.”

(Luke 13:33.) To go there was to fulfill the mission to which he had been sent by his Heavenly Father.

He planned to arrive in Jerusalem at a special time. It was the season of Passover, late March or early April. Jewish pilgrims from all over Jewry were present. The conditions were right. Jesus knew that in Jerusalem were “those who [were] the more wicked part of the world; and they [would] crucify him . . . and there [was] none other nation on earth that would crucify their God.” (2 Nephi 10:3.)

THE LAST DAYS OF JESUS’ MORTAL MISSION

Let us now preview some of the major events which led to Jesus’ crucifixion, death, and glorious resurrection.

First Day

Jesus arrived at Jerusalem. He secured a donkey and a colt, and rode through the city gates into Jerusalem. A “very great multitude” who knew him to be “the prophet of Nazareth of Galilee” placed palm branches in his way and greeted him with a hosanna shout: “Hosanna to the Son of David: Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord; Hosanna in the highest.” (Matthew 21:9.)

He went directly to the temple, and according to Mark, took note of what he saw and retired to Bethany for the night (Mark 11:11).

Second Day

Early the next morning Jesus went again to the temple and made a decisive thrust calculated to challenge the Jewish religious leadership. He drove from the outer court area of the temple those who were trading and making money exchange from foreign currency. The money exchange was apparently sanctioned by the Jewish leaders; and by preventing the merchandizing, Jesus was in effect challenging their leadership. The issue was clear: Was the temple to be a place of

worship of God or of pursuit of gain? As he cleared the temple courts, he said, “It is written, My house shall be called the house of prayer; but ye have made it a den of thieves.” (Matthew 21:13.)

Again that evening Jesus returned to Bethany.

Third Day

Jesus’ wrath in the temple raised the issue of authority, and the priests were not about to let the incident pass. As Jesus came to the temple the next day, the priests challenged him: “By what authority doest thou these things? and who gave thee this authority?” (Matthew 21:23.) Jesus responded by relating a series of parables that offended the religious leaders of the Jews. The scribes and Pharisees challenged him again; Jesus openly denounced them and condemned them as hypocrites.

From this point on, Jesus did not teach the public, but only the Twelve.

Perceiving that Jesus had gained the upper hand in their confrontations, the Jewish leaders consulted again how they might bring about Jesus’ death. They would have to move quickly before the Passover to avoid a riot, however, since Jesus had become very popular with the Jewish people. How to bring about an arrest without provoking crowd reaction was the problem. An unexpected turn of events that took place abetted their plot. One of Jesus’ own disciples offered to betray him.

Fourth Day

Jesus well knew of the plot. The fourth day was spent outside the city, perhaps at Bethany. The record of the gospel writers is silent on the proceedings of this day.

Fifth Day

Jesus had arranged to commemorate the Passover meal in a home privately reserved for him and the Twelve. Following the Passover meal, Jesus introduced a new ordinance, the sacrament, which presaged his atoning sacrifice. He then prophesied of his death and indicated who would betray him.

After some instructions, Jesus offered his great intercessory prayer. Then, with the eleven (Judas had left), Jesus led them outside the walls to a familiar spot—Gethsemane. Then taking Peter, James, and John with him, he went further into the Garden where he then left those three and went off by himself to pray. (See Matthew 26:36–39.) There he pled with his Heavenly Father to “let this cup pass from me:

nevertheless not as I will, but as thou wilt.” (Matthew 26:39.) The cup did not pass and Jesus suffered “the pain of all men” (D&C 18:11), an agony so excruciating that it caused him to bleed at every pore (D&C 19:18).

Some time later he rejoined his apostles and indicated that his betrayer was at hand. While he spoke, an armed band led by Judas approached Jesus to seize him. Without resistance Jesus submitted. Jesus was brought to an illegal trial that night.

Sixth Day

The Jewish leaders now faced another problem. They were not content that Jesus should be put to death; they also wanted to discredit him before his own people. To do this, the leaders arranged to have Jesus charged with two crimes. The first was blasphemy, a capital offense under Jewish law. He was unanimously convicted of this charge solely on the evidence that he had said that he was the Son of God. (See Matthew 26:57–66.) Such a conviction would discredit Jesus before the Jews, but the rulers knew well that they could not carry out the death penalty; only the Roman governor could pronounce this. Therefore, they had to find political indictment against Jesus. The surest means of securing this was the charge of sedition against the state, for he had claimed to be a “king of the Jews.” Though Pilate’s examination found Jesus guiltless of the charge, the Jewish leaders had incited the crowd to “destroy Jesus.” (Matthew 27:20.) Fearing a demonstration, Pilate gave in to the clamor to crucify Jesus, and the death sentence was pronounced.

And so Jesus was executed by the brutal Roman practice of crucifixion. Later that afternoon he voluntarily gave up his spirit. The next day, which began at sundown, was the Passover, and the Jewish leaders abhorred the idea that a man should remain on a cross on the Sabbath, particularly the paschal Sabbath. Before nightfall, Jesus’ body was removed from the cross and buried in a sealed tomb by two revering disciples.

Seventh Day

This was the Jewish Sabbath. Jesus’ body remained in the tomb, but in spirit he ministered in the realm of departed spirits. (See 1 Peter 3:18–20.)

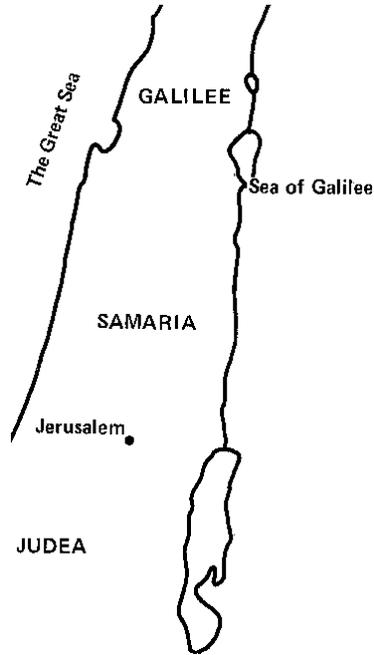
Day of the Resurrection

Had the gospel ended with Jesus’ burial, there would be no gospel story, no “good news.” The great

message of these testators is that Jesus was risen and was seen again by many witnesses. On the first day of the week, the most memorable Sunday in history, Jesus Christ emerged alive from the tomb, and appeared before Mary. The testimony of these witnesses constitutes the gospel story, the “good news.”

“These are written, that ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the son of God; and that believing ye might have life through his name.” (John 20:31.)

THE TRIUMPHAL ENTRY



THE WEEK OF THE ATONING SACRIFICE	Matthew	Mark	Luke	John
FIRST DAY				
Jerusalem and Bethany, Judea Nisan/April Triumphal Entry into Jerusalem	21:1–11	11:1–10	19:29–44	12:12–19
Certain Greeks Visit Christ—a Voice from Heaven				12:20–36
Return to Bethany		11:11		
SECOND DAY				
Cursing of the Barren Fig Tree	21:18–19	11:12–14		
Second Cleansing of the Temple	21:12–16	11:15–18	19:45–48	
Return to Bethany	21:17	11:19	21:37	
THIRD DAY				
Discourse on Faith	21:19–22	11:20–26	21:38	
Question of Authority	21:23–27	11:27–33	20:1–8	

THEME

The triumphal entry of the Son of David into the Holy City gave added witness of his messiahship and prefigured his future coming in glory.

INTRODUCTION

All Jerusalem was in an uproar. It was the season of the Passover, and everywhere in the city travelers arrived, lambs and pigeons for offerings were sold, and sacrificial coins clattered in the coffer of those who had perverted the stewardship of caring for Israel. Above the festive clamor for religious merchandise, Jerusalem reverberated with concern about the “Prophet of Galilee.” Among the common people and on the lips of staunch Pharisees was ever the same question: “What think ye, that he will not come to the feast [of the Passover]?” (John 11:56.) Many in Jerusalem must have been awed by the majesty of the drama played before them, the full significance of which they did not perceive. This commemoration of God’s blessing to ancient Israel would be the last authorized Passover—the killing of paschal lambs after this year would be apostasy. For even now, as the bleating of young lambs echoed amidst the confusion of Jerusalem’s din, another great and last sacrifice, “the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world” (Revelation 13:8), was receiving an anointing under Mary’s hand in the quiet of Simon’s house at Bethany.

Jerusalem was a natural fortress. It was surrounded on three sides by unusually deep ravines and was reinforced by massive walls and strong defensive towers. To travelers or armies approaching from the east or west, Jerusalem must have presented a formidable sight! Here David established the throne of his kingdom; and after David, his son Solomon perpetuated the fame of Jerusalem through what has been called Israel’s golden age. But strong walls alone do not guarantee security—from Jerusalem also gushed the fountainhead of apostasy and moral decay that vitiated the strength of Israel and wasted her glory until pagan kings with their godless legions tramped almost at will in the very lifeblood of God’s covenant people.

Jerusalem had bowed in submission to many kings—Shalmaneser, Sargon II, Nebuchadnezzar, Alexander, Herod the Great—and even now, as Jesus prepared to enter Jerusalem, Roman troops occupied the fortress Antonia that overlooked the oft-contested city.

But Jesus brandished no sword as he approached the city. And in his triumphal entry, a door wider than Jerusalem’s gate opened to receive him, for at Jerusalem he gave his life for all mankind and there took leave of this mortal world to return to an estate of surpassing honor and majesty on the “right hand” of that God who gave him life (Hebrews 1:3).

If you had been in Jerusalem during the last week of the Savior’s ministry, would you have been among the few to welcome him or among the many who misunderstood? Will the majority understand when the Savior makes his great triumphal entry at his second coming? Will you? Read D&C 133:46–49.

Before proceeding, read all the scriptural references in the reading block.

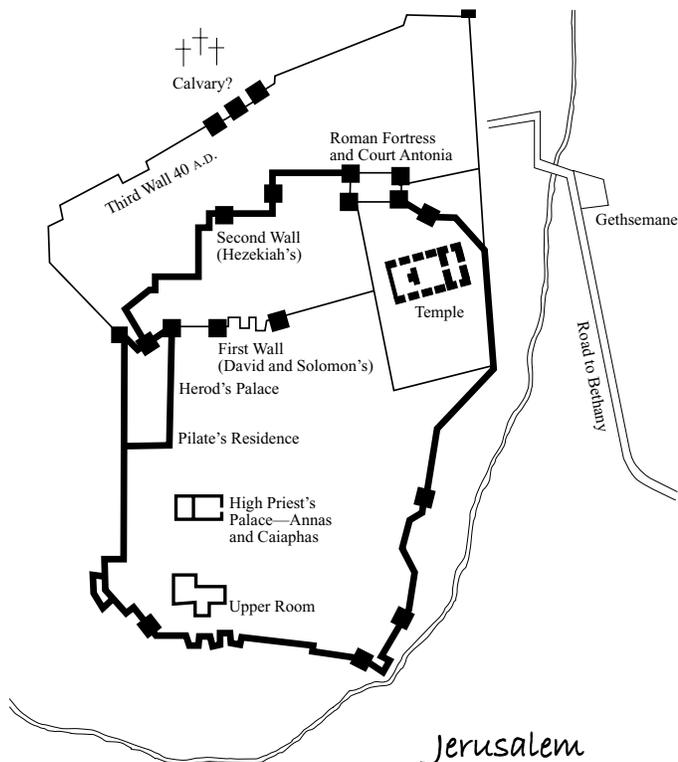
INTERPRETIVE COMMENTARY

(20-1) Luke 19:41. Jesus Wept over Jerusalem

According to tradition, when these words were spoken, Jesus stood on the Mount of Olives, opposite a point in the walls surrounding Jerusalem a few yards south of the Gate Beautiful. From this spot one may behold a beautiful view of that historic city.

“It is wonderfully picturesque, with its quaint, flat-roofed houses, church towers, and mosque domes covering the four hills on which Jerusalem is built. The view is impressive even now; it must have been inspiring when Jesus beheld it in all its Herodian splendor.

“But it was the inhabitants of the city, not the beautiful buildings or the commanding view that the Savior saw through tear bedimmed eyes when he cried: ‘if thou hadst known . . . the things which belong unto thy peace! but now they are hid from thine eyes.’ (Luke 19:42.) He saw the people divided into conflicting and contending sects, each professing more holiness and righteousness than the other and all closing their eyes to the truth. There were the conservative Hebraic Jews, holding rigidly to the Mosaic law; there were the more liberal minded, Hellenistic Jews whose views had been modified by pagan philosophy; there were a few Essenes with their asceticism and rejection of the Aaronic Priesthood; there were the Sadducees with their lifeless and formal observance of the Sabbath, and their denial of the resurrection; and, finally, the Pharisees with their ‘ostentatious almsgiving,’ ‘broadened phylacteries,’ ‘greedy avarice,’ ‘haughty assertion of preeminence,’ ‘ill-concealed hypocrisy’



which was often hidden under a venerable assumption of superior holiness.

“No wonder the Savior, seeing such division among the people, prayed to the Father so earnestly in behalf of his own little flock to keep them ‘one as we are one.’ No wonder the Savior, discerning perfectly the deceit and hypocrisy underneath the glassed-over outside of religion, uttered such scathing denunciation when he said:

“... Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye shut up the kingdom of heaven against men: for ye neither go in yourselves, neither suffer ye them that are entering to go in. (Matthew 23:13.)”

“Such were the people whom the Son of Man saw when he stood twenty centuries ago on the Mount of Olives and ‘beheld the city and wept over it.’” (David O. McKay in *CR*, Oct. 1944, pp. 77–78.)

(20-2) Matthew 24:2. “There Shall Not Be Left Here One Stone upon Another”

“Jeremiah’s prophecy still lacked a complete fulfilment, but time proved that not a word was to fail. ‘Judah shall be carried away captive, all of it; it shall be wholly carried away captive’; this was the prediction. A rebellious disturbance among the Jews gave a semblance of excuse for chastisement to be visited upon them by their Roman masters, which culminated in the destruction of Jerusalem, A.D. 70.

The city fell after a six month’s siege before the Roman arms led by Titus, son of the Emperor Vespasian. Josephus, the famous historian to whom we owe most of our knowledge as to the details of the struggle, was himself a resident in Galilee and was carried to Rome among the captives. From his record we learn that more than a million Jews lost their lives through the famine incident to the siege; many more were sold into slavery, and uncounted numbers were forced into exile. The city was utterly destroyed, and the site upon which the Temple had stood was plowed up by the Romans in their search for treasure. Thus literally were the words of Christ fulfilled: ‘There shall not be left here one stone upon another, that shall not be thrown down.’” (Talmage, *Articles of Faith*, p. 324.)

(20-3) Mark 11:11. Jesus Blessed His Disciples Against the Day When Jerusalem Would Be Destroyed

“And Jesus entered into Jerusalem, and into the temple. And when he had looked round about upon all things, and blessed the disciples, the eventide was come; and he went out unto Bethany with the twelve.” (Mark 11:13, Inspired Version.)

“Though Jerusalem, as a whole, was to be desolated and scourged as few cities have ever been yet the faithful within her walls were to be saved, preserved, and blessed.” (McConkie, *DNTC*, 1:579.)

(20-4) John 12:15. “Behold, Thy King Cometh”

“As was known and understood among the people, Zechariah had prophesied: ‘Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Zion; shout, O daughter of Jerusalem: behold, thy King cometh unto thee: he is just, and having salvation; lowly, and riding upon an ass, and upon a colt the foal of an ass.’ (Zech. 9:9.) Now as we see our Lord’s triumphal entry into Jerusalem, amid waving palm branches, riding over the carefully placed clothing of the people, and accepting their acclamations of praise and divinity, it is as though Zechariah had viewed the scene and written, not prophecy, but history.

“Every detail of this unique episode joined in testifying of the identity of the central figure in the picture. It was as though Jesus had said: ‘Many times I have told you in plain words and by necessary implication that I am the Messiah. My disciples also bear the same witness. Now I come unto you as the King of Israel in the very way that the prophet of old said I would; and your participation in this event is itself a witness that I am he who should come to redeem my people.’” (McConkie, *DNTC*, 1:577–78.)

(20-5) John 12:20–26. How Did Jesus Teach the Greeks That It Was Necessary for Him to Die?

“To them Jesus testified that the hour of His death was near at hand, the hour in which ‘the Son of man should be glorified.’ They were surprised and pained by the Lord’s words, and possibly they inquired as to the necessity of such a sacrifice. Jesus explained by citing a striking illustration drawn from nature: ‘Verily, verily, I say unto you, Except a corn of wheat fall into the ground and die, it abideth alone: but if it die, it bringeth forth much fruit.’ The simile is an apt one, and at once impressively simple and beautiful. A farmer who neglects or refuses to cast his wheat into the earth, because he wants to keep it, can have no increase; but if he sow the wheat in good rich soil, each living grain may multiply itself many fold, though of necessity the seed must be sacrificed in the process. So, said the Lord, ‘He that loveth his life shall lose it; and he that hateth his life in this world shall keep it unto life eternal.’ The Master’s meaning is clear; he that loves his life so well that he will not imperil it, or, if need be, give it up, in the service of God, shall forfeit his opportunity to win the bounteous increase of eternal life; while he who esteems the call of God as so greatly superior to life that his love of life is as hatred in comparison, shall find the life he freely yields or is willing to yield, though for the time being it disappear like the grain buried in the soil; and he shall rejoice in the bounty of eternal development. If such be true of every man’s existence, how transcendently so was it of the life of Him who came to die that men may live? Therefore was it necessary that He die, as He had said He was about to do; but His death, far from being life lost, was to be life glorified.” (Talmage, *Jesus the Christ*, pp. 518–19.)

(20-6) John 12:26. What Reward Shall Jesus’ Faithful Servants Receive?

“... after the testimony of the Scriptures on this point, the assurance is given by the Holy Ghost, bearing witness to those who obey Him, that Christ Himself has assuredly risen from the dead; and if He has risen from the dead, He will, by His power, bring all men to stand before Him: for if He has risen from the dead the bands of the temporal death are broken that the grave has no victory. If then, the grave has no victory, *those who keep the sayings of Jesus and obey His teachings have not only a promise of resurrection from the dead, but an assurance of being admitted into His glorious kingdom; for, He Himself says, ‘Where I am there also shall my servant be’ (see John xii).*” (Smith, *HC*, 2:19. Italics added.)

(20-7) John 12:27–30. Who Heard the Voice of God Testify of Jesus?

“In the Gospel of John is related a parallel experience in the Master’s ministry showing how, out of a multitude, only a few—or none—may hear God when he speaks.

“Only the Master, apparently, knew that God had spoken. So often today, men and women are living so far apart from things spiritual that when the Lord is speaking to their physical hearing, to their minds with no audible sound, or to them through his authorized servants who, when directed by the Spirit, are as his own voice, they hear only a noise as did they at Jerusalem. Likewise, they received no inspired wisdom, nor inward assurance, that the mind of the Lord has spoken through his prophet leaders.” (Harold B. Lee in *CR*, Oct. 1966, pp. 115–16.)

(20-8) Mark 11:12–14. Why Did Jesus Curse the Barren Fig Tree?

Perhaps Jesus sought to teach many lessons when he cursed the barren fig tree.

1. To Demonstrate His Power to Destroy

“Though Jesus had come to bless and save, yet he had the power to smite, destroy, and curse. ‘It must needs be, that there is an opposition in all things’ (2 Ne. 2:11); if blessings are born of righteousness, their opposite, curses, must come from wickedness. True gospel ministers seek always to bless, yet curses attend rejection of their message. “Whomsoever you bless I will bless, and whomsoever you curse I will curse, saith the Lord.’ (D. & C. 132:47.) It is fitting that Jesus should leave a manifestation of his power to curse, and the fact that he chose, not a person, but a tree, is an evident act of mercy.” (McConkie, *DNTC*, 1:582.)

2. To Teach Faith to His Disciples

“Applying the lesson of the occasion, Jesus said, ‘Have faith in God’; and then He repeated some of His former assurances as to the power of faith, by which even mountains may be removed, should there be need of such miraculous accomplishment, and through which, indeed, any necessary thing may be done. The blighting of a tree was shown to be small in comparison with the greater possibilities of achievement through faith and prayer.” (Talmage, *Jesus the Christ*, 525.)

3. To Bear Witness of His Control over All Things

“To the apostles the act was another and an indisputable proof of the Lord’s power over nature,

His control of natural forces and all material things, His jurisdiction over life and death. He had healed multitudes; the wind and the waves had obeyed His words; on three occasions He had restored the dead to life; it was fitting that He should demonstrate His power to smite and to destroy. In manifesting His command over death, He had mercifully raised a maiden from the couch on which she had died, a young man from the bier on which he was being carried to the grave, another from the sepulchre in which he had been laid away a corpse; but in proof of His power to destroy by a word He chose a barren and worthless tree for His subject. Could any of the Twelve doubt, when, a few days later they saw Him in the hands of vindictive priests and heartless pagans, that did He so will He could smite His enemies by a word, even unto death? Yet not until after His glorious resurrection did even the apostles realize how truly voluntary His sacrifice had been.” (Talmage, *Jesus the Christ*, p. 526.)

4. To Show the Fate of the Nation That Rejected Him

“The leafy, fruitless tree was a symbol of Judaism, which loudly proclaimed itself as the only true religion of the age, and condescendingly invited all the world to come and partake of its rich ripe fruit; when in truth it was but an unnatural growth of leaves, with no fruit of the season, nor even an edible bulb held over from earlier years, for such as it had of former fruitage was dried to worthlessness and made repulsive in its worm-eaten decay. The religion of Israel had degenerated into an artificial religionism, which in pretentious show and empty profession outclassed the abominations of heathendom. As already pointed out in these pages, the fig tree was a favorite type in rabbinical representation of the Jewish race, and the Lord had before adopted the symbolism in the Parable of the Barren Fig Tree, that worthless growth which did but cumber the ground.” (Talmage, *Jesus the Christ*, p. 527.)

POINTS TO PONDER

(20-9) Why Were the Jews So Offended by Jesus’ Cleansing of the Temple?

Before this question may be properly considered, it is necessary to understand who the “children” were that praised Jesus in the temple.

“And when the chief priests and Scribes saw the wonderful things that he did, and the children of the kingdom crying in the temple, and saying, Hosanna to the Son of David! they were sore displeased, and said

unto him, Hearest thou what these say?” (Matthew 21:13, Inspired Version.)

“Not children in the sense of infants as the King James Version has it, but disciples, members of the Church, those who had testimonies of Jesus’ divinity.

“From these adult ‘children of the kingdom,’ these members of the Church who through repentance and baptism had become ‘newborn babes’ in Christ (1 Pet. 2:2), came ‘perfected praise.’ How could such come from any except those who had knowledge and who were subject to the dictates of the Holy Spirit?” (McConkie, *DNTC*, 1:585.)

The chief priests were the guardians of the temple and, in fact, guardians (as they supposed) of the whole structure of Jewish religion. They glutted themselves on the profits from temple business, and so the temple was not just the source of their favored social position (which they coveted so jealously) but also the source of their incomes—more, their fortunes.

Jesus had come within the confines of their sacred stewardship before, early in his ministry, and on that occasion he had called the temple “*my Father’s house*.” (John 2:16.) Though his claim on that occasion offended the priests (because he claimed to be the Son of God, whose temple it was), still the claim itself declared that the temple belonged to God, and with that, at least, the chief priests agreed.

But now, near the end of his ministry, he openly declared his messiahship, and those “children of the kingdom” heard him call the temple “*my house*.” (Matthew 21:13.)

Apparently his followers understood this claim by Jesus, for they began to sing and praise him as the long-awaited Messiah. When the wrath and violence of the temple purging was over, Jesus’ followers gathered around him to receive what he might give them, *for it was his house, and no one had a more perfect right to minister there than he*. “His wrath of indignation was followed by the calmness of gentle ministry; there in the cleared courts of His house, blind and lame folk came limping and groping about Him, and He healed them. The anger of the chief priests and scribes was raging against Him; but it was impotent. They had decreed His death, and had made repeated efforts to take him, and there he sat within the very area over which they claimed supreme jurisdiction, and they were afraid to touch Him because of the common people, whom they professed to despise yet heartily feared—‘for all the people were very attentive to hear him.’” (Talmage, *Jesus the Christ*, pp. 528–29.)

Consider the following questions:

1. *When Jesus drove the merchants from the temple, why were the Jewish leaders offended?*
2. *When Jesus called the temple “my house,” how did the Jewish leaders react?*
3. *In your reading, is there any evidence that Jesus tried to placate or appease the Jewish leadership?*
4. *Is there evidence that the Savior made any attempt to fit people’s preconceived notions of what the Messiah would be or what he would do? Read Mark 8:11–13.*
5. *Read John 16:1–3. Is it important to understand the truth about the Lord and his servants? Why?*

(20-10) Why Did Many of the People Who Welcomed Jesus to Jerusalem as King and Messiah Later Reject Him?

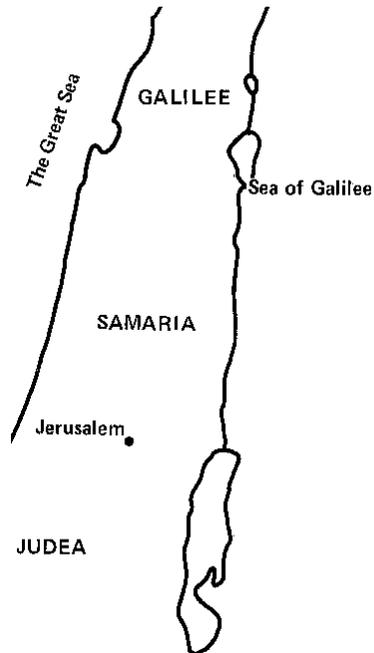
The people of Israel despised the cruel and oppressive rule of Rome. And their scriptures promised a Messiah who would deliver them, promises of which the apostle Paul would later testify. Read Romans 11:26, 27. (Compare Psalms 14:7; Isaiah 59:20.)

But unlike other apostate and fallen nations, many of the people of Palestine by Jesus’ day had lost so much of light and revelation that they could not see spiritual truth. They were ruled by Rome, and about the only sense they could wrest from the promise of an expected deliverer was that he would redeem Israel from foreign rule. But many of the people were also ruled by hypocrisy, dead religious forms, extortion, and pride—many of the leaders who administered the religion were guilty of crimes (e.g., John 8:1–11). They were enshrouded by such a deplorable condition of wanton religious blindness that they paid no heed to the claims of one who could deliver them (by their repentance) from sin.

(20-11) SUMMARY

Only a few faithful disciples comprehended the real significance of the Lord’s initial entry into Jerusalem. When he comes again he will come as King of kings and Lord of lords, and every knee will bow and every tongue confess. Who, then, will be ready to receive him? (See D&C 45:56–58.) Do you suppose His coming in glory will convince all people to serve him and worship him? If no, what will? What is it that brings people to Jesus? What has that to do with you?

"WOE UNTO YOU... HYPOCRITES!"



THE WEEK OF THE ATONING SACRIFICE	Matthew	Mark	Luke	John
THIRD DAY, continued				
Parable of the Two Sons Parable of the Wicked Husbandmen	21:28-32 21:33-46	12:1-12	20:9-18	
Parable of the Royal Marriage Feast A Question About Tribute to Caesar Marriage After the Resurrection The Great Commandment	22:1-14 22:15-22 22:23-33 22:34-40	12:13-17 12:18-27 12:28-34	20:19-26 20:27-40	
"Who Is Christ's Father?" Scribes and Pharisees Are Condemned Jesus Laments over Jerusalem	22:41-46 23:1-36 23:37-39	12:35-37 12:38-40	20:41-44 20:45-47	
The Widow's Mite Christ Declares the Purpose of His Mission		12:41-44	21:1-4	12:37-50

THEME

Hypocrisy can be overcome through acts of service rendered quietly and privately.

INTRODUCTION

In these closing chapters of the public ministry of our Lord, you will read about Jesus' last public confrontation with the scribes, Pharisees, and Herodians; it is the last because the Jewish leaders

at this point were determined that Jesus should die for the nation and constantly “they took counsel together for to put him to death.” (John 11:53.) In these chapters you will come to know how they tried to provoke him into an overt act of speech or action by which they might charge him with the capital crime of treason against Roman authority.

Following this last confrontation in which Jesus condemned the hypocrisy of both scribes and Pharisees with his questions and answers, he turned to the multitude and to his disciples to give one final denunciation of the whole Pharisaic system. As you read and ponder the meaning of this condemnation of the Jewish leaders, you will see how it was possible for them to pay tithing, to pray, to fast, to proselyte, yet be inclined to omit “the weightier matters”—mercy, judgment, and faith. (See Matthew 23:23.) You will see how outward cleanliness of person was observed, yet inward cleanliness was neglected.

Before proceeding, read all the scriptural references in the reading block.

INTERPRETIVE COMMENTARY

(21-1) Matthew 21:28–32. What Is the Message of the Parable of the Two Sons?

“The opening sentence, ‘But what think ye?’ was a call to close attention. It implied a question soon to follow; and that proved to be: Which of the two sons was the obedient one? There was but one consistent answer, and they had to give it, however loath. The application of the parable followed with convicting promptness. They, the chief priests, scribes, Pharisees and elders of the people, were typified by the second son, who, when told to labor in the vineyard answered so assuringly, but went not, though the vines were running to wild growth for want of pruning, and such poor fruit as might mature would be left to fall and rot upon the ground. The publicans and sinners upon whom they vented their contempt, whose touch was defilement, were like unto the first son, who in rude though frank refusal ignored the father’s call, but afterward relented and set to work, repentantly hoping to make amends for the time he had lost and for the unfilial spirit he had shown.” (Talmage, *Jesus the Christ*, p. 532.)

(21-2) Matthew 21:33–41. When They Answered the Lord’s Question, How Did the Jewish Leaders Pass Judgment upon Themselves?

“Again the Jews were compelled to make answer to the great question with which the parable dealt, and again by their answer they pronounced judgment upon themselves. The vineyard, broadly speaking, was the human family, but more specifically the covenant people, Israel; the soil was good and capable of yielding in rich abundance; the vines were choice and had been set out with care; and the whole vineyard was amply protected with a hedge, and suitably furnished with winepress and tower. The husbandmen could be none other than the priests and teachers of Israel, including the ecclesiastical leaders who were then and there present in an official capacity. The Lord of the vineyard had sent among the people prophets authorized to speak in His name; and these the wicked tenants had rejected, maltreated, and, in many instances, cruelly slain. In the more detailed reports of the parable we read that when the first servant came, the cruel husbandmen ‘beat him and sent him away empty’; the next they wounded ‘in the head, and sent him away shamefully handled’; another they murdered and all who came later were brutally mistreated, and some of them were killed. Those wicked men had used the vineyard of their Lord for personal gain, and had rendered no part of the vintage to the lawful Owner. When the Lord sent other messengers, ‘more than the first,’ or in other words, greater than the earlier ones, the most recent example being John the Baptist, the husbandmen rejected them with evil determination more pronounced than ever. At last the Son had come in person; His authority they feared as that of the lawful heir, and with malignity almost beyond belief, they determined to kill Him that they might perpetuate their unworthy possession of the vineyard and thenceforward hold it as their own.

“Jesus carried the story without break from the criminal past to the yet more tragic and awful future, then but three days distant; and calmly related in prophetic imagery, as though already fulfilled, how those evil men cast the well beloved Son out of the vineyard and slew Him. Unable to evade the searching question as to what the Lord of the vineyard would naturally and righteously do to the wicked husbandmen, the Jewish rulers gave the only pertinent answer possible—that He would surely destroy those wretched sinners, and let out His vineyard to tenants

who were more honest and worthy.” (Talmage, *Jesus the Christ*, p. 534–35.)

(21-3) Matthew 21:42–46. What Great Message Does Jesus Teach in the Parable of the Rejected Stone?

Read Ephesians 2:20 and Acts 4:10–12.

(21-4) Matthew 22:2–11. What Is the Interpretation of the Parable of the Marriage of the King’s Son?

“In this *Parable of the Marriage of the King’s Son*, sometimes called the *Parable of the Royal Marriage Feast*, Jesus teaches these truths: (1) His own divine Sonship; (2) the impending destruction of Jerusalem; (3) the rejection of the Jewish remnant of the covenant race; (4) the gospel call to the Gentiles; and (5) that those who answer the gospel call will not be chosen for salvation unless they put on the robes of righteousness. Compare Luke 14:16–24.

“Deity himself is the king in the parable; Jesus, his offspring and heir, is the king’s son; and those first invited to ‘the marriage of the Lamb’ (D. & C. 58:11) are the chosen and favored hosts of Israel to whom the gospel had been offered in ages past. ‘The remnant’ who rejected the later invitation with violence and murder were Jewish descendants of ancient Israel; and it was their city, Jerusalem, which was violently destroyed.” (McConkie, *DNTC*, 1:597.)

“That this son was the Messiah will not be disputed, since it was the kingdom of heaven that was represented in the parable; and that *the Saints, or those who are found faithful to the Lord, are the individuals who will be found worthy to inherit a seat at the marriage supper*, is evident from the sayings of John in the Revelation where he represents the sound which he heard in heaven to be like a great multitude, or like the voice of mighty thunders, saying, the Lord God Omnipotent reigneth. Let us be glad and rejoice, and give honor to Him; for the marriage of the Lamb is come, and His wife hath made herself ready. And to her was granted that she should be arrayed in fine linen, clean and white: For the fine linen is the righteousness of Saints (Rev. xix).” (Smith, *Teachings*, p. 63. Italics added.)

(21-5) Matthew 22:15. What Efforts Were Made to Tempt Jesus into an Act or Statement Contrary to Jewish or Roman Law?

“The Jewish authorities continued unceasingly active in their determined efforts to tempt or beguile Jesus

into some act or utterance on which they could base a charge of offense, under either their own or Roman law. The Pharisees counseled together as to ‘how they might entangle him in his talk’; and then, laying aside their partisan prejudices, they conspired to this end with the Herodians, a political faction whose chief characteristic was the purpose of maintaining in power the family of the Herods, which policy of necessity entailed the upholding of the Roman power, upon which the Herods depended for their delegated authority. The same incongruous association had been entered into before in an attempt to provoke Jesus to overt speech or action in Galilee; and the Lord had coupled the parties together in His warning to the disciples to beware of the leaven of both. So, on the last day of our Lord’s teaching in public, Pharisees and Herodians joined forces against Him; the one watchful for the smallest technical infringement of the Mosaic law, the other alert to seize upon the slightest excuse for charging Him with disloyalty to the secular powers. Their plans were conceived in treachery, and put into operation as the living embodiment of a lie.” (Talmage, *Jesus the Christ*, p. 544.)

(21-6) Matthew 22:18. What Are Hypocrites?

“Taking the New Testament alone, you will gain little idea of the kind of life the Romans led in Palestine, the kind of life that the Christ condemned, and yet as I have already said, it has seemed to me that the one sin that the Savior condemned as much as any other was the sin of hypocrisy—the living of the double life, the life we let our friends and sometimes our wives believe, and the life we actually live. (J. Reuben Clark, Jr., *Church News*, 2 Feb. 1963, p. 16.)

“The word *hypocrite* is translated from a Greek word meaning actor. A hypocrite is an actor, a pretender. He assumes roles which do not reflect his true feeling and thinking. He does not present his real self to others. There is pretense, subterfuge, show, sham, and deceit in his behavior. In the make-believe atmosphere of the theatre we recognize that actors are pretending to be someone else. In everyday life, however, we expect people to be themselves, to act without pretense, sincerely and honestly.” (Lowell L. Bennion, “Jesus the Christ,” *Instructor*, Apr. 1964, p. 165.)

(21-7) Matthew 22:17–21. How Did Jesus Avoid the Dilemma Posed in the Tribute Money Incident?

“His adversaries intended that Jesus would be gored on whichever horn of dilemma he might choose. The interesting thing about his answer is that he did not evade the question, but he answered it clearly and

positively without being caught on either horn. He said, ‘Why tempt ye me, ye hypocrites? Shew me the tribute money. And they brought unto him a penny.’ (Matt. 22:18–19.) What is referred to as a penny was no doubt the current Roman denarius with the image of Tiberius or possibly Augustus. He wanted to point out to them the image of Caesar and the inscription that gave his name and titles. There was a common maxim that the one who causes his image and titles to be stamped on the coin is the owner of the coin and acknowledged as the sovereign. ‘And he saith unto them, Whose is this image and superscription? They say unto him, Caesar’s. . . .’ (Matt. 22:20–21.) They had acknowledged that the coin belonged to the Roman Emperor, and it being the current coin for the payment of tax, it showed the country to be under the rule of Rome. ‘. . . Then saith he unto them, Render therefore unto Caesar the things which are Caesar’s; and unto God the things that are God’s.’ (Matt. 22:21.) In other words, ‘Don’t be unjust: give to Caesar the things that are his; and at the same time don’t be impious: give to God the things that belong to God.’

“The wisdom of this answer defines the limitations of dual sovereigns and defines the jurisdiction of the two empires of heaven and earth. The image of monarchs stamped on coins denotes that temporal things belong to the temporal sovereign. The image of God stamped on the heart and soul of a man denotes that all its faculties and powers belong to God and should be employed in his service. . . .

“In the present day of unrest, the question might appropriately be asked, what do we owe to Caesar? To the country in which we live? We owe allegiance, respect, and honor. Laws enacted to promote the welfare of the whole and suppress evil doing are to be strictly obeyed. We must pay tribute to sustain the government in the necessary expense incurred in the protection of life, liberty, property, and in promoting the welfare of all persons.” (Howard W. Hunter in *CR*, Apr. 1968, p. 65.)

(21-8) Matthew 22:23–33. Is There to Be Marriage in the Resurrected State?

“Jesus stopped not, however, to question the elements of the problem as presented to Him; whether the case was assumed or real mattered not, since the question ‘Whose wife shall she be?’ was based on an utterly erroneous conception. ‘Jesus answered and said unto them, Ye do err, not knowing the scriptures, nor the power of God. For in the resurrection they neither marry, nor are given in marriage, but are as the angels

of God in heaven.’ The Lord’s meaning was clear, that in the resurrected state there can be no question among the seven brothers as to whose wife for eternity the woman shall be, since all except the first had married her for the duration of mortal life only, and primarily for the purpose of perpetuating in mortality the name and family of the brother who first died. Luke records the Lord’s words as follows in part: ‘But they which shall be accounted worthy to obtain that world, and the resurrection from the dead, neither marry, nor are given in marriage: Neither can they die any more: for they are equal unto the angels; and are the children of God, being the children of the resurrection.’ In the resurrection there will be no marrying nor giving in marriage; for all questions of marital status must be settled before that time, under the authority of the Holy Priesthood, which holds the power to seal in marriage for both time and eternity.” (Talmage, *Jesus the Christ*, p. 548.)

(21-9) Matthew 23:5. “They Make Broad Their Phylacteries, and Enlarge the Borders of Their Garments”

“Through a traditional interpretation of Exo. 13:9 and Deut. 6:8, the Hebrews adopted the custom of wearing phylacteries, which consisted essentially of strips of parchment on which were inscribed in whole or in part the following texts: Exo. 13:2–10 and 11–17; Deut. 6:4–9, and 11:13–21. Phylacteries were worn on the head and arm. The parchment strips for the head were four, on each of which one of the texts cited above was written. These were placed in a cubical box of leather measuring from ½ inch to 1½ inches along the edge; the box was divided into four compartments and one of the little parchment rolls was placed in each. Thongs held the box in place on the forehead between the eyes of the wearer. The arm phylactery comprised but a single roll of parchment on which the four prescribed texts were written; this was placed in a little box which was bound by thongs to the inside of the left arm so as to be brought close to the heart when the hands were placed together in the attitude of devotion. The Pharisees wore the arm phylactery above the elbow, while their rivals, the Sadducees, fastened it to the palm of the hand (see Exo. 13:9). The common people wore phylacteries only at prayer time; but the Pharisees were said to display them throughout the day. Our Lord’s reference to the Pharisees’ custom of making broad their phylacteries had reference to the enlarging of the containing box, particularly the frontlet. The size of the parchment strips was fixed by rigid rule.

“The Lord had required of Israel through Moses (Numb. 15:38) that the people attach to the border of their garment a fringe with a ribbon of blue. In ostentatious display of assumed piety, the scribes and Pharisees delighted to wear enlarged borders to attract public attention. It was another manifestation of hypocritical sanctimoniousness.” (Talmage, *Jesus the Christ*, pp. 565–66.)

(21-10) Matthew 23:7. Should Men Use Such Titles as Rabbi?

“Such titles of respect as Brother, Elder, Bishop, or Rabbi, are appropriate and proper when used discreetly and with respect for the office or status involved. What Jesus here condemns is not the use of titles as such, but the vainglory and presumptuous self-adulation which called forth their excessive and patronizing use. Indeed, it would appear . . . that these religious leaders were so wrapped up in their own conceit that they ranked themselves along with Deity in importance. ‘The rabbis really did put themselves in the place of God, and almost on an equality with him. Their traditions were more binding than the Law, and were regarded as in a sense binding upon God.’ (*Dummelow*, 700.)” (McConkie, *DNTC*, 1:617.)

(21-11) Matthew 23:37–39. Why Did Jesus Lament over Jerusalem?

“Jerusalem—the holy city!

“Jerusalem—the city of depravity, ‘which spiritually is called Sodom and Egypt’! (Rev. 11:8.)

“Jerusalem—doomed spiritually and soon to be desolated temporally. See Luke 19:41–44.

“Jerusalem—site of the temple; home of the prophets; city of our Lord’s ministry.

“Jerusalem—city where the Son of God was crucified, crucified by ‘the more wicked part of the world,’ for ‘there is none other nation on earth that would crucify their God.’ (2 Ne. 10:3.)

“Jerusalem—future world capital and center from which ‘the word of the Lord’ shall go unto all people. (Isa. 2:3.)

“Truly Jerusalem’s history is like that of no other place; and truly Jesus with cause, wept because of the rebellion of her children.” (McConkie, *DNTC*, 1:626.)

(21-12) Mark 12:41–44. What Was the Significance of the Widow’s Gift?

“In the accounts kept by the recording angels, figured

out according to the arithmetic of heaven, entries are made in terms of quality rather than of quantity, and values are determined on the basis of capability and intent. The rich gave much yet kept back more; the widow’s gift was her all. It was not the smallness of her offering that made it especially acceptable, but the spirit of sacrifice and devout intent with which she gave. On the books of the heavenly accountants that widow’s contribution was entered as a munificent gift, surpassing in worth the largess of kings. ‘For if there be first a willing mind, it is accepted according to that a man hath, and not according to that he hath not.’” (Talmage, *Jesus the Christ*, pp. 561–62.)

POINTS TO PONDER

THE SAVIOR DENOUNCED HYPOCRISY AS ONE OF THE WORST SINS

(21-13) Hypocrisy Is One of the Worst Forms of Dishonesty

“As God condemns immorality, so he denounces hypocrisy, which is one of the worst forms of dishonesty. When he describes the hell of the world to come, he specifies that dishonest persons will go there. As no unclean thing can enter the presence of the Lord, so no liar nor cheat nor hypocrite can abide in his kingdom.

“Dishonesty is directly related to selfishness, which is its origin and source. Selfishness is at the root of nearly all the disorders that afflict us, and man’s inhumanity to man continues to make countless thousands mourn.” (Mark E. Petersen in *CR*, Oct. 1971, pp. 63–64.)

(21-14) Hypocrisy, like Cancer, Can Grow Until It Overcomes Us

“I know a young man who is ruining his own success as well as the lives of others because he greatly exaggerates his own virtues and self-importance. He tolerates a serious selfishness and continually excuses his sins and weakness. He takes credit for imagined abilities that are based on false assumptions.

“He always blames others when things go wrong. And for something to seem right to him, it needs only to appear to be in his own interest. But his problems of false witness to himself are fast getting out of hand. Reason is becoming more and more difficult for him as he is rapidly losing the power to undeceive himself.” (Sterling W. Sill, *Church News*, 8 Jan. 1966, p. 9.)

HYPOCRISY IS AS MUCH A CHALLENGE IN OUR DAY AS IT WAS IN JESUS' DAY

According to the dictionary, the word woe means a condition of suffering, affliction, grief, calamity, or misfortune. Eight times, as recounted in Matthew 23, the Lord pronounces such a “woe,” such a curse, on the hypocritical scribes and Pharisees.

Could the Lord pronounce this same “woe” on people today? What were the scribes and Pharisees doing that would cause the Lord to say this? Did you know that the Pharisees paid a full tithing? that they gave alms to the poor? that they regularly attended their worship services at the synagogue, and were devoutly faithful in going to the temple? What was it, then, that made them hypocrites? It was not their good acts, for these could all be praised. Still, they were hypocrites. Why? Could it be because they were seeking their own glory? They paid tithing and prayed to draw followers to them. In this manner they were actually drawing people away from God, for their hearts and intentions were wrong.

The Lord has said of these kinds of people: “. . . this people draw near me with their mouth, . . . but have removed their heart far from me.” (Isaiah 29:13.)

A hypocrite is, therefore, among other things, a type of person who pretends to be a good member of the Church but who, in reality, has no desire to draw closer to Christ nor do his will because of love for him.

Now consider for a moment your own personal desires. Do you pay tithing? give fast offerings to the poor? attend your Church meetings? If you have said yes to each of these, you should be commended. But what is your purpose in doing these things? Is it for personal glory or because of social pressure, or is your motive to draw closer to Jesus Christ? What happens to hypocrisy when you put Christ in the center of what you do?

HYPOCRISY CAN BE OVERCOME THROUGH ACTS OF SERVICE DONE QUIETLY AND PRIVATELY

Can you see that one of the main causes of hypocrisy is the desire to be seen of men, or to receive praise, approval, or reward? What could help us to avoid this kind of desire? Read 3 Nephi 13:1–4. Jesus taught that we should do acts of service in secret. What do you think he meant? Did he mean to do something without thought of personal gain or reward? What should our major motive be? Now read the following comment by President Spencer W. Kimball:

“I have learned that it is by serving that we learn how to serve. When we are engaged in the service of our fellowmen, not only do our deeds assist them, but we put our own problems in a fresher perspective. When we concern ourselves more with others, there is less time to be concerned with ourselves. In the midst of the miracle of serving, there is the promise of Jesus, that by losing ourselves, we find ourselves. (See Matt. 10:39.)

“Not only do we ‘find’ ourselves in terms of acknowledging guidance in our lives, but the more we serve our fellowmen in appropriate ways, the more substance there is to our souls. We become more significant individuals as we serve others. We become more substantive as we serve others—indeed, it is easier to ‘find’ ourselves because there is so much more of us to find!” (Ensign, Dec. 1974, p. 2.)

As you consider the words of President Kimball, how can you apply them to your life here and now? Without thought of reward, what acts of service could you perform for—

Your parents?

Your brothers and sisters?

Your roommates?

Your home teaching or visiting teaching families?

The Church in the payment of tithes and offerings?

As you learn to give without thought of praise or reward, you will learn to overcome the problem faced by the scribes and Pharisees: hypocrisy.

“WHAT SHALL BE THE SIGN OF THY COMING?”



THE WEEK OF THE ATONING SACRIFICE	Matthew	Mark	Luke	John
THIRD DAY, continued				
Olivet Discourse	24:1–51	13:1–37	21:5–36	
Parable of the Ten Virgins	25:1–13			
Parable of the Entrusted Talents	25:14–30			
The Inevitable and Final Judgment	25:31–46			

Also read Joseph Smith—Matthew, which is the Prophet’s inspired revision of Matthew 24.

THEME

Those who are aware of the many signs of the Savior’s second coming will be better prepared for that great event.

INTRODUCTION

After denouncing the scribes and Pharisees for their hypocrisy, Jesus left the temple. As he and his disciples viewed the buildings of the temple, he confronted the disciples with a prophetic statement that must have been startling. Of the temple and its buildings, he said: “I say unto you, there shall not be

left here one stone upon another, that shall not be thrown down.” (Matthew 24:2.) Not one stone was to be left upon another: not one stone of the porch, the sanctuary, and the holy of holies of the holy house; not one stone of the court and cloisters of the temple. All was to be thrown down. The temple of Herod was to be destroyed. (See William Smith, A Dictionary of the Bible, rev. ed., s.v. “Temple.”)

Later, as Jesus sat upon the Mount of Olives, his disciples approached him privately to ask him two significant questions. With the first question, “Tell us, when shall these things be?” the disciples asked Jesus to tell them when the destruction of the temple of Herod and the slaughter and dispersion of the Jews was to take place. With the second question, “And what shall be the sign of thy coming, and of the end of the world?” they made a request for a definitive explanation of those significant events which precede the Lord’s second coming. (See Matthew 24:3.)

As part of this lesson, you will read the Olivet discourse, which contains Jesus’ reply to the two questions. You will also study two parables, both of which emphasize the need for constant diligence and vigilance if one is to be prepared for the Lord’s second coming, when he will take vengeance upon the wicked and will sit as judge at the inevitable and final judgment.

The coming of the Savior in power and glory to judge the world is near at hand. Prophets, ancient and modern, have spoken of this glorious and dreadful event, and they have given mankind signs as evidences that he will come. The occurrence of each of these signs of the times is an indication that the day is drawing closer. True, no one knows the precise time when the Savior will return. Yet, he will come soon; and by learning to recognize the signs of the times men may be ready to meet him. They will be prepared with adequate oil in their lamps. They will be ready on judgment day.

As you study this lesson, especially note the signs of his coming which have been fulfilled and those signs of the times which are yet to take place before the Savior returns to reign as Judge and King. Try to evaluate your own readiness for his second coming and take any necessary steps to be prepared, so that you may always be ready to give an accounting of your life to God.

Before proceeding, read all the scriptural references in the reading block.

INTERPRETIVE COMMENTARY

(22-1) Matthew 24:2. How Was the Prophecy Regarding the Destruction of the Temple and Jerusalem Fulfilled?

“You all know the sequel, how the Jews carried through their awful plot and crucified the Son of God, and how thereafter they continued to fight against his gospel. You remember, too, the price they paid, how in 70 A.D. the city fell into the hands of the Romans as the climax of a siege in which the historian Josephus tells us there were a million one hundred thousand people killed and

“ . . . tens of thousands were taken captive, to be afterwards sold into slavery, or to be slain by wild beasts, or in gladiatorial combat for the amusement of Roman spectators.”

“All of this destruction and the dispersion of the Jews would have been avoided had the people accepted the gospel of Jesus Christ and had their hearts changed by it.” (Marion G. Romney in *CR*, Oct. 1948, pp. 76–77.)

(22-2) Matthew 24:3. What Is the Significance of the Mount of Olives?

It was on the Mount of Olives, or Olivet, where the Lord often held discourse with the apostles and disciples; and here on the slopes of the Mount of Olives was Gethsemane. From this Mount the Lord ascended into heaven. (See Talmage, *Jesus the Christ*, pp. 540, 569, 611, 697.) To this Mount the Lord will return and make himself known to the Jews. Read D&C 45:48–53.

(22-3) Matthew 24:3. What Is the End of the World Spoken of Here?

“Now men cannot have any possible grounds to say that this is figurative, or that it does not mean what it says: for He is now explaining what He had previously spoken in parables; and according to this language, the end of the world is the destruction of the wicked, the harvest and the end of the world have an allusion directly to the human family in the last days, instead of the earth, as many have imagined; and that which shall precede the coming of the Son of Man, and the restitution of all things spoken of by the mouth of all the holy prophets since the world began; and the angels are to have something to do in this great work, for they are the reapers. As, therefore, the tares are gathered and burned in the fire, so shall it be in the end of the world; that is, as the servants of God go forth warning the nations, both priests and people, and

as they harden their hearts and reject the light of truth, these first being delivered over to the buffetings of Satan, and the law and the testimony being closed up, as it was in the case of the Jews, they are left in darkness, and delivered over unto the day of burning; thus being bound up by their creeds, and their bands being made strong by their priests, are prepared for the fulfillment of the saying of the Savior—‘The Son of Man shall send forth His angels, and gather out of His Kingdom all things that offend, and them which do iniquity, and shall cast them into a furnace of fire, there shall be wailing and gnashing of teeth.’ We understand that the work of gathering together of the wheat into barns, or garners, is to take place while the tares are being bound over, and preparing for the day of burning; that after the day of burnings, the righteous shall shine forth like the sun, in the Kingdom of their Father. Who hath ears to hear, let him hear.” (Smith, *Teachings*, pp. 100–101.)

(22-4) Matthew 24:15–22, 29, 34, 35. What Is the Abomination of Desolation Spoken of by Daniel the Prophet and the Savior?

There were to be two times when this great tragedy would occur:

“And now the ax was laid at the root of the rotted tree. Jerusalem was to pay the price. Daniel had foretold this hour when desolation, born of abomination and wickedness, would sweep the city. (Dan. 9:27; 11:31; 12:11.) Moses had said the siege would be so severe women would eat their own children. (Deut. 28.) Jesus specified the destruction would come in the days of the disciples.

“And come it did, in vengeance, without restraint. Hunger exceeded human endurance; blood flowed in the streets; destruction made desolate the temple; 1,100,000 Jews were slaughtered; Jerusalem was ploughed as a field; and a remnant of a once mighty nation was scattered to the ends of the earth. The Jewish nation died, impaled on Roman spears, at the hands of Gentile overlords.

“But what of the saints who dwelt in Jerusalem in that gloomy day? They heeded Jesus’ warning and fled in haste. Guided by revelation, as true saints always are, they fled to Pella in Perea and were spared.” (McConkie, *DNTC*, 1:644–45.)

2. At the Time of the Second Coming

“All the desolation and waste which attended the former destruction of Jerusalem is but prelude to the coming siege. Titus and his legions slaughtered

1,100,000 Jews, destroyed the temple, and ploughed the city. In the coming reenactment of this ‘abomination of desolation,’ the whole world will be at war, Jerusalem will be the center of the conflict, every modern weapon will be used, and in the midst of the siege the Son of Man shall come, setting his foot upon the mount of Olives and fighting the battle of his saints. (Zech. 12:1–9.)

“Speaking of these final battles which shall accompany his return, the Lord says: ‘I will gather all nations against Jerusalem to battle; and the city shall be taken, and the houses rifled, and the women ravished; and half of the city shall go forth into captivity, and the residue of the people shall not be cut off from the city.’ However, the final end of the conflict shall be different this time than it was anciently. ‘Then shall the Lord go forth,’ the prophetic record says, ‘and fight against those nations, as when he fought in the day of battle. And his feet shall stand in that day upon the mount of Olives, . . . and the Lord shall be king over all the earth.’ (Zech. 14.)” (McConkie, *DNTC*, 1:659–60.)

(22-5) Matthew 24:24. How Might the Very Elect Be Preserved from Deception?

“The Prophet Joseph Smith, in his inspired version of that same scripture, added these significant words: ‘*who are the elect, according to the covenant.*’ This is what has been said, in effect, in this conference: Unless every member of this Church gains for himself an unshakable testimony of the divinity of this Church, he will be among those who will be deceived in this day when the ‘elect according to the covenant’ are going to be tried and tested. Only those will survive who have gained for themselves that testimony.” (Harold B. Lee in *CR*, Oct. 1950, p. 129.)

(22-6) Matthew 24:28. “Wheresoever the Carcass Is, There Will the Eagles Be Gathered Together”

“In the parable, as here given, the carcass is the body of the Church to which the eagles, who are Israel, shall fly to find nourishment. ‘The gathering of Israel is first *spiritual* and second *temporal*. It is spiritual in that the lost sheep of Israel are first “restored to the true church and fold of God,” meaning that they come to a true knowledge of the God of Israel, accept the gospel which he has restored in latter-days, and join the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. It is temporal in that these converts are then “gathered home to the lands of their inheritance, and . . . established in all their lands of promise.” (2 Ne. 9:2; 25:15–18; Jer. 16:14–21), meaning that the house of

Joseph will be established in America, the house of Judah in Palestine, and that the Lost Tribes will come to Ephraim in America to receive their blessings in due course. (D. & C. 133.)' (*Mormon Doctrine*, p. 280.)" (McConkie, *DNTC*, 1:648–49.)

(22-7) Matthew 24:29, 30, 36–39. What Did the Prophet Joseph Tell Us of the Time of the Second Coming and of the Sign of the Son of Man?

"The coming of the Son of Man never will be—never can be till the judgments spoken of for this hour are poured out: which judgments are commenced. Paul says, 'Ye are the children of the light, and not of the darkness, that that day should overtake you as a thief in the night.' It is not the design of the Almighty to come upon the earth and crush it and grind it to powder, but he will reveal it to His servants the prophets.

"Judah must return, Jerusalem must be rebuilt, and the temple, and water come out from under the temple, and the waters of the Dead Sea be healed. It will take some time to rebuild the walls of the city and the temple, &c.; and all this must be done before the Son of Man will make His appearance. There will be wars and rumors of wars, signs in the heavens above and on the earth beneath, the sun turned into darkness and the moon to blood, earthquakes in divers places, the seas heaving beyond their bounds; then will appear one grand sign of the Son of Man in heaven. But what will the world do? They will say it is a planet, a comet, etc. But the Son of man will come as the sign of the coming of the Son of Man, which will be as the light of the morning cometh out of the east." (Smith, *Teachings*, pp. 286–87.)

(22-8) Matthew 24:40. Why Is It That One Is Destroyed and the Other Left Alone When the Lord Returns?

"Thus those who shall abide the day, who shall remain on the earth when it is transfigured (D. & C. 63:20–21), are those who are honest and upright and who are living at least that law which would take them to the terrestrial kingdom of glory in the resurrection. Anyone living by telestial standards can no longer remain on earth and so cannot abide the day.

"Hence we find Malachi listing among those who shall not abide the day the following: sorcerers; adulterers; false swearers; those who oppress the hireling, the widow, and the fatherless in their wages; those who lead men away from the truth; those who do not fear God; members of the true Church who do not pay an

honest tithing; they that work wickedness; and the proud. All these, he says, shall be as stubble when the day comes that shall burn as an oven. (Mal. 3; 4; D. & C. 64:23–25.)" (McConkie, *DNTC*, 1:669.)

(22-9) Matthew 24:45–51. "The Faithful and Wise Servant"

"Jesus speaks here of his ministers, his servants, the holders of his holy priesthood. They are the ones whom he has made rulers in the household of God to teach and perfect his saints. Theirs is the responsibility to be so engaged when the Master returns. If they are so serving when the Lord comes, he will give them exaltation. But if the rulers in the Lord's house think the Second Coming is far distant, if they forget their charge, contend with their fellow ministers, and begin to live after the manner of the world, then the vengeance of their rejected Lord shall, in justice, fall upon them when he comes again." (McConkie, *DNTC*, 1:675.)

(22-10) Matthew 25:1–13. What Is the Meaning of the Parable of the Ten Virgins?

"The purpose of this lesson was to impress upon those called to the ministry and upon his followers and upon the world that there should be an unceasing watchfulness and preparation for the day which he had predicted when the Lord would come again in judgment upon the earth.

"The bridegroom of the parable was the Master, the Savior of mankind. The marriage feast symbolized the second coming of the Savior to receive his Church unto himself. The virgins were those who were professed believers in Christ, because they were expectantly waiting for the coming of the bridegroom to the marriage feast, or they were connected with the Church and the events which were to transpire with reference to it.

"That this parable did refer particularly to the believers in Christ with a warning to them is further indicated by what the Lord has told us in modern revelation in which he said:

"These are the things that ye must look for; . . . even in the day of the coming of the Son of Man.

"And until that hour there will be foolish virgins among the wise; and at that hour cometh an entire separation of the righteous and the wicked. (D. & C. 63:53–54.)' [This] undoubtedly mean[s] a separation of the wicked from the righteous among the professing believers in the Lord Jesus Christ.

“The Lord defines the wise virgins of his parable in still another revelation in which he said,

“For they that are wise and have received the truth, and have taken the Holy Spirit for their guide, and have not been deceived—verily I say unto you, they shall not be hewn down and cast into the fire, but shall abide the day. (*Ibid.*, 45:57.)”

“Here is clearly indicated a truth we must all recognize, that among the people of God, the believers in the Savior of the world, there are those who are wise and keep the commandments, and yet there are those who are foolish, who are disobedient, and who neglect their duties.” (Harold B. Lee in *CR*, Oct. 1951, pp. 26–27.)

(22-11) Matthew 25:14–30. An Explanation for the Parable of the Entrusted Talents

“You know, brethren, that when the Master in the Savior’s parable of the stewards called his servants before him he gave them several talents to improve on while he should tarry abroad for a little season, and when he returned he called for an accounting. So it is now. Our Master is absent only for a little season, and at the end of it He will call each to render an account; and where the five talents were bestowed, ten will be required; and he that has made no improvement will be cast out as an unprofitable servant, while the faithful will enjoy everlasting honors. Therefore we earnestly implore the grace of our Father to rest upon you, through Jesus Christ His Son, that you may not faint in the hour of temptation, nor be overcome in the time of persecution.” (Smith, *Teachings*, p. 68.)

POINTS TO PONDER

“WHAT SHALL BE THE SIGN OF THY COMING?”

The Savior Was Speaking of Two Specific Events in Matthew 24

Jesus’ disciples asked him two questions: (1) “Tell us, when shall these things be?”; and (2) “What shall be the sign of thy coming, and of the end of the world?” (Matthew 24:3.) The first question pertained to both the abomination of desolation which should come upon the Jews, and the destruction of the temple of Herod. The second question had to do with the Lord’s second coming in glory to judge the world. Considering the manner in which these two questions were asked, perhaps the disciples thought these two events would take place at or near the same time. In

his reply to the disciples, however, Jesus made it abundantly clear that such was not to be the case at all.

QUESTION

To what did the disciples have reference when they asked Jesus the question, “Tell us, when shall these things be?” (Matthew 24:1–3.)

ANSWER

Their question referred specifically to the destruction of the temple of Herod, to the overthrow of Jerusalem, and to the slaughter and dispersion of the Jews. (See Joseph Smith—Matthew 1:2–4, and the interpretive commentary, 22:1.)

QUESTION

How were ancient Christians deceived and also persecuted as Jesus prophesied they would be? (Matthew 24:3–5, 9–13.)

ANSWER

*False Christs—Simon Magus, Menander, Dositheus, and others (see McConkie, *DNTC*, 1:640)—and false teachers preaching damnable heresies (see Talmage, *The Great Apostasy*, pp. 40–47) led many of the early saints to apostatize from the faith. Persecution was widely manifest in a Judaistic persecution which derived from the conflict between Judaism and Christianity: Apostles were put in prison (*Acts 5:18*); Stephen was stoned (*Acts 7:54–60*); Herod ordered James, the son of Zebedee, killed (*Acts 12:1, 2*). Also, the Jews not only sought to persecute those who professed Jesus Christ, but they zealously tried to influence the Romans to oppose the Christian movement. (See Talmage, *The Great Apostasy*, pp. 57–61.)*

QUESTION

What was the abomination of desolation which was to sweep Jerusalem? (Matthew 24:15–22.)

ANSWER

See the interpretive commentary, 22:4.

QUESTION

Was the temple of Herod destroyed, as prophesied? (Matthew 24:1–3.)

ANSWER

Yes. This occurred on or about Friday, August 9, A.D. 70. See the interpretive commentary, 22:4.

WHAT ARE THE SIGNS OF THE TIMES WHICH PRECEDE THE LORD’S SECOND COMING?

(22-12) What Is the Key, the Sure Word of Prophecy, That Will Help Us Understand the Signs of the Times?

“There are among us many loose writings predicting the calamities which are about to overtake us. Some of these have been publicized as though they were necessary to wake up the world to the horrors about to overtake us. Many of these are from sources upon which there cannot be unquestioned reliance.

“Are you priesthood bearers aware of the fact that we need no such publications to be forewarned, if we were only conversant with what the scriptures have already spoken to us in plainness?

“Let me give you the sure word of prophecy on which you should rely for your guide instead of these strange sources which may have great political implications.

“Read the 24th chapter of Matthew—particularly that inspired version as contained in the Pearl of Great Price. [Joseph Smith—Matthew 1.]

“Then read the 45th section of the Doctrine and Covenants where the Lord, not man, has documented the signs of the times.

“Now turn to section 101 and section 133 of the Doctrine and Covenants and hear the step-by-step recounting of events leading up to the coming of the Savior.

“Finally, turn to the promises the Lord makes to those who keep the commandments when these judgments descend upon the wicked, as set forth in the Doctrine and Covenants, section 38.

“Brethren, these are some of the writings with which you should concern yourselves, rather than commentaries that may come from those whose information may not be the most reliable and whose motives may be subject to question. And may I say, parenthetically, most of such writers are not handicapped by having any authentic information on their writings.” (Harold B. Lee in *CR*, Oct. 1972, p. 128.)

“And What Shall Be the Sign of Thy Coming, and of the End of the World?” (Matthew 24:3.)

<i>Questions</i>	<i>Pearl of Great Price and New Testament References</i>
<i>Who will attempt to deceive the very elect, and what tactics will be used? (The elect are the faithful members of the Church.)</i>	<i>JS—M 1:22 Matthew 24:24</i>
<i>What ought to be the reaction of men when they hear of wars and rumors of wars?</i>	<i>JS—M 1:23, 28, 29 Matthew 24:6</i>
<i>When claims are made that Jesus Christ is in the desert or in the secret chambers, what ought to be your response?</i>	<i>JS—M 1:25 Matthew 24:26</i>
<i>To what extent will the light of the gospel spread forth in the earth?</i>	<i>JS—M 1:26 Matthew 24:27</i>
<i>What is meant by this statement: “For wheresoever the carcass is, there will the eagles be gathered together.”</i>	<i>JS—M 1:27 Matthew 24:28 (See the interpretive commentary, 22-6.)</i>
<i>List the four signs named in Matthew 24:7.</i>	<i>JS—M 1:29 Matthew 24:7</i>
<i>What is meant by this statement: “The love of many shall wax cold”?</i>	<i>JS—M 1:30 Matthew 24:12</i>
<i>Who, then, shall be saved?</i>	<i>JS—M 1:30 Matthew 24:12</i>
<i>When shall the end come (the destruction of the wicked)? And why is the gospel of the kingdom to be preached first?</i>	<i>JS—M 1:31 Matthew 24:14</i>
<i>What is the abomination of desolation which shall occur a second time?</i>	<i>JS—M 1:32 Matthew 24:15 (See the interpretive commentary, 22-4.)</i>
<i>After the tribulation of the days of abomination, what four signs will be given?</i>	<i>JS—M 1:33 Matthew 24:29</i>
<i>What is meant in Matthew 24:34?</i>	<i>JS—M 1:34 Matthew 24:34</i>
<i>What is the sign of the Son of Man which will be shown forth in heaven?</i>	<i>JS—M 1:36 Matthew 24:29, 30 (See the interpretive commentary, 22-7.)</i>

Questions	Pearl of Great Price and New Testament References
<i>How, then, may men avoid deception?</i>	JS—M 1:37–40 Matthew 24:31–33, 42, 44
<i>What shall be the attitude of most men prior to Jesus' coming?</i>	JS—M 1:41–43 Matthew 24:37–39
<i>What is meant by this statement: "Then shall two be in the field; the one shall be taken, and the other left"?</i>	JS—M 1:44–45 Matthew 24:40–41 (See the interpretive commentary 22–8.)
<i>What is the admonition men must heed?</i>	JS—M 1:46–48 Matthew 24:42–43
<i>What will happen if we fail to prepare?</i>	JS—M 1:49–55 Matthew 24:45–51

For additional insight, read the other scriptures that President Harold B. Lee indicated men ought to study if they want to understand the signs of the times: D&C 45:15–17; D&C 101:11–23; D&C 133:1–25, 36–52, 58–64.

(22-13) How May You Always Be Prepared? (D&C 38:18–22, 39–42)

“Brothers and sisters, this is the day the Lord is speaking of. You see the signs are here. Be ye therefore ready. The Brethren have told you in this conference how to prepare to be ready. We have never had a conference where there has been so much direct instruction, so much admonition; when the problems have been defined and also the solution to the problem has been suggested.

“Let us not turn a deaf ear now, but listen to these as the words that have come from the Lord, inspired of him, and we will be safe on Zion’s hill, until all that the Lord has for his children shall have been accomplished.” (Harold B. Lee in CR, Oct. 1973, p. 170. Italics added.)

(22-14) What Are the Implications of President Lee’s Comment?

Is it not that we are provided with a handbook, the conference report, which gives us direction and guidance for each six-month period? By obtaining a copy of the discourses which are delivered by the living prophets each six months at conference and by following the directions given, we may ever be in a state of readiness for the Second Coming.

He Comes!

The tongue of man falters, and the pen drops from the hand of the writer, as the mind is rapt in contemplation of the sublime and awful majesty of his coming to take vengeance on the ungodly and to reign as King of the whole earth.

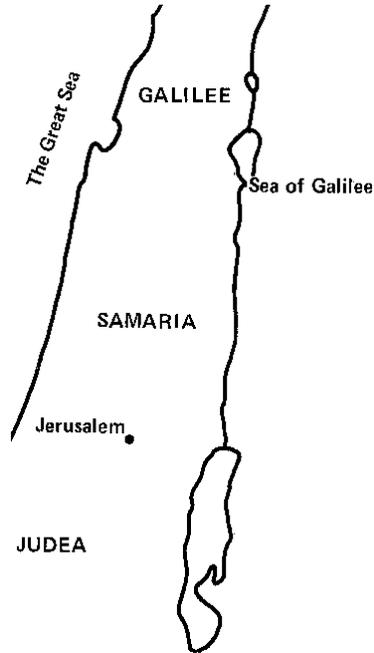
“He comes! The earth shakes, and the tall mountains tremble; the mighty deep rolls back to the north as in fear, and the rent skies glow like molten brass. He comes! The dead Saints burst forth from their tombs, and ‘those who are alive and remain’ are ‘caught up’ with them to meet him. The ungodly rush to hide themselves from his presence, and call upon the quivering rocks to cover them. He comes! with all the hosts of the righteous glorified. The breath of his lips strikes death to the wicked. His glory is a consuming fire. The proud and rebellious are as stubble; they are burned and ‘left neither root nor branch.’ He sweeps the earth ‘as with the besom of destruction.’ He deluges the earth with the fiery floods of his wrath, and the filthiness and abominations of the world are consumed. Satan and his dark hosts are taken and bound—the prince of the power of the air has lost his dominion, for He whose right it is to reign has come, and ‘the kingdoms of this world have become the kingdoms of our Lord and of his Christ.’

“‘The people of the Saints of the Most High’ will dwell on the earth, which shall bring forth her strength as in the days of her youth; they will build cities and plant gardens; those who have been faithful over a few things will be made rulers over many things; Eden will bloom, and the fruits and flowers of Paradise display their loveliness as at the first; Jesus shall reign ‘in Mount Zion and in Jerusalem and before his ancients gloriously,’ and all created things shall ‘praise the Lord.’” (Charles W. Penrose, “The Second Advent,” *Millennial Star* 21:583 [1859].)

AND BLESSED IS HE WHO WATCHETH FOR ME

Have you ever asked yourself why the Lord has given us so much information about his second coming? He indicates one reason in D&C 45:44. According to this scripture, what is your responsibility? How can you best “watch” for the Savior? If the Lord has revealed the signs which men should look for but they don’t watch for them, can they blame him if the cataclysm of the last days overtake them? Why is it necessary for you to prepare yourself and “watch” for the Lord?

"AS I HAVE LOVED YOU"



THE WEEK OF THE ATONING SACRIFICE	Matthew	Mark	Luke	John
THIRD DAY, continued				
Jesus' Betrayal Foretold	26:1, 2			
The Plot Against Jesus	26:3-5	14:1, 2	22:1, 2	
Judas Arranges Betrayal	26:14-16	14:10, 11	22:3-6	
FIFTH DAY				
Arrangements for the Passover Meal	26:17-19	14:12-16	22:7-13	
Strife over Precedence in the Passover Chamber Jesus Washes the Apostles' Feet	26:20	14:17	22:14; 24:30	13:1-20
Passover Meal—Introduction of the Sacrament	26:26-29	14:22-25	22:15-20	
Jesus Indicates the Betrayer Judas Leaves the Chamber Jesus Foretells His Own Death	26:21-25	14:18-21	22:21-23	13:21-26 13:27-30 13:31-35
Apostles Express Loyalty	26:31-35	14:27-31	22:31-38	13:36-38

THEME

Jesus Christ is the ultimate manifestation of the love of the Father, and we become his true disciples only as we follow in his footsteps in our demonstration of love.

INTRODUCTION

The last Passover of Jesus' ministry marks the beginning of the end of his mortal life. For several hundred years faithful Jews, obedient to the command of Jehovah, had offered up the paschal lamb in remembrance of the Lord's mercy to them in Egypt. The ritual and the feast connected with it were symbolic of an even greater deliverance than that which occurred under Moses: the deliverance of men from sin through the atoning sacrifice of the Lamb of God. Jesus' death would be the "great and last sacrifice," and would end sacrifice by the shedding of blood as required by Mosaic law. (See Alma 34:13.) Jesus had come to earth to fulfill that law! (See Matthew 5:17, 18.)

The time was now at hand when he who was the Lamb of God slain from before the foundation of the world would, in the fulfillment of his great Atonement, fully demonstrate his love for his Father and for all of us. Surely, "greater love hath no man than this . . ."

Before proceeding, read all the scriptural references in the reading block.

INTERPRETIVE COMMENTARY

(23-1) Matthew 26:5. Why Didn't the Jewish Leaders Capture Jesus During the Feast of the Passover?

"The rulers feared especially an outbreak by the Galileans, who had a provincial pride in the prominence of Jesus as one of their countrymen, and many of whom were then in Jerusalem. It was further concluded and for the same reasons, that the Jewish custom of making impressive examples of notable offenders by executing public punishment upon them at times of great general assemblages, be set aside in the case of Jesus; therefore the conspirators said: 'Not on the feast day, lest there be an uproar among the people.'" (Talmage, *Jesus the Christ*, p. 591.)

(23-2) Luke 22:3 Did Satan Literally Enter into Judas' Body?

"Perhaps, for Satan is a spirit man, a being who was born the offspring of God in pre-existence, and who was cast out of heaven for rebellion. He and his spirit followers have power in some cases to enter the bodies of men; they are, also, sometimes cast out of these illegally entered habitations by the power of the priesthood. See Mark 1:21–28.

"But if the body of Judas was not possessed literally by Satan, still this traitorous member of the Twelve was totally submissive to the will of the devil. 'Before Judas sold Christ to the Jews, he had sold himself to the devil; he had become Satan's serf, and did his master's bidding.' (Talmage, [*Jesus the Christ*], p. 592.)" (McConkie, *DNTC*, 1:702.)

(23-3) Matthew 26:15. What Is the Significance of the "Thirty Pieces of Silver"?

"They could have said one piece of silver or a thousand. Judas had not come to haggle but to betray. What amount, then, should they set? With devilish cunning they chose that sum which in their law was the fixed price of a slave. 'Thirty shekels of silver' would recompense an owner for the death of 'a manservant or a maidservant.' (Ex. 21:28–32.)

"Thirty pieces of silver! Such would they pay for the life of their God—no more and no less. And by so doing all men ever after would know that they esteemed him as the basest of men. And thus, also, even their attempts to debase and insult would fulfill, in literal detail, the Messianic prophecy of Zechariah which had foretold their evil conspiracy. 'If ye think good, give me my price; and if not, forbear,' the Lord says of the sum for which he will be sold. 'So they weighed for my price thirty pieces of silver.' (Zech. 11:12.)" (McConkie, *DNTC*, 1:702–3.)

(23-4) Mark 14:22–25. What Did Jesus Really Say at the Institution of the Last Supper?

Compare the King James account with that rendered by the Prophet Joseph Smith in the Inspired Version.

"And as they did eat, Jesus took bread and blessed it, and brake, and gave to them, and said, Take it, and eat.

"Behold, this is for you to do in remembrance of my body; for as oft as ye do this ye will remember this hour that I was with you.

“And he took the cup, and when he had given thanks, he gave it to them, and they all drank of it.

“And he said unto them, This is in remembrance of my blood which is shed for many, and the new testament which I give unto you; for of me, ye shall bear record unto all the world.

“And as oft as ye do this ordinance, ye will remember me in this hour that I was with you, and drank with you of this cup, even the last time in my ministry.

“Verily I say unto you, Of this ye shall bear record; for I will no more drink of the fruit of the vine with you, until that day that I drink it new in the kingdom of God. (Mark 14:20–25, Inspired Version.)

(23-5) John 13:1–20. When Jesus Washed His Disciples’ Feet, It Was a Sign of His Love for Them.

Washing of feet is a sacred gospel ordinance. It has been commanded of the Lord in the present as well as in previous dispensations.

“. . . our Lord did two things in the performance of this ordinance: 1. He fulfilled the old law given to Moses; and 2. He instituted a sacred ordinance which should be performed by legal administrators among his true disciples from that day forward.

“As part of the restoration of all things, the ordinance of washing of feet has been restored in the dispensation of the fulness of times. In keeping with the standard pattern of revealing principles and practices line upon line and precept upon precept, the Lord revealed his will concerning the washing of feet little by little until the full knowledge of the endowment and all temple ordinances had been given.” (McConkie, *Mormon Doctrine*, pp. 829–30.)

President David O. McKay saw in the ordinance a great example of service. Speaking to the Church in the April 1951 general conference on the occasion of his being sustained by the members as president of the Church, he said:

“What an example of service to those great servants, followers of the Christ! He that is greatest among you, let him be least. So we sense the obligation to be of greater service to the membership of the Church, to devote our lives to the advancement of the kingdom of God on earth.” (CR, Apr. 1951, p. 159.)

(23-6) John 13:26, 27. What Does It Mean to Give a Sop?

In areas of the world where table utensils are not used at mealtime, it is common practice to place both broth

and meat in a dish in the center of the table. Thin pieces of bread, often shaped to make a spoon, are used to extract both meat and broth from their repository. The bread thus dipped becomes a “sop.” It is a mark of great honor for two friends to dip from the same sop-dish and an even greater mark of respect for one to dip for a friend and present the sop to him. Thus it was that Judas attempted to feign his love and loyalty for Jesus at the Passover meal by dipping his hand in the same dish with him. (See Matthew 26:23.) John reports that it was Jesus who dipped the sop for Judas and then handed it to him with the words, “That thou doest, do quickly.” (John 13:27.) (See *Harper’s Bible Dictionary*, s.v. “sop.”)

(23-7) Matthew 26:17. What Was the Feast of Unleavened Bread?

Closely associated with the Passover was the Feast of Unleavened Bread. As the ancient Israelites made their hasty preparations to leave Egypt and its unwelcome hardships, they did not have sufficient time to permit their bread to rise as was the custom. Instead they baked in haste and vacated their homes as quickly as possible. The festival of Unleavened Bread was held to commemorate this fact. Where Passover lasted one day originally, the Feast of Unleavened Bread lasted seven. In process of time, both festivals were combined into one, making the entire Passover period eight days in length.

(23-8) What Is the Relationship Between the Sacrament and the Atonement?

The final Passover was, in reality, two events rather than one: a formal celebration of the annual Passover supper and the first observance of the Lord’s Supper in commemoration of the atoning act of Jesus Christ. In speaking of the second of the two suppers, Elder Talmage has written:

“While Jesus with the Twelve still sat at table, He took a loaf or cake of bread, and having reverently given thanks and by blessing sanctified it, He gave a portion to each of the apostles, saying: ‘Take, eat; this is my body’: or, according to the more extended account, ‘This is my body which is given for you: this do in remembrance of me.’ Then, taking a cup of wine, He gave thanks and blessed it, and gave it unto them with the command: ‘Drink ye all of it; for this is my blood of the new testament, which is shed for many for the remission of sins. But I say unto you, I will not drink henceforth of this fruit of the vine, until that day when I drink it new with you in my Father’s kingdom.’ In this simple but impressive manner was instituted the ordinance, since known as the Sacrament of the Lord’s

Supper. The bread and wine, duly consecrated by prayer, become emblems of the Lord's body and blood, to be eaten and drunk reverently, and in remembrance of Him. (*Jesus the Christ*, pp. 596–97.)

(23-9) Matthew 26:22. “Lord, Is It I”?

“There is a lesson to be drawn from the twenty-sixth chapter of Matthew. The occasion, the Last Supper.

“And as they did eat, he said, Verily I say unto you, that one of you shall betray me.’

“I remind you that these men were apostles. They were of apostolic stature. It has always been interesting to me that they did not on that occasion, nudge one another and say, ‘I’ll bet that is old Judas. He has surely been acting queer lately.’ It reflects something of their stature. Rather it is recorded that:

“They were exceedingly sorrowful, and began every one of them to say unto him, Lord, is it I?” (Matthew 26:22.)

“Would you, I plead, overrule the tendency to disregard counsel and assume for just a moment something apostolic in attitude at least, and ask yourself these questions: Do I need to improve myself? Should I take this counsel to heart and act upon it? If there is one weak or failing, unwilling to follow the brethren, Lord, is it I?” (Boyd K. Packer, “Follow the Brethren,” *Speeches of the Year*, 1965, p. 3.)

(23-10) Matthew 26:1, 2. Jesus Prophecies of His Death and Resurrection

As the time for Jesus’ death drew near, the Savior spoke of it directly and of the methods that would be used to bring it about. But this was not the first time Jesus had prophesied concerning his death and the resurrection to follow.

The following chart shows some of the occasions when Jesus had taught his apostles and others that he must die. They did not comprehend the real significance of his words—not until after the resurrection was an accomplished fact.

Reference	Period of Time in the Lord’s Ministry
John 2:18–22	Beginning of the First Passover
Luke 9:21, 22	Two Years Later During the Galilean Ministry
Mark 9:30–32	Still Later During the Galilean Ministry
Mark 10:32–34	The Following Year, Just Preceding the Last Passover

POINTS TO PONDER

JESUS IS OUR GREAT EXAMPLE OF WHAT IT MEANS TO LOVE ONE ANOTHER

Jesus is the Father’s gift to all men. In offering his Son as he did, our Father in heaven has shown us our truest example of pure love. Out of his divine love came a willingness to endure the sacrifice of his Son—the incomparable suffering in Gethsemane, the abuse by Romans and Jews, the mockery of a trial, the pain and horror of a crucifixion. And why? Because our Father in heaven loves us and knew that we could return to him only through the atonement of Jesus Christ.

Note 1 John 4:7–10. Is God Love? What is John talking about here?

But the Savior did not have to die, for he held death in abeyance. His was a willing sacrifice, a supreme act of love. He lived a life of complete obedience to the Father’s will. In giving his life willingly as he did, our Savior placed the seal of divine love on his life and mission and demonstrated the course which all men should emulate.

Note John 1:34, 35. What should be the great distinguishing trait of a true disciple of Christ?

(23-11) John 13:31–35. What Did Jesus Teach About the Principle of Love?

It has been aptly observed that while many of the world’s great religious leaders taught the principle of love, Jesus is the only one who could truly say, “Follow me,” for he alone not only taught the principle but exemplified it. And we are to love one another as he has loved us. “By this,” he says, “shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another.” (John 13:35.)

Read John 15:8–13.

Perhaps the best way we can comprehend what Jesus taught about the principle of love is to ponder the love that Jesus offers us. Consider the divine station from which he descended to come to earth to rescue us and to provide for us redemption and forgiveness of sins. Consider also the agony in Gethsemane and on the cross.

“I stand all amazed at the love Jesus offers me, Confused at the grace that so fully he proffers me; I tremble to know that for me he was crucified, That for me, a sinner, he suffered, he bled and died.

“I marvel that he would descend from his throne
divine
To rescue a soul so rebellious and proud as mine;
That he should extend his great love unto such as I,
Sufficient to own, to redeem, and to justify.

“I think of his hands pierced and bleeding to
pay the debt!
Such mercy, such love, and devotion can I forget?
No, no, I will praise and adore at the mercy seat,
Until at the glorified throne I kneel at his feet.

“Oh, it is wonderful that he should care for me,
Enough to die for me!
Oh, it is wonderful,
Wonderful to me!”

(“I Stand all Amazed,” *Hymns* 80.)

Very often students desire to know how they can really demonstrate love. Have you ever felt this way? If so, the following scriptures will provide valuable insight and help.

Summarize briefly how we may demonstrate our love as described in the following scriptures:

John 15:9, 10. How do we best show our love for God?

1 John 2:15–17. How do many love the world rather than God?

1 John 3:17, 18. How important is service to the demonstration of love?

(23-12) Love in Deed and Not in Word Only

We love our Father and our Savior because *they first loved us!* And we demonstrate our love for them in our treatment of each other. Most of us may never be put to the crucial test of laying down our lives for one we love. Our tests of love and devotion may come in other ways, more quiet perhaps, but nonetheless real. And as they do, “let us not love in word, neither in tongue; but in deed and in truth.”

The application of these divine standards might be illustrated by the following story:

“Some time ago a friend of mine related an experience that I should like to pass on to you. He said:

“My father’s cousin and my father lived in the same community and were competing in the construction business. There grew up over the years a very keen and bitter rivalry between them. This was triggered in the beginning in the bidding of construction contracts,

and later in our city political affairs where they opposed each other in very spirited elections.

“Our immediate families inherited this situation upon the death of my father, for we boys seemed to take over where Dad left off. It was quite a strain on the members of his family and ours even to be civil to one another, even in our Church callings where he served as bishop of one ward and I in another, and later in the high council where we were both members. When we came together it seemed that Satan took over, and I am sure he did, for haven’t we been told that where contention is, the Spirit of the Lord is not?

“This situation continued to fester. Suddenly I found myself with a call to put aside all worldly things and go to preside over a mission. This was a thrilling experience to contemplate, and yet I subconsciously had a most uneasy feeling about it. I kept asking myself: “Are you really worthy to accept such an important call?” I was living the Word of Wisdom, I was a full tithing payer, I was faithful in all my Church activities, I was morally clean, and yet this uneasy feeling persisted.

“I set about immediately to get my business and personal affairs in a condition where others could handle them while we were gone. While returning home from my office one afternoon, it really happened. I didn’t hear a voice, but just as clearly as if a voice spoke to me something said: “You must go to your father’s cousin and get things straightened out. You cannot go on this mission and teach the gospel of love when this terrible feeling exists between you.”

“I drove to his home, and with great fear and trepidation went up and rang the doorbell. There was no answer. After waiting a few minutes I went back to my car and said silently, “Lord, I made the attempt. I am sure this will be acceptable.” But it wasn’t. This uneasy feeling still persisted. I prayed earnestly about it.

“The next day as I sat in a funeral service, my cousin came in and sat across the aisle from me. The Spirit moved me to ask him if I could see him at his home after the service. He agreed. This time I went with calmness and tranquility in my soul because I had asked the Lord to prepare the way for me.

“When I rang the doorbell he invited me into the living room and congratulated me on my mission call. We talked a few minutes about things in general, and then it happened. I looked at him with the feeling of love, which replaced all the old bitterness, and said: “I have come to ask forgiveness for anything I have ever

said or done that has tended to divide us and our families.”

““At this point tears came into our eyes, and for a few minutes neither of us could say a word. This was one time when silence was more powerful than words. In a few minutes he said: “I wish I had come to you first.” I replied: “The important thing is that it is done, not who initiated it.”

““At this moment we had a rich spiritual experience, which caused us to purge our lives and our souls of those things which had separated us, which has resulted in our having proper family relationships.

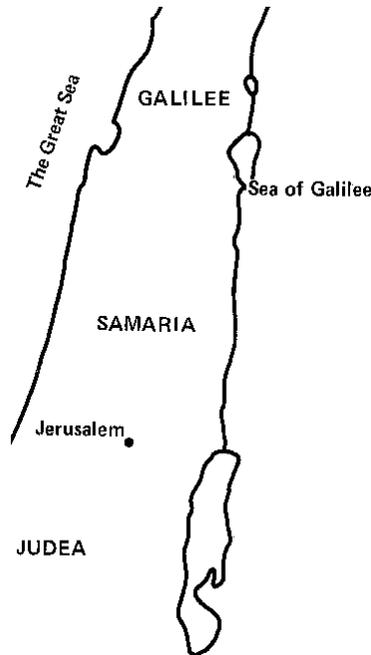
““Now I could go on my mission and teach the true meaning of love, because for the first time in my life I had experienced its deepest dimension, and now I could honestly say that there wasn’t a person in the world that I didn’t love and appreciate. Since that day my life has never been the same, for it was then that I learned in a most positive way as I had never understood before the injunction of the Master to his disciples when he said: “A new commandment I give

unto you, That ye love one another.”” (John 13:34.)” (N. Eldon Tanner in *CR*, Apr. 1967, pp. 105–6.)

What may I do to demonstrate my love to those close to me? Who really are my neighbors? It is significant that the Lord did not merely command that we must love one another; he showed us the way. All who would be godlike must follow him. What does love have to do with the difference between testimony and conversion? Can one have a testimony and not love? Can one be truly converted and not demonstrate love for both God and his fellowman? The answer is almost certainly not.

Now take a moment and evaluate your own standing. Are you the possessor of a testimony? Has it led you to conversion? If your answer to the last question was yes, what evidence from your life could you cite to support your answer? If your answer was no, what things must you do to bring you to the conversion state?

"MY PEACE I GIVE UNTO YOU"



THE WEEK OF THE ATONING SACRIFICE	Matthew	Mark	Luke	John
FIFTH DAY, continued				
Jerusalem, Judea Discourse About the Comforter				14:1–31
They Sing a Hymn—Proceed to the Mount of Olives	26:30	14:26	22:39	
Their Relationship to Christ and the World; His Death Explained				15:1–27; 16:1–33

THEME

The peace of which the Savior spoke, that peace that the world knows not, comes to the true disciple largely through the instrumentality of the Comforter—the Holy Ghost.

INTRODUCTION

In these last hours of his mortal life Jesus spoke to his apostles of love and prayed to the Father for them, that they might be one. Throngs had hailed his appearance at Jerusalem as that of a king, and shouted hosannas in the expectation that Jesus would

deliver them from their oppressors. But even now, as he sat at supper and instructed those whom he had called and chosen out of the world, the Sanhedrin plotted for his death and tried to undermine his popularity among the masses. And in the end he would be alone—multitudes would disclaim him. None (even those who loved him most slept!) would hail his suffering in Gethsemane, where alone, forsaken, and without the pomp of crowds, he would win an infinite victory far greater than any defeat of Rome.

But for now, he turned his attention to those whom he loved. "I go my way to him that sent me," he said.

“. . . Ye shall be sorrowful, but your sorrow shall be turned into joy.” (John 16:5, 20.) But how was sorrow to be turned into joy?

It is significant to remember that Jesus did not leave his apostles comfortless—he admonished them to look forward to the time when they would see him again. He taught them about the Father and about the Holy Ghost, the great Comforter who would testify of him and would lead all who would follow into a fulness of the truth.

This comforter would also bring them the great peace of which he spoke—a peace that would withstand all the tribulation of a lone and dreary world. The gift of the Holy Ghost has always been available to the faithful disciple.

Before proceeding, read all the scriptural references in the reading block.

INTERPRETIVE COMMENTARY

(24-1) John 14:2. What Are the Many Mansions?

“My text is on the resurrection of the dead, which you will find in the 14th chapter of John—‘In my Father’s house are many mansions.’ It should be—‘In my Father’s kingdom are many kingdoms,’ in order that ye may be heirs of God and joint-heirs with me. . . .

“There are mansions for those who obey a celestial law, and there are other mansions for those who come short of the law, every man in his own order.” (Smith, *Teachings*, p. 366.)

(24-2) John 14:7–11. How Is It Possible to Understand About the Father?

When Jesus ministered in this world, he looked like the Father would have looked; he said what the Father would have said, and he did what the Father would have done. As Elder Marion G. Romney has taught:

“Jesus in his mortal ministry, being, as Paul said, ‘the express image of his [Father’s] person’ (Heb. 1:3), was a true and complete revelation of the person and nature of God. This he confirmed to Philip when he said: ‘. . . he that hath seen me hath seen the Father. . . .’ (John 14:9.)” (CR, Oct. 1967, p. 135.)

(24-3) John 14:12. How Could His Servants Do Greater Works Than Jesus Did?

“He does not say that they should do these works in time; but they should do greater works, because he

went to the Father. He says in the 24th verse [of the 17th chapter of John]: ‘Father, I will that they also, whom thou hast given me, be with me where I am; that they may behold my glory.’ These sayings, taken in connection, make it very plain that the greater works which those that believed on his name were to do were to be done in eternity, where he was going and where they should behold his glory.” (*Lectures on Faith*, Lecture Seventh, vs. 12.)

(24-4) John 14:18–24. What Are the Two Comforters?

“These statements about the two Comforters climax and crown the teachings of the Son of God. We have no record of anything he ever said which can so completely withdraw the curtain of eternity and open to the faithful a vision of the glories of God. Based on love, born of obedience, Jesus promises the saints that they can have, here and now in this life, the following:

“(1) The gift and constant companionship of the Holy Ghost; the comfort and peace which it is the function of that Holy Spirit to bestow; the revelation and the sanctifying power which alone will prepare men for the companionship of gods and angels hereafter;

“(2) Personal visitations from the Second Comforter, the Lord Jesus Christ himself, the resurrected and perfected being who dwells with his Father in the mansions on high; and

“(3) God the Father—mark it well Philip!—shall visit man in person, take up his abode with him, as it were, and reveal to him all the hidden mysteries of his kingdom.” (McConkie, *DNTC*, 1:735.)

(24-5) John 14:18–24. “I Will Come to You”

“Now what is this other Comforter. It is no more nor less than the Lord Jesus Christ himself; and this is the sum and substance of the whole matter; that when any man obtains this last Comforter, he will have the personage of Jesus Christ to attend him, or appear unto him from time to time, and even he will manifest the Father unto him, and they will take up their abode with him, and the visions of the heavens will be opened unto him, and the Lord will teach him face to face, and he may have a perfect knowledge of the mysteries of the kingdom of God; and this is the state and place the ancient saints arrived at when they had such glorious visions—Isaiah, Ezekiel, John upon the Isle of Patmos, St. Paul in the three heavens, and all the saints who held communion with the general assembly and Church of the First Born.” (*Teachings*, pp. 150–51.)

(24-6) John 14:26. When Did the Disciples Receive the Gift of the Holy Ghost?

Elder Joseph Fielding Smith stated that “the disciples of Jesus did not receive the gift of the Holy Ghost while he was with them. The reason for this, in part at least, was due to the fact that they had with them to guide and teach them the second member of the Godhead, even Jesus himself. While he was with them there was no occasion for them to have the companionship of the Holy Ghost. Before the Savior left them, he promised to send them the Comforter, or Holy Ghost.” (*Answers to Gospel Questions*, 2:159.)

(24-7) John 14:30. “The Prince of This World Cometh”

“So powerful was he in the Master’s day that the Master referred to Satan as ‘the prince of this world,’ but he added, ‘the prince of this world cometh, and hath nothing in me.’ (John 14:30.) We must be able to say, though the power is evil on every side, ‘As for me and my house, we shall serve the God of this land.’ The prince of this world is coming to tempt every one of us, and the only ones who will stand through these evil days are those who have founded their houses upon the rock, as the Master said: when the storms descended and the winds blew and the rains came and beat upon the house, it fell not because it was founded upon the rock. That is what the Lord is trying to say to us today.” (Harold B. Lee in *British Area Conference Report*, Aug. 1971, p. 135.)

(24-8) John 16:24. Had the Apostles Never Before Prayed?

In this verse Jesus did not state that his apostles had never prayed, or asked anything; rather, he said that his apostles had never before prayed *in his name*, that is, in the name of Jesus Christ. Without doubt the apostles were men of faith who prayed often, else how could they ever merit the high and holy honor of a call to the apostleship?

“Since the divine law in all ages called for men to pray to the Father in the name of Christ, why had Jesus awaited this hour to institute the age-old system among his disciples? Perhaps it is a situation similar to that which is involved in receiving the gift of the Holy Ghost; as long as Jesus was with the disciples they did not enjoy the *full manifestations* of the Holy Ghost. (John 16:7.) Perhaps as long as Jesus was personally with them many of their petitions were addressed directly to him rather than to the Father.

Such was the course followed by the Nephites when the resurrected and glorified Lord ministered among them. They prayed directly to him and not to the Father.” (McConkie, *DNTC*, 1:758; see also 3 Nephi 19:17–25.)

POINTS TO PONDER

“MY PEACE I GIVE UNTO YOU”

Jesus was obedient to the Father’s will, and at the end of his mortal ministry he taught those principles contained in the chapters you are considering (John 14–17). In these verses the Lord taught his disciples the way to ultimate peace in a world that knows it not. He expounded to them the mission of the Holy Ghost.

(24-9) John 15:1–8. “Without Me Ye Can Do Nothing”

Members of the Church are like the branches and leaves on a great tree. They are on the tree, but that alone does not save them. If they do not receive the nourishment and sustaining power that comes from Christ, who is the trunk (whose sustaining power is carried to them by the Holy Ghost only as they make themselves worthy to receive it), then they wither and fall away like dry leaves. Of this, President John Taylor said:

“As a Saint you say, ‘I think I understand my duty, and I am doing very well.’ That may be so. You see the little twig: it is green; it flourishes and is the very picture of life. It bears its part and proportion in the tree, and is connected with the stem, branches, and root. But could the tree live without it? Yes, it could. It need not boast itself and get uplifted and say, ‘How green I am! and how I flourish! and what a healthy position I am in! How well I am doing! and I am in my proper place and am doing right.’ But could you do without the root? No: you bear your proper part and position in the tree. Just so with this people. When they are doing their part—when they are magnifying their calling, living their religion, and walking in obedience to the Spirit of the Lord, they have a portion of his Spirit given to them to profit withal. And while they are humble, faithful, diligent, and observe the laws and commandments of God, they stand in their proper position on the tree: they are flourishing; the buds, blossoms, leaves, and everything about them are all right, and they form a part and parcel of the tree. . . .” (John Taylor in *JD*, 6:108.)

Without any written response, contemplate carefully these questions:

Who is the source, or “vine,” whose power and influence may sustain and nurture the Saints?

Which member of the Godhead labors with a man, and corrects and teaches and refines him, so that he may be worthy enough to receive the blessings that come from Jesus?

What must a man do so that he will be firmly attached to the tree?

What will become of anyone who, through willfulness or disobedience or for whatever reason, separates himself from the tree?

John 14:26 What did Jesus say the Holy Ghost would do for those who were striving to be worthy?

John 15:26 Of whom does the Holy Ghost testify?

John 16:7–11 Jesus said the Holy Ghost would come to reprove the world for three reasons. What are they?

John 16:13–15 In what way does the Holy Ghost glorify Jesus and the Father?

(24-10) The Holy Ghost Brings Man to His Fullest Potential

“The gift of the Holy Ghost adapts itself to all these organs or attributes. It quickens all the intellectual faculties, increases, enlarges, expands and purifies all the natural passions and affections; and adapts them, by the gift of wisdom, to their lawful use. It inspires, develops, cultivates and matures all the fine-toned sympathies, joys, tastes, kindred feelings and affections of our nature. It inspires virtue, kindness, goodness, tenderness, gentleness and charity. It develops beauty of person, form and features. It tends to health, vigor, animation and social feeling. It invigorates all the faculties of the physical and intellectual man. It strengthens, and gives tone to the nerves. In short, it is, as it were, marrow to the bone, joy to the heart, light to the eyes, music to the ears, and life to the whole being.

“In the presence of such persons, one feels to enjoy the light of their countenances, as the genial rays of a sunbeam. Their very atmosphere diffuses a thrill, a warm glow of pure gladness and sympathy, to the heart and nerves of others who have kindred feelings, or sympathy of spirit.” (Pratt, *Key to the Science of Theology*, p. 101.)

(24-11) As a Messenger of the Godhead, the Holy Ghost Teaches Faithful Members

“The Holy Ghost is a Personage of Spirit, in the likeness of God the Father, in other words a likeness of the Father and the Son. His mission is to instruct and enlighten the minds of those who, through their faithfulness have obeyed the commandments of the Father and the Son. He bears witness of the truth, quickens the minds of those who have made covenant and reveals to them the mysteries of the kingdom of God. He is a special messenger from the Father and the Son and carries out their will. . . .” (Smith, *Answers to Gospel Questions*, 5:134.)

(24-12) John 16:33. “Be of Good Cheer; I Have Overcome the World”

There is a great difference between the kind of peace that Jesus spoke of and the world around us. We live in a wicked world, a world gone crazy with wanton indulgence and crime. Each day the news bears tragic record of wars, natural disasters, terror, and the frustrated efforts of mankind to avert or respond intelligently to the disasters. In spite of all this, Jesus has promised his followers that they may have peace in this world. Read John 16:33. Compare Philippians 4:7.

And Jesus’ promise is real, for those who obey his commandments do feel his influence and comfort in their hearts, and they are not afraid. In the face of every threatening peril, they can pray to God and he will answer them by the “still small voice” of the Holy Spirit, and speak peace to their souls. Elder Harold B. Lee taught this:

“All too often when God speaks in this still, small voice, as he did to Elijah in the cave, it may not be audible to our physical hearing because, like a faulty radio, we may be out of tune with the infinite.” (CR, Oct. 1966, p. 115.)

But if you will be obedient (for that is the condition), the Lord’s promise to you of peace is sure, absolutely certain!

The soul that on Jesus hath leaned for repose
[He] will not, [he] cannot, desert to his foes.
That soul, though all hell shall endeavor to shake,
[He’ll] never, no never, no never forsake!
 (“How Firm a Foundation,” *Hymns*, 66.)

Gordon was struggling. He had listened many times to his father’s testimony about the sweet and gentle influence of the Holy Ghost. But Gordon himself felt that he had never even approached having the

companionship of that Spirit. He wondered about many things, and the wondering depressed him. Was there something wrong, something different about him that meant he could never have the same calm and assurance, the same peace that his father possessed? He was trying to live a good life, but was there something still that he lacked, something he had overlooked that was keeping him from obtaining what his father had?

And the most distressing question of all was this: Was his father misleading him? But this last thought always melted away, because Gordon knew that his father knew. It was that simple. He had lived in his father's home, had heard him pray, had observed his father's life and example.

One evening Gordon overheard his father reassure someone over the telephone by saying, "Well, I know things will work out, so let's not worry about it any more." As soon as his father put down the receiver, Gordon demanded, "Dad, how do you know? This is a shifting, unstable world! How can you pretend to know anything for sure?"

Surprised by Gordon's outburst, his father hesitated, and then replied quietly, "Gordon, I just know." Then, as though perceiving Gordon's inward struggle, his father added, "And, Gordon, you can know just as I know, if you want to."

"But, Dad," Gordon interrupted, louder than was necessary, "I have lived good, and I pray, and I try, but I haven't received any answers to prayers, and I haven't had visions, or special feelings of comfort. I don't feel sure of anything! Is there something wrong with me?"

"No, Gordon, there's nothing wrong with you. And I repeat, you can have that peace and reassurance that you speak about, but only if you pay the price. You must be patient, for the companionship and peace of the Spirit does not come easily. You must live the commandments and keep the covenants that you have made as a holder of the priesthood. Beyond these things, you must pray earnestly and study diligently about Jesus and his church, for the Holy Ghost will not come simply to amuse you or to appease curiosity; but he will help you develop a relationship with your Redeemer if your efforts are tireless and your desires are sincere." Read Matthew 13:45, 46.

"Now, Gordon, don't be discouraged. Seek, knock, study, pray, be obedient, and you will receive the peace and calm assurance that you desire."

Months passed after Gordon began his search. He studied and prayed with all his heart. He read in the New Testament (many times far into the night) the account of Jesus' life, and he prayed and sincerely tried to live and act as Jesus had done.

And then gradually and very gently, there came into his heart the longed-for-peace and quiet assurance of the reality of Jesus. His father really did know, and now Gordon knew as well.

It Shall Be Manifest

Beautiful

*is the operation of
the Holy Spirit.*

*It unveils and develops that which is
noble,
and eternal,
and divine in man.*

*The proud are humbled,
The hateful made to love.*

*The supposedly self-sufficient
are enlightened
as to the identity of
and their dependency upon
Our Divine Redeemer.*

*The eyes
of those who have been
blind to the truth
are opened.*

*The hearts
of those who have been hardened
against the ever-condescending rays
of light
and love
are softened.*

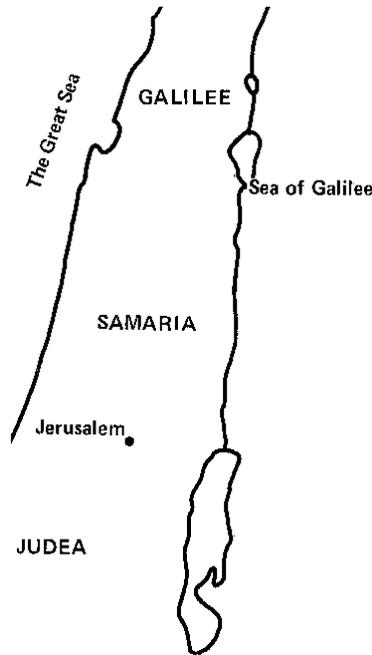
*And if they receive it,
Each day
is more precious,
more meaningful for them,
and*

*They may walk in a newness of life,
If they but ask.*

(Used by permission.)

Although in our mortal lives it is necessary for us to experience tribulation, trial, and struggle, through the Holy Ghost the disciples of Jesus Christ may have a peace not known in the world. Do you have such peace?

"NOT MY WILL, BUT THINE, BE DONE"



THE WEEK OF THE ATONING SACRIFICE	Matthew	Mark	Luke	John
FIFTH DAY, continued				
High Priestly Prayer				17:1–26
Agony in Gethsemane	26:36–46	14:32–42	22:40–46	18:1, 2

THEME

Through the suffering of Jesus Christ in Gethsemane, we can receive forgiveness of sins.

INTRODUCTION

On the fifth day of the week of the atoning sacrifice, Jesus had made arrangements to eat the Passover meal with the Twelve. Following this “last supper,” Jesus indicated who his betrayer was; Judas then left to carry out his treachery. After signifying his death, Jesus instituted the Lord’s Supper—the sacrament—

and said to the eleven apostles, “I will drink no more of the fruit of the vine, until that day that I drink it new in the kingdom of God.” (Mark 14:25.) He then said that it was necessary for him to leave them, that he might prepare a place for them with his Father, but that he would send the Comforter to them, and that he himself would come to them. He then left his peace with them, telling them not to be troubled or afraid. Following this discourse (see John 14), Jesus said, “Arise, let us go hence.” A hymn was then sung (see Mark 14:26), and Jesus led the eleven apostles to the Mount of Olives.

The quiet procession passed through the gate west of the temple, descended into a ravine called Kidron, and then proceeded up the slope of the Mount of Olives. At this time Jesus explained in another discourse to the apostles his relationship to them, and he likened this relationship to a vine and its branches. Jesus commanded the disciples to love one another; then he gave a further explanation of the role of the Comforter and explained why it was necessary that he leave. He spoke plainly concerning his death, which caused the apostles to declare, "Lo, now speakest thou plainly, and . . . no proverb. . . . we believe that thou camest forth from God." (John 16:29, 30.) Jesus then offered his great intercessory prayer to the Father on behalf of his disciples (see John 17); and, descending the Mount, he took his apostles into a garden called Gethsemane where he subsequently began to pray, and being in great agony he bled at every pore. Thus did he assume the burden of men's sins. Your reading should bring you to greater love, understanding, and appreciation of Christ's infinite sacrifice for you.

Before proceeding, read all the scriptural references in the reading block.

INTERPRETIVE COMMENTARY

(25-1) John 17:1. The Significance of the High Priestly Prayer of Jesus

With a perfect understanding of his mission and that the time of his atonement was "at hand," Jesus concluded the teaching portion of his ministry with a prayer—a prayer which has sometimes been referred to as the high-priestly or great intercessory prayer. (See John 17.) These designations are not inappropriate, for, as we shall see, Jesus, our Great High Priest, first offered himself as an offering; then, as Mediator, he interceded on behalf of worthy members of his kingdom. The pattern for this had been established in ancient Israel.

Once each year, the presiding high priest in ancient Israel entered into the holy of holies, the most sacred place within the tabernacle. There he would perform certain rites in connection with the Day of Atonement, a day set aside for national humiliation and contrition. Having bathed himself and dressed in white linen, he would present before the Lord a young bullock and two young goats as sin offerings, and a ram as a burnt offering in behalf of his sins and those of the people. The high priest's role was that of a mediator, or one

who interceded with the Lord in behalf of the people. His role, of course, was but a type of the great mediating role of the Savior in our behalf. Thus, when Jesus pleaded to the Father for all those who believed on him, he did so as our Intercessor, or Great High Priest.

The prayer he offered on this occasion had three distinct parts:

In the first part (see John 17:1–3), Jesus offered himself as the great sacrifice. His hour had come.

The next part of the prayer (see John 17:4–19) was a reverent report to the Father of his mortal mission.

In the last part (see John 17:20–26) of his prayer, Jesus interceded not only for the eleven apostles present, but for all who shall believe on Jesus "through their word," in order that all would come to a perfect unity, which unity invested Christ in them as Christ is in the Father. Thus all would be perfect in unity, and the world would believe that the Father had sent his Son.

(25-2) John 17:3. How Can a Man Know God and Jesus?

"To know God in that full sense which will enable us to gain eternal salvation means that we must know what he knows, enjoy what he enjoys, experience what he experiences. In New Testament language, we must 'be like him.' (1 John 3:2.)

"But before we can become like him, we must obey those laws that will enable us to acquire the character, perfections, and attributes that he possesses.

"And before we can obey these laws, we must learn what they are; we must learn of Christ and his gospel. We must learn 'that salvation was, and is, and is to come, in and through the atoning blood of Christ, the Lord Omnipotent.' (Mosiah 3:18.) We must learn that baptism under the hands of a legal administrator is essential to salvation and that after baptism we must keep the commandments and 'press forward with a steadfastness in Christ, having a perfect brightness of hope, and a love of God and of all men.' (2 Ne. 31:20.)" (Bruce R. McConkie in *CR*, Apr. 1966, p. 79.)

(25-3) Matthew 26:36. "Then Cometh Jesus . . . unto a Place Called Gethsemane"

"Gethsemane.—The name means 'oil-press' and probably has reference to a mill maintained at the place for the extraction of oil from the olives there

cultivated. John refers to the spot as a garden, from which designation we may regard it as an enclosed space of private ownership. That it was a place frequented by Jesus when He sought retirement for prayer, or opportunity for confidential converse with the disciples, is indicated by the same writer (John 18:1, 2).” (Talmage, *Jesus the Christ*, p. 620.)

(25-4) Matthew 26:39. “If It Be Possible, Let This Cup Pass from Me”

“God is unchangeable, so are also his laws, in all their forms, and in all their applications, and being Himself the essence of Law, the giver of law, the sustainer of law, all of those laws are eternal in all their operations. . . .

“Hence, the law of atonement had to be met as well as all other laws, for God could not be God without fulfilling it.

“Jesus said, ‘If it be possible, let this cup pass.’ But it was not possible; for to have done so would have been a violation of the law, and he had to take it. The atonement must be made, a God must be sacrificed. No power can resist a law of God. It is omnipresent, omnipotent, exists everywhere, in all things. . . .” (Taylor, *The Mediation and Atonement*, pp. 168–69.)

(25-5) What Took Place in Gethsemane?

“Where and under what circumstances was the atoning sacrifice of the Son of God made? Was it on the Cross of Calvary or in the Garden of Gethsemane? It is to the Cross of Christ that most Christians look when centering their attention upon the infinite and eternal atonement. And certainly the sacrifice of our Lord was completed when he was lifted up by men; also, that part of his life and suffering is more dramatic and, perhaps, more soul stirring. But in reality the pain and suffering, the triumph and grandeur, of the atonement took place primarily in Gethsemane.

“It was there Jesus took upon himself the sins of the world on conditions of repentance. It was there he suffered beyond human power to endure. It was there he sweat great drops of blood from every pore. It was there his anguish was so great he fain would have let the bitter cup pass. It was there he made the final choice to follow the will of the Father. It was there that an angel from heaven came to strengthen him in his greatest trial. Many have been crucified and the torment and pain is extreme. But only one, and he the Man who had God as his Father, has bowed beneath the burden of grief and sorrow that lay upon him in that awful night, that night in which he descended

below all things as he prepared himself to rise above them all.” (McConkie, *DNTC*, 1:774–75.)

(25-6) To What Extent Was the Atonement Completed in the Garden of Gethsemane?

“It seems, that in addition to the fearful suffering incident to crucifixion, the agony of Gethsemane had recurred, intensified beyond human power to endure. In that bitterest hour the dying Christ was alone, alone in most terrible reality. That the supreme sacrifice of the Son might be consummated in all its fulness, the Father seems to have withdrawn the support of His immediate Presence, leaving to the Savior of men the glory of complete victory over the forces of sin and death.” (Talmage, *Jesus the Christ*, p. 661.)

When the Savior exclaimed in triumph, “It is finished” (John 19:30), he knew his atoning sacrifice had been accepted by the Father. (See John 19:28.)

“Sweet and welcome as would have been the relief of death in any of the earlier stages of His suffering from Gethsemane to the cross, He lived until all things were accomplished as had been appointed.” (Talmage, *Jesus the Christ*, p. 662.)

(25-7) Luke 22:44. “And Being in an Agony, He Prayed More Earnestly”

“How perfect the example is! Though he were the Son of God, yet even he, having been strengthened by an angelic ministrant, prays with increased faith; even he grows in grace and ascends to higher heights of spiritual unity with the Father. How well Paul wrote of this hour: ‘In the days of his flesh, when he had offered up prayers and supplications with strong crying and tears unto him that was able to save him from death, and was heard in that he feared; Though he were a Son, yet learned he obedience by the things which he suffered; And being made perfect, he became the author of eternal salvation unto all them that obey him.’ (Heb. 5:7–9.)” (McConkie, *DNTC*, 1:776.)

But what was it that caused the Savior’s intense agony?

“Jesus had to take away sin by the sacrifice of Himself. . . . And as He in His own person bore the sins of all, and atoned for them by the sacrifice of Himself, so there came upon Him the weight and agony of ages and generations, the indescribable agony consequent upon this great sacrificial atonement wherein He bore the sins of the world, and suffered in His own person the consequences of an eternal law of God broken by men. Hence His profound grief, His

indescribable anguish, His overpowering torture, all experienced in the submission to the eternal fiat of Jehovah and the requirements of an inexorable law.

“The suffering of the Son of God was not simply the suffering of personal death; for in assuming the position that He did in making an atonement for the sins of the world He bore the weight, the responsibility, and the burden of the sins of all men, which, to us, is incomprehensible. . . .

“Groaning beneath this concentrated load, this intense, incomprehensible pressure, this terrible exaction of Divine Justice, from which feeble humanity shrank, and through the agony thus experienced sweating great drops of blood, He was led to exclaim, ‘Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me.’ He had wrestled with the superincumbent load in the wilderness, He had struggled against the powers of darkness that had been let loose upon him there; placed below all things, His mind surcharged with agony and pain, lonely and apparently helpless and forsaken, in his agony the blood oozed from His pores.” (Taylor, *The Mediation and Atonement*, pp. 149–50.)

(25-8) Luke 22:44. “And His Sweat Was As It Were Great Drops of Blood Falling Down to the Ground”

“Christ’s agony in the garden is unfathomable by the finite mind, both as to intensity and cause. The thought that He suffered through fear of death is untenable. Death to Him was preliminary to resurrection and triumphal return to the Father from whom He had come, and to a state of glory even beyond what He had before possessed; and, moreover, it is within His power to lay down His life voluntarily. He struggled and groaned under a burden such as no other being who has lived on earth might even conceive as possible. It was not physical pain, nor mental anguish alone, that caused Him to suffer such torture as to produce an extrusion of blood from every pore; but a spiritual agony of soul such as only God was capable of experiencing. No other man, however great his powers of physical or mental endurance, could have suffered so; for his human organism would have succumbed, and syncope would have produced unconsciousness and welcome oblivion. In that hour of anguish Christ met and overcame all the horrors that Satan, ‘the prince of this world’ could inflict. The frightful struggle incident to the temptations immediately following the Lord’s baptism was surpassed and overshadowed by this supreme contest with the powers of evil.

“In some manner, actual and terribly real though to man incomprehensible, the Savior took upon Himself the burden of the sins of mankind from Adam to the end of the world.” (Talmage, *Jesus the Christ*, p. 613.)

POINTS TO PONDER

THE SIGNIFICANCE OF GETHSEMANE

Descending the eastern slope of Olivet almost to the base of the ravine lies a garden, or small olive orchard, called Gethsemane. The designation means “oil press,” so called perhaps because the olive grove contained a press to crush the olives from the orchard. It is removed about a half mile from the city walls and was a place of frequent seclusion for Jesus and his disciples.

As the procession came to the Garden, Jesus said to eight of the eleven, “Sit ye here, while I go and pray yonder.” (Matthew 26:36.) Then taking Peter, James, and John—those who had been with him on the Mount of Transfiguration—he entered into the interior of the Garden. His time had come. His instructions to the three were brief and foreboding: “My soul is exceeding sorrowful, even unto death: tarry ye here, and watch with me.” (Matthew 26:38.) “Pray that ye enter not into temptation.” (Luke 22:40.) Then Jesus proceeded about a “stone’s throw” farther (about 100 feet), and “fell on his face, and prayed.” (Matthew 26:39.) In prostrate supplication our Lord pleaded: “Abba, Father, all things are possible unto thee; take away this cup from me: nevertheless not what I will, but what thou wilt.” (Mark 14:36.)

We pause and leave this scene for just a moment. To understand the soul-cry of our Lord and God who pleaded to his Father to take away his “cup” (or lot which had befallen him), you need to have in mind some idea of the weight that was upon him. The Redeemer himself has provided a vivid description for us in a latter-day revelation to Joseph Smith. Underline the passage in the manner illustrated and cross-reference this with your New Testament text.

20. Wherefore, I command you again to repent, lest I humble you with my almighty power; and that you confess your sins, lest you suffer these punishments of which I have spoken, of which in the smallest, yea, even in the least degree you have tasted at the time I withdrew my Spirit. (D&C 19:20.)

The revelation was given to Martin Harris, who had been responsible for the loss of 116 pages of the

manuscript of the translation of the Nephite record. It had been only through sore repentance that he had become one of the three witnesses. On this occasion, the Lord commanded Martin to repent of subsequent transgressions lest he suffer the same punishment as endured by the Savior in Gethsemane, “which in the smallest, . . . in the least degree you have tasted at the time I withdrew my Spirit.”

Joseph Smith’s mother provides an account of the anguish faced by Martin when the Spirit was withdrawn.

“When Joseph had taken a little nourishment, . . . he requested us to send immediately for Mr. Harris. This we did without delay. . . . we commenced preparing breakfast for the family; and we supposed that Mr. Harris would be there, as soon as it was ready, to eat with us, for he generally came in such haste when he was sent for. At eight o’clock we set the victuals on the table, as we were expecting him every moment. We waited till nine, and he came not—till ten, and he was not there—till eleven, still he did not make his appearance. But at half past twelve we saw him walking with a slow and measured tread towards the house, his eyes fixed thoughtfully upon the ground. On coming to the gate, he stopped, instead of passing through, and got upon the fence, and sat there some time with his hat drawn over his eyes. At length he entered the house. Soon after which we sat down to the table, Mr. Harris with the rest. He took up his knife and fork as if he were going to use them, but immediately dropped them. Hyrum, observing this, said ‘Martin, why do you not eat; are you sick?’ Upon which Mr. Harris pressed his hands upon his temples, and cried out in a tone of deep anguish, ‘Oh, I have lost my soul! I have lost my soul!’

“Joseph who had not expressed his fears till now, sprang from the table, exclaiming, ‘Martin, have you lost that manuscript? Have you broken your oath, and brought down condemnation upon my head as well as your own?’

“‘Yes; it is gone,’ replied Martin, ‘and I know not where.’

“‘Oh, my God!’ said Joseph, clinching his hands. ‘All is lost! all is lost! What shall I do? I have sinned—it is I who tempted the wrath of God. I should have been satisfied with the first answer which I received from the Lord; for he told me that it was not safe to let the writing go out of my possession.’ He wept and groaned, and walked the floor continually.

“At length he told Martin to go back and search again.

“‘No’; said Martin, ‘it is all in vain; for I have ripped open beds and pillows; and I know it is not there.’

“‘Then must I,’ said Joseph, ‘return with such a tale as this? I dare not do it. And how shall I appear before the Lord? Of what rebuke am I not worthy from the angel of the Most High?’

“I besought him not to mourn so, for perhaps the Lord would forgive him, after a short season of humiliation and repentance. But what could I do to comfort him, when he saw all the family in the same situation of mind as himself; for sobs and groans, and the most bitter lamentations filled the house. However, Joseph was more distressed than the rest, as he better understood the consequences of disobedience. And he continued pacing back and forth, meantime weeping and grieving, until about sunset, when, by persuasion, he took a little nourishment. . . .

“I well remember that day of darkness, both within and without. To us, at least, the heavens seemed clothed with blackness, and the earth shrouded with gloom. I have often said within myself, that if a continual punishment, as severe as that which we experienced on that occasion, were to be inflicted upon the most wicked characters who ever stood upon the footstool of the Almighty—if even their punishment were no greater than that, I should feel to pity their condition.” (Lucy Mack Smith, *History of Joseph Smith*, pp. 127–32. Emphasis added.)

Such is a picture of a mortal man who had experienced “in the least degree” the withdrawal of the Lord’s Spirit. Most, if not all, have suffered this feeling to some degree. You may identify yourself to one of these situations:

- A friend gave offense. Words were exchanged. You were hurt. Bitter feelings and alienation resulted. You didn’t sleep, and the incident remained on your mind continually.
- You had prided yourself on your knowledge of the gospel. Another took exception to your point of view. A heated discussion ensued. You backed up your position with authority and bore testimony. The Spirit of the Lord, however, did not accompany your words, and you felt alone.
- You had worked a number of hours on an important project. Somehow—you don’t know how it happened—ink was spilled on it,

necessitating that the work be done again. You were angry, flew into a tantrum, and emphasized your rage with profanity. After the anger had subsided, you felt terrible inside. You knew that the Lord had been offended.

Have similar experiences caused anguish to your soul? President Joseph Fielding Smith typified such suffering in this manner:

*“I have known of men and have had men come to me—big, strong, husky fellows—trembling with mental torment because of their sins, wondering if there was any way possible for them to get relief. They have come in the anguish of their souls.” (“For Ye Are Bought with a Price,” *Speeches of the Year*, 1957, p. 5.)*

If you can recall in your own life at least one occasion where you have acutely felt the withdrawal of the Spirit of the Lord from you and the suffering you experienced at that time, you can then begin to glimpse the significance of what the Savior experienced. With reverence, let us now return to the scene in Gethsemane.

*Prostrate on the ground was God’s own Son—no mere mortal. In great agony, he called to his Father. His prayer was heard, for “there appeared an angel unto him from heaven, strengthening him. And being in agony he prayed more earnestly: and his sweat was as it were great drops of blood falling down to the ground.” (Luke 22:43, 44. *Emphasis added.*)*

*The agony persisted into the night. The three apostles who witnessed his excruciating suffering finally gave way to their fatigue and sorrow. Jesus returned to them and asked, “What, could ye not watch with me one hour? Watch and pray, that ye enter not into temptation.” (Matthew 26:40, 41.) The apostles answered him and said, “The Spirit truly is ready, but the flesh is weak.” (Mark 14:43, *Inspired Version.*) Returning again to his lonely agony, he pleaded again: “O my Father, if this cup may not pass away from me except I drink it, thy will be done.” (Matthew 26:42.) A second time he returned for respite and, perhaps, solace and found them asleep, “for their eyes were heavy”; and they did not know what answer to give to him. (Mark 14:40.) A third time he prayed, “saying the same words.” (Matthew 26:44.) Then returning again to the three, he said: “Sleep on now, and take your rest: behold, the hour is at hand, and the Son of man is betrayed into the hands of sinners. Rise, let us be going: behold, he is at hand that doth betray me.” (Matthew 26:45–46.)*

Jesus, with the three who had gone with him into the Garden, rejoined the other apostles, where they patiently awaited his betrayer. Our mind now attempts to comprehend that which seems incomprehensible: How can a God suffer such unfathomable agony? What caused it? What was its significance? As we fit together what the Lord himself has revealed concerning his infinite sacrifice, we begin to glimpse its significance to us.

We have learned by our experience the personal misery caused by the withdrawal of the Spirit. King Benjamin spoke of it vividly in these terms:

Read Mosiah 2:38 and 3:25–27.

President Joseph Fielding Smith summarized it in this way:

“There isn’t one of us I take it that hasn’t done something wrong and then been sorry and wished we hadn’t. Then our consciences strike us and we have been very, very miserable.

*Have you gone through that experience? I have. . . . But here we have the Son of God carrying the burden of my transgressions and your transgressions and the transgressions of every soul that receives the gospel of Jesus Christ. . . . he carried the burden—our burden. I added something to it; so did you. So did everybody else. He took it upon himself to pay the price that I might escape—that you might escape—the punishment on the conditions that we will receive his gospel and be true and faithful in it.” (“Fall, Atonement, Resurrection, Sacrament,” *Address delivered at the Salt Lake Institute of Religion [U. of U.]*, 14 Jan. 1961, p. 8.)*

To better appreciate the unfathomable agony of our Lord, carefully review these passages of scripture. The first passage is his own testimony concerning his suffering.

D&C 19:15–20

Cross-reference to Luke 22:44 and Mosiah 3:7.

No mortal could have endured such pain, but Jesus was no mere mortal. His capacity to endure consisted of all the mental, physical, and spiritual endowments of his parentage: one parent being an infinite and eternal being—God the Father; the other being mortal and subject to infirmity—Mary. His capability to bear the excruciating pain, “more than man can suffer,” was possible because he was the only Being born into the world who was infinite and eternal, but who also had the power to lay down his life if he willed to do so.

Read 2 Nephi 9:7; Alma 34:10–14; and John 10:17, 18. This “spiritual agony of soul,” wrote Elder James E. Talmage, was such “as only a God was capable of experiencing. No other man, however great his powers of physical or mental endurance, could have suffered so; for his human organism would have succumbed.” (Jesus the Christ, p. 613.)

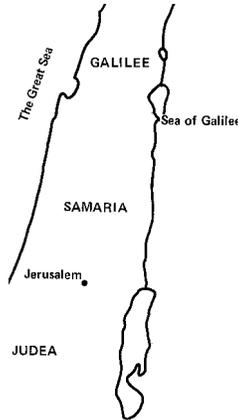
In comforting the Prophet in Liberty Jail, our Lord reminded Joseph Smith that “the very jaws of hell shall gape open the mouth wide after thee. . . .

“[But] The Son of Man hath descended below them all. Art thou greater than he?” (D&C 122:7, 8.)

As you ponder what you have had to endure, and contemplate the times when “in the least degree” you suffered the pangs of spiritual loss, remember and reverence Him whom you have covenanted to remember always.

One last thought. The mortal history of mankind began with the exile of Adam and Eve from a garden, which exile signified man’s separation from God. The apex of mankind’s mortal history also occurred in a garden. The happening of that night some two thousand years ago provided every descendant of Adam with opportunity to come back into the presence of his Eternal Father on conditions of personal repentance. Thus the arm of mercy was extended, the wandering exiles bidden home, and the breach of Eden healed. This is the significance of Gethsemane. As you contemplate what Jesus has done, how does it cause you to feel? Do you feel, as the hymn suggests, “I stand all amazed at the love Jesus offers me”? As you think of your sins, do you now see that you do have someone to turn to for forgiveness and peace? Do you think the sacrament covenant will now take on greater meaning as you promise to “always remember him and keep his commandments”?

"I FIND NO FAULT IN THIS MAN"



THE WEEK OF THE ATONING SACRIFICE	Matthew	Mark	Luke	John
SIXTH DAY				
The Betrayal by Judas The Arrest	26:47–50 26:51–56	14:43–45 14:46–52	22:47, 48 22:49–53	18:2–9 18:10–12
Jesus Questioned by Annas Examined Before Caiaphas	26:57–68	14:53–65	22:54, 55, 63–65	18:13, 19–24 18:14–16, 18
Peter Denies Knowing Jesus	26:69–75	14:66–72	22:55–62	18:17, 25–27
Formal Trial and Condemnation	27:1, 2	15:1	22:66–71; 23:1	
Judas Iscariot's Death Before Pilate Before Herod	27:3–10 27:11–14	15:2–5	23:2–5 23:6–12	18:28–38
Again Before Pilate Barabbas Released Pilate Sentences Jesus The Way to Calvary	27:15–23 27:26–30 27:24, 25 27:31–34, 38	15:6–14 15:15–19 15:20–23, 25, 27, 28	23:13–23 23:25 23:24 23:26–33	18:39, 40 19:1–3 19:4–16 19:16–18
Superscription on the Cross His First Utterance on the Cross Soldiers Divide His Clothing Mocking and Scoffing	27:37 27:35, 36 27:39–44	15:26 15:24 15:29–32	23:38 23:34 23:34 23:35–37	19:19–22 19:23, 24
Second Utterance from the Cross Third Utterance by the Savior Darkness Covers the Earth Fourth Statement	27:45 27:46, 47	15:33 15:34, 35	23:39–43 23:44, 45	19:25–27
Fifth Statement Sixth Utterance Final Utterance; Jesus Dies Centurion's Testimony	27:48, 49 27:50 27:51–56	15:36 15:37 15:38–41	 23:46 23:45, 47–49	19:28, 29 19:30 19:30
His Side Pierced His Burial	27:57–61	15:42–47	23:50–56	19:31–37 19:38–42

THEME

Nothing shows the magnitude of the character of Jesus Christ more than does the last day of his life, which is an example for all his disciples to follow.

INTRODUCTION

As a mortal you are unable to fully understand the significance of the sufferings, the sorrow, and the anguish of soul endured by the Savior in the Garden of Gethsemane; for what mortal could comprehend the intensity of the physical, mental, and spiritual pain Jesus suffered when he took upon himself the punishment and remorse incident to the sins of all mankind? Yet, you may understand in part; and the words of the Savior give you a glimpse of what was experienced in the Garden. To the Prophet Joseph Smith the Lord said of the suffering of that hour,

“Which suffering caused myself, even God, the greatest of all, to tremble because of pain, and to bleed at every pore, and to suffer both body and spirit—and would that I might not drink the bitter cup, and shrink—

“Nevertheless, glory be to the Father, and I partook and finished my preparations unto the children of men.” (D&C 19:18, 19.)

Only a God could completely comprehend or endure the tribulation of that hour in Gethsemane.

Now it will be your opportunity to consider the betrayal of Jesus by Judas, the Savior’s trial before Jewish leaders and before Pilate, and the final agony of Calvary. As you study, you will come to understand the Jewish feelings about Roman rule. You will have an opportunity to identify many of the illegalities of the trial of Jesus and to probe the question of why the Jewish leaders were able to prevail upon Pilate to authorize the execution of Jesus when the Savior was generally known to be innocent of any crime. You will also be able to identify the seven statements made by Jesus on the cross and explain (1) how they portray the Lord’s magnanimity for his Roman executors; (2) his concern for others, including his concern for his sorrowing mother; and (3) his resignation by his own will to die a physical death. But most important, you will have an opportunity to increase your feeling of love for the Savior and your determination to live worthy of his sacrifice for you.

Before proceeding, read all the scriptural references in the reading block.

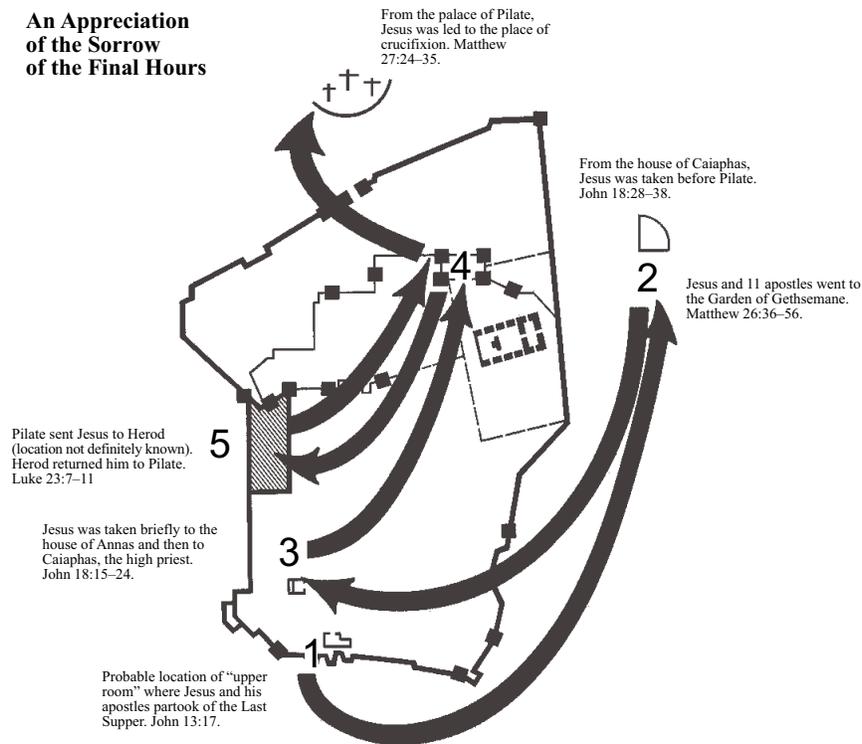
INTERPRETIVE COMMENTARY

AN APPRECIATION OF THE SORROW OF THE FINAL HOURS

Provided on the next page is a map depicting the city of Jerusalem and the possible sites where the last days in the mortal life of Jesus Christ were spent. As you read the following narrative, picture in your mind the events that took place on that day of days and feel the sorrow of those final hours. Numbers on the map correspond to the numbers adjacent to the paragraphs.

- 1 & 2 From the upper room to Gethsemane the disciples and Jesus walked, to an orchard, or garden, of olive trees, where in agony the Lord suffered until he sweat great drops of blood. Returning to the slumbering Peter, James, and John, Jesus spoke, his words an evidence that he was most aware of what was to take place before his mortal ministry was finished. “Sleep on now and take your rest: it is enough, the hour is come; behold, the Son of Man is betrayed into the hands of sinners. Rise up, let us go; lo, he that betrayeth me is at hand.” Then came Judas, with a great multitude of men who were armed with swords and staves; and Judas did betray Jesus with a kiss. “And they laid their hands on him, and took him.” (Matthew 26:36–56; Mark 14:32–52; Luke 22:40–53; John 18:1–12.)
- 3 Betrayed, arrested, bound, forsaken, and alone, in the middle of the night Jesus was taken over the Kidron and up the steep slope to the house of Annas to be questioned first by the former high priest and then to receive that first insulting blow upon the face. As with all the abuse he experienced, the Lord suffered that insult in silence. Then he was sent across the courtyard to the high priest Joseph Caiaphas. There false witnesses were sought whose words proved to be so at variance that even the wicked priests, in some show of decency, could not accept the testimony. Yet through all the illegality and falseness of such a trial, Jesus innocently and silently stood before them, as it were, to judge them, until, in a paroxysm of anger, if not rage, Caiaphas exclaimed, “Answerest thou nothing? what is it which these witness against thee?” But Jesus held his peace. And the high priest said to him, “I adjure thee by the living God, that thou tell us whether thou be the Christ, the Son of God.” Jesus said to him, “Thou hast

**An Appreciation
of the Sorrow
of the Final Hours**



said. . . .” And the high priest exclaimed, “He hath spoken blasphemy.” The infamous members of the Sanhedrin who were present responded, “He is guilty of death!” And from that time on they spit upon him, buffeted him, and mocked him. Not long afterwards, the cock crowed for the third time. “And the Lord turned, and looked upon Peter. . . . And Peter went out, and wept bitterly.” “When the morning was come, all the chief priests and elders of the people took counsel against Jesus to put him to death: And when they had bound him, they led him away, and delivered him to Pontius Pilate the governor.” (Matthew 26:57–75; 27:1–2; Mark 14:53–71; 15:1; Luke 22:54–71; John 18:13–27.)

4 & 5 Before Pilate, then before Herod, and again before Pilate, the Lord suffered the indescribable abuse and mockery of an illegal and false inquisition. Then Pilate answered them, saying, “Will ye that I release unto you the King of the Jews?” For he knew that the chief priests had delivered him for envy. But the chief priests moved the people, that he should rather release Barabbas unto them. And Pilate answered and said again unto them, “What will ye then that I shall do unto him whom ye call the King of the Jews? And they cried out again, Crucify him.” And so to

placate the people, Pilate had the Lord scourged with a whip made of many thongs which were impregnated with pieces of metal and jagged bone. Then Pilate delivered the Lord up to be crucified. (Matthew 27:11–25; Mark 15:2–19; Luke 23:2–25; John 18:28–40; 19:1–16.)

6 Forced to carry his own cross until he could do so no more, to Calvary he was taken, where the Roman soldiers pierced his hands, wrists, and feet with nails, thus affixing his body to the cross. There he hung in a constant agony, derived from pain, thirst, and derision, with no one to comfort him or relieve his anguish of body, mind, or spirit. Then after one last experience with the torment of Gethsemane, he cried with a loud voice, saying, “It is finished.” “Father, into thy hands I commend my spirit.” The Lord Jesus Christ had died for all mankind. Then came Joseph of Arimathea with fine linen, and he took Jesus’ body down, wrapped it in the linen, “and laid him in a sepulchre which was hewn out of a rock, and rolled a stone unto the door of the sepulchre.” The mortal life and the mortal ministry of Jesus Christ were ended. (Matthew 27:31–61; Mark 15:20–47; Luke 23:26–56; John 19:16–42.)

(26-1) John 18:13. Who Were Annas and Caiaphas?

“Cyrenius . . . deprived Joazar of the high priesthood . . . and he appointed Ananus, the son of Seth, to be high priest, . . . [Valerius Gratus] deprived Ananus of the high priesthood, and appointed Ismael, the son of Phabi, to be high-priest. He also deprived him in a little time, and ordained Eleazar, the son of Ananus, who had been high-priest before, to be high-priest: which office, when he had held for a year, Gratus deprived him of it, and gave the high-priesthood to Simon, the son of Camithus; and, when he had possessed that dignity no longer than a year, Joseph Caiaphas was made his successor. When Gratus had done those things, he went back to Rome, after he had tarried in Judea eleven years, when Pontius Pilate came as his successor.” (Josephus, *Antiquities of the Jews*, 18. 2. 1–2.)

Joseph Caiaphas was high priest between the years A.D. 18–36, but Annas continued to exercise much religious and political control over the Jews as either substitute for the high priest, president of the Sanhedrin, or chief examining judge. Annas’ wealth was immense; and it derived, in part, at least, from the sale of materials used in the temple sacrifices. (See Hastings, *Dictionary of the Bible*, s.v. “Annas”; Smith, *Dictionary of the Bible*, rev. ed., s.v. “Annas.”) Joseph Caiaphas was the Jewish high priest under Tiberius (see Matthew 26:3, 57; John 11:49; 18:13, 14, 24, 28; and Acts 4:6) and was appointed to the office of high priest by Valerius Gratus. (See Smith, *Dictionary*, s.v. “Caiaphas.”) In John 18:13 we read that Joseph Caiaphas was the son-in-law of Annas.

(26-2) Matthew 26:59; 27:1, 2. Who Were the Sanhedrin?

Comprised of an assembly of seventy-one ordained scholars, including Levites, priests, scribes, Pharisees, Sadducees, and those of other political persuasion, in the time of the Savior the Great Sanhedrin was the highest Jewish court of justice and the supreme legislative council at Jerusalem. Its main function was to serve as a supreme court when Jewish law was interpreted. The Sanhedrin met in the temple collonade in the impressive chambers of hewn stone, where members of the council sat in a semicircle. An accused prisoner, dressed in garments of mourning, was arraigned in front of the council; and if evidence against the prisoner warranted, the Sanhedrin had authority to decree capital punishment for offenses which violated major Jewish laws. However, the council was not authorized to carry out its sentence

and execute the prisoner, for Roman law forbade them from putting an individual to death without the sanction of the Roman procurator. Jurisdiction of the Sanhedrin in the time of Jesus extended only throughout Judea; and as long as Jesus preached in Galilee and Perea, the council was unable to arrest him. When Jesus entered Jerusalem for his last Passover, however, he was within the jurisdiction of the Sanhedrin, where evil and unscrupulous leaders of the council were able to take him, arrange a charge of blasphemy against him, and then manipulate Pilate, the Roman procurator, to bring about the crucifixion.

(26-3) Matthew 26:47–75; John 18:12–14; 19:23. Illegalities of the Trial of Jesus and Peter’s Alleged Denial of Jesus

The arrest, the private examination, the indictment, the proceedings of the Sanhedrin, the trial, the condemnation proceedings, the sentence, the qualification of the members of the Great Sanhedrin to try Jesus—all were illegal.

For an evaluation of the trial of Jesus see *Jesus the Christ*, p. 644. For an explanation of Peter’s alleged denial of Jesus, see appendix D, “*Peter, My Brother*,” by Elder Spencer W. Kimball.

(26-4) Matthew 27:2. Pontius Pilate

Appointed in A.D. 25–26 in the twelfth year of Tiberius, Pontius Pilate was the sixth Roman procurator of Judea and was the Roman ruler during the time of Christ’s ministry. Arbitrary and anxious to please Caesar, his political life ended in misfortune. (See Smith, *Dictionary*, s.v. “Pilate, Pontius.”)

(26-5) Matthew 27:24. Why Did Pilate Give In to the Demands of the Jews to Execute Jesus?

“In utter disregard of the Hebrew antipathy against images and heathen insignia [Pilate] had the legionaries enter Jerusalem at night, carrying their eagles and standards decorated with the effigy of the emperor. To the Jews this act was a defilement of the Holy City. In vast multitudes they gathered at Caesarea, and petitioned the procurator that the standards and other images be removed from Jerusalem. For five days the people demanded and Pilate refused. He threatened a general slaughter, and was amazed to see the people offer themselves as victims of the sword rather than relinquish their demands. Pilate had to yield (Josephus, *Ant.* xviii, Chap. 3:1; also Wars, ii, Chap. 9:2, 3). Again he gave offense in forcibly appropriating the Corban, or sacred funds of the temple, to the construction of an aqueduct

for supplying Jerusalem with water from the pools of Solomon. Anticipating the public protest of the people, he had caused Roman soldiers to disguise themselves as Jews; and with weapons concealed to mingle with the crowds. At a given signal these assassins plied their weapons and great numbers of defenseless Jews were killed or wounded (Josephus, *Ant.* xviii, chap. 3:2; and *Wars*, ii, chap. 9:3, 4). On another occasion, Pilate had grossly offended the people by setting up in his official residence at Jerusalem, shields that had been dedicated to Tiberius, and this ‘less for the honor of Tiberius than for annoyance of the Jewish people.’ A petition signed by the ecclesiastical officials of the nation, and by others of influence, including four Herodian princes, was sent to the emperor, who reprimanded Pilate and directed that the shields be removed from Jerusalem to Caesarea. (Philo. *De Lagatione ad Caium*; sec. 38).

“These outrages on national feeling, and many minor acts of violence, extortion and cruelty, the Jews held against the procurator. He realized that his tenure was insecure, and he dreaded exposure. Such wrongs had he wrought that when he would have done good, he was deterred through cowardly fear of the accusing past.” (Talmage, *Jesus the Christ*, pp. 648–49.)

(26-6) Luke 23:6–11. Christ Before Herod

“Whatever fear Herod had once felt regarding Jesus, whom he had superstitiously thought to be the reincarnation of his murdered victim, John the Baptist, was replaced by amused interest when he saw the far-famed Prophet of Galilee in bonds before him, attended by a Roman guard, and accompanied by ecclesiastical officials. Herod began to question the Prisoner; but Jesus remained silent. The chief priests and scribes vehemently voiced their accusations; but not a word was uttered by the Lord. Herod is the only character in history to whom Jesus is known to have applied a personal epithet of contempt. ‘Go ye and tell that fox’ He once said to certain Pharisees who had come to Him with the story that Herod intended to kill Him. As far as we know, Herod is further distinguished as the only being who saw Christ face to face and spoke to Him, yet never heard His voice. For penitent sinners, weeping women, prattling children, for the scribes, the Pharisees, the Sadducees, the rabbis, for the perjured high priest and his obsequious and insolent underling, and for Pilate the pagan, Christ had words—of comfort or instruction, of warning or rebuke, of protest or denunciation—yet for Herod the fox He had but disdainful and kingly silence.

Thoroughly piqued, Herod turned from insulting questions to acts of malignant derision. He and his men-at-arms made sport of the suffering Christ, ‘set him at nought and mocked him’; then in travesty they ‘arrayed him in a gorgeous robe and sent him again to Pilate.’ Herod had found nothing in Jesus to warrant condemnation.” (Talmage, *Jesus the Christ*, p. 636.)

(26-7) Matthew 27:24. What Did Pilate Mean When He Washed His Hands Before the Jews?

“At this point (or perhaps earlier, as the Inspired Version account indicates) Pilate, following the Jewish practice in such cases (*Deut.* 21:1–9), performed the ritualistic ceremony designed to free him from responsibility for Jesus’ death.” (McConkie, *DNTC*, 1:810.)

(26-8) John 19:4–12. Pilate Sought to Release Him

“I find no fault in him] Jesus is innocent. Pilate knew it; Herod knew it; Caiaphas knew it; the Sanhedrin knew it; the mob-multitude knew it—and Satan knew it. Yet he is to be pronounced guilty and sentenced to death.

“Behold the man!] ‘Pilate seems to have counted on the pitiful sight of the scourged and bleeding Christ to soften the hearts of the maddened Jews. But the effect failed. Think of the awful fact—a heathen, a pagan, who knew not God, pleading with the priests and people of Israel for the life of their Lord and King!’ (Talmage, p. 639.)

“Take ye him, and crucify him: for I find no fault in him] Pilate gave the order; no one else had the power. Pilate sentenced an innocent Man to be crucified—and he knew it! Is there a better example in all history of judicial murder?

“Jesus’ sentence by the Sanhedrin was for blasphemy, a Jewish crime; Pilate’s sentence was for sedition, a Roman offense. Now that our Lord’s death had been ordered, the Jews seek to make it appear that Pilate had endorsed their Jewish death decree. Their mention of ‘the Son of God’ increases Pilate’s fears for having ordered an unjust execution. He asks, ‘Are you a man or a demigod?’ Jesus disdains to answer. Pilate is piqued and boasts of his power to save or destroy Jesus. Then our Lord becomes the Judge and places Pilate before the judgment bar: ‘Against me you have only such power as Divine Providence permits; your sentence is unjust, but Caiaphas who delivered me to thee has the greater sin for as a Jew he knows of my divine origin.’

“Pilate sought to release him] Sought the consent of the chief priests and scribes to release him, for the Procurator had the power, if he chose to use it, to either save or destroy.” (McConkie, *DNTC*, 1:809.)

(26-9) Matthew 27:26–30. Derision and Scourging

“This brutal practice, a preliminary to crucifixion, consisted of stripping the victim of clothes, strapping him to a pillar or frame, and beating him with a scourge made of leather straps weighted with sharp pieces of lead and bone. It left the tortured sufferer bleeding, weak, and sometimes dead. Pilate tried in vain to create compassion for Jesus as a result of the scourging. Teaching the need to bear chastisement, Paul, looking back on the scene, wrote: ‘Whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth, and scourgeth every son whom he receiveth.’ (Heb. 12:6.)

“While Pilate watches, his cohort of six hundred soldiers mock and deride the Son of God. The scarlet robe, the crown of thorns, the reed in our Lord’s hand, the mocking obeisance, the cynical hailing of him as King—all devil-inspired substitutes of the respect rightfully his—plus the foul spittle and the smiting blows, all paint a picture of gross human debasement. The Roman soldiers have partaken of the spirit of the Jewish mob.” (McConkie, *DNTC*, 1:807.)

(26-10) Matthew 27:32. The Cross

““The cross consisted of two parts, a strong stake or pole 8 or 9 ft. high, which was fixed in the ground, and a movable cross-piece (patibulum), which was carried by the criminal to the place of execution. Sometimes the patibulum was a single beam of wood, but more often it consisted of two parallel beams fastened together, between which the neck of the criminal was inserted. Before him went a herald bearing a tablet on which the offense was inscribed, or the criminal himself bore it suspended by a cord round his neck. At the place of execution the criminal was stripped and laid on his back, and his hands were nailed to the patibulum; The patibulum, with the criminal hanging from it, was then hoisted into position and fastened by nails or ropes to the upright pole. The victim’s body was supported not only by the nails through the hands, but by a small piece of wood projecting at right angles (sedile), on which he sat as on a saddle. Sometimes there was also a support for the feet, to which the feet were nailed. The protracted agony of crucifixion sometimes lasted for days, death being caused by pain, hunger, and thirst.’ (*Dummelow*, pp. 716–17.)” (McConkie, *DNTC*, 1:815.)

(26-11) Matthew 27:33; Luke 23:33. Golgotha, or Calvary

“‘The Place of a Skull’—The Aramaic Hebrew name ‘Golgotha,’ the Greek ‘Kranion,’ and the Latin ‘Calvaria’ or, as Anglicized, ‘Calvary,’ have the same meaning, and connote ‘a skull.’ The name may have been applied with reference to topographical features, as we speak of the brow of a hill; or, if the spot was the usual place of execution, it may have been so called as expressive of death, just as we call a skull a death’s head. It is probable that the bodies of executed convicts were buried near the place of death; and if Golgotha or Calvary was the appointed site for execution, the exposure of skulls and other human bones through the ravages of beasts and by other means, would not be surprising; though the leaving of bodies or any of their parts unburied was contrary to Jewish law and sentiment. The origin of the name is of as little importance as are the many divergent suppositions concerning the exact location of the spot.” (Talmage, *Jesus the Christ*, p. 667.)

(26-12) Matthew 27:35. “And They Crucified Him”

“‘[Crucifixion] was unanimously considered the most horrible form of death. Among the Romans also the degradation was a part of the infliction, and the punishment if applied to freeman was only used in the case of the vilest criminals. . . . The criminal carried his own cross, or at any rate a part of it. Hence, figuratively *to take, to take up or bear one’s cross is to endure suffering, affliction, or shame*, like a criminal on his way to the place of crucifixion (Matt. 10:38; 16:24; Luke 14:27, etc.). The place of execution was outside the city (Kings 21:13; Acts 7:58; Heb. 13:12), often in some public road or other conspicuous place. Arrived at the place of execution, the sufferer was stripped naked, the dress being the perquisite of the soldiers (Matt. 27:35). The cross was then driven into the ground, so that the feet of the condemned were a foot or two above the earth, and he was lifted upon it; or else stretched upon it on the ground and then he was lifted up with it.’ It was the custom to station soldiers to watch the cross, so as to prevent the removal of the sufferer while yet alive. ‘This was necessary from the lingering character of the death, which sometimes did not supervene even for three days, and was at last the result of gradual numbing and starvation. But for this guard, the persons might have been taken down and recovered, as was actually done in the case of a friend of Josephus. . . . In most cases the body was suffered to rot on the cross by the action of sun and rain, or to be

devoured by birds and beasts. Sepulture was generally therefore forbidden; but in consequences of Deut. 21:22, 23, an express national exception was made in favor of the Jews (Matt. 27:58). This accursed and awful mode of punishment was happily abolished by Constantine.’ Smith’s *Bible Dict.*” (Talmage, *Jesus the Christ*, pp. 667–68.)

(26-13) Matthew 27:35; Psalm 22:18. “Upon My Vesture Did They Cast Lots”

“The Messianic prophecy—’They part my garments among them, and cast lots upon my vesture’ (Psalm 22:18)—contains two parts: (1) His garments are to be divided among them; and (2) For his vesture or robe they are to cast lots.

“Jewish men wore five articles of clothing: A headdress, shoes, an inner garment, an outer garment, and a girdle. These items, according to Roman custom, became the property of the soldiers who performed the crucifixion. There were four soldiers and each took one article of clothing. In the case of Jesus, the robe, woven of a single piece of cloth, apparently was of excellent workmanship, and for this the soldiers elected to cast lots.” (McConkie, *DNTC*, 1:820.)

POINTS TO PONDER

So important were the events associated with the Atonement and Crucifixion that many prophets were given a profound understanding of what would take place during the last twenty-four hours of Christ’s life. One great prophet living about seven hundred years before Christ prophetically chronicled these events with unusual clarity. This prophet was Isaiah, and his prophecy is recorded in the fifty-third chapter of his work, which is reproduced hereafter. First, read it through carefully. Then compare each of the following scriptures with the bracketed and/or underlined verses. Determine which scriptures are related to the various sections indicated and write the number of the appropriate scriptural reference on the line to the side of the Isaiah passage.

1. Acts 8:32–35
2. Luke 23:8–11
3. Daniel 9:26; John 19:18–30
4. Matthew 27:57–60
5. John 19:2, 18, 34
6. John 19:1
7. 1 John 2:1, 2
8. Mark 15:28; Luke 23:34
9. Hebrews 9:28

CHAPTER 53

1 Who hath believed our report? and to whom is the arm of the Lord revealed?

2 For he shall grow up before him as a tender plant, and as a root out of a dry ground: he hath no form nor comeliness; and when we shall see him, there is no beauty that we should desire him.

3 He is despised and rejected of men; a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief: and we hid as it were our faces from him; he was despised, and we esteemed him not.

4 Surely he hath borne our griefs, and carried our sorrows; yet we did esteem him stricken, smitten of God, and afflicted.

[5 But he was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities:] the chastisement of our peace was upon him; and with his stripes we are healed.

6 All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned every one to his own way; and the Lord hath laid on him the iniquity of us all.

7 He was oppressed, and he was afflicted, yet he opened not his mouth: [he is brought as a lamb to the slaughter,] and as a sheep before her shearers is dumb, so he openeth not his mouth.

8 He was taken from prison and from judgment: and who shall declare his generation? for [he was cut off out of the land of the living:] for the transgression of my people was he stricken.

9 And he made his grave with the wicked, and with the rich in his death; because he had done no violence, neither was any deceit in his mouth.

10 Yet it pleased the Lord to bruise him; [he hath put him to grief: when thou shalt make his soul an offering for sin,] he shall see his seed, he shall prolong his days, and the pleasure of the Lord shall prosper in his hand.

11 He shall see of the travail of his soul, and shall be satisfied: by his knowledge shall my righteous servant justify many; for he shall bear their iniquities.

12 Therefore will I divide him a portion with the great, and he shall divide the spoil with the strong; because he hath poured out his soul unto death: and [he was numbered with the transgressors; and he bare the sin of many, and made intercession for the transgressors.]

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(26-14) The Character and the Divine Nature of Jesus Christ As Seen from the Seven Recorded Statements Made by Jesus on the Cross

It might well be stated as a rule of human nature that when a man reaches his greatest extremity, a moment of extreme danger, pain, emotion, or critical need, a point in life which is marked by imminent destruction or death, the true nature of his soul becomes evident from statements he makes at that crucial time.

Why? Because a man's words mirror his innermost soul. His speech betrays what his character is really like—the quality of his concerns, his compassion, his love—the whole focus or thrust of his life, whether noble or mean, depraved or exalted. At his greatest extremity the very depths of his soul are bared for all to view; the intensity of the moment calls forth comments that mirror his inner self. A glorious example of this rule is the life of Jesus of Nazareth. His last seven recorded utterances permit all the world to see and know the true quality of his character and the divine nature of his soul.

That you might feel for yourself the true quality of his character, read and consider carefully the following scriptures which contain the last recorded statements of Christ:

Luke 23:34

John 19:28

Luke 23:43

John 19:30

John 19:26, 27

Luke 23:46

Matthew 27:46

As you have perhaps observed, these seven statements focus on three great aspects of the Lord's character and divinity. These are expanded in the next three readings. Ponder their meaning to you as a contemporary disciple of Christ who is committed to follow his way.

(26-15) His Forgiving Nature

“. . . it [the first word from the cross] is a petition asking for forgiveness in a particular and limited sense of the word. Jesus was the Son of God; as such he had power to forgive sins, a power which he had freely exercised in proper cases. See Matt. 9:2–8.

“But no such power is exercised here. He does not say, ‘Thy sins be forgiven thee,’ as had been his wont on other occasion. Nor does he ask the Father to forgive the sins of those involved, in the sense of cleansing

them from sin so as to qualify them for church membership or celestial inheritance. The law whereby such forgiveness is gained requires repentance and baptism. But he says, rather, ‘Father lay not this sin to their charge, for they are acting under orders, and those upon whom the full and real guilt rests are their rulers and the Jewish conspirators who caused me to be condemned. It is Caiaphas and Pilate who know I am innocent; these soldiers are just carrying out their orders.’

“Jesus did not, it should be noted, pray for Judas who betrayed him; for Caiaphas and the chief priests who conspired against him; for the false witnesses who perjured their souls before the Sanhedrin and in the judgment halls of Rome; for Pilate and Herod, either of whom could have freed him; nor for Lucifer whose power and persuasive ability underlay the whole wicked procedure. All these are left in the hands of Eternal Justice to be dealt with according to their works. Mercy cannot rob justice; the guilty do not go free simply because the righteous bring no railing accusation against them.

“Here on the cross Jesus is simply complying with his own command to forgive your enemies and to bless those who curse you.” (McConkie, *DNTC*, 1:818–19.)

(26-16) His Concern for Others

To the thief on the cross who asked to be remembered after death, the Savior responded to give him what hope he could:

“Today shalt thou be with me in paradise.” That is to say, today you shall be with me in the world of spirits, where you will be taught the gospel and your inquiries will be answered. (See Smith, *Teachings*, p. 309.)

Jesus did not lend any credence to a death-bed repentance or the malefactor. What Jesus did do was give recognition to the seeds of faith and repentance which were evidenced by a penitent man. As always, the Lord's efforts were directed toward offering as much hope as possible to one who would turn from darkness unto the everlasting light. (See McConkie, *DNTC*, 1:823–24.)

His concern and love for his mother, Mary, is revealed by the circumstances which surround the third recorded utterance.

“There remained yet a few faithful followers. From his tortured position on the cruel cross, he sees his mother and the disciple whom he loved standing by. He speaks: ‘. . . woman, behold thy son! Then saith he to the disciple, Behold thy mother! . . .’ (John 19:26–27.)

“From that awful night when time stood still, when the earth did quake and great mountains were brought down—yes, through the annals of history, over the centuries of years and beyond the span of time, there echoes his simple yet divine words, ‘Behold thy mother!’” (Thomas S. Monson in *CR*, Oct. 1973, p. 30.)

(26-17) His Resignation by His Own Will to Die a Physical Death

“My God, My God, why hast thou forsaken me?” (Matthew 27:46.) His was to be the choice. His was to be the opportunity. His was to be the challenge to give his life voluntarily. With all of the Father’s support withdrawn, with the pains of Gethsemane recurring, our Savior was left unto himself in order that he alone might complete the atoning sacrifice and have “the glory of complete victory over the forces of sin and death.” (Talmage, *Jesus the Christ*, p. 661.) His was to be the resignation by his own will to give up his own life, a ransom for many, that we, through his blood, might be purified and sanctified until we reach a state where we again might enjoy the presence of our Father in heaven.

Yet at no time, in spite of his great suffering, did he complain. Resigned as he was to complete his great mission, throughout this great ordeal there is but one recorded instance which even begins to be expressive of his physical suffering. Of this statement, Elder James E. Talmage said:

“The period of faintness, the conception of utter forsakenness soon passed, and the natural cravings of the body reasserted themselves. The maddening thirst, which constituted one of the worst of the crucifixion agonies, wrung from the Savior’s lips His one recorded utterance expressive of physical suffering. ‘*I thirst*’ He said. One of those who stood by, whether Roman or Jew, disciple or skeptic, we are not told, hastily saturated a sponge with vinegar, a vessel of which was at hand, and having fastened the sponge to the end of a reed, or stalk of hyssop, pressed it to the Lord’s fevered lips. Some others would have prevented this one act of human response, for they said: ‘Let be, let us see whether Elias will come to

save him.’ John affirms that Christ uttered the exclamation, ‘I thirst,’ only when He knew ‘that all things were now accomplished’; and the apostle saw in the incident a fulfillment of prophecy. (*Jesus the Christ*, p. 661.)

He realized that “it [was] finished” (John 19:30). He had endured to the end the suffering of Gethsemane, the mockery of the trial, the pain of the actual crucifixion. He had trodden the winepress alone, and this because of his undeviating devotion to the will of the Father, because he was sustained by a complete and eternal love for you and for all mankind, “who, without his mediation would have remained in the total gloom of desiring without hope throughout eternity.” (Hugh B. Brown in *CR*, Apr. 1962, p. 108.)

When he realized that his work as a mortal was finished, only then did he say, in humility, in reverence, with relief, and with a resignation born of his own will, “Father, into thy hands I commend my spirit.” (Luke 23:46.) Jesus Christ bowed his head and voluntarily passed from this life into the next.

“Jesus the Christ was dead. His life had not been taken from Him except as He had willed to permit. Sweet and welcome as would have been the relief of death in any of the earlier stages of His suffering from Gethsemane to the cross, He lived until all things were accomplished as had been appointed. In the latter days the voice of the Lord Jesus has been heard affirming the actuality of His suffering and death, and the eternal purpose thereby accomplished. Hear and heed His words: ‘For, behold, the Lord your Redeemer suffered death in the flesh; wherefore he suffered the pain of all men, that all men might repent and come unto him.’ (D&C 18:11.)” (Talmage, *Jesus the Christ*, p. 662.)

Now that you have completed your study of the last recorded day of the life of the Savior, perhaps this thought has entered your mind: Why was he willing to go through all of that for me? To partially answer the question, read 1 Nephi 19:9. What does it really mean to know that Christ underwent all that he did because of his love for you? How can you, in turn, show your love for him?

SECTION 6

THE GLORIFIED PALESTINIAN MINISTRY

LESSONS

27. “He Is Risen!”

28. “I Know That He Lives”

HE IS RISEN!

That was the most memorable day in history. On that glorious day the sepulchre was opened, and Jesus rose from the dead. The “good news,” was first proclaimed by angelic proclamation, “He is risen; he is not here: behold the place where they laid him.” (Mark 16:6.)

The event, of course, was unprecedented. Others, such as Lazarus, had been brought back to life; but that was a restoration to mortality, not a resurrection to everlasting life. To Jesus was accorded the honor of becoming “the firstfruits of them that slept.” (1 Corinthians 15:20.) The fact that the event had not occurred before accounted for the incredulity among his own apostles that such a literal resurrection could be. But before the day of the resurrection was spent, Jesus had left infallible proof that he had indeed risen from the dead. Skepticism vanished as his disciples saw and felt the wounds in his hands, feet, and side. As noted by the chart below, at least five appearances took place on that day. These included visitations to Mary Magdalene; to the other women; to Cleopas and his companion on the road to Emmaus, to Peter alone; then to the ten apostles in the upper room, Thomas being absent. One week later Jesus made another appearance in that same room, with Thomas present. Jesus said to Thomas: “Reach hither thy finger, and behold my hands; and reach hither thy hand, and thrust it into my side.” (John 20:27.) And Thomas no longer doubted. Jesus ministered on the earth as a resurrected being for forty days—from resurrection day until the ascension. This was the period, according to Luke, when Jesus appeared to many of his disciples and spoke to them “of the things pertaining to the kingdom of God.” (Acts 1:3.)

On the night Jesus was betrayed, he had told his apostles that “after I am risen again, I will go before you into Galilee.” (Matthew 26:32.) The angel at the tomb had told the women to tell the disciples that Jesus “goeth before you into Galilee; there ye shall see him.” (Matthew 28:7.) Thus we read in Matthew that “the eleven disciples went away into Galilee, into a

mountain where Jesus had appointed them.” (Matthew 28:16.) This prearranged meeting (according to both Elders Talmage and McConkie) was probably a meeting where a great multitude of disciples were invited, and may have been the occasion of which Paul wrote later, “he was seen of above five hundred brethren at once.” (1 Corinthians 15:6.) Such a conference would have included the apostles, seventies, other leading brethren, and faithful women. (See McConkie, *DNTC*, 1:886.)

The Significance of the Forty-Day Ministry

Though the records of it are fragmentary, the forty-day ministry that you will study in this last lesson was important for at least these reasons:

1. It was the period during which the chief apostle, Peter, had impressed on him that his ministerial calling superseded all temporal pursuits, and that to “feed the sheep” of Christ was far more important than his intent to go fishing.
2. It was the period during which Jesus gave his apostles their final commission to teach the gospel to all nations, and further instructed them in their duties.
3. It was during this period that Jesus appeared in resurrected form to many others besides the eleven, thus qualifying them as sure witnesses to his literal resurrection.
4. Finally, at the end of this period, Jesus made a literal, bodily ascension into heaven as his disciples watched and two angels stood by and promised that Jesus would return again “in like manner as ye have seen him go into heaven.” (Acts 1:11.)

All doubt was removed from the apostles’ minds. They now had an absolute witness of the Savior’s literal resurrection. They were qualified to declare with certainty that *Jesus lives!* President David O. McKay has indicated that a transformation occurred in the lives of those eleven men during this forty-day period and that this transformation constitutes one of the significant evidences of the reality of the resurrection of our Lord.

What Changed the Apostles?

“That the literal resurrection from the grave was a reality to the disciples who knew Christ intimately is a certainty. In their minds there was absolutely no doubt. They were witnesses of the fact. They knew, because their eyes beheld, their ears heard, their hands felt the corporeal presence of the Risen Redeemer.

“At Jesus’ death, the apostles were stricken with gloom. When he lay dead their hopes all but died. Their intense grief, the story of Thomas, the moral perplexity of Peter, the evident preparation for a permanent burial, combine to illustrate the prevalence of a fear that the redemption of Israel had failed.

“Notwithstanding the often-repeated assurances of Christ that he would return to them after death, the apostles did not seem fully to comprehend it. At the crucifixion, they were frightened and discouraged. For two and a half years they had been upheld and inspired by Christ’s presence. But now he was gone. They were left alone, and they seemed confused, fearful, helpless; only John stood by the cross.

“The world would never have been stirred by men with such wavering, doubting, despairing minds as the apostles possessed on the day of the crucifixion.

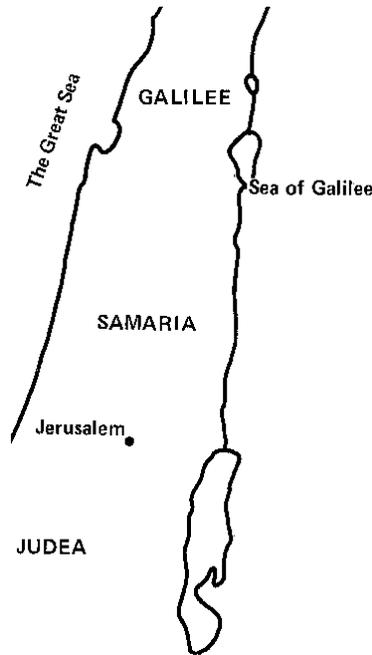
“What was it that suddenly changed these disciples to confident, fearless, heroic preachers of the gospel of Jesus Christ? It was the revelation that Christ had risen from the grave. His promises had been kept, his Messianic mission fulfilled. In the words of an eminent writer, ‘The final and absolute seal of genuineness has been put on all his claims, and the indelible stamp of a divine authority upon all his teachings. The gloom of death had been banished by the glorious light of the presence of their Risen, Glorified Lord and Savior.’

“On the evidence of these unprejudiced, unexpectant, incredulous witnesses, faith in the resurrection has its impregnable foundation.” (McKay, *Treasures of Life*, pp. 15–16.)

As you read chapter 28, you will consider the testimonies of the witnesses of the former days as well as those in our modern times.

27

"HE IS RISEN!"



THE WEEK OF THE ATONING SACRIFICE	Matthew	Mark	Luke	John
SEVENTH DAY				
Guards Are Placed at the Tomb	27:62-66			
THE RESURRECTED CHRIST APPEARS TO MEN				
THE FIRST DAY OF THE WEEK				
The Tomb Is Opened Mary Magdalene and Other Women Visit the Tomb	28:2-4 28:1, 5-7	16:1-8	24:1-8	20:1
Mary Tells Peter and John			24:9-11	20:2
Peter, Mary, and John Visit the Tomb The Savior Appears to Mary Mary Tells the Apostles		16:9 16:10, 11	24:12	20:3-10 20:11-17 20:18
Christ Appears to the Other Women	28:9, 10			
Chief Priests Told of Resurrection by Guards	28:11-15			
Two Disciples See the Savior While En Route to Emmaus		16:12, 13	24:13-32	

THEME

No event in all history compares in importance to the resurrection of Christ, for because of it all will come forth, each in his own order.

INTRODUCTION

In Handel's Messiah are found a tenor recitative and a chorus (no. 27, no. 28), both of which use one of the Psalms as a text: "All they that see Him, laugh Him to scorn; they shoot out their lips, and shake their heads, saying: He trusted in God that he would deliver him; let him deliver him, if he delight in him." (See Psalm 22:7, 8.) Directly following these two oratorio numbers, in another recitative for tenor (no. 29), Handel uses as his text words of the sixty-ninth Psalm, pathos-filled words: "Thy rebuke hath broken His heart; He is full of heaviness, Thy rebuke hath broken His heart; He looked for some to have pity on Him, but there was no man, neither found He any to comfort Him." (See Psalm 69:20.)

*After experiencing ridicule, an illegal hearing, and abuse at the hands of Herod and Pilate, Jesus was led away to be crucified at a place called Calvary, where those who passed by him reviled him by saying, "If thou be the Son of God, come down from the cross." The chief priests mocked him, as did the scribes and the elders, by saying: "He trusted in God; let him deliver him now, if he will have him: for he said, I am the Son of God." Even one of the thieves that was crucified with him "cast the same in his teeth." Several hours later, in agony, he cried with a loud voice, asking why he had been forsaken by his Father; and not long thereafter, in relief, Jesus cried again with a loud voice, and he "yielded up the ghost." It was finished. (See Matthew 27:35–50.) The prophecies of the psalmist were fulfilled. Many that saw him had laughed him to scorn, and few had demonstrated pity in his behalf. "Reproach [had] broken [his] heart; and [he was] full of heaviness: and [he] looked for some to take pity, but there was none; and for comforters, but [he] found none." (Psalm 69:20. See also Talmage, *Jesus the Christ*, pp. 668–69.) The mortal body of the Savior was then laid in a garden tomb, which was then sealed shut.*

Your reading now permits you to contemplate the good news, the glorious message—the supreme fact that He is risen! You now have an opportunity to read about the events which took place on the day of the resurrection: the Lord's triumph over death, the dramatic interview between the resurrected Jesus

and Mary Magdalene, the Savior's appearance to the disciples on the road to Emmaus. As you read about and ponder these events, as with Mary Magdalene and the disciples at Emmaus, you should come to know and feel that the Lord Jesus Christ is risen from the dead. He lives who once was dead, and he is alive forever more.

Before proceeding, read the following:

INTERPRETIVE COMMENTARY

(27-1) Matthew 28:2–4, 11–15. What Was the Soldiers' Reaction to the Events of the Day of Resurrection?

"Saturday, the Jewish Sabbath, had passed, and the night preceding the dawn of the most memorable Sunday in history was well nigh spent, while the Roman guard kept watch over the sealed sepulchre wherein lay the body of the Lord Jesus. While it was yet dark, the earth began to quake; an angel of the Lord descended in glory, rolled back the massive stone from the portal of the tomb, and sat upon it.

His countenance was brilliant as the lightning, and his raiment was as the driven snow for whiteness. The soldiers, paralyzed with fear, fell to the earth as dead men. When they had partially recovered from their fright, they fled from the place in terror. Even the rigor of Roman discipline, which decreed summary death to every soldier who deserted his post, could not deter them. Moreover, there was nothing left for them to guard; the seal of authority had been broken, the sepulchre was open, and empty." (Talmage, *Jesus the Christ*, p. 678.)

(27-2) Matthew 28:1–4. What Was the Time of the Resurrection? When Did the Savior Emerge from the Tomb?

"Our Lord definitely predicted His resurrection from the dead on the third day, (Matt. 16:21; 17:23; 20:19; Mark 9:31; 10:34; Luke 9:22; 13:32; 18:33), and the angels at the tomb (Luke 24:7), and the risen Lord in Person (Luke 24:46) verified the fulfillment of the prophecies; and apostles so testified in later years (Acts 10:40; 1 Cor. 15:4). This specification of the third day must not be understood as meaning after three full days. The Jews began their counting of the daily hours with sunset; therefore the hour before sunset and the hour following belonged to different days. Jesus died and was interred during Friday afternoon. His body lay in the tomb, dead, during part

of Friday (first day), throughout Saturday, or as we divide the days, from sunset Friday to sunset Saturday, (second day), and part of Sunday (third day). We know not at what hour between Saturday sunset and Sunday dawn He rose.” (Talmage, *Jesus the Christ*, p. 697.)

(27-3) John 20:1. What Is the Significance of “The First Day of the Week”?

“Because Jesus came forth from the grave on the first day of the week, to commemorate that day and to keep in remembrance the glorious reality of the resurrection, the ancient apostles, as guided by the Spirit, changed the Sabbath to Sunday. That this change had divine approval we know from latter-day revelation, in which Deity speaks of ‘the Lord’s day’ as such and sets forth what should and should not be done on that day. (D. & C. 59:9–17.)” (McConkie, *DNTC*, 1:841.)

(27-4) Matthew 26:6–13. Was Mary Magdalene the Same Who Anointed Jesus at Simon the Pharisee’s House (Luke 7:36–50), or the Same Woman Referred to as Mary of Bethany?

“Mary Magdalene became one of the closest friends Christ had among women; her devotion to Him as her Healer and as the One whom she adored as the Christ was unswerving; she stood close by the cross while other women tarried afar off in the time of His mortal agony; she was among the first at the sepulchre on the resurrection morning, and was the first mortal to look upon and recognize a resurrected Being—the Lord whom she had loved with all the fervor of spiritual adoration. To say that this woman, chosen from among women as deserving of such distinctive honors, was once a fallen creature, her soul seared by the heat of unhallowed lust, is to contribute to the perpetuating of an error for which there is no excuse. Nevertheless the false tradition, arising from early and unjustifiable assumption, that this noble woman, distinctively a friend of the Lord, is the same who, admittedly a sinner, washed and anointed the Savior’s feet in the house of Simon the Pharisee and gained the boon of forgiveness through contrition, has so tenaciously held its place in the popular mind through the centuries, that the name, Magdalene, has come to be a generic designation for women who fall from virtue and afterward repent. We are not considering whether the mercy of Christ could have been extended to such a sinner as Mary of Magdala is wrongly reputed to have been; man cannot measure the bounds nor fathom the depths of divine forgiveness; and if it were so that this Mary and the repentant sinner who ministered to Jesus

as He sat at the Pharisee’s table were one and the same, the question would stand affirmatively answered, for that woman who had been a sinner was forgiven. We are dealing with the scriptural record as a history, and nothing said therein warrants the really repellent though common imputation of unchastity to the devoted soul of Mary Magdalene.” (Talmage, *Jesus the Christ*, pp. 264–65.)

(27-5) Mark 16:9–11; John 20:11–18. Jesus Appears to Mary Magdalene

“How much there is incident to the death, burial, and resurrection of our Lord which ennobles and exalts faithful women. They wept at the cross, sought to care for his wounded and lifeless body, and came to his tomb to weep and worship for their friend and Master. And so it is not strange that we find a woman, Mary of Magdala, chosen and singled out from all the disciples, even including the apostles, to be the first mortal to see and bow in the presence of a resurrected being. Mary, who had been healed of much and who loved much, saw the risen Christ!” (McConkie, *DNTC*, 1:843.)

(27-6) John 20:17. Why Did the Lord Forbid Mary to Touch Him?

“One may wonder why Jesus had forbidden Mary Magdalene to touch Him, and then, so soon after, had permitted other women to hold Him by the feet as they bowed in reverence. We may assume that Mary’s emotional approach had been prompted more by a feeling of personal yet holy affection than by an impulse of devotional worship such as the other women evinced. Though the resurrected Christ manifested the same friendly and intimate regard as He had shown in the mortal state toward those with whom He had been closely associated, He was no longer one of them in the literal sense. There was about Him a divine dignity that forbade close personal familiarity. To Mary Magdalene Christ had said: ‘Touch me not; for I am not yet ascended to my Father.’ If the second clause was spoken in explanation of the first, we have to infer that no human hand was to be permitted to touch the Lord’s resurrected and immortalized body until after He had presented Himself to the Father. It appears reasonable and probable that between Mary’s impulsive attempt to touch the Lord, and the action of the other women who held Him by the feet as they bowed in worshipful reverence, Christ did ascend to the Father, and that later He returned to earth to continue His ministry in the resurrected state.” (Talmage, *Jesus the Christ*, p. 682.)

(27-7) John 20:17. What Is the Significance of Jesus' Words "I Ascend unto My Father, and Your Father; and to My God, and Your God"?

"Such careful choice of words was in keeping with his unvarying custom of maintaining a distinction between himself and other men. He was the Son of God, literally; other men had mortal fathers. Thus, for instance, he was careful to say. 'I ascend unto my Father, and your Father; and to my God and your God' (John 20:17), not unto *our Father* and *our God*." (McConkie, *DNTC*, 1:413.)

(27-8) Matthew 28:1, 5-7; Mark 15:47; 16:1. Why Did Mary Magdalene and Other Faithful Women Set Out to Visit the Tomb?

"At the earliest indication of dawn, the devoted Mary Magdalene and other faithful women set out for the tomb, bearing spices and ointments which they had prepared for the further anointing of the body of Jesus. Some of them had been witnesses of the burial, and were conscious of the necessary haste with which the corpse had been wrapped with spicery and laid away by Joseph and Nicodemus, just before the beginning of the Sabbath; and now these adoring women came early to render loving service in a more thorough anointing and external embalmment of the body." (Talmage, *Jesus the Christ*, p. 678.)

(27-9) Mark 16:11, 13; Luke 24:10, 11. Why Didn't the Apostles Believe the Account of Mary Magdalene and the Other Women?

"Mary Magdalene and the other women told the wonderful story of their several experiences to the disciples, but the brethren could not credit their words, which 'seemed to them as idle tales, and they believed them not.' After all that Christ had taught concerning His rising from the dead on that third day, the apostles were unable to accept the actuality of the occurrence; to their minds the resurrection was some mysterious and remote event, not a present possibility. There was neither precedent nor analogy for the stories these women told—of a dead person returning to life, with a body of flesh and bones, such as could be seen and felt—except the instances of the young man of Nain, the daughter of Jairus, and the beloved Lazarus of Bethany, between whose cases of restoration to a renewal of mortal life and the reported resurrection of Jesus they recognized essential differences. The grief and the sense of irreparable loss which had characterized the yesterday Sabbath, were replaced by profound perplexity and contending doubts on this first day of the week. But while the apostles hesitated

to believe that Christ had actually risen, the women, less skeptical, more trustful, knew, for they had both seen Him and heard His voice, and some of them had touched His feet." (Talmage, *Jesus the Christ*, pp. 682-83.)

(27-10) Matthew 27:62-69; 28:1-4, 11-15. What Attempts Were Made to Discredit the Resurrection?

"The inconsistent assertion that Christ had not risen but that His body had been stolen from the tomb by the disciples, has been sufficiently treated in the text. The falsehood is its own refutation. Unbelievers of later date, recognizing the palpable absurdity of this gross attempt at misrepresentation, have not hesitated to suggest other hypotheses, each of which is conclusively untenable. Thus, the theory based upon the impossible assumption that Christ was not dead when taken from the cross, but was in a state of coma or swoon, and that He was afterward resuscitated, disproves itself when considered in connection with recorded facts. The spear-thrust of the Roman soldier would have been fatal, even if death had not already occurred. The body was taken down, handled, wrapped and buried by members of the Jewish council, who cannot be thought of as actors in the burial of a living man; and so far as subsequent resuscitation is concerned, Edersheim (vol. 2, p. 626) trenchantly remarks: 'Not to speak of the many absurdities which this theory involves, it really shifts—if we acquit the disciples of complicity—the fraud upon Christ Himself.' A crucified person, removed from the cross before death and subsequently revived, could not have walked with pierced and mangled feet on the very day of his resuscitation, as Jesus did on the road to Emmaus. Another theory that has had its day is that of unconscious deception on the part of those who claimed to have seen the resurrected Christ, such persons having been victims of subjective but unreal visions conjured up by their own excited and imaginative condition. The independence and marked individuality of the several recorded appearances of the Lord disprove the vision theory. Such subjective visual illusions as are predicated by this hypothesis, presuppose a state of expectancy on the part of those who think they see; but all the incidents connected with the manifestations of Jesus after His resurrection were directly opposed to the expectations of those who were made witnesses of His resurrected state.

"The foregoing instances of false and untenable theories regarding the resurrection of our Lord are

cited as examples of the numerous abortive attempts to explain away the greatest miracle and the most glorious fact of history. The resurrection of Jesus Christ is attested by evidence more conclusive than that upon which rests our acceptance of historical events in general. Yet the testimony of our Lord's rising from the dead is not founded on written pages. To him who seeks in faith and sincerity shall be given an individual conviction which shall enable him to reverently confess as exclaimed the enlightened apostle of old: 'Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God.' Jesus, who is God the Son, is not dead. 'I know that my Redeemer liveth.' (Job 19:25.)" (Talmage, *Jesus the Christ*, pp. 698–99.)

(27-11) Mark 16:12. Why Did the Lord Withhold His Identity When He Appeared to Cleopas and His Companion on the Road to Emmaus?

"Why did the risen Lord take this means of appearing to Cleopas and his companion (perhaps Luke, since it is he who records the account)? Was it to quote and interpret the Messianic prophecies 'beginning at Moses and all the prophets'; Such could have been done under more effective circumstances, and for that matter, Luke does not even record the explanations given. Why did Jesus keep his identity hidden? Why walk and talk, perhaps for hours, along the dusty lanes of Palestine?

"Obviously it was to show what a resurrected being is like. He was teaching the gospel as only he could, teaching a living sermon, a sermon that was to be climaxed shortly in an upper room in the presence of his apostles. See Luke 24:36–44.

"Jesus walked down a Judean lane, walked for hours and taught the truths of the gospel, exactly as he had during three and a half years of his mortal ministry. So much did he seem like any other wayfaring teacher, in demeanor, in dress, in speech, in physical appearance, in conversation, that they did not recognize him as the Jesus whom they assumed was dead. 'Abide with us,' they said, as they would have done to Peter or John. 'Come in and eat and sleep; you must be tired and hungry.' They thought he was a mortal man. *Could anyone devise a more perfect way to teach what a resurrected being is like when his glory is retained within him?* Men are men whether mortal or immortal, and there need be no spiritualizing away of the reality of the resurrection, not after this Emmaus road episode. See Mark 16:9–11." (McConkie, *DNTC*, 1:850.)

(27-12) Luke 24:13. How Far Was Emmaus from Jerusalem, and Where Was the Village Located?

Emmaus was threescore furlongs—about 7½ miles from Jerusalem. The site of the village of Emmaus has not yet been located. (See Smith, *A Dictionary of the Bible*, rev. ed., s.v. "Emmaus.")

HE IS RISEN!

(27-13) Though the Sepulchre Was Made Sure, Nothing Could Keep the Savior from Coming Forth

After the chief priests and the Pharisees obtained guards from Pilate, they went and "made the sepulchre sure, sealing the stone, and setting a watch" (Matthew 27:66), with the intent that the disciples might not come during the night, steal away the body of Jesus, and then say to the people that the Savior was risen from the dead. The Jewish leaders realized that such a witness of the resurrection would be more powerful than testimonies that were given while Jesus walked in mortality. They knew that if the disciples told the people that Jesus was risen from the dead, this would be a capstone to the Savior's ministry and would draw men to him and to his gospel. To forestall just such a result, Roman guards were obtained from Pilate, and the sepulchre was made sure. (See Matthew 27:62–66.)

But the plans of God were not to be frustrated, for in the early hours of the morning, before it was light, two angels of the Lord descended from the heavens to roll away the stone from before the door of the sepulchre. (Matthew 28:2, 4, Inspired Version.) "And for fear of him [them] the keepers did shake, and became as dead men." (Matthew 28:3, 4.)

(27-14) What Acts Incident to the Resurrection of Our Lord Tend to Ennoble and Exalt Mary Magdalene and the Other Faithful Women?

"How much there is incident to the death, burial, and resurrection of our Lord which ennobles and exalts faithful women. They wept at the cross, sought to care for his wounded and lifeless body, and came to his tomb to weep and worship for their friend and Master. And so it is not strange that we find a woman, Mary of Magdala, chosen and singled out from all the disciples, even including the apostles, to be the first mortal to see and bow in the presence of a resurrected being. Mary, who had been healed of much and who loved much, saw the risen Christ! . . .

“Jesus appeared first to Mary Magdalene and then to other women. To Mary the mother of Joses, to Joanna, to Salome the mother of James and John, and to other unnamed women, the two angels announced the resurrection, and sent them to tell Peter and the other disciples. As they went, Jesus appeared and greeted them with the familiar ‘All hail.’ And so again it was women who were honored with a visitation from their friend the resurrected Lord.” (McConkie, *DNTC*, 1:843, 846.)

POINTS TO PONDER

AS DID THE TWO DISCIPLES WHO WALKED ON THE ROAD TO EMMAUS, HAVE YOU EXPERIENCED A BURNING WITHIN?

(27-15) . . . As You Listened to Inspirational Singing and Sublime Testimonies?

“One day, two men were walking near Emmaus, a town not far from Jerusalem, and a man suddenly appeared by their side. They did not recognize him. After he left them, they said, ‘Did not our heart burn within us . . . ?’ (Luke 24:32.) Luke tells us about that incident, after he had inquired of many people who had had some intimacy with Jesus.

“I think that there are many in this congregation, and I hope many who have been listening over radio and television who have had their hearts ‘burn within them’ as they have listened not only to the inspirational singing, but to the sublime testimonies, and I hope as their hearts have burned within them, that they realized the message that went into their hearts. I hope they have an inkling, at least, of the divine truth that they are sons of God, and that that burning within them was just a touch of harmony between them and the infinite, the Spirit of God which will enlighten our minds, quicken our understandings, and bring all things to our remembrance.” (David O. McKay in *CR*, Apr. 1960, pp. 121–22. Italics added.)

(27-16) . . . Has a Teacher of the Gospel Opened to You the Scriptures?

“Never was her teaching so dynamic nor its impact more everlasting as one Sunday morning when she sadly announced to us the passing of a classmate’s mother. We had missed Billy that morning, but knew not the reason for his absence. The lesson featured the theme, ‘It is more blessed to give than to receive.’ Midway through the lesson, our teacher closed the manual and opened our eyes and our ears and our hearts to the glory of God. She asked, ‘How much money do we have in our class party fund?’

“Depression days prompted a proud answer: ‘Four dollars and seventy-five cents.’

“Then ever so gently she suggested: “Billy’s family is hard-pressed and grief-stricken. What would you think of the possibility of visiting the family members this morning and giving to them your fund?”

“Ever shall I remember the tiny band walking those three city blocks, entering Billy’s home, greeting him, his brother, sisters, and father. Noticeably absent was his mother. Always I shall treasure the tears which glistened in the eyes of all as the white envelope containing our precious party fund passed from the delicate hand of our teacher to the needy hand of a heartbroken father. We fairly skipped our way back to the chapel. Our hearts were lighter than they had ever been: our joy more full; our understanding more profound. A God-inspired teacher had taught her boys and girls an eternal lesson of divine truth. ‘It is more blessed to give than to receive.’

“Well could we have echoed the words of the disciples on the way to Emaeus [sic]: ‘Did not our hearts burn within us . . . while [she] opened to us the scriptures?’ (Luke 24:32.)” (Thomas S. Monson in *CR*, Apr. 1970, p. 99. Italics added.)

(27-17) . . . As You Received the Light, and Walked in the Light?

“I say, our mission is not only to proclaim, but to live as witnesses who have received the truth, and who love the truth. And if we live the truth, my brethren and sisters, no man can come within the circle of our influence without being impressed with the fact—somewhat after the same spirit as the disciples, when the Master met them on the way to Emmaus, and when they walked with him. The Scripture says, ‘Their eyes were holden,’ and when he came in and broke bread with them, then they beheld, and it was revealed unto them positively who it was. *Then, in counseling with them, they said, ‘Did not our hearts burn within us while he talked with us?’* So it will be with you, so it will be with me, so it will be with every man who, having received the light, walks in the light.” (Alonzo A. Hinckley in *CR*, Apr. 1917, pp. 93–94. Italics added.)

(27-18) . . . As You Contemplated His Life and Mission, as You Received the Humble and Solemn Witness That He Lives?

“In our hearts we feel much the same as the two who walked unbeknown to them with the resurrected Christ, Cleopas and another, who, while walking to Emmaus at the time of the resurrection, were

discussing Jesus as they journeyed. The Master joined them and opened the scriptures to their eyes. Impressed, they asked him to tarry with them as they stopped to be refreshed. . . .

“Later their eyes were open and they knew him, but he had vanished. Said they: ‘Did not our heart burn within us, while he talked with us by the way. . . .?’ (Luke 24:25, 32.)

“As we contemplate his life and mission, our hearts burn within us, for we know that he lives.” (Alvin R. Dyer in *CR*, Apr. 1966, p. 125. Italics added.)

(27-19) Jesus the Christ, Our Savior and Redeemer, Is Risen!

“I bear witness to you that Jesus is the Christ, the Savior and Redeemer of the world—the very Son of God.

“He was *born* the babe of Bethlehem.

“He *lived* and ministered among men.

“He was *crucified* on Calvary.

“His friends *deserted* him.

“His closest associates did not fully *understand* his mission, and they *doubted*. One of the most trusted *denied* knowing him.

“A pagan governor, struggling with his conscience after consenting to Jesus’ death, caused a sign to be erected over the cross proclaiming him ‘JESUS OF NAZARETH THE KING OF THE JEWS.’ (John 19:19.)

“He asked *forgiveness* for his tormentors and then willingly gave up his life.

“His body was *laid* in a borrowed tomb.

“An immense stone was placed over the opening.

“In the minds of his stunned followers over and over echoed some of his last words, ‘. . . be of good cheer; I have overcome the world.’ (*Ibid.*, 16:33.)

“On the third day there was a great earthquake. The stone was rolled back from the door of the tomb. Some of the women, among the most devoted of his followers, came to the place with spices ‘and found not the body of the Lord Jesus.’ (Luke 24:3.)

“Angels appeared and said simply, ‘Why seek ye the living among the dead?’

“‘He is not here, but is risen.’ (*Ibid.*, 24:5–6.)

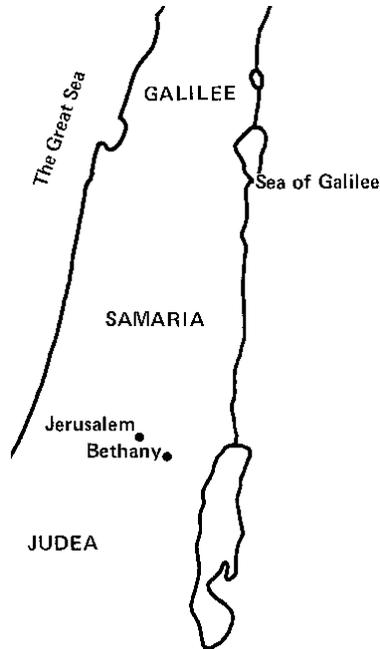
“There is nothing in history to equal that dramatic announcement: ‘He is not here, but is risen.’” (Ezra Taft Benson in *CR*, Apr. 1964, p. 119.)

The resurrection of Jesus has been proclaimed as one of the best attested of all events in history.

From what you have presently learned, identify five reasons why this is so. In what ultimate way is its attestation greater than any secular event?

The empty tomb of our Savior is the most significant of all time, for it was death that died, not Jesus. The Prince of Peace, having fulfilled all things, is the Prince of life for all mankind and of eternal life to those who will follow him.

"I KNOW THAT HE LIVES"



THE RESURRECTED CHRIST APPEARS TO MEN	Matthew	Mark	Luke	John
THE FIRST DAY OF THE WEEK				
Appears unto Peter Appears to all Apostles Except Thomas		16:14	24:34 24:33-49	20:19-23
APPEARANCES SUBSEQUENT TO THOSE OF THE FIRST DAY OF THE WEEK				
Jerusalem Appears to the Eleven Apostles				20:24-29
Sea of Galilee An Appearance to the Disciples				21:1-14
"Feed My Sheep" John Is to Be Translated				21:15-19 21:20-23
Jerusalem Appearance to a Great Multitude Appears to James		(1 Corinthians 15:6) (1 Corinthians 15:7)		
Galilee Appearance to the Disciples	28:16-20	16:15-18	(See Acts 1:1-8)	
Bethany, Judea The Ascension		16:19	24:50, 51	
Disciples Return to Jerusalem		16:20	24:52, 53	
John's Concluding Words				20:30, 31 21:24, 25

THEME

The testimony of all the prophets of all the ages is that Jesus is our living Savior; all the Saints share that witness.

INTRODUCTION

*Oh, haughty Rome! and faithless Sanhedrin—you thought a mortared stone could seal the borrowed tomb and stay the power of God! A thousand stones, ten thousand guards, could not have secured that door. As well you might have piled dry leaves to stop Euroclydon!**

On the first day of the week, at the rising of the sun, those devout, faithful women came to the sepulchre. As they approached that sacred, holy place, they wondered among themselves: “Who shall roll us away the stone from the door of the sepulchre?” (Mark 16:3.) But there was a great earthquake, and angels whose countenances shone like lightning came down and rolled away the stone and announced the sacred, solemn truth that Christ had risen. (See Matthew 28:1–8; Mark 16:1–8; Luke 24:1–9.)

*No mortal man was pure enough
To first bear that great word,
But witness true, from angels came,
Of Christ, the risen Lord!
“He is not here, the tomb is bare.
Come hither now and see.
The Lord of life o’er death has won
Triumphant victory!”*

(Anonymous)

**Euroclydon was the Bible name for a tempestuous wind or hurricane on the Mediterranean, now called a levanter. (See Acts 27:14.)*

Those women, apparently the first to hear the glad and glorious news, were instructed by the angels to inform Peter and the other apostles. Thus by Jesus’ design was launched a series of tests for his disciples. Then as now, the truth was established first by testimony, then by confirmation. (See Mark 16:14.) And, oh, how that testing must have taxed their faith: they were invited to accept the concept of resurrection, when for them resurrection had no historical precedent! Little wonder that when first his disciples heard the gladsome news, they struggled to believe. But the seeds of hope and faith were planted in their hearts by the testimonies of the women and others. Difficult as it was, and although to them the concept of an actual resurrection defied all their

logic and experience, yet they did not allow those seeds of faith and hope to die. And thus, after their faith had been sorely tried, they received the glorious witness they desired. (See Ether 12:6.) Jesus, their risen Lord and Master, appeared to the disciples!

Before proceeding, read all of the scriptural references in the reading block.

INTERPRETIVE COMMENTARY

(28-1) Luke 24:34. Why Did Jesus Appear to Peter Apart from the Others?

“This is the sole mention made by the Gospel-writers of Christ’s personal appearance to Simon Peter on that day. The interview between the Lord and His once recreant but now repentant apostle must have been affecting in the extreme. Peter’s remorseful penitence over his denial of Christ in the palace of the high priest was deep and pitiful; he may have doubted that ever again would the Master call him His servant; but hope must have been engendered through the message from the tomb brought by the women, in which the Lord sent greetings to the apostles, whom for the first time He designated as His brethren, and from this honorable and affectionate characterization Peter had not been excluded; moreover, the angel’s commission to the women had given prominence to Peter by particular mention. To the repentant Peter came the Lord, doubtless with forgiveness and loving assurance. The apostle himself maintains a reverent silence respecting the visitation, but the fact thereof is attested by Paul as one of the definite proofs of the Lord’s resurrection.” (Talmage, *Jesus the Christ*, p. 687.)

But Jesus’ appearance to Peter perhaps had additional significance. Earlier, during his mortal ministry, Jesus had announced that he would confer the “keys of the kingdom” upon Peter (Matthew 16:19). Peter, in conjunction with James and John, who would preside with him, received those keys on the Mount of Transfiguration (see Matthew 17:1–8; Luke 9:28–36), and thereafter “acted as the First Presidency of the Church in their day.” (Smith, *Doctrines of Salvation*, 3:152.) Those keys “belong always unto the Presidency of the High Priesthood” (D&C 81:2), and can be exercised in their fulness on the earth by only *one man* at a time; and *that man* in the period just after Jesus ascended into heaven was Peter. It may have been, then, that Jesus’ special appearance to Peter was associated in some way with the principle of keys. (See also McConkie, *DNTC*, 1:851.)

(28-2) John 20:19–29. Did Thomas Doubt the Resurrection?

“The case of Thomas shows why the Lord went to such great lengths on the Emmaus road and in the upper room to show beyond peradventure of doubt exactly what his body was like. And so rather than point the finger of scorn at Thomas we might do well to look carefully at the modern disbelief in that holy being who with his Father reigns as a Holy Man in the heavens above.” (McConkie, *DNTC*, 1:860.)

(28-3) John 21:1–17. “Simon, . . . Lovest Thou Me More than These?”

“This is a very important question for each one of us. May I ask each of you, ‘Do you love the Lord?’ The answer almost without exception would be, ‘Yes.’ Let us place ourselves in the position of Peter. . . .

“Can you picture this great scene of that powerful Peter being asked these simple questions? And the Lord had a way of knowing how deep the love was within Peter and how to teach him the way to show his love for Jesus Christ.

“We show and prove our love by *feeding the lambs and the sheep*. There are over three billion people on the earth today, and at the present rate of teaching, over two and a half billion of God’s children will never be taught the gospel of Jesus Christ. What if you were to live on this earth and never had a chance to hear and be taught the true way of life?

“Our task is great. Teachers are needed. Every member of this Church that has a testimony and is converted is urgently needed. The lambs and the sheep are hungry for the bread of life, for the gospel of Jesus Christ. We can show our love by following the prophet of God, ‘by every member being a missionary’ to bring one or more souls into the Church each year.” (Bernard P. Brockbank in *CR*, Oct. 1963, p. 66.)

(28-4) John 21:21–24; D&C 7:1–8. Would John Never Die?

“It is interesting to note that in the gospel account John specifies that he was promised that he should tarry until the Second Coming and not that he should escape death. From the account of the translation of the Three Nephite disciples we learn that this is exactly what takes place. A change is wrought in their bodies so they cannot die at this time, but when the Lord comes again they ‘shall be changed in the twinkling of an eye from mortality to immortality,’

and thus they ‘shall never taste of death.’ (3 Ne. 28:1–10, 36–40.) They will be like a person who lives during the millennium.” (McConkie, *DNTC*, 1:865.)

(28-5) Matthew 28:16–20. Jesus Appears in Galilee

“Of all the recorded appearances of the risen Christ to his disciples in Palestine, this one is paramount; and yet of it the present Bible preserves only a most fragmentary account. This was an appearance by appointment, by prearrangement, to which probably a great multitude of disciples was invited. It is likely the occasion of which, as Paul wrote later, ‘he was seen of above five hundred brethren at once.’ (1 Cor. 15:6.) If so, the seventies and leading brethren of the Church would have been present, as also perhaps the faithful women who are inheritors of like rewards with obedient priesthood holders.

“We do not know when Jesus specified the location of the meeting, but on the night of his betrayal and arrest, he gave this promise: ‘After I am risen again, I will go before you into Galilee.’ (Matt. 26:32.) Then the angels at the tomb, as part of their announcement to the women that ‘he is risen,’ commanded them to tell his disciples: ‘He goeth before you into Galilee; there shall ye see him.’ (Matt. 28:7; Mark 16:7.) And then to confirm again their previously made appointment, and in so doing to reemphasize its importance, the risen Jesus himself said to the women, as they held him by the feet, and worshipped him: ‘Go tell my brethren that they go into Galilee, and there shall they see me.’ (Matt. 28:9–10.)

“We may suppose that great preparation preceded this meeting; that it dealt with many things, perhaps being similar to his resurrected ministry to multitudes of Nephites; and that from it, by the mouths of many witnesses, the sure testimony of his divine Sonship went forth to the world.” (McConkie, *DNTC*, 1:866–67.)

POINTS TO PONDER

(28-6) “I Know That He Lives”

Jesus rose from the dead. As a glorified, resurrected being, he appeared before his disciples. They saw him—saw the wounds which marked his crucifixion. They saw him eat and speak and move before them. He was alive! They saw that he lived, and they declared that witness before kings and nations and defended it by faithful testimony to the end of their lives. Others, apostles and prophets in this modern day, bear the same witness: that Jesus lives and is the Redeemer!

Centuries before his ministry, death, and resurrection, Jesus had commanded Moses that truth could be verified by the testimony of two or more witnesses. (See Deuteronomy 17:6; compare D&C 6:28.) Consistent with that requirement, between his resurrection and ascension disciples by the score became witnesses of the living Redeemer.

At a general conference, President Harold B. Lee prefaced his witness by these words: “I know, with a testimony more powerful than sight. . . .” (*CR*, Oct. 1972, p. 20.) No doubt many hundreds saw Jesus during his lifetime—even Pilate and the members of the Sanhedrin saw him. But they did not have the witness that Jesus was their Redeemer. Read these four passages carefully to see how this “second witness,” “more powerful than sight,” was a principle established by Jesus and well understood by his disciples.

Read the following: Matthew 16:15–17; John 15:26; 1 Corinthians 12:3; Acts 2:32. How did these early disciples become witnesses of Christ? Is this avenue open to you?

(28-7) Understand the Significance of These Simple Words? “I Know That He Lives!”

You have read the four Gospels, and you have had an opportunity to consider carefully the life and ministry of that being who is your Redeemer. Presumably you have been a good student. Hopefully you will pray often and earnestly for the Holy Spirit to enlighten and guide your study.

When John wrote the final verses of his Gospel, which appropriately concludes the four, he bore testimony that the things he had written about Jesus were true. (See John 21:24, 25.) Do you know that they are true? Have you wanted to know? Read Matthew 13:44–46; 7:7, 8. Have you paid the price to know?

TESTIMONIES OF THE PROPHETS

In this last dispensation twelve prophets have stood at the fore of those whom God has called to bear special witness of Jesus. Each of these men has served as the president of the Church. They have borne a faithful testimony of Jesus to the Church and to the world.

Before you read their testimonies, however, there is something you should consider. These are special men—they bear special witness, but the words they use are nevertheless common words.

(28-8) Heed the Testimonies of the Prophets

“There are those who hear testimonies borne in the Church, by those in high station and by members in the wards and branches, all using the same words—‘I know that God lives; I know that Jesus is the Christ,’ and come to question, ‘Why cannot it be said in plainer words? Why aren’t they more explicit and more descriptive? Cannot the apostles say more?’

“How like the sacred experience in the temple becomes our personal testimony. It is sacred, and when we are wont to put it into words, we say it in the same way—all using the same words. The apostles declare it in the same phrases with the little Primary or Sunday School youngster. ‘I know that God lives and I know that Jesus is the Christ.’

“We would do well not to disregard the testimonies of the prophets or of the children, for ‘he imparteth his words by angels unto men, yea, not only men but women also. Now this is not all; little children do have words given unto them many times which confound the wise and the learned.’ (Al. 32:23.)

“Some seek for a witness to be given in some new and dramatic and different way.

“The bearing of a testimony is akin to a declaration of love. The romantics and poets and couples in love, from the beginning of time, have sought more impressive ways of saying it, or singing it, or writing it. They have used all of the adjectives, all of the superlatives, all manner of poetic expression. And when all is said and done, the declaration which is most powerful is the simple, three-word variety.

“To one who is honestly seeking, the testimony borne in these simple phrases is enough, for it is the spirit that beareth record, not the words.” (Boyd K. Packer in *CR*, Apr. 1971, pp. 123–24.)

Now, keeping that in mind, read these testimonies of the prophets. Read them carefully and slowly: ponder them, and remember that “it is the spirit that beareth record, and not the words.” (Compare D&C 1:39.)

(28-9) Joseph Smith

“And now, after the many testimonies which have been given of him, this is the testimony, last of all, which we give of him: That he lives!

“For we saw him, even on the right hand of God; and we heard the voice bearing record that he is the Only Begotten of the Father!

“That by him, and through him, and of him, the worlds are and were created, and the inhabitants

thereof are begotten sons and daughters unto God.”
(D&C 76:22–24.)

(28-10) Brigham Young

“My testimony is positive. I know that there are such cities as London, Paris, and New York—from my own experience or from that of others; I know that the sun shines, I know that I exist and have a being, and I testify that there is a God, and that Jesus Christ lives, and that he is the Savior of the world. Have you been to heaven and learned to the contrary? I know that Joseph Smith was a Prophet of God, and that he had many revelations. Who can disprove this testimony? Any one may dispute it, but there is no one in the world who can disprove it. I have had many revelations; I have seen and heard for myself, and know these things are true, and nobody on earth can disprove them. The eye, the ear, the hand, all the senses may be deceived, but the Spirit of God cannot be deceived; and when inspired with that Spirit, the whole man is filled with knowledge, he can see with a spiritual eye, and he knows that which is beyond the power of man to controvert. What I know concerning God, concerning the earth, concerning government, I have received from the heavens, not alone through my natural ability, and I give God the glory and the praise.” (*Discourses of Brigham Young*, 1951 ed., p. 433.)

(28-11) John Taylor

“As a God, He descended below all things, and made Himself subject to man in man’s fallen condition; as a man, He grappled with all the circumstances incident to His sufferings in the world. Anointed, indeed, with the oil of gladness above His fellows, He struggled with and overcame the powers of men and devils, of earth and hell combined; and aided by this superior power of the Godhead, He vanquished death, hell and the grave, and arose triumphant as the Son of God, the very eternal Father, the Messiah, the Prince of peace, the Redeemer, the Savior of the world; having finished and completed the work pertaining to the atonement, which His Father had given Him to do as the Son of God and the Son of man. As the Son of Man, He endured all that it was possible for flesh and blood to endure; as the Son of God He triumphed over all, and forever ascended to the right hand of God, to further carry out the designs of Jehovah pertaining to the world and to the human family.” (*The Mediation and Atonement*, pp. 147–48.)

(28-12) Wilford Woodruff

“When our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, stepped forth into the world to occupy the position to which He had been ordained of God, there were but few individuals who had faith in Him, or who were looking for the coming of the Son of Man in fulfillment of prophecy. Jesus, all His life, it may be said, from the manger to the cross, was very unpopular with the mass of the human family, more particularly the inhabitants of Jerusalem. His history is before the world. He died an ignominious death upon the cross, and those of His own Father’s house, the High Priests, and the leading men of Jerusalem, were all in favor of His death. Yet the Savior possessed truth. He offered truth to the world; He offered life and salvation to the world. But the principles He taught were unpopular in His day. He gathered around Him a few followers; but the acceptance of His principles cost them their lives, as it did the life of the Savior Himself. I do not know of a man—except it was John the Revelator—who escaped. They all died violent deaths. They had to seal their testimony with their blood. Some were crucified; others were sawn asunder, beheaded, or in some way put to death for the word of God, and the testimony of Jesus Christ. They were put to death for their religion. How is it to-day? What name has been more honored, or more held up as an ensample to the world than the name of Jesus Christ?” (*JD*, 25:5.)

(28-13) Lorenzo Snow

“There is no man that knows the truth of this work more than I do. I know it fully; I know it distinctly. I know there is a God just as well as any man knows it, because God has revealed himself to me. I know it positively. I shall never forget the manifestations of the Lord; I never will forget them as long as memory endures. It is in me. There is something to labor for, there is something to sacrifice for. When the Elders go forth among the nations, they dare to say this; they dare to say that God has revealed himself. They dare to say that God has spoken to His sons and daughters as He did in former days, and they dare to say that He has heard the prayers of the house of Israel, He has heard the prayers of the honest in heart, and He has come down as He did in the days of Israel when they were in Egyptian bondage to deliver them; He has come down to relieve the distressed, and to confer upon them knowledge, intellectually, spiritually, and to place them in a country where they can be blessed and saved from that half-starvation in which many have been found where the Gospel reached them.” (*CR*, Oct. 1880, p. 32.)

(28-14) Joseph F. Smith

“I bear my testimony, and surely it is of as much force and effect, if it be true, as the testimony of Job, the testimonies of the disciples of Jerusalem, the disciples on this continent, of Joseph Smith, or any other man who told the truth. All are of equal force and binding on the world. If no man had ever testified to these things upon the face of the globe, I want to say as a servant of God, independent of the testimonies of all men and of every book that has been written, that I have received the witness of the Spirit in my own heart, and I testify before God, angels and men, without fear of the consequences, that I know that my Redeemer lives, and I shall see him face to face, and stand with him in my resurrected body upon this earth, if I am faithful; for God has revealed this unto me. I have received the witness, and I bear my testimony, and my testimony is true.” (*Gospel Doctrine*, pp. 446–47.)

(28-15) Heber J. Grant

“I thank God for the knowledge I possess by the inspiration of his Spirit that God lives, that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of the living God, the Redeemer of the world, the Only Begotten of the Father in the flesh. And I thank him that I do know that Joseph Smith was a prophet of the true and the living God. . . . May God help me and every Latter-day Saint who has a testimony of the divinity of the work in which we are engaged to so live that our lives may proclaim the truth of this Gospel, is my humble prayer, and I ask it in the name of Jesus Christ, our Redeemer. Amen.” (*CR*, Apr. 1930, p. 192.)

(28-16) George Albert Smith

“In conclusion let me say: We are not out of the woods. This world is in for a housecleaning unless the sons and daughters of our Heavenly Father repent of their sins and turn to him. And that means the Latter-day Saints, or the members of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, along with all the rest, but we, first of all, ought to be setting the example. We have sent over seventy thousand of our sons and daughters into the world, paying their own expenses, to divide the gospel of Jesus Christ with his other children. Why? Because we know it is the only plan God has given to the children of men to earn a place in the celestial kingdom. That is why it is so important. In this great building that has been so sacred to all, after listening to the splendid choir and the organ, listening to the prayers that have been offered here, listening to the testimonies that have been borne, I

want to leave my testimony with you and say to you: I know that God lives. I know that Jesus is the Christ. I know that Joseph Smith was a Prophet of the Living God, and had restored to him the true gospel of Jesus Christ in these latter days. . . .

“So, realizing the seriousness of a testimony like that, realizing what it means, and with love unfeigned and a desire to be a blessing to all our Father’s children, I leave this witness with you that this is the gospel of Jesus Christ, the only power of God unto salvation in preparation for the celestial kingdom, into which kingdom we may all go if we will, but it will be on his terms, and I bear you that witness this day, in the name of Jesus Christ, our Lord. Amen.” (*CR*, Oct. 1946, p. 153.)

(28-17) David O. McKay

“Brethren and sisters, I have cherished from childhood the truth that God is a personal being and is, indeed, our Father whom we can approach in prayer and receive answers thereto. My testimony of the risen Lord is just as real as Thomas’, who said to the resurrected Christ when he appeared to his disciples: ‘My Lord and my God.’ (John 20:28.) I know that he lives. He is God made manifest in the flesh; and I know that ‘there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved.’ (Acts 4:12.)

“I know that he will confer with his servants who seek him in humility and in righteousness. I know because I have heard his voice, and I have received his guidance in matters pertaining to his kingdom here on earth.

“I know that his Father, our Creator, lives. I know that they appeared to the Prophet Joseph Smith and revealed to him the revelations which we now have recorded in the Doctrine and Covenants and in other Church works. This knowledge is as real to me as that which occurs in our daily lives. When we lay our bodies down at night, we know—we have an assurance—that the sun will rise in the morning and shed its glory over all the earth. So near to me is the knowledge of Christ’s existence and divinity of this restored Church.” (*CR*, Apr. 1968, pp. 9–10.)

(28-18) Joseph Fielding Smith

“The Savior never committed any sin nor carried any troubled conscience. He hadn’t been under the necessity of repenting as you and I have; but in some way that I can not understand, he carried the weight of my transgressions and yours and the transgressions of every soul who comes into this Church from the days

of Adam to our present time. He came and offered himself as a sacrifice to pay the debt for the things I have done that are wrong and that each of you individually have done that are wrong, and each other person who has been willing to repent of his sins and return to Jesus Christ and keep his commandments. He paid the price. Think of it if you can. Think of what one man can suffer for his wrongdoing. The Savior carried that burden in some way beyond our comprehension. But he carried it. I know that because I accept his word. And the great weight of the torment he went through to save us from the torment was so great that he plead with his Father that if it were possible he may not drink the bitter cup and shrink—‘but nevertheless thy will be done.’ The answer he got from his Father was, ‘You have to drink it.’

“Can I help loving him? No, I can’t. Do you love him? Then keep his commandments. If you don’t, you will have to answer for them yourselves. ‘If ye love me, keep my commandments.’” (*Take Heed to Yourselves*, pp. 281–82.)

(28-19) Harold B. Lee

“As one of the humblest among you, and occupying the station I do, I want to bear you my humble testimony that I have received by the voice and the power of revelation, the knowledge and an understanding that God is. It was a week following the conference, when I was preparing myself for a radio talk on the life of the Savior when I read again the story of the life, the crucifixion and, the resurrection of the Master—there came to me as I read that, a reality of that story, more than just what was on the written page. For in truth, *I found myself viewing the scenes with a certainty as though I had been there in person*. I know that these things come by the revelations of the living God.” (“Divine Revelation,” *Speeches of the Year*, 1952, p. 12. Italics added.)

(28-20) Spencer W. Kimball

“This is Easter week—a time when we solemnly remind each other of the unprecedented occurrence which took place in a small inner garden, in a rough-hewn tomb, in a caliche hill, outside the walls of Jerusalem. It happened there in an early morning and startled every soul who heard of it.

“Since it had never happened before on this earth, it must have been difficult for the people to believe, but how could they any longer doubt, when the resurrected Lord himself came to them and showed himself, and they felt the wounds in his hands and

feet? Hundreds of his intimate believing friends bore witness.

“This was Jesus of Nazareth, born in a manger, reared in a small village, baptized in the Jordan River, crucified on Golgotha, buried in a stone-cold roomlet in the cliff, and his resurrection attested to in a small, pleasant garden near the tomb.

“His suffering before and on the cross and his great sacrifice can mean little or nothing to us unless we live his commandments. For he says:

“ . . . why call ye me, Lord, Lord, and do not the things which I say?” (Luke 6:46.)

“‘If ye love me, keep my commandments.’ (John 14:15.)

“Certainly if we fail to live his teachings, we lose communication with him. (*CR*, Apr. 1972, pp. 25–26.) . . .

“And eternal life again was made available to men in the earth, for does not the scripture say: ‘And this is life eternal, that they might know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom thou hast sent.’ (John 17:3.) And so we return to the promise made on the hill in Palestine. ‘Blessed are the pure in heart: for they shall see God.’” (Matt. 5:8.)

“Men who know God and love him and live his commandments and obey his true ordinances may yet in this life, or the life to come, see his face and know that he lives and will commune with them.

“Our friends, I invite further inquiry. I testify to these truths, in the name of Jesus Christ. Amen.” (*CR*, Apr. 1964, pp. 98–99.)

These are the testimonies of the prophets—twelve men who, among many others, know the Lord and know that he is a living Redeemer. How strong is your testimony? Has your study of the Gospels strengthened it? How? Have you raised your voice as a witness, as have the prophets?

(28-21) Will It Make a Difference?

You are at the end of this lesson and at the end of your study of the Gospels. But the account about you is just beginning. You will write it—all the rest of it—throughout your life. Will you live and act and serve as one who loves the Lord?

Come back to the Gospels often—never get too far away from the sweet, quiet testimony that they contain: that Jesus lives and is your Redeemer.

“Members of the Church . . . are under obligation to make the sinless Son of Man their ideal—the one perfect being who ever walked the earth.

Sublimest Example of Nobility
God-like in nature
Perfect in his love
Our Redeemer

Our Savior
The immaculate Son of our Eternal Father
The Light, the Life, the Way

“I know he lives. . . .” (David O. McKay, “The Transforming Power of Faith in Jesus Christ,” *Improvement Era*, June 1951, p. 478.)

MAP SECTION

Note: The following items are not available in the Internet and PDF versions of this manual:

- Appendix E: The Land of Palestine
- Jerusalem During the Time of Christ
- The Holy Land at the Time of the Early Apostles
- New Testament Chronological History
- The Mediterranean World at the Time of the Early Apostles
- The Mediterranean World Today
- Paul's 1st Journey
- Paul's 2nd Journey
- Paul's 3rd Journey
- The Voyage to Rome
- The Seven Churches of Asia

CHRONOLOGICAL HISTORY OF THE LIFE AND MINISTRY OF JESUS CHRIST

(Many New Testament dates are only approximate within one to seven years. A few highlights of the Savior's ministry have been selected as representative of his activities.)

<p>4 B.C.</p> <p>John ben Zacharias b. ca. Oct.; Jesus Christ b. 6 April (called John the Baptist)</p> <p>Angels, Shepherds Rejoice Jesus Circumcised in Temple Testimonies of Simeon, Anna Visit of Wise Men Flight to Egypt Return to Nazareth</p>	<p>A.D. 1 3 6 9 12 15 18 21 24 27</p> <p>John the Forerunner</p> <p>“And he came and dwelt in a city called Nazareth, that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the prophets, <i>He shall be called a Nazarene.</i></p> <p>“And it came to pass that Jesus grew up with his brethren, and waxed strong, and waited upon the Lord for the time of his ministry to come.” (Matthew 3:23, 24, Inspired Version. Italics added.)</p>	<p>A.D. 30</p> <p>THE FIRST YEAR OF JESUS' PUBLIC MINISTRY</p> <p>Baptism of Jesus Temptations First Cleansing of the Temple Calling of Andrew, Simon, Philip, Nathanael Marriage at Cana—1st Recorded Miracle First Passover in Jerusalem Visit from Nicodemus</p> <p>FIRST JUDEAN MINISTRY</p> <p>John Imprisoned at Machaerus, Perea</p> <p>The Woman of Samaria</p> <p>Galilean Ministry Begins</p>	<p>A.D. 31</p> <p>Rejection at Nazareth Calling of Peter, Andrew, James, John Many Healings</p>
<p>Augustus</p> <p>27 B.C. to A.D. 14</p>	<p>Tiberius, A.D. 14–37</p>		
<p>Herod the Great, 37 B.C.–4 B.C.*</p>	<p>Judea, Samaria, and Idumea Formed into a Roman Province under a Procurator, A.D. 6–70</p> <p>Copohius A.D. 6–9 (est) Marcus Ambivivius A.D. 9–12 (est) Annus Rufus A.D. 12–15 (est)</p> <p>Valerius Gratus Pontius Pilate, A.D. 26–36 A.D. 15–26</p>		
	<p>Archelaus, Ethnarch of Judea, 4 B.C.–A.D. 6</p>		
	<p>Herod Philip, Tetrarch of Iturea, 4 B.C.–A.D. 34</p>		
	<p>Herod Antipas, Tetrarch of Galilee, 4 B.C.–A.D. 39</p>		

<p>THE SECOND YEAR OF JESUS' PUBLIC MINISTRY</p> <p>Second Passover at Jerusalem The Twelve Chosen Sermon on the Mount Miracles and Healings Storm Stilled on Sea of Galilee Healings, Casting Out of Devils Parables at the Sea of Galilee Second Rejection at Nazareth</p>	<p>A.D. 32</p> <p>The Twelve Sent Forth Death of John at Machaerus, Perea Return of the Twelve</p> <p>THE THIRD YEAR OF JESUS' PUBLIC MINISTRY</p> <p>Feeding of the Five Thousand Jesus Walks on the Sea Third Passover Transfiguration Seventy Sent Forth Jerusalem—Feast of Tabernacles Seventy Return <i>Later Judean and Perea Ministry Commences</i> Jerusalem—Feast of Dedication Raising of Lazarus at Bethany</p>				<p>* It will be noted that no attempt has been made to reconcile this chronological study with the conclusions of many scholars and historians who believe that Christ was born at least 4 B.C. Elder James E. Talmage believes that the Savior was born on 6 Apr. 1 B.C. (See <i>Jesus the Christ</i>, pp. 104, 109.) In probability, it will be discovered that four years have been lost from our present calendar, and that the problem will one day be satisfactorily resolved.</p>				<p>ROMAN EMPERORS</p>	<p>A.D. 33</p> <p>THE WEEK OF THE ATONING SACRIFICE</p> <p>First day: Triumphal Entry into Jerusalem Second day: Cleansing of the Temple Third day: The Teaching of Parables Fourth day: Rest at Bethany Fifth day: Fourth Passover / Sacrament Mount of Olives—Gethsemane Sixth day: Betrayal, Arrest, Trial, Condemnation, Crucifixion, and Entombment Seventh day: Guard Established at Tomb First day: Christ Appears as a Resurrected Being</p> <p>THE FORTY-DAY MINISTRY</p> <p>Appearances of Christ to Disciples in Jerusalem, Galilee Special Instruction, Blessings to the Twelve Ascension from the Mount of Olives</p>	<p>ROMAN PROCURATORS OF PALESTINE</p>			<p>KING'S SUBSIDIARIES TO ROME</p>
		<p>A.D. 34</p> <p>APPEARANCE TO THE NEPHITES</p>												

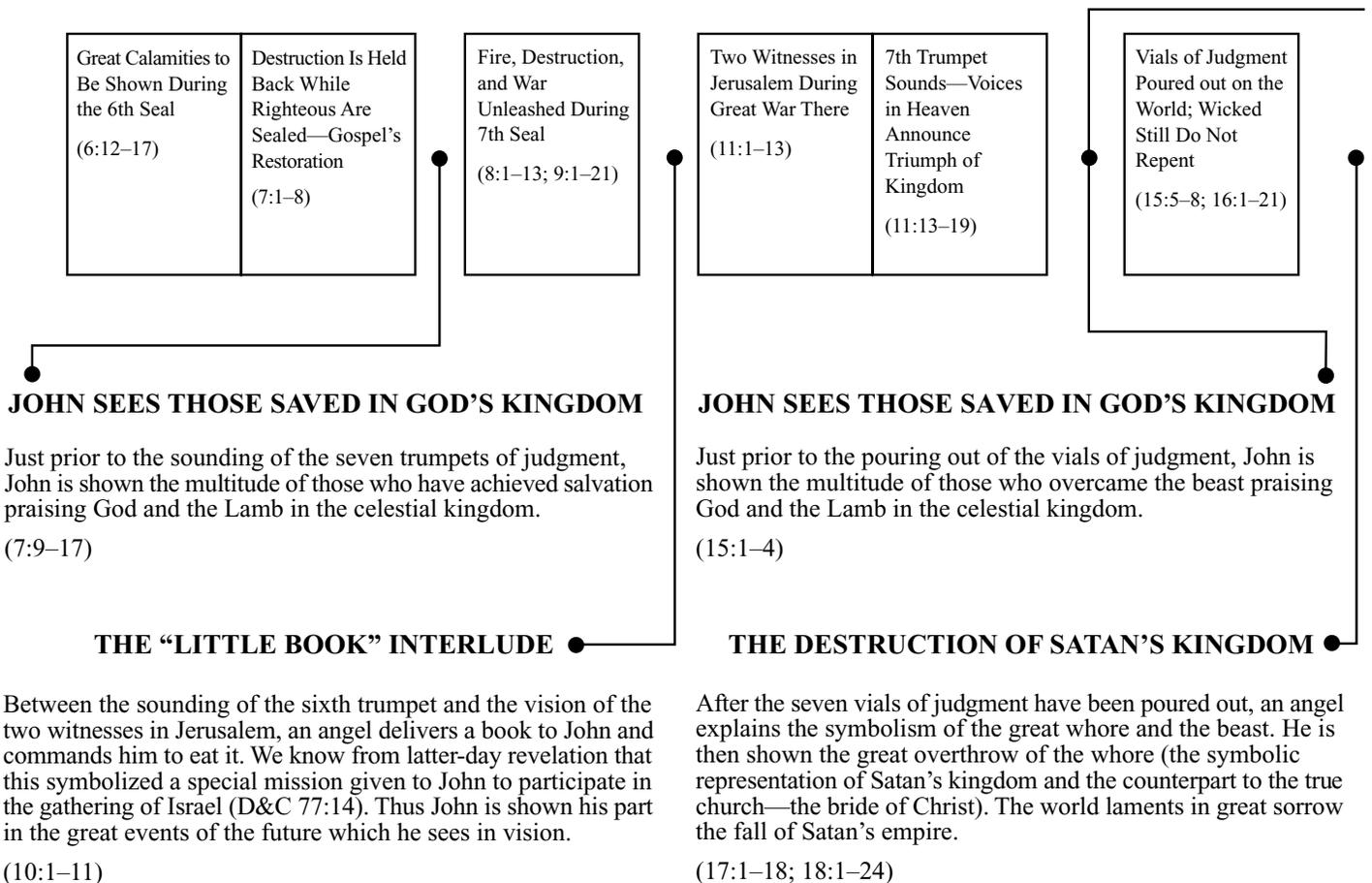
THE BOOK OF REVELATION

The Seven Seals (The Seven 1,000 Year Days of the Earth's Temporal Existence*)

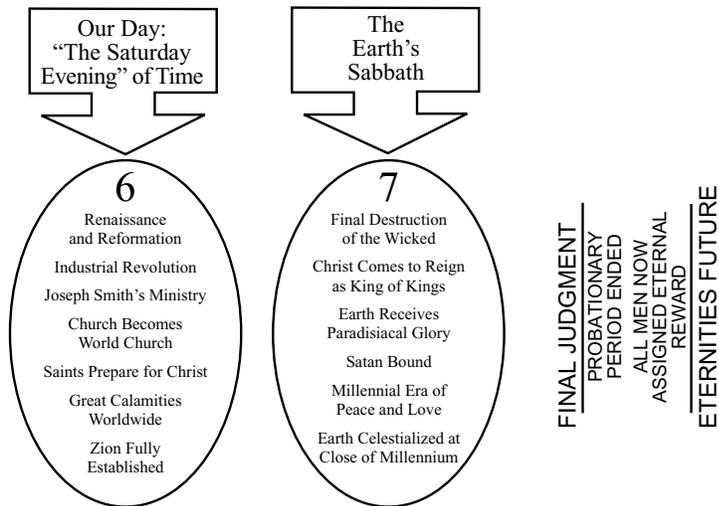


John Summarizes the Highlights of the First Five Seals

Joseph Smith said: "The things which John saw had no allusion to the scenes of the days of Adam, Enoch, Abraham or Jesus, only so far as is plainly represented by John. . . . John saw that only which was lying in futurity and which was shortly to come to pass." (*Teachings*, p. 289.) That such is the case is evident when we see that the first five seals are dealt with in 11 verses (only 3% of the total verses) while 281 verses (70%) deal with the events of the sixth and seventh seals and the final glory of the earth.



* These "days" should not in any way be confused with the major gospel dispensations. Such dispensations have not been initiated at regular intervals but have been subject to the wisdom of God and willingness of man to believe the prophets. (See D&C 77:7, 12.)



The Kingdom of God—Its Triumphant Destiny

While the events of the future ages were revealed around the basic chronological framework of the seven seals, it does not seem to have been the Lord's purpose to arrange every aspect of the revelation in a strict order of the occurrence of these events. Like a master teacher who digresses from his presentation to further clarify or expand what he teaches, even so the Lord interrupts the order of the presentation to give greater insight, further truths, deeper knowledge of the marvelous future destiny of his kingdom. These "teaching interludes" are shown on the chart below.

Voice Announces in Heaven the Final Triumph of Christ's Kingdom (19:1–10)	Christ Comes as King of Kings—Final Destruction of the Wicked (19:11–21)	Satan Is Bound (20:1, 2)	The Righteous Are Redeemed; the Millennium Begins (20:3–6)	Satan Loosed at End of Millennium, His Final Conquest and Banishment (20:7–10)	The Great and Last Judgment (20:11–15)	A New Heaven and New Earth—the Word Is Celestialized (21:1–27; 22:1–5)
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AN EXPLANATION OF THE KINGDOM OF GOD AND ITS OPPOSITION FROM SATAN'S KINGDOM

The voices in heaven announced the coming triumph of the Kingdom of God. This kingdom and its great satanic counterpart are now discussed in some detail.

I. The Church and Kingdom of God

- A. The church (the ecclesiastical aspect of the kingdom) brings forth the kingdom where Christ reigns as king (the political aspect of the kingdom).
- B. The church and kingdom of God are opposed by the great dragon (Satan).
- C. This opposition actually began in the premortal existence and caused war in heaven.
- D. The church of John's time would not bring forth the kingdom but would be driven into the wilderness (apostasy) by the dragon.
(12:1–17)

II. The Church and Kingdom of Satan

- A. John sees the beast from the sea and is shown that Satan has power over earthly kingdoms (the political aspects of his kingdom).
- B. John sees the beast from the earth exercising great evil through religious power (the ecclesiastical aspects of his kingdom).
- C. The followers of the beast are sealed in their foreheads to mark their allegiance.
(13:1–18)

III. The Final Outcome

- A. John sees the Lamb on Mount Zion with those who have been sealed in their foreheads by God. (The 144,000)
- B. John sees the angelic restoration of the gospel, which signals the fall of Satan's dominions.
- C. The Son of Man is seen in heaven with the sickle and winepress. The great harvest (judgment) of the wicked is to begin.
(14:1–20)

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not this special PDF version.]

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“YE SHALL BE WITNESSES UNTO ME”

THEME

“Ye shall receive power, after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you: and ye shall be witnesses unto me both in Jerusalem, and in all Judea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth.” (Acts 1:8.)

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“I ask you, what did he mean when the Lord took his Twelve Apostles to the top of the Mount of Olives and said:

“‘. . . And ye shall be witnesses unto me both in Jerusalem, and in all Judea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth.’ (Acts 1:8.)

“These were his last words on earth before he went to his heavenly home.

“What is the significance of the phrase ‘uttermost part of the earth’? He had already covered the area known to the apostles. Was it the people in Judea? Or those in Samaria? Or the few millions in the Near East? Where were the ‘uttermost parts of the earth’? Did he mean the millions in what is now America? Did he include the hundreds of thousands, or even millions, in Greece, Italy, around the Mediterranean, the inhabitants of central Europe? What did he mean? Or did he mean all the living people of all the world and those spirits assigned to this world to come in centuries ahead? Have we underestimated his language or its meaning? How can we be satisfied with 100,000 converts out of nearly four billion people in the world who need the gospel? . . .

“You are acquainted with the statement of the Prophet Joseph Smith in the Wentworth Letters written March 1, 1842. (*History of the Church*, vol. 4, p. 536.) I am sure the Prophet Joseph looked ahead and saw many problems with national animosities and fears with war and commotions and jealousies, and I am sure that he saw all these things would happen and yet in spite of everything he said with great boldness and assurance:

““No unhallowed hand can stop the work from progressing; persecutions may rage, mobs may combine, armies may assemble, calumny may defame,

but the truth of God will go forth boldly, nobly and independent, till it has penetrated every continent; visited every clime, swept every country and sounded in every ear; till the purposes of God shall be accomplished, and the great Jehovah shall say the work is done.” [History of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 4:540.] (Spencer W. Kimball, “When the World Will Be Converted,” *Ensign*, Oct. 1974, pp. 4–13.)

The early apostles and saints labored diligently and faithfully to fulfill the divine charge to take their witness to all the world. The purpose of this course manual is to help you realize how deeply these men took the Savior’s charge to heart and carried out their part of the great commission. In the words of President Harold B. Lee:

“As we review again the matchless and unselfish devotion of these early prophets and martyrs to the gospel of Christ, may we bow in reverence and repeat with a greater appreciation and comprehension as with the multitude in Jerusalem on the occasion of the triumphal entry the words: ‘How blessed is he [the Apostles of the past and present] that cometh in the name of the Lord.’” (*CR*, Apr. 1955, p. 19.)

What Should I Seek to Accomplish As I Take This Course of Study?

Two major objectives lie at the heart of a study of the latter half of the New Testament. First, to draw closer to Christ and feel increased spiritual power. Secondly, a study of Acts to Revelation is especially valuable for Latter-day Saints because we face many of the same problems that faced those early saints. In our dispensation, the church of Jesus Christ has once again been organized, and our commission is the same as was theirs: to take the blessings of the Church and the witness of the resurrected Christ to all the world (D&C 1:17–23).

This Course of Study Chronicles the Testimony of Eyewitnesses

At the death of Jesus, his apostles and disciples were filled with despair. They had been sustained and upheld by him for almost three years, and now he was

gone. Alone, discouraged, wavering in faith, and perhaps frightened, they thought at first all was lost. As you ponder the fact that these were ordinary men and that their despondency was quite a natural and human reaction under the circumstances, you also must be struck by another more compelling fact—that fifty days later these same men were bearing a fervent testimony that Jesus was alive, that he had been seen of them, and that he was, in fact, risen from the dead as he said he would be. Further, you must be impressed that for the sake of bearing this witness, they endured slander, physical abuse, and extreme adversity; they compassed land and sea; and finally, most of them died a martyr’s death. Why? How do you account for such a transformation in their lives? Why is Paul one day a zealous persecutor of the Christians and then abruptly a bold witness for Christ? Theirs is no testimony of despair or doubt. Ponder their witness carefully.

Peter

“Ye men of Israel, hear these words; Jesus of Nazareth, a man approved of God among you by miracles and wonders and signs, which God did by him in the midst of you, as ye yourselves also know: Him, being delivered by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God, ye have taken, and by wicked hands have crucified and slain: Whom God hath raised up, having loosed the pains of death: . . . This Jesus hath God raised up, WHEREOF WE ALL ARE WITNESSES.” (Acts 2:22–24, 32. Emphasis added.)

Paul

“For I delivered unto you first of all that which I also received, how that Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures; And that he was buried, and that he rose again the third day according to the scriptures: And that he was seen of Cephas, then of the twelve: After that, he was seen of above five hundred brethren at once; of whom the greater part remain unto this present, but some are fallen asleep. After that, he was seen of James; then of all the apostles. And last of all he was seen of me. . . .” (1 Corinthians 15:3–8.)

John

“That which . . . we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked upon, and our hands have handled . . . the Word of life.” (1 John 1:1.)

How does one account for their boldness, their change, their assuredness? The real answer is found in the explanation as declared by David O. McKay:

“That the literal resurrection from the grave was a reality to the disciples, who knew Christ intimately, is a certainty. In their minds there was absolutely no doubt. *They were witnesses of the fact. They knew because their eyes beheld, their ears heard, their hands felt the corporeal presence of the risen Redeemer.*” (CR, Apr. 1939, p. 112. Italics added.)

The implication of their witness to you should be clear. As Elder McKay further declared:

1. “If Christ lived after death, so shall men, each one taking the place in the next world for which he is best fitted.” (CR, Apr. 1939, p. 115.)
2. “To him who accepts Jesus of Nazareth as the very Son of God, to him who believes with all his soul that Jesus lives today, that he can . . . and that he does influence the world, to him, I say, . . . Christ’s teachings as well as his personality, become a reality. You cannot profess to be truly a Christian and refuse to live up to the principles that Christ taught and obeyed.” (CR, Apr. 1918, pp. 78–79.)

This course of study chronicles the lives, discourses, and written testimony of men who, as eyewitnesses, saw the risen Lord and were transformed by his power and influence. It is hoped that as you consider their witness, coupled with the testimonies of the Lord’s special witnesses in this dispensation, you will receive their testimony as a witness, more powerful than sight, of our Lord’s resurrection and redemptive mission.

Mars’ Hill and the Apostle Paul

The Athens that Paul knew was nearly two thousand years younger than the Athens of today. Even the little in the city that has survived the ravages of two millennia bears eloquent witness to the glorious heights achieved by the ancient Greeks. But no one should be fooled into thinking that marble columns and graceful architecture are the only legacies bequeathed to future generations by the noble Greeks. Democracy, the political ideal of much of the world, had its birth in Athens; students in virtually every major university in the world still explore the philosophies of Socrates, Plato, and Aristotle; the

dramas of Sophocles and Euripides, written hundreds of years before the birth of Christ, are performed all over the globe; mathematics students memorize the theorems and formulas of Pythagoras and Euclid; and every four years, millions watch via satellite as athletes from many nations compete in the Olympic games, an event started by the Greeks in 776 B.C.

To Athens, long a center for Greek culture, came Paul, a humble servant of Jesus Christ. Recently beaten and jailed in Philippi and fresh from expulsion from Thessalonica and Berea by angry Jews, Paul hoped that Athens might accept God's word. But Athens was a city alien to the spirit of true Christianity.

Those temples and buildings that have survived the claws of time give us some hint of the glory that must have greeted Paul's eyes as he entered the city. The Parthenon, even then nearly five hundred years old, dominated Athens from its majestic spot atop the acropolis. Like other buildings near it, the Parthenon beckoned to worshipers of Athena, the goddess of wisdom. Numerous magnificent shrines and temples lined the city's streets, for Athens was a city saturated with idolatry. The cautious Greeks had even erected an altar dedicated to the Unknown God, lest they should offend some god that had been inadvertently overlooked.

Thoughts of the beauty and glory of Athens must have been overshadowed in the mind of the apostle by the other things which he saw, for Luke records that while Paul awaited the arrival of his companions, "his spirit was stirred in him, when he saw the city wholly given to idolatry." (Acts 17:16.) Moved by that spirit, Paul attempted to teach the Athenians the truths of the gospel both in the Jewish synagogue and in the marketplace. Later he was taken before the famed council of the Areopagus, on Mars' hill, where he delivered a powerful sermon on the subject of the Unknown God. But though the Athenians were willing to listen to this new philosophy, as indeed they were to anything novel or extraordinary, when Paul spoke of the resurrection, they mocked him (Acts 17:32). The Greeks believed in the immortality of the soul but found the idea of literal resurrection simply absurd. Soon thereafter, Paul left the city and journeyed on to Corinth. There is no further record of missionary work being performed in Athens.

Though Paul stood before the council of the Areopagus for only a few short minutes and left the city of Athens after a very limited stay, his presence in the city symbolizes the clash between the gospel and the world of Paul's time. Standing in sight of the awesome Parthenon, this converted Jew of Tarsus, a man who pretended to no great worldly learning and who preached a simple gospel, told the learned men of Athens of their ignorance, of their status as children of God, and of their eventual resurrection after death. They did not believe him then; much of the world still does not believe. Is it not a strange irony that the city of Athens, renowned as a center of knowledge and known through the ages for its wisdom, should reject those truths which are, above all others, most precious? It was not simply the idolatry of Athens that lay at the heart of this rejection, for many other cities equally idolatrous provided the apostles of Jesus Christ with rich and fruitful fields of labor. Athens' malady was the worship of the wisdom of men. It was this problem, more than any other, which proved the undoing of the early church of Jesus Christ. Again and again, as the gospel spread throughout the world, its profound and simple truths were blended with the philosophies of men. The wisdom of God was rejected as foolishness. The miracles of the Atonement, the Resurrection, and the ordinances were diluted and deleted. Men, blinded to the wisdom of God by their own intellectual conceit, added and subtracted at will from the truths revealed by God. Gradually and inevitably, these precious truths were changed, perverted, and lost. The simple was embellished, the holy corrupted, the truth falsified. The tragedy of Athens became the tragedy of the great apostasy. Men stood in the shadow of the Parthenon and could not see the Light of the world; they basked in the radiance of their own understanding and were blinded to the glory of God; they walked in the paths of their own making and tripped over the stumbling block of Christ and his crucifixion; they called themselves philosophers—lovers of wisdom—but were so enamored of their own learning that they were incapable of loving the greatest wisdom of all.

After his experience at Athens, Paul journeyed to Corinth. Later he wrote to the Corinthians:

“Where is the wise? where is the scribe? where is the disputer of this world? hath not God made foolish the wisdom of this world?”

“For the Jews require a sign, and the Greeks seek after wisdom:

“But we preach Christ crucified, unto the Jews a stumbling block, and unto the Greeks foolishness;

“But unto them which are called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God, and the wisdom of God.

“Because the foolishness of God is wiser than men; and the weakness of God is stronger than men.” (1 Corinthians 1:20, 22–25.)

SECTION 7

THE CHURCH GROWS AS THE WITNESSES GO FORTH

LESSONS

29. “Ye Are My Witnesses, Saith the Lord” (Acts 1–8)
30. “God Is No Respector of Persons” (Acts 10–12)
31. “A Chosen Vessel unto Me” (Acts 9)
32. “I Have Set Thee to Be a Light of the Gentiles” (Acts 13–18)

THE SETTING

The Political Picture

Christianity made its appearance in the days of the apostles at a time when Rome ruled most of the known world. Founded in 753 B.C., the city of Rome was the center of an empire that stretched in all directions.

Unlike modern republics in which the federal government presides over a group of states or counties, the Roman empire was composed of independent cities, states, and territories, each of which was subject to the overall authority of the emperor and the senate. In the days of the apostles, larger parts of the imperial system were known as provinces. Examples of such, as found in the book of Acts, are Macedonia (Acts 16:9), Asia (Acts 20:4), Bithynia (Acts 16:7), and Cilicia (Acts 6:9). (See the map section, p. 216.)

Government was primarily of two kinds. Those provinces regarded as peaceful were ruled by proconsuls, special appointees of Rome who had the power of independent decision making but were accountable to powerful members of the Roman Senate. These proconsuls were sometimes called deputies. (See Acts 18:7–12.) Provinces generally felt to be more turbulent were directly responsible to the emperor himself and were kept in check by constant military guard. Palestine, one of the more volatile provinces in the days of Jesus and the apostles, was under the immediate supervision of the emperor through a governor or procurator. (See Matthew 27:2 and Acts 24:1.)

In addition, the Jews had a king who, although he was partly of Jewish descent, also ruled at the discretion of the Roman rulers. Herod the Great, ruling monarch in Palestine at the birth of Jesus, held the titles of procurator, tetrarch, and king. Following Herod’s death the kingdom of the Jews passed to these three sons: Archelaus, Antipas, and Philip.

Herod’s sons were followed in power by Agrippa I. He was succeeded by his son, Agrippa II, who ruled for more than fifty years. During the latter’s reign, one of the Roman governors was Felix, before whom Paul was tried (Acts 23; 24). Felix was followed by Festus through whom Paul, when he discovered that he could not secure justice in Palestine, appealed to the Caesar himself (Acts 25:8–13). During Paul’s incarceration at Caesarea, Festus invited King Agrippa II to hear Paul’s case. Although Agrippa had an adequate understanding of Jewish law, he was not deeply committed to its religious doctrines. He gave only token observance to its ceremonial requirements, more to placate his subjects than out of any sincere conviction of its religious truth. It was his conclusion upon hearing Paul that “this man might have been set at liberty, if he had not appealed unto Caesar.” (Acts 26:32.)

Among the several emperors who reigned during the period of the New Testament was the hated Caesar (Nero) (A.D. 54 to 68), before whom Paul appeared for trial (Acts 27:24). In A.D. 64, a great fire broke out in Rome. Nero, suspected of having set the fire himself, openly accused the Christians of this incendiary act. Many believed the charge. Thus broke out the first, albeit limited, Roman persecution of the Christians. Tradition has it that during this period both Peter and Paul met their deaths in Rome. (For a view of the relationships between the political leaders of Rome and the early Christians, see the New Testament Chronology Chart in the center section of this manual.)

The Religious Picture

Many are familiar with the fact that the Jewish leaders openly opposed the message of Jesus in the Savior’s

day. Believing that the death of Jesus would crush the movement which prospered under his leadership, Jewish rulers conspired to do away with the Son of God. Later, when the movement continued to grow, persecution increased also. Why? What were the forces that made it possible for Christianity to survive during its early years?

Foremost among the factors deserving mention was the zeal of the Christian converts. Their faith was not based on a dead Savior but on a living one, one that had risen from the dead, to which fact many were eyewitnesses (Acts 2:23, 24, 32; 5:30–32; 1 Corinthians 15:4–8). In addition, although the Jews openly opposed the new faith, their counteractions were largely held in check by Roman law. The political state recognized many gods, and it was the practice not to interfere with any man's faith so long as his worship did not prove subversive to the state. Judaism was among the tolerated religions, and the leaders in Rome did not see Christianity as a new movement but rather as just another division within the Jewish order. Rome's attitude of tolerance has been expressed in these words:

“The religious philosophy of the Roman state did not deny the existence of any religion's gods, nor did it purport to declare that there was but one true religion, nor did it take the position that there was one religion that was better for the Roman Empire than another. In one sense there was religious toleration that bordered on almost pure religious liberty. . . .

‘It was into such a religious world that Christianity ventured, struggling to gain converts and save all mankind.’ (Lyon, *Apostasy to Restoration*, p. 21.)

As time passed, however, and the new church expanded and grew, the attitude of tolerance began to change. Though the worship of other gods was still tolerated, more and more the personage of the emperor was seen as divine, and Roman subjects were expected to give their allegiance to him as god, as well as their own deities.

By the time of Nero, it was customary for the emperor to be called by such titles as *theos* (god) and *soter* (savior). By the time of Domitian (A.D. 81–96) the title *Dominus et Deus* (Lord and God) was also added. The Greek word for the Latin *dominus* was *kurios*, or Lord, the exact same word that is the most common title applied to Jesus. (It is used almost seven hundred times in the New Testament.)

There is little doubt that the early Christians saw in the emperor a direct challenge to the divinity of Christ

when they saw and heard him addressed as “God,” “the Son of God,” “the Holy One,” “Lord,” and “Savior.” Their refusal to bow and worship this substitute deity was one of the central causes of the terrible persecutions which brought so many of the early saints to martyrdom.

The Greek Influence on the Early Church

Although openly opposed by Jewish elements, early Christian missionaries generally found the empire a congenial place in which to travel and preach. This was due in large measure to the Greek influence, or Hellenism, as it was called. The Greeks were anything but idle witnesses to Roman domination. Where the Romans built the roads, established the postal systems, and sought for law and order, the Greeks were a thinking, planning, and philosophizing society. If the Romans were the doers, the builders, the politicians, the Greeks were the thinkers, the planners, the philosophers; if Rome conquered Greece with its armies, Greece conquered Rome with its ideas. Greek slaves were often better educated than the Roman masters whom they served.

Greeks equated religion with man's efforts to understand all aspects of human existence. Religion was not a definition of the gods nor yet an act of patriotic sentiment; it was a creation of men's minds. According to the Greeks, man had the power of independent thought, the ability to examine the mysteries of the universe firsthand, and understanding sufficient to formulate satisfactory explanations. Thus, as an interest in the Greek and Roman gods declined, philosophical and scientific inquiry took its place. Religion became an attempt to correlate all existing human knowledge into one vast system of logic verified by man's experience, by his careful observation, and by his patient thought. Thus, when Paul came to Athens, “the Athenians and strangers which were there spent their time in nothing else, but either to tell, or to hear some new thing.” (Acts 17:21.) They were stirred by Paul's presence, not because they wished to know and obey the truth, but because they were curious. Their curiosity led them to take Paul to Areopagus, the highest court in Athens, where they said to him: “May we know what this new doctrine, whereof thou speakest is? For thou bringest certain strange things to our ears: we would know therefore what these things mean.” (Acts 17:19, 20.) Taking advantage of the circumstances, Paul preached to them a sermon about the “unknown god” that they worshipped.

The Greek influence had two immediate effects on Christianity, one beneficial and the other detrimental. It was beneficial in that it provided a medium through which the teachings of Jesus and his apostles could be spread rapidly: the Greek language. In addition, Christianity, as we have seen, was new, and the Greek attitude to see and to hear new things had influenced many. It was detrimental because men could not resist the temptation to embellish the Christian revelation with their own interpretations. The result was a new Christianity altogether. Let us examine each of these influences in turn.

Many throughout the ancient Roman world were bilingual. One language would be their native tongue; the other was most often Koine Greek, the common, and almost universal, language of the time. The existence of a common language made possible the rapid spread of the Christian message. Prior to the birth of Christ, the Hebrew scriptures (Old Testament) had been translated from Hebrew into Greek. This rendition, known as the “septuagint,” was most likely the Bible of the Greek-speaking Jews in the time of Jesus and his apostles. All Paul had to do in order to obtain a point of contact in any new city was to go to the local Jewish synagogue on the Sabbath day. Here he would find any number of eager listeners, and he could speak to them either in Greek (the common tongue) or in Aramaic, a dialect of Hebrew, the language of the Jews. Paul spoke both (Acts 21:37–40).

The major problem presented to Christianity was how to keep the gospel message pure and free from the false philosophies so prevalent in the empire. In time, the Christian resistance to Greek philosophy broke down. Christianity became wedded to Greek thought, and the marriage proved to be disastrous for the once pure gospel of Jesus Christ. Christian converts educated in the philosophies of Socrates, Plato, Aristotle, and other current schools of thought found the temptation to mix their newfound faith with Greek learning too great to resist. Temples dedicated to Athena, Zeus, and Diana became, in time, centers of Christian worship; the rituals practiced, however, were not purely Christian but a blend of the true with the false. This strange admixture of Christian truth with pagan philosophy and practice constituted what is known as the Great Apostasy. As Paul prophesied to the Ephesian elders, so it came to pass:

“For I know this, that after my departing shall grievous wolves enter in among you, not sparing the flock.

“Also of your own selves shall men arise, speaking perverse things, to draw away disciples after them.” (Acts 20:29, 30.)

Summary: A Restored Gospel at Odds with Its Contemporary Society

Early Christianity, which was a restored gospel in the meridian dispensation, made its appearance at a most propitious time in history. Roman roads literally opened avenues for Christian missionary work in every part of the empire. Roman toleration also made possible the practice and spread of Christianity among peoples otherwise largely opposed to it. The spirit of Greek rationalism as well as the widespread use of the Greek language provided Christianity with opportunities to be heard and understood wherever men might gather. The Jewish dispersion made it possible for Jewish-Christians to enter synagogues everywhere and preach the “good news” of Jesus Christ to all who would open their hearts and listen.

In time, however, Christianity began to experience negative attitudes within this world of government-sponsored religions. The new faith was not in total harmony with the spirit of its time. The Greeks considered the doctrines of atonement and resurrection “foolishness” (1 Corinthians 1:23) and mocked Paul’s earnest attempts to win their hearts to Christ (Acts 17:32). The Jews held it to be an open threat to their Mosaic institutions (John 11:48) and persecuted “unto the death” many who followed the way of Christ (Acts 22:4). In time, even the Romans came to regard Christianity as an illicit cult, deserving neither sanction nor favor from the state.

In contrast to the secular and religious philosophies of the time, Christianity was nonspeculative. It did not indulge in theory or endless dispute but in eyewitness testimony. Jesus Christ lived, died, and rose from the dead and was seen by many following his resurrection (1 Corinthians 15:3–8). The nonspeculative nature of the Christian faith made it unpalatable to many whose lives were thoroughly grounded in philosophical conjecture.

THE JEWISH CULTURAL HERITAGE

Why the Jewish Claim to Genealogical Inheritance Probably Contributed to a Feeling of Exclusiveness

The Jews in the days of the early apostles traced their genealogical descent from Abraham, a great prophet who lived in Canaan about two thousand years before Christ. God established with him His special covenant, which, among other things, was to bless all nations of

the earth (Abraham 2:8–11). It was Abraham who founded the Hebrew nation. Through him and his posterity the sacred covenant which made of Israel “a peculiar treasure, . . . a kingdom of priests, and an holy nation” (Exodus 19:5, 6) unto the Lord was transmitted from generation to generation.

In addition to Abraham, the Jews looked to their great Hebrew statesman and lawgiver, Moses, for proof of their chosen condition. He was God’s mouthpiece on earth, the one through whom God spoke to all Israel (Numbers 12:5–8). Thus was established the preeminence of Moses among the prophets of Israel. Jehovah was God and Moses was his prophet!

That their descent from Abraham and their spiritual legacy from Moses bred in the Jewish nation a false sense of their own superiority is evident from a reading of the New Testament. When Jesus, who was Jehovah in the premortal world, made his appearance among them, the contentious Jews lost no time in reminding the Savior of their personal exclusiveness: “Abraham is our father” they boasted (John 8:39), and “we are Moses’ disciples” (John 9:28). They were proud of their religious background. It remained for John the Baptist to remind them that true spirituality is based on deeds, not genealogical inheritance. “Think not to say within yourselves, We have Abraham to our father:” John warned, “for I say unto you, that God is able of these stones [gentiles] to raise up children unto Abraham.” (Matthew 3:7–9.)

Why the Jewish Interpretation of the Law of Moses Probably Contributed to a Feeling of Exclusiveness

From God, by revelation to Moses, came the great Law which bears Moses’ name. Contained within the Pentateuch, or first five books of the Old Testament, the law of Moses provided regulations for situations arising between God and man, man and other men, and man and God’s other creatures. Faithful Israelites recognized it as the revealed will of God for his covenant people, and its violation brought with it severe penalties. Prior to their captivity by the Babylonians (about 600 B.C.), members of the tribe of Judah had probably not observed the law of Moses as rigidly as they later came to do. The writings of Israel’s prophets indicate that the worship of foreign deities by the Israelites was more the rule than the exception, although it was always vigorously denounced by the nation’s prophets. In their captive condition, however, forced to live as exiles from their homeland, the Jews were compelled to make an important decision: would they permit themselves to become totally absorbed in the cultural ways of their

captors or would they remain faithful to Jehovah? A many-faceted Judaism was the result.

That the Jews viewed themselves as a people set apart is evident in all phases of their cultural life. To them, contact with those not of their faith was contaminating. They assumed that they alone possessed God’s law by direct revelation. Moses forbade the people to make marriages with those of other nations (Deuteronomy 7:3, 4). Moreover, they alone held the sacred texts in which that revelation was housed. They were exclusively the “people of the book.”

Into their Babylonian captivity the Jews took their sacred writings. Having no temple in which to worship, they began a vigorous study of the sacred texts. Scribes or special interpreters of the law arose, each with his own view of God’s word. By the time of Jesus and the apostles, much of Judaism was hopelessly entangled in a morass of legalism which militated against, if it did not crowd out altogether, the true spirit of religion. For many Jews worship was no longer a matter of the heart. The so-called traditions of the elders prevented it from being so (Matthew 15:2–6).

Jewish scholars often looked upon themselves as better than the common mass of their Jewish brothers and sisters. Jews in general manifested an intense disdain for the Samaritans, who could claim only a partial Jewish heritage. Jesus represented one Pharisee as standing in prayer before the Lord and saying: “God, I thank thee, that I am not as other men are, extortioners, unjust, adulterers, or even as this publican. I fast twice in the week, I give tithes of all that I possess.” (Luke 18:11, 12.) Such men were rebuked as hypocrites. They did all their works, Jesus said, “to be seen of men.” To pay tithing is, of course, a good thing, but they had “omitted the weightier matters of the law, judgment, mercy, and faith.” (Matthew 23:13, 14, 23.)

Another example is the occasion when the Pharisees asked Jesus why his disciples ate without washing their hands. This act of defilement, though not part of the Mosaic law, was forbidden by the tradition of the elders (Mark 7:3–8).

Thus, Jewish religion in the days of the apostles was largely a system of rules and safeguards, “hedged about the law” as the Jews called them, brought about by the elders in their efforts to preserve the sanctity of the law and its observance. All of this tended to make religious observance more a matter of outward

response to a code of laws than an inner attitude of heart and mind. Salvation began to be measured by outward performances and “works of the law” (Galatians 2:16), a condition which Paul referred to as the “yoke of bondage” (Galatians 4:3, 9; 5:1). A man who rigidly observed the traditions of the elders was always in a state of apprehension lest he violate one of the numerous rules of his religion. A man who scrupulously kept these laws had a tendency to view himself as superior to other men.

Why the Jewish Places of Worship Probably Contributed to a Feeling of Exclusiveness

Prior to the time of Solomon, the Jews had their special places of worship. One such, constructed in Moses’ day, was a portable tabernacle which could be moved from place to place wherever the people wandered. In Solomon’s time, however, a temple was built. This became the center of worship.

After the destruction of Solomon’s temple by Nebuchadnezzar, the synagogue became the primary place of Jewish worship. Even when the Jews returned to their Holy Land from Babylonian exile and rebuilt their temple, worship continued to center in the local synagogue, a special edifice serving a purpose similar to a present-day meetinghouse or chapel. Later, when the Jews were scattered throughout the Greek and Roman empires, the synagogue continued to be the focal point for religious interests. A pilgrimage to the temple in Jerusalem might be a wonderful, once-in-a-lifetime experience, but worship in the synagogue was a weekly factor of life. It was only natural, therefore, that Paul, a Jewish Christian, should visit the synagogues first in each city into which he took the Christian message. (See, for example, Acts 13:5, 14; 14–1.)

The synagogue served a dual purpose for the Jews. Not only was it reserved for religious affairs, it was also the educational center in which Jewish children were daily instructed in the law. Each synagogue had its head, or chief ruler (Luke 8:41, 46), whose main responsibility seems to have been to decide upon the order of the public service each week and to maintain a strict decorum within the sacred confines.

Each synagogue contained copies of the Holy Books, particularly the first five books (the Torah). As formerly shown, by the time of Peter and Paul the law had come to be held in greatest respect, and its precepts were regarded as inviolable by any and all who considered themselves faithful Jews. It was only natural for Peter and Paul to quote at length from the

sacred writings if they wished to hold the interest and attention of their Jewish listeners (Acts 2:16–21, 25, 26; 3:22–26; 13:16–22, 35). Likewise, Israel’s history as cited by Stephen prior to his martyrdom was something with which any twelve-year-old Jewish boy would be familiar (Acts 7).

All of this did not depreciate the sacred temple. On the contrary, a visit to the temple in Jerusalem was always an event of greatest significance. The temple standing in the days of the apostles possessed both an inner and an outer court, and only Jews were permitted to enter the inner precincts. Even there, specific divisions confined men, women, and priests to certain quarters. In the temple proper, the Holy of Holies, or Most Holy Place, was reserved only for the high priest, and that on the Day of Atonement. Gentiles might enter the outermost court known as the Court of the Gentiles, but they could not proceed further on penalty of death. In order to prevent such acts of desecration, a large sign was placed between the inner and outer courts for all to see. It carried a specific warning against any gentile intrusion. Such an understanding is essential in order to appreciate why the Jews could pretend to find fault with Paul for an alleged act of desecration (Acts 21:27–29). The sacred courts were reserved exclusively for things Jewish, and their use was decided by the Sanhedrin and its officers.

Why the Jewish Dispersion Probably Contributed to a Feeling of Exclusiveness

Strangely enough, most of the Jews in the days of the apostles did not reside either in Jerusalem or in its immediate vicinity. They lived in scattered communities throughout the Roman empire and were part of what was known as the Diaspora, or the “people of the dispersion.” Nearly every large city possessed sufficient numbers of these people to form a local synagogue; the same was true of many of the smaller cities.

The work of scattering began in 721 B.C. under Sargon II of Assyria, who led away into captivity the inhabitants of Israel, the ten tribes of the northern kingdom in Palestine. Later, Nebuchadnezzar conquered Judah, the southern kingdom, and about 589 B.C. destroyed Jerusalem and carried his captives into Babylon. Some seventy years or so later, Cyrus, a benevolent king of Persia, permitted those exiled Jews to return to their native land and rebuild their sacred temple. All, however, did not return. Later, when Alexander the Great conquered the known world, further Jewish migrations from the Holy Land occurred. Many of those who took up residency in

other lands later applied for and were granted the rights of Roman citizenship. Paul and the family from which he came appear to have been one of these, for Paul was a free-born Roman citizen and was always intensely proud of this fact. (See Acts 21:39; 22:25–29.)

Unquestionably these scattered Jews, like some of their compatriots in Palestine, were influenced by the world around them. Many tended in process of time to lose their Jewish exclusiveness and to be assimilated into their environment. These are sometimes referred to as Hellenistic Jews, or Grecians (Acts 6:1; 9:29; 11:20), because they adopted the Greek culture and language as their own. Only in matters of religious faith did they remain Jewish, and even this was not the strict variety. Others resisted amalgamation of any sort. While they maintained friendly relations with their non-Israelite neighbors, they refused to adopt Greek or Roman ways. Paul was of such a family. According to his own testimony, he was “circumcised the eighth day, of the stock of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, an Hebrew of the Hebrews, as touching the Law, a Pharisee.” (Philippians 3:5.) Such Jews are sometimes called Hebraists because of their tendency to cling to their Jewish exclusiveness in the midst of an alien environment.

A good example of Jews of the dispersion would be those spoken of in Acts 2:5. They are described as “dwelling at” Jerusalem at the time of the Passover, “devout men out of every nation under heaven,” and were said to be “Parthians, and Medes, and Elamites, and the dwellers in Mesopotamia, and in Judaea, and Cappadocia, in Pontus, and Asia, Phrygia, and Pamphylia, in Egypt, and in the parts of Libya about Cyrene, and strangers of Rome, Jews and proselytes, Cretes and Arabians. . . .” (Acts 2:9–11.)

Even in their scattered condition, however, the Jews, particularly the Hebraists, continued to look upon Jerusalem as their spiritual home on earth. As formerly noted, pilgrimages to the sacred temple, while not a yearly occurrence for those scattered in the furthest regions, were great events and eagerly anticipated. All faithful Jews continued to pay the half-shekel tax for maintenance of temple worship. Moreover, it would appear that the famed Sanhedrin of Jerusalem exercised at least token influence over the scattered Jewish communities throughout the empire. A good example would be Paul’s request of the high priest in Jerusalem for “letters to Damascus to the synagogues, that if he found any of this [Christian] way, whether they were men or women, he might

bring them bound unto Jerusalem,” presumably for examination (Acts 9:1, 2). (See also the implications in Acts 22:4, 30 and 26:12.)

Why the Jewish Education System Probably Contributed to a Feeling of Exclusiveness

Part of the Jewish exclusiveness was undoubtedly due to the fact that the Jews found themselves in very close proximity to other nations, generally more powerful than themselves. There was always a great temptation to imbibe the evil influences of foreigners and thus incur Jehovah’s wrath. Particularly was this true of those Jews who did not live in Palestine. Uprooted from their homeland, possessing no system of military defense, the preservation of their national identity depended on how skillfully they perpetuated their Jewish heritage, hence their heavy emphasis on Torah instruction. Every phase of Jewish life merged with theology. Education was no exception. Jewish children, wherever they lived, were taught that they were a people set apart, that they were called of God and were to keep themselves unspotted from the heathens with whom they were surrounded. To fail to do this was to sacrifice one’s chosen status. If by his conduct or words a Jew displeased his elders, he could literally be “put from the synagogue,” that is, expelled or excommunicated. (See, for example, John 9:13–34.) Small wonder, then, that Peter and Paul generally encountered the problems that they did (Acts 4:16–18; 5:17–32; 13:44–50). Gentiles might consider Christianity merely another sect of Judaism such as Pharisees and Sadducees, but the Jews—never!

The word *gentile* comes to us from the Latin *gentilis*, which is derived from *gens*, the Latin word for “nations.” In Jewish thought, it included all non-Hebrew peoples. Sometimes the term was applied in a reproachful way; sometimes it was not. Often it was used merely to identify those peoples or nations whose God was not Jehovah, whose worship, ritual, and religious practices were foreign to those of Israel. Whereas the Roman world was largely pagan in its orientation and accepted and even embraced the gods of various nations, the Jews believed in and worshipped one God alone: Jehovah. He only, of all the gods of men, had a true existence in fact. Gentiles could become Jews providing they were willing to subscribe to all requirements of the law of Moses, including circumcision. Those who would not so subscribe were generally looked upon as inferior to God’s “chosen people.”

(See Deuteronomy 7:6; 10:15; 14:2; and Isaiah 41:8, all of which speak of God’s chosen people. The thing

the Jews forgot was that they were chosen from among the peoples of the earth for a special mission: to bless all others with the truths of God. They were not chosen so that they could reserve these blessings exclusively for themselves. Neither did the possession of these truths make them better than other people. “For unto whomsoever much is given of him shall be much required.” [Luke 12:48; cf. D&C 82:3.] Even the apostles had to learn this important truth.)

A Special Problem: The Jewish Convert to the Church

We have already mentioned how the law of Moses was generally viewed by the Jews of apostolic times. Among those who laid the most rigid interpretation upon its strict observance was a Jewish sect known as Pharisees, the group Jesus denounced for their hypocritical ways (see Matthew 23), and a group that Paul referred to as the “strictest sect of our religion.” (Acts 26:5.) Although a Jew of the dispersion, Paul was raised “a Pharisee, the son of a Pharisee” (Acts 23:6) and referred to himself as a “Hebrew of the Hebrews,” one who was “blameless” as far as the rigid observance of the Law was concerned (Philippians 3:5, 6).

Following his vision and conversion at Damascus, however, Paul changed his attitude toward the Law. The law of Moses was fulfilled and done away with in Christ’s atoning act. Even as early as Stephen’s martyrdom the Jews were charging the saints with desires to “change the customs which Moses delivered unto us.” (Acts 6:14.) How rapidly or in what manner this change occurred we cannot say. What can be said is that questions regarding the binding nature of the law on new converts, Jew or gentile, became the burden of many of Paul’s letters directed to the various Christian churches. The books of Galatians and Romans in particular were dedicated to persuading his readers that the law of Moses was dead, so far as Christians were concerned.

Not all Jewish converts to the church of Jesus Christ agreed with Paul. As a matter of fact, at least one body disagreed strongly. Probably Pharisaical in background, they insisted that the law was given of God to be observed for all time. Those who held such views have come to be known as Judaizers, although the term as such is not found in scripture. Let it be clearly understood that these Judaizers were converts to the church, men who thought they espoused the Christian cause and accepted Christ as their Redeemer. Generally they were faithful Jews who saw Christianity as a mere outgrowth of Judaism rather

than as a restored gospel that did away with the lesser law of Moses. As such they continued to press for rigid and inflexible observance of the law for all members of the church. Such insistence created all kinds of special problems. Paul and the gentile saints viewed their church membership as a formal deliverance from all the religious ceremonialism of their former faiths. Why should they place themselves now beneath the yoke of Jewish ritualism?

If we ask the question, Why were there Judaizers in the church of Jesus Christ in these early days? let us also consider the fact that Judaic influence was a paramount feature of life for every faithful Jew. It was only with some difficulties that these traditions and dogma were set aside at all. The difficulty of shedding old habits and replacing them with new ones is obvious to anyone who has ever sought true repentance. The law of circumcision was commonplace to Peter, Paul, and other Jews. Even gentile converts to Judaism were required to observe it if they would claim a true home among their new-found friends (Genesis 34:14–17; Exodus 12:48).

That the Jews felt themselves to be exclusive among all of our Father’s children, the factors that contributed to this exclusive feeling, the effects of the Jewish dispersion among the gentile nations, and the effect of the gospel upon Jewish converts—all of these are essential to your understanding of the historical setting of the New Testament and particularly to the written correspondence of church leaders to church members spread throughout the Roman world.

BIOGRAPHIES

LUKE

Physician (Colossians 4:14) and missionary companion of Paul, Luke made a significant contribution to saints of all ages by writing two of the New Testament books—the Gospel that bears his name and Acts. (Actually, they are two volumes of the same work, as can be seen from his introduction to both books.) He was of gentile origin and joined Paul on the second missionary journey, probably at Troas. (See Acts 16:10 where the so-called “we” sections begin.) Modern Bible research and archeology have shown him to be a historian of accuracy and sensitivity.

PETER

Peter, son of Jonah, lived with his wife and other family members in Bethsaida, a village on the Sea of Galilee near Capernaum. His trade was that of a

fisherman. He, with his brother Andrew and the two sons of Zebedee, James and John, were partners in a fishing business. It was Andrew who introduced Peter to Jesus of Nazareth at a time when Peter, Andrew, James, and John were disciples of John the Baptist. At his first meeting with Jesus, Peter was given another name by the Savior—Cephas, an Aramaic word meaning “rock or stone.”

With James, John, and Andrew, Peter was challenged to abandon worldly pursuits and follow in the footsteps of the Savior. When the first Quorum of Twelve Apostles was formed, Jesus called Peter to the apostleship, and ordained him, and sent him forth with Andrew to preach the gospel. It was Peter who declared Jesus’ messiahship after most of Jesus’ hearers rejected the Bread of Life sermon. It was Peter who testified that Jesus was “the Christ, the Son of the living God.” (Matthew 16:16.)

Not long after the Bread of Life sermon, Jesus took Peter, James, and John onto the Mount of Transfiguration. From lay disciple, Peter had ascended the ladder of faith, rung by rung, until he was privileged to stand on that mountain and receive revelation from heavenly beings who included Jesus, Elohim, Moses, and Elijah.

Of all the apostles, Peter seems to have been the most impetuous. He appears to have often acted from impulse. In the upper room, Peter protested vigorously when the ordinance of the washing of feet was introduced to him by Jesus. In Gethsemane, Peter slept while the Savior experienced his agony. At the time of Jesus’ arrest, it was Peter who drew his sword and cut off the ear of Malchus, the servant of the High Priest. Not long thereafter, Peter three times denied knowing the Savior.

Always, however, Peter’s repentance was sincere and complete. He had always the strength and determination not to repeat the same mistake. That Peter enjoyed the Savior’s forgiveness and approval is evident from the fact that Jesus appeared to the chief apostle on the day of the resurrection and commanded Peter to “feed my sheep.” (John 21:16.)

Through all of his experiences with Jesus, Peter was carefully tutored to assume his foreordained responsibility to serve as president of the church of Jesus Christ after the Lord’s ascension. The first twelve chapters of the book of Acts contain an account of Peter’s steadfastness in the face of great opposition. Peter was indeed a true prophet of the Lord Jesus Christ. (For an excellent treatment of Peter’s life, see Appendix D at the end of the manual.)

PAUL

It is difficult to date the birth of Paul with accuracy, although some time between A.D. 1 and 6 is probable. As for Paul’s place of birth, he was born in Tarsus, capital of the Roman province of Cilicia, to Jewish parents who were of the tribe of Benjamin.

From Acts 22:28, we learn of Paul’s free-born status as a Roman citizen, though how his forebears acquired this station is not known. Throughout his life, Paul’s Roman citizenship was both a means of physical protection for himself and a source of much influence among the gentiles.

If he followed the Jewish custom of the times, Paul received the education of every Jewish boy. At age five, his parents would have begun his instruction in the Old Testament. He would have committed to memory all or part of Psalms 63 to 68 (the Shema and the Hallel). When he was six, he would have attended a rabbinical school; at age ten he would have studied the oral law; at thirteen he would have been confirmed as a “son of the commandment” (the bar mitzvah), and he would have left the “House of the Book,” where he had labored to learn the scriptures, in order to take his place among the Jewish men.

It is thought that Paul most likely remained in Tarsus until he was thirteen. At that age a Jewish boy had to begin his studies at the feet of a great Jewish teacher if he were to become a rabbi. We know that Paul was a student in Jerusalem under the famous rabbi-teacher Gamaliel (Acts 22:3). Paul’s own testimony leads us to conclude that he spent a major portion of his youth in Jerusalem (Acts 26:4).

“The phrase ‘to sit at the feet of Gamaliel’ gives a true description of the method of [Paul’s] study. The great master [Gamaliel] would sit on a raised stand, and about him, sitting on the floor at his feet, would be his eager disciples.” (Sperry, *Paul’s Life and Letters*, p. 7.) Paul’s studies would include a thorough examination of all facets of the law of Moses. As Paul himself informs us, he was, “taught according to the perfect manner of the law of the fathers.” (Acts 22:3.) He was, as he said, a “Hebrew of the Hebrews.” (Philippians 3:5.)

It was a religious duty for a Jewish young man to marry when he was between sixteen and eighteen years of age. Since Paul was a devout Pharisee, there is good reason to suppose that Paul was married. If Paul became a member of the Sanhedrin, to qualify for such membership he had to be married and he had to be a father.

Paul may have been present to hear the mighty discourse wherein Stephen defended the faith. Paul was present at Stephen's execution (Acts 7:58). It is thought that perhaps Paul attended the stoning in an official capacity. Possibly he was present at the command of the Sanhedrin to insure adherence to the biblical injunction regarding witnesses in a capital case (Deuteronomy 17:6, 7). That Paul consented to Stephen's death is a fact (Acts 8:1; 22:20). After the death of Stephen, Paul "made havock of the church, entering into every house, and haling men and women committed them to prison." (Acts 8:3.) To avoid the heavy hand of persecution, the saints scattered throughout the country.

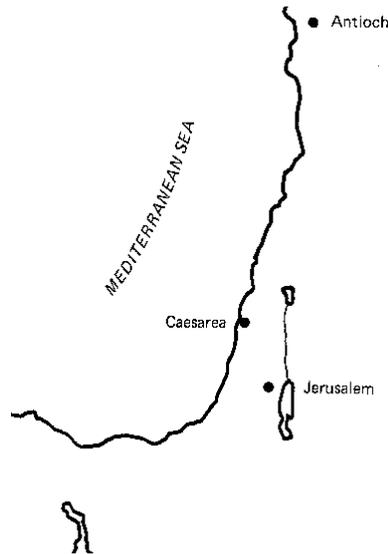
Having obtained letters from the Sanhedrin which authorized him to capture members of the church in Damascus, Paul set out to accomplish his task. His efforts proved fruitless, for on the road to Damascus the course of his life was completely altered by a

vision from the heavens. "Paul's life had been bisected by Damascus Road. Before, he was an aggressive persecutor of Christianity, but after Damascus Road he was one of its most fervent propagators." (Howard W. Hunter in *CR*, Oct. 1964, p. 109.)

The Prophet Joseph Smith gave a description of Paul on January 5, 1841, at the organization of a school of instruction: "He is about five feet high; very dark hair; dark complexion; dark skin; large Roman nose; sharp face; small black eyes, penetrating as eternity; round shoulders; a whining voice, except when elevated, and then it almost resembled the roaring of a lion. He was a good orator, active and diligent, always employing himself in doing good to his fellow man." (*Teachings*, p. 180.)

(*Note*: Additional biographical material on Paul is included in other sections.)

"YE ARE MY WITNESSES, SAITH THE LORD"



The Acts of the Apostles, Written by Luke to Theophilus, ca. A.D. 61–63 Events Occurred ca. A.D. 33–36 (1–8)		
	Acts	
Kingdom to Be Restored to Israel	1:1–8	Fate of Deceivers
Mount of Olives: Christ Ascends to Heaven	1:9–14	Apostles Continue Miracles of Jesus
Jerusalem: Apostles Choose Successor to Judas	1:15–26	Angels Deliver Apostles from Prison
The Holy Ghost and the Day of Pentecost	2:1–21	Apostles Testify of Christ
Peter Testifies of Jesus' Resurrection	2:22–36	Persecution Is Not of God
How to Gain Salvation	2:37–40	Seven Chosen to Assist Apostles
All Things in Common	2:41–47	Stephen Transfigured Before the Sanhedrin
Peter Heals Man Lame from Birth	3:1–16	Stephen Preaches about Israel
Age of Restoration Is Prior to Christ's Second Coming	3:17–24	Moses—A Prototype of Christ
The Children of the Covenant	3:25, 26	Stephen Testifies of Apostasy in Israel
Salvation Comes Only Through Christ	4:1–12	Stephen Sees the Father and the Son
Sadducees Seek to Silence Apostles	4:13–22	Saul Persecutes the Church
Saints Glory in Testimony of Jesus	4:23–31	Samaria: Philip Works Miracles, Converts Simon
Saints Practice United Order	4:32–37	Apostles Confer Gift of the Holy Ghost
		Simon Seeks to Buy Gift of the Holy Ghost
		Toward Gaza: Philip Preaches Christ, Baptizes Eunuch
		8:26–40

THEME

Every member of the Church has made covenants to be a modern-day witness for Christ.

INTRODUCTION

For a period of forty days, the resurrected, glorified Christ visited with his disciples and spoke to them “of the things pertaining to the kingdom of God.” (Acts 1:3.) Though little detail of those days is recorded, we can be certain that during that time the church and its leaders received much of the power that fired them with the will to accomplish what they did. Christ’s similar mission among the Nephites in the New World so completely affected their society that war, poverty, injustice, and contention—evils that have plagued mankind from the dawning of history—were banished for nearly two hundred years. (See 4 Nephi 2–6.)

The effects of the ministry of the Savior after his resurrection were not limited to those privileged to see and meet with him. Those fortunate enough to have that special opportunity were told specifically that it was their duty to share their witness of the Savior and the blessings of the kingdom with others. “Go ye therefore, and teach all nations,” Christ commanded (Matthew 28:19) “and be witnesses unto me both in Jerusalem, and . . . unto the uttermost part of the earth” (Acts 1:8). The lives of the former-day saints were transformed by that witness, and in turn they transformed the lives of thousands of others. The New Testament from Acts to Revelation contains the record of their efforts, the effect of those efforts upon the lives of those who were touched, and the adversary’s attempts to smother and impede the Lord’s work. Those who were faithful to that divine commission to bear witness to the world are honored and revered even today. Peter, John, Paul, James, Stephen, Philip, Mark, and hundreds of others, named and unnamed, sought with valiance to obey the Master’s command.

That commission given two thousand years ago has been renewed in our own time, and new names have been added: Joseph Smith, Brigham Young, Parley P. Pratt, Wilford Woodruff, Harold B. Lee, Spencer W. Kimball, and many others. And while the former-day saints and those who came early in our own dispensation have met their obligations to bear witness of Christ to the world, the Savior’s commission has not yet been fulfilled. The gospel has not yet gone to the uttermost parts of the earth. There

are billions of souls yet to hear and choose. Surely the Master is not satisfied. Surely his charge to us is not revoked.

As a young, committed Latter-day Saint living in the last years of the twentieth century, you are challenged to see your own role in the fulfillment of the Savior’s charge. There is great need for your personal efforts in sharing the witness of the living Christ. There is yet much to do.

This study of the saints of the dispensation of the meridian of time and the witness they bore should be much more than a mere intellectual plowing of scriptural passages and ancient writings. Probe deeply into the lives and hearts of these early saints, for they bore powerful, demanding witness, and laid the foundation stones for the kingdom of God in their dispensation. Learn from them the skills and seek from them the inspiration that can help you add significantly to the growth of that kingdom today. Never lose sight of the fact that when Jesus said, “Be witnesses unto me,” he spoke to you as well as to them.

The first chapters of Acts contain great and motivating insights into what gave the church of Jesus Christ its unique and powerful impact. Read them now with the idea of learning from the early saints, for there is much that our generation can learn from their faithfulness.

Before proceeding, read all the scriptural references in the reading block.

It would also be profitable for you to study the map opposite the introductory page of this chapter to get a clear concept of where these events took place.

INTERPRETIVE COMMENTARY

(29-1) What Is the Theme of the Acts of the Apostles?

The principal theme of the book of Acts is that of growth—growth in men through adherence to the gospel of Jesus Christ and growth of the church through the preaching of God’s word. As Jesus told his apostles shortly before his ascension to heaven, “Ye shall be witnesses unto me both in Jerusalem, and in all Judea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth.” (Acts 1:8.) Note the ever-widening circle of apostolic influence: first “in Jerusalem,” then “in all Judea,” then “in Samaria,” and finally “unto the uttermost part of the earth.” The manner in which the

apostles and others fulfilled this divine commission becomes one of the major messages of the book of Acts.

(29-2) Who Wrote the Book of Acts of the Apostles?

It is generally agreed that the book of Acts was written by the same person who wrote the third Gospel, namely, Luke. Careful students of Luke's gospel will recall that its first four verses are addressed to one described as the "most excellent Theophilus." We do not know who Theophilus was or what position of excellence or honor he held. That he was a person of considerable prominence, likely a Greek, seems probable, since Luke addresses him in both of his written works. Prefacing the book of Acts, Luke writes:

"The former treatise [i.e., the Gospel of Luke] have I made, O Theophilus, of all that Jesus began both to do and teach." (Acts 1:1.) The book of Acts begins where the Gospel of Luke leaves off: with an account of the events surrounding the ascension of Jesus into heaven.

That the author of Acts was an active participant in many of the events described in its pages is evident from the so-called "we" passages. These commence in Acts 16:10, presumably following the conversion of Luke to the gospel by Paul's preaching, and continue for a time without interruption, indicating the active presence of the writer in the events described. These so-called "we" sections then disappear for a while, only to reoccur in Acts 20:6 and in some later chapters.

(29-3) Date and Place of Writing

While the place of writing cannot be determined with any degree of certainty, the time of writing can be narrowed with some assurance. The book itself records Paul's journey to Rome and his imprisonment there for two years, probably about A.D. 61–63 (Acts 28:30). Yet no mention is made by Luke of the trial itself or of its outcome, a fact he would hardly have failed to mention if it had already taken place. The date of writing is very probable within that two-year period.

(29-4) The Significance of the Acts of the Apostles

The book of Acts provides us with our principal view of the church of Jesus Christ during its formative years. It forms a unique bridge between the life and teachings of Jesus on the one hand and the writings and labors of the Savior's apostles on the other.

According to Elder Bruce R. McConkie, Acts also ranks first among biblical books "in telling how the Church and kingdom of God on earth operates when Jesus the King is not personally resident on planet earth." (*DNTC*, 2:19.) Elder McConkie further states: "Acts tells how the spiritual gifts multiplied until they were enjoyed by the apostles and by whole congregations of the faithful. Peter and Paul raise the dead. Angels minister to Jew and Gentile alike. Miracles of healing multiply. Thousands receive the gift of tongues. Revelation and prophecy is everywhere. . . .

"Amid the spiritual display, Acts recounts the facts relative to church organization, missionary journeys, and the general spread of truth in a pagan world. It tells of the persecutions, stonings, trials, and impositions heaped upon those who center their hearts on Christ and strive to overcome the world.

"And the doctrines of salvation—how many of these are spoken of in plainness and perfection: the Second Coming, the plan of salvation, the atonement of Christ, the restoration of the gospel in latter-days, revelation, prophecy, gifts of the Spirit, miracles, healings, the latter-day gathering of Israel, the resurrection, apostasy from the truth, and so forth." (McConkie, *DNTC*, 2:19–20.)

Thus we are indebted to Acts for our clearest view of life in the early church. Nowhere do we get a better view of Paul's travels in behalf of the kingdom of Christ. Further, the epistles written by Paul and others take on their greatest significance only when viewed against the backdrop of the narrative provided by Luke. We see the infant church and its leaders struggling with the problems encountered when the new revelation in Christ is thrust against the time-honored traditions of the Jews. Are gentiles who enter the church bound by the Mosaic restrictions? Do Jews who become Christians continue to be subject to the law of Moses? What is the status of the law of Moses now that Christ has atoned for men's sins? These and other problems are wrestled with and solved by divine revelation.

The book of Acts comes to us in two principal divisions: In the first part, Acts 1–12, activities of the church center in and near Jerusalem; and Peter, the president of the church, is the principal figure. In the second part, Acts 13–28, Antioch in Syria is the primary center from which activity emerges, and the main focus is on Paul, missionary to the gentiles.

(29-5) Acts 1:1. Who Was Theophilus?

The name itself means “beloved” or “friend of God.” The Gospel of Luke and the book of Acts were addressed to this man (Luke 1:3; Acts 1:1). Because he is referred to in Luke as “most excellent Theophilus,” it has been inferred that he was of high rank. The title “most excellent” is thought to be equivalent to “right honorable” in English. All that can be safely assumed is that he was a gentile, possibly a Greek and an official.

(29-6) Acts 1:8. Was There a Particular Pattern to the Manner in Which the Gospel Message Was Spread?

Just prior to his ascension to heaven, Jesus informed his apostles that they would be “witnesses” to his name “both in Jerusalem, and in all Judea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth.” It is interesting to notice how the book of Acts reflects the fulfillment of our Savior’s words. Chapters one through seven deal with events in the city of Jerusalem only. Following the stoning of Stephen, however, the disciples “were all scattered abroad throughout the regions of Judaea and Samaria.” (Acts 8:1.) Luke informs us that those thus scattered “went every where preaching the word.” (Acts 8:4.) Later he tells us just how far from Jerusalem the word had spread: “Now they which were scattered abroad upon the persecution that arose about Stephen traveled as far as Phenice, and Cyprus, and Antioch, *preaching the word to none but unto the Jews only.*” (Acts 11:19. Italics added.) (See map inset.)

At this point, the word of God was taken into Samaria by Philip (Acts 8:5). The Samaritans, while not totally gentiles, were considered half-caste Jews by the residents of Judea. They were a people to be avoided if at all possible. When the apostles at Jerusalem learned that Samaria had received the word of the Lord, Peter and John went to bestow the gift of the Holy Ghost (Acts 18:14, 15). Clearly, the gospel message had moved out of Jerusalem. By the time of Paul’s conversion, as recorded in Acts, chapter 9, the word of the Lord had spread as far as Damascus, a city of Syria, some 130 miles northeast of Jerusalem. Meanwhile, Philip was preaching in the cities west of Judea along the Mediterranean seacoast. (See the map on page 230.)

Living in Caesarea was a certain man named Cornelius, a Roman centurion and a gentile. He was a worshiper of God, and he thought much on spiritual

matters. He was privileged to be the first Gentile who had not previously become a proselyte to Judaism, to join the church of Jesus Christ (Acts 10). To Peter, president of the church of Jesus Christ, was given the revelation that “God is no respecter of persons: But in every nation he that feareth him, and worketh righteousness, is accepted with him.” (Acts 10:34, 35.) The gospel had moved from Jerusalem to Samaria, to the whole world, to the gentiles. Although Paul’s pattern was to preach the gospel first in the Jewish synagogues in every town into which he might journey, he turned his attention increasingly to the gentiles also (Acts 13:46; 18:6; 28:28). It is safe to assume that the other apostles, though we have no precise record of their labors, also helped to fulfill the Lord’s prediction that they would be his “witnesses . . . unto the uttermost part of the earth.”

(29-7) Acts 2:1. What Was the Day of Pentecost?

Fifty days or seven weeks following the Passover feast, faithful Jews observed a celebration known as Pentecost. The word comes to us from the Greek *pentekoste* and literally means “fiftieth.” It was variously known as the day of the first fruits (Numbers 28:26) or feast of harvest (Exodus 23:16). Coming as it did following the seven weeks of Passover, it was also known as the feast of weeks (Exodus 34:22; Deuteronomy 16:10). How significant that God should literally pour out his Spirit upon the people at a time when they were pouring out their gratitude to him. Peter saw it as a partial fulfillment of the ancient prophecy of the prophet Joel (Joel 2:28–32).

(29-8) Acts 2:2–4. Has the Ancient Pentecostal Experience Ever Been Repeated?

The great pentecostal experience of the outpouring of the Spirit, or Holy Ghost, has a parallel in history. At the time of the dedicatory services for the Kirtland Temple, the Prophet Joseph Smith prayed for a special anointing of the Spirit from on high. “Let it be fulfilled upon them as in the days of Pentecost,” he pleaded in behalf of the Saints. “Let the gift of tongues be poured out upon thy people, even cloven tongues as of fire, and the interpretation thereof. And let thy house be filled, as with a rushing mighty wind, with thy glory.” (D&C 109:35–37.) This plea was literally fulfilled, not once, but for several days following the initial dedicatory services. On one occasion, “a noise was heard like the sound of a rushing mighty wind, which filled the Temple, and all the congregation simultaneously arose, being moved upon by an

invisible power; many began to speak in tongues and prophesy; others saw glorious visions; and I beheld the Temple was filled with angels, which fact I declared to the congregation.” (Smith, *HC*, 2:428; cf. 432.)

(29-9) Acts 2:29–31, 34. What Do We Know Concerning the Spiritual Fate of David, King of Israel?

“A murderer, for instance, one that sheds innocent blood, cannot have forgiveness. David sought repentance at the hand of God carefully with tears, for the murder of Uriah; but he could only get it through hell: he got a promise that his soul should not be left in hell.”

“Although David was a king, he never did obtain the spirit and power of Elijah and the fullness of the Priesthood; and the Priesthood that he received, and throne and kingdom of David is to be taken from him and given to another by the name of David in the last days, raised up out of his lineage. (Smith, *Teachings*, p. 339.)

(29-10) Acts 2:40. What Is an “Untoward Generation”?

In the Old English used when the King James Version was written, *toward* meant obedient, teachable, amenable. *Untoward*, therefore, meant rebellious, intractable, perverse.

(29-11) Acts 3:19. What Is Meant by the “Times of Refreshing”?

“If we are to catch the vision of Peter’s prophecy, we must know pointedly and specifically what is meant by *the times of refreshing*. It is elsewhere spoken of by Jesus as ‘the regeneration when the Son of man shall sit in the throne of his glory.’ (Matt. 19:28.) It is the day ‘when the earth shall be transfigured, even according to the pattern which was shown unto mine apostles upon the mount. . . .’ the Lord says. (D&C 63:21.) It is the day when ‘the earth will be renewed and receive its paradisiacal glory.’ (Tenth Article of Faith.) It is the day of the ‘new earth’ that Isaiah saw (Isa. 65:17), the earth which will prevail when wickedness ceases, when the millennial era is ushered in. . . . It is the day when men ‘shall beat their swords into plowshares, and hooks’ (Isa. 2:4), a day of universal peace and justice, a millennial era when Christ shall reign personally upon the earth.” (Bruce R. McConkie in *CR*, Oct. 1967, p. 43.)

(29-12) Acts 3:21. What Is Meant by the “Times of Restitution”?

“These words mean *age of restoration*, an age in which God has promised to restore all things that he spoke by the mouth of all his holy prophets since the world began.

“Thus, Christ came once and ministered among men, climaxing his ministry with his atoning sacrifice and ascension to his Father. He is to come again, a second time, in a day of refreshing and renewal, to reign personally upon the earth. But he cannot come this second time until an age in the earth’s history commences which has the name *the times of restitution*, or in other words he cannot come until the age or period of restoration; and in that age or period all essential things that God ever gave in any age of the earth for salvation, betterment, blessing, and edification of his children will be restored again.” (Bruce R. McConkie in *CR*, Oct. 1967, p. 43.)

(29-13) Acts 4:6. Who Were Annas, Caiaphas, John, and Alexander?

Annas was a Jewish high priest in the days of Jesus. He was the son of Seth, was appointed to the priestly office at age thirty-seven, and held the office when John the Baptist commenced his call for repentance (Luke 3:2). He was the father-in-law of Caiaphas, high priest during the time of Jesus’ crucifixion and Peter and John’s difficulties with the Sanhedrin (John 18:18, 24; Acts 4:6). He was a man of powerful influence among the Jews, and five of his sons served as high priests.

The full name of Caiaphas was Joseph Caiaphas. He was high priest of the Jews during the reign of the emperor Tiberius (Matthew 26:3, 57; John 11:49; 18:13, 14, 24, 28; Acts 4:6). Before him appeared both Jesus and the apostles Peter and John. He was the son-in-law of Annas, high priest before him, and he served some eighteen years in this important post.

Nothing more is known of John and Alexander beyond this one reference.

(29-14) Acts 5:1–11. What Lesson Can Be Learned from the Deaths of Ananias and Sapphira?

“In effect the lesson to learn from Ananias is that unrepentant liars will be damned. What, then, of the part tithpayer who tells his bishop the sum given the Church is a full tithing? Or of the immoral couple who, conspiring together, assert their purity in order to

get a temple recommend? Or of church members who deny sins of any sort which would keep them from receiving temple blessings, priesthood ordinations, or positions of leadership?" (McConkie, *DNTC*, 2:58–59.)

(29-15) Acts 5:34–40. Who Was Gamaliel?

The grandson of the famous rabbi Hillel and famous in his own right, Gamaliel was a member of the Sanhedrin and a distinguished scholar of the Jewish law during the time when the early church was first getting underway. Paul states that he was “brought up at the feet” of Gamaliel (Acts 22:3), an idiomatic expression meaning that he was tutored by the famous master of the law. Gamaliel had a reputation for being tolerant and kindhearted, emphasizing the humanistic considerations of the law, relaxing the demands of Sabbath observance so they were not so rigorous, and encouraging more humane treatment of the woman in divorce laws. The advice which he gives to the chief priests regarding the apostles and the infant church (Acts 5:34–40) supports this reputation for tolerance and wisdom. It is likely that his wise advice saved the lives of the apostles, even though the council beat them before sending them away (Acts 5:40).

(29-16) Acts 5:36. Who Were Theudas and Judas of Galilee?

Gamaliel attempted to persuade the Jewish leaders from their intent to persecute and kill Peter and the apostles. In a speech before the Sanhedrin he referred to a man called Theudas who had gained four hundred followers, only to fail in his attempts to acquire additional adherents. In fact, Theudas was killed and his followers were scattered. In effect, Gamaliel’s approach was, “Let nature take its course. If the work be of men, it will fail as did Theudas. If it is of God, it will triumph to your injury.” (See Acts 5:35–39.)

In giving a reason why the Sanhedrin should let the apostles go, Gamaliel cited the case of Judas of Galilee as an example of how a movement would come to naught if the Lord was not with it. Though Gamaliel’s advice carried with the council, his evaluation of Judas and his followers proved to be quite inadequate. In about A.D. 6 or 7, Quirinius, the Roman governor of Syria, undertook a census of Palestine. Judas, a fanatically loyal Galilean, said that the Jews should be free of any foreign domination and therefore opposed the census. He gathered a band of followers who resisted the order with open violence. They were, for the most part, captured, tortured, and killed, including Judas, so in that sense, at least,

Gamaliel was correct. But from that brief insurrection was born the movement known as the Zealots which, in A.D. 66, led another revolt against Rome. It was this Zealot-inspired revolt which led to the destruction of the temple and the scattering of the Jews from Palestine in A.D. 70–72.

(29-17) Acts 6:5–7:59. Who Was Stephen?

Seven men, among whom was Stephen, were selected by the apostles to perform duties pertaining to whatever system of welfare was in use at the time. Stephen was especially valiant in his ministry. The scriptures attest that he was a man “full of faith and power” who “did great wonders and miracles among the people.” Because he spoke and acted with such authority and might, certain men of the Jews had him arrested on false charges. False witnesses testified before the Sanhedrin that Stephen had spoken blasphemy against the temple and the law of Moses. During the proceedings, all who looked on him “saw his face as it had been the face of an angel” (Acts 6:15); yet they refused to heed this visible witness which was manifest in Stephen’s transfiguration. His defense was a recitation of the history of God’s dealings with his children. Stephen argued that Israel did not understand their own law. They had persecuted and killed the prophets as they had persecuted and killed Jesus. Stephen gazed into the heavens and saw the resurrected Christ with his Father. His incriminating testimony they could not bear. Crying “blasphemy,” Stephen was cast out of Jerusalem’s walls and stoned. Stephen died, one of the first martyrs of the faith.

(29-18) Acts 7:58. Who Was Saul?

Saul was the Hebrew name of Paul the apostle. Born of the tribe of Benjamin (Romans 11:1; Philippians 3:5), Paul was a Jew of the Diaspora. At an appropriate time he changed his Hebrew name to its Roman counterpart, Paul, thus enabling him to move more easily in gentile circles. (For further biographical detail, see page 270.)

(29-19) Acts 7:60. “Lord, Lay Not This Sin to Their Charge”

“When the Lord, in his dying moments, turned to the Father and requested, ‘Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do’ (Luke 23:34), he was referring to the soldiers who crucified him. They acted under the mandate of a sovereign nation. It was the Jews who were guilty of the Lord’s death. Again how could he forgive them, or how could his Father forgive them,

when they were not repentant. These vicious people who cried, ‘ . . . His blood be on us, and on our children’ (Matt. 27:25) had not repented. Those who ‘reviled him’ on Calvary (Matt. 27:39) had not repented. The Jewish leaders who tried Jesus illegally, demanded his crucifixion from Pilate, and incited the mob to their vilest actions had not repented. Nor had the Roman soldiers who, though no doubt obligated under their military law to crucify Jesus as instructed, were under no compulsion to add the insults and cruelties to which they subjected the Savior prior to his crucifixion.

“Could the Lord forgive Pilate? Certainly he could not without Pilate’s repentance. Did Pilate repent? We do not know what Pilate did after the scripture drops him. He had a desire to favor the Savior. He did not display full courage in resisting the pressures of the people. Could he have saved the life of the Lord? Again, we do not know. We leave Pilate to the Lord as we do all other sinners, but remember that ‘to know and not to do’ is sin.” (Kimball, *Miracle of Forgiveness*, p. 167.)

(29-20) Acts 8:5. Who Was Philip?

Philip was one of seven men chosen to assist the apostles in caring for the needy (Acts 6:1–6). He preached at Samaria, where Simon the sorcerer believed the gospel message (Acts 8:5–13). When commanded by an angel, Philip went from Jerusalem to Gaza, where he expounded the words of Isaiah and the gospel to a eunuch of great importance who received the word with gladness and was baptized (Acts 8:26–39). Then he preached in different places until he took up residence at Caesarea (Acts 8:40). Paul stayed with Philip at Caesarea on his third missionary journey (Acts 21:8–15). Philip had four unmarried daughters who had the gift of prophecy (Acts 21:9).

(29-21) Acts 8:5–8. Can a Member of the Aaronic Priesthood Perform Great Works of Righteousness?

“I desire to impress upon you the fact that it does not make any difference whether a man is a Priest or an Apostle, if he magnifies his calling. A Priest holds the key of the ministering of angels. Never in my life, as an Apostle, as a Seventy, or as an Elder, have I ever had more of the protection of the Lord than while holding the office of a Priest. The Lord revealed to me by visions, by revelations, and by the Holy Spirit, many things that lay before me.” (Wilford Woodruff, *Millennial Star*, 53:629.)

POINTS TO PONDER

THE COMMISSION TO BE WITNESSES OF CHRIST CONTINUES FOR SAINTS OF MODERN TIMES

(29-22) All the World Is to Be Converted

When Christ said that the witness of him should go “unto the uttermost part of the earth” (Acts 1:8), some people assumed he was speaking only to the saints of that time. But that was not true. Christ was speaking especially to us as members of the restored church. President Spencer W. Kimball said this:

“If there were no converts, the Church would shrivel and die on the vine. But perhaps the greatest reason for missionary work is to give the world its chance to hear and accept the gospel. The scriptures are replete with commands and promises and calls and rewards for teaching the gospel. I use the word *command* deliberately for it seems to be an insistent directive from which we, singly and collectively, cannot escape.

“. . . It seems to me that the Lord chose his words when he said ‘every nation,’ ‘every land,’ ‘uttermost bounds of the earth,’ ‘every tongue,’ ‘every people,’ ‘every soul,’ ‘all the world,’ ‘many lands.’

“Surely there is significance in these words!

“Certainly his sheep were not limited to the thousands about him and with whom he rubbed shoulders each day. A universal family! A universal command!” (“When the World Will Be Converted,” *Ensign*, Oct. 1974, pp. 4–5.)

(29-23) “For Verily the Voice of the Lord Is unto All Men”

It is clearly a monumental task that the Lord has given his church. Even considering the fact that the charge does not necessarily imply that every person must be converted but rather that every soul must have the privilege of hearing the gospel and choosing for himself, it is still a challenge of staggering proportions. But, obviously, President Kimball is not discouraged by the challenge. Before reading of the great perspective he has about how this divine commission can literally be fulfilled, consider some other statistics which show that, while the task is of huge proportions, the Church is making amazing headway in its accomplishment.

Population experts estimate that in 1850 the world's population reached one billion people.

In 1850 the total membership of the church of Jesus Christ was an estimated 60,000.

By 1976, the world's population had increased to about four billion people.

By 1976, the membership of the Church had increased to nearly 3,650,000.

Thus, in the last 126 years the world's population increased fourfold, but Church membership had increased over fifty-six fold. In other words, Church growth was fourteen times faster than that of the population.

Or to put it another way, in 1850 Church membership amounted to only six thousandths of one percent of the world's total people. But by 1976 that ratio had increased fourteen times, to just less than one-tenth of one percent.

(29-24) When the World Will Be Converted

When President Kimball gave this address, he was speaking to Regional Representatives of the Twelve. But you ask yourself the same questions he asked them, for when it comes right down to it, the responsibility must rest upon the shoulders of individual members of the Church.

“My brethren, I wonder if we are doing all we can. Are we complacent in our approach to teaching all the world? We have been proselyting now 144 years. Are we prepared to lengthen our stride? To enlarge our vision?”

“Remember, our ally is our God. He is our commander. He made the plans. He gave the commandment. Remember what we have quoted thousands of times as told by Nephi:

“‘And it came to pass that I, Nephi, said unto my father: I will go and do the things which the Lord hath commanded, for I know that the Lord giveth no commandments unto the children of men, save he shall prepare a way for them that they may accomplish the thing which he commandeth them.’ (1 Ne. 3:7.)

“And as I read the scripture I think of the numerous nations that are still untouched. I know they have curtains, like iron curtains and bamboo curtains. I

know how difficult it is because we have made some efforts. Surely the Lord knew what he was doing when he commanded. . . .

“‘For verily the voice of the Lord is unto all men, and there is none to escape; and there is no eye that shall not see, neither ear that shall not hear, neither heart that shall not be penetrated.

“‘And the voice of warning shall be unto all people, by the mouths of my disciples, whom I have chosen in these last days.’ (D&C 1:2, 4.)

“‘Somehow, brethren, I feel that when we have done all in our power that the Lord will find a way to open doors. That is my faith.

“‘Is any thing too hard for the Lord?’ he asked, when Sarah laughed when she was told that she would have a son. When she heard this in the tent door, she knew that both Abraham at 100 years and she at 90 years were past the age of reproduction. She could not bear children. She knew that, as well as it has been known that we could not open doors to many nations.

“‘And the Lord said unto Abraham, Wherefore did Sarah laugh. . . .

“‘Is any thing too hard for the Lord? At the time appointed I will return unto thee, according to the time of life, and Sarah shall have a son.’ (Gen. 18:13–14.)

“‘Brethren, Sarah did have a son, from Abraham, the father of nations.

“‘Therefore sprang there even of one, and him as good as dead [and that was Abraham, 100 years old], so many as the stars of the sky in multitude, and as the sand which is by the sea shore innumerable.’ (Heb. 11:12.)

“‘Is anything too hard for the Lord?

“‘Also to Jeremiah he had said:

“‘Behold, I am the Lord, the God of all flesh: is there any thing too hard for me?’ (Jer. 32:27.)

“‘If he commands, certainly he can fulfill.

“‘We remember the exodus of the children of Israel crossing the uncrossable Red Sea.

“‘We remember Cyrus diverting a river and taking the impregnable city of Babylon.

“‘We remember the Lehites getting to the promised land.

“We remember the Revolutionary War and the power of God that gave us triumph.

“I believe the Lord can do anything he sets his mind to do.

“But I can see no good reason why the Lord would open doors that we are not prepared to enter. Why should he break down the Iron Curtain or the Bamboo Curtain or any other curtain if we are still unprepared to enter?

“I believe we have men who could help the apostles to open these doors—statesmen, able and trustworthy—but, when we are ready for them.

“Today we have 18,600 missionaries. We can send more. Many more! Eight thousand, nine hundred went through the mission home in 1973.

“I believe it was John Taylor who said, ‘God will hold us responsible to the people we might have saved, had we done our duty.’” (Kimball, “When the World Will Be Converted,” pp. 5, 7.)

As you read what President Kimball said, were you thinking only in terms of the full-time missionary and the contribution he can make? If you are a young man who has not yet fulfilled a mission, then you can take President Kimball’s challenge directly into your life and apply it. But consider also some other ways you can do your part in increasing the missionary effort.

- *Are you dating a boy who is approaching mission age? Have you let him know that you want him to go, that anything less on his part would be a severe disappointment to you? Or have you thought only in terms of your own temporary loss and thus added to the difficulty of his leaving?*
- *If you are a returned missionary, do you share your testimony often with young men around you about the importance of missionary work and the great value of fulfilling a mission? Do you share the experiences you had which will motivate others to say, “That’s the kind of experience I want in my life”?*
- *Do you teach a class of Primary or Sunday School children? Have you remembered that attitudes set early in life influence patterns for years thereafter? Are you doing all you can as a teacher to develop the eager, spiritually prepared missionary President Kimball is calling for?*

- *And what about your own family? Are there opportunities there to influence a younger brother? Have you lent your faithful prayers to an older brother struggling to decide whether or not he should go?*
- *Have you determined irrevocably in your own heart to raise sons that will be the kind of missionaries demanded by our challenge? Have you broken out of the limited vision of now and thought of your possible contributions in ten or twenty years from now? Such determination would mean wise selection of a mate, temple marriage, church activity.*
- *Do you capitalize on your opportunities to influence nonmembers to seek for the knowledge and blessings you have? You can prepare effective contacts for the missionaries. Are you remembering that potential also?*
- *At baptism, you made a solemn covenant with the Lord. Part of the covenant included the promise to “stand as witnesses of God at all times and in all things, and in all places that ye may be in, even until death.” (Mosiah 18:9.) What would the faithful completion of that covenant mean for you?*
- *Every Sunday when you partake of the sacrament, you again solemnly affirm that you are bearing witness of something. (See D&C 20:77, 79.) To what are you bearing witness and what does that mean in terms of missionary work?*

Christ issued the commission to go to all the world, and President Kimball has challenged us to accept that commission literally and fulfill it. Your place in its fulfillment can be of eternal and profound significance if you willingly commit yourself to the task.

“I ask you, what did he mean when the Lord took his Twelve Apostles to the top of the Mount of Olives and said:

“‘. . . And ye shall be witnesses unto me both in Jerusalem, and in all Judea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth.’ (Acts 1:8.)

“These were his last words on earth before he went to his heavenly home.

“What is the significance of the phrase ‘uttermost part of the earth’? He had already covered the area

known to the apostles. Was it the people in Judea? Or those in Samaria? Or the few millions in the Near East? Where were the 'uttermost parts of the earth'? Did he mean the millions in what is now America? Did he include the hundreds of thousands, or even millions, in Greece, Italy, around the Mediterranean, the inhabitants of central Europe? What did he mean? Or did he mean all the living people of all the

*world and those spirits assigned to this world to come in centuries ahead? Have we underestimated his language or its meaning? How can we be satisfied with 100,000 converts out of nearly four billion people in the world who need the gospel?" ("When the World Will Be Converted," *Ensign*, Oct. 1974, p. 4.)*

"GOD IS NO RESPECTER OF PERSONS"



The Acts of the Apostles—Events Occurred ca. A.D. 40–44 (10–13:1–5)	
	Acts
Caesarea, Judea The Vision of Cornelius	10:1–8
Peter: A Vision of the Unclean	10:9–20
The Gospel Is Sent to the Gentiles	10:21–35
Teachings of Witnesses	10:36–43
The Holy Ghost Poured Out on the Gentiles	10:44–48
Jerusalem, Judea Peter's Report	11:1–18
Antioch, Syria Disciples are Called Christians	11:19–26
Agabus Prophecies of Famine	11:27–30
Jerusalem, Judea Peter is Freed from Prison	12:1–19
Caesarea: Herod Dies of Disease	12:20–23
Antioch, Syria Saul and Barnabas Called to the Ministry	12:24, 25; 13:1–5

THEME

Membership in God's kingdom is offered to all men everywhere, for the Lord is no respecter of persons.

INTRODUCTION

It is unfortunate that the long and dimly lit corridor of time obscures so much of the vision of the past. As the centuries mount one upon the other, the pressures of change transform the face of the past, and what was once vividly real is blurred and faded. The new becomes the commonplace; the innovative becomes the traditional; the revolutionary becomes the practiced; that which startled is soon expected; that which angered, accepted; that which shocked, embraced. And so it is with the concept of God's impartiality. Today it is accepted as doctrinal, and any other concept would seem absurd. But it was not always so.

An angel came to an officer of the imperial Roman legions. Messengers were sent to a humble fisherman-apostle in Joppa, who himself was just recovering from a daylight vision. The apostle journeyed northward. A sermon was preached. The Holy Ghost descended. Baptisms were performed.

The account is disarmingly simple, and the nineteen intervening centuries cloak the profound impact of that watershed moment of history so that it falls on our minds ever so softly. “God is no respecter of persons,” Peter exclaimed in awestruck wonder. “But of course,” replies the mind conditioned by a thousand days of Christian truth and enlightenment.

But Luke knew. He was close enough to that tradition-shattering event to see its tremendous significance. Since the time of Moses the covenant had been jealously guarded by the protective hands of Israel. The sacred laws of God were given for all, the rabbis declared, but only on condition of accepting and embracing its demands. If a gentile wished to shoulder the burdens of the Mosaic law—which by Christ’s time had come to strongly emphasize circumcision, the rigid rules of Sabbath observance, dietary restrictions, and an infinitely complex and precise set of commands and prohibitions—he was welcomed and brought into Judaism. But on any other condition, no! Israel was the covenant people. The Jews were the chosen of God. All others were unacceptable in the sight of the one true God.

And then Peter went northward from Joppa to the city whose very name was derived from the Roman emperors, symbol of all that was antithetical to the laws of the sacred Torah. In the house of a Roman Centurion in Caesarea, two thousand years of deeply entrenched traditions were swept aside.

Gentiles had been welcomed into Christ’s church, but all, without exception, had first been “proselytes,” or converts, to Judaism.

Remember the significance of that day when the president of the church of Jesus Christ as a result of revelation was to change its destiny forever.

Before proceeding, read all the scriptural references in the reading block.

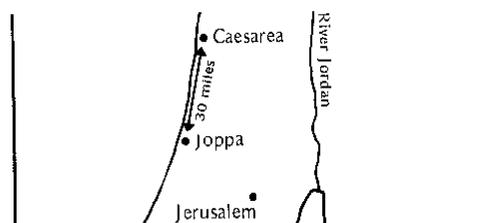
INTERPRETIVE COMMENTARY

(30-1) Acts 10:1. Who Was Cornelius?

A Roman centurion, or leader of one hundred men, Cornelius is described by Luke as “a devout man, and one that feared God with all his house which gave much alms to the people, and prayed to God

always.” (Acts 10:1, 2.) He must have also been a seeking, praying man, for he was given a vision in answer to prayer and was instructed to seek out Peter, who would tell Cornelius what he ought to do to perfect his life before God (Acts 10:3–6). He is the first gentile known to have received the gospel in the meridian of time without first fully converting to Judaism. (Acts 10:47, 48).

Where Was Caesarea in Relation to Joppa?



(30-2) Acts 10:1–6. Why Did Cornelius Seek Out Peter After Having Seen an Angel?

Seeing an angel or receiving a visitation from heaven does not bring salvation; keeping the commandments does. Cornelius wished for salvation, and in order to obtain it he had to obey its precepts. The angel who appeared and gave Cornelius initial instructions could have told him what to do, but he sent him to Peter, who held the earthly authority. This is the pattern in the kingdom of God. It is, then, as Joseph Smith observed: “No wonder the angel told good old Cornelius that he must send for Peter to learn how to be saved: *Peter could baptize and angels could not, so long as there were legal officers in the flesh holding the keys of the kingdom, or the authority of the priesthood.*” (*Teachings*, p. 265. Italics added.)

(30-3) Acts 10:9–33. Why Was Peter Chosen to Introduce the Gospel to the Gentiles?

“It [was] Peter’s duty and privilege to preach the gospel first to the Gentiles. Please note that when the Lord desired the Gentiles to hear His word, He instructed the chief of the Twelve to turn the key that opened the gospel door to them. This is one of the special duties of the apostleship.” (McKay, *Ancient Apostles*, p. 87.)

“In other words, Peter, holding the keys of the kingdom, was as much the president of the High Priesthood in his day as Joseph Smith and his successors, to whom also these ‘keys’ were given in

our day, are the presidents of the High Priesthood and the earthly heads of the Church and kingdom of God on earth.” (Harold B. Lee in *CR*, Oct. 1953, 25.)

(30-4) Acts 10:10. What Is the Meaning of the Phrase “Fell into a Trance”?

“Sometimes prophets go into *trances* in connection with the receipt of visions. That is, they are so completely overshadowed by the Spirit that to all outward appearances normal bodily functions are suspended.” (McConkie, *Mormon Doctrine*, p. 802.)

(30-5) Acts 10:44–48. What Is the Difference Between the Holy Ghost and the Gift of the Holy Ghost?

“There is a difference between the Holy Ghost and the gift of the Holy Ghost. Cornelius received the Holy Ghost *before he was baptized*, which was the convincing power of God unto him of the truth of the Gospel, *but he could not receive the gift of the Holy Ghost until after he was baptized*. Had he not taken this sign or ordinance upon him, the Holy Ghost which convinced him of the truth of God, would have left him. Until he obeyed these ordinances and received the gift of the Holy Ghost, by the laying on of hands, according to the order of God, he could not have healed the sick or commanded an evil spirit to come out of a man and it obey him. . . .” (Smith, *Teachings*, p. 199. Italics added.)

(30-6) Acts 11:26. When Were the Early Saints Called Christians, and Why?

“Christians is an obvious name for the followers of Christ, for those who believe he is the Son of God and that salvation of all degrees comes because of him and his atoning sacrifice. Since there have been followers of Christ in successive gospel dispensations from Adam to the present, these all would have been known as Christians or some equivalent, synonymous term. By saying the saints were called Christians first in Antioch means that for the first time in the meridian dispensation there was a sufficient church membership so that nonmembers recognized the saints as a separate and distinct organization, one severed and apart from the Jewish synagogue and community.” (McConkie, *DNTC*, 2:112.)

It is interesting to note that as early as 73 B.C., all Nephites who belonged to the church of Jesus Christ in the land of Zarahemla were known as Christians

(Alma 46:14, 15). In fact, the name of Jesus Christ had been revealed to Jacob and Nephi some five hundred years before his birth, thus leaving the Nephites, at least, in little doubt as to the identity of the Messiah who should save them from their sins. (See 2 Nephi 10:3 and 25:19.)

(30-7) Acts 11:28. Who Was Agabus?

Little is known of Agabus other than that he possessed the gift of prophecy and was a noble Christian. By means of divine inspiration, he foretold a famine during the reign of the emperor Claudius, a fact which both the New Testament and Josephus confirm (Acts 11:28; Josephus, *The Life and Works of Flavius Joseph*, Antiquities of the Jews 20. 2. 5). Following Paul’s return from his third mission, Agabus also predicted Paul’s future imprisonment and bonds (Acts 21:10, 11).

(30-8) Acts 12:1. Who Was the James Whom Herod Killed?

At least three men are mentioned in the New Testament as bearing the name of James: (1) James, the son of Zebedee and brother of John the beloved apostle, was a member of the original Quorum of the Twelve Apostles. He suffered martyrdom at the hands of Herod in the early days of the apostolic ministry. With Peter and John, James served in the First Presidency until his death about A.D. 44. (2) James, the son of Alphaeus and Mary (Acts 1:13; Mark 16:1), sometimes known as James the less, was also a member of the original Quorum of the Twelve. Where he ministered following the resurrection of Jesus is not known. (3) James, the half-brother of Jesus, like his other brothers, did not accept the calling of Jesus while the Savior lived (John 7:1–7). Afterwards he became an apostle. (See Acts 15:13–34; Galatians 1:18, 19; 2:9; and further biographical information on page 404.)

(30-9) Acts 12:1. Who Were Herod and Bernice?

Two of the Herods, father and son, were called Herod Agrippa. They ruled the Jews during the time of Jesus and the apostles. Herod Agrippa I was a grandson of Herod the Great and, unlike those who reigned before him, was a great observer of the law of Moses. In order to keep the favor of the Jews, he put to death James, who was the son of Zebedee, brother of John the Beloved, and an apostle of Jesus Christ (Acts 12). Following his father’s death, Herod Agrippa II was

given the tetrarchies formerly held by Philip his brother, and Lysonias, a Roman appointee, and received the title of king (Acts 25:13). Our best picture of him is that provided in the New Testament during his encounter with Paul in the court of Festus (Acts 25:13 through 26:32). His incestuous marriage with his sister Bernice rendered him detestable to the Jews.

Bernice was the oldest daughter of Herod Agrippa I. Her first marriage at a very young age was to her uncle, Herod, king of Chalsis. Following his death about A.D. 48, she married her own brother, Herod Agrippa II. She was present on the occasion when her husband-brother and Festus listened to Paul's case prior to the latter's departure for Rome (Acts 25:13, 23; 26:30).

(30-10) Acts 12:4. The Use of the Word *Easter*

The term *Easter* as used here by King James translators is an anachronism, for there was no Easter celebration as such for many, many years following the Savior's death and resurrection. The Greek word *pascha*, equivalent to the Hebrew *payach*, translates itself as *Passover*. Early Christians changed the Hebrew custom of celebrating Passover into their own commemoration of the resurrection of Jesus, whom they regarded as the true Paschal Lamb of God and the first fruits of the resurrection.

(30-11) Acts 12:12. Who Was John Mark?

John Mark, commonly known as Mark, is the author of the Gospel of that name. He was the son of one of the leading women in the early church in Jerusalem. Believers assembled at her home, and Peter returned there after being freed from prison (Acts 12:12–17). John Mark was chosen as a companion of Paul and Barnabas as they left on the first missionary journey (Acts 12:25, 13:5) but for an unnamed reason he left the two brethren about half way into the journey (Acts 13:13). This later became a point of contention between Paul and Barnabas when departing on the second journey. Barnabas wanted to take Mark again, but Paul refused; so they split company and went their separate ways (Acts 15:37–41). Evidently Paul was later reconciled to Mark, for he speaks of him with commendation in his epistles. (See, for example, Colossians 4:10; Philemon 24.) Peter speaks of Mark as his son and as being with him in Babylon—probably Rome. An ancient tradition states that Mark wrote his gospel in Rome, taking his material directly from Peter.

POINTS TO PONDER

GOD IS NO RESPECTER OF PERSONS

While Jesus had taught that his disciples were to love their enemies, a deep distrust of all who were not Jewish must have remained in the hearts of many disciples. The allegiance to the requirements of the Mosaic law burned fiercely on even after conversion. Even Peter was appalled when he was commanded in the vision to eat of animals declared unclean by the Torah. And his tone was one of amazement as he realized the implications of the revelation for the gentiles.

But while the events of those four days in Joppa and Caesarea drastically altered the direction of the missionary effort of the church, it did not automatically remove the problems of Jewish exclusiveness. Nor does this imply that the saints of those early days were lacking in devotion to the Master. Attitudes and prejudices that are cemented through generations of indoctrination are not removed in a day's time. When Peter returned to Jerusalem, some members of the church were waiting for him, critical and challenging of his association with the unclean heathen. His rehearsal of the events that had led him to Caesarea and those that had occurred once he reached there silenced his critics. They had to admit that the evidence was irrefutable; the gentiles were to be granted repentance unto life. (See Acts 11:18.)

But even in the face of such direct revelation, the problem was not completely eliminated. The Jewish members of the church overcame the first hurdle—the gentiles were to be granted the new covenant of the gospel; it was no longer reserved just for the children of Abraham. But this did not imply, in many of their minds, that the law of Moses had been fulfilled. It was not long before members were demanding that the gentile converts be circumcised, and the Jerusalem council was held to deal with that problem (Acts 15). And for the next several decades the church would be plagued with the attacks of Judaizers (the name given to Jewish Christians who demanded that all members of the Christian church keep the Mosaic ordinances as well).

The feelings of Jewish exclusiveness in the church and their tenacious loyalty to codes of the past were not automatically solved by the events of Caesarea. The conversions and adjustments would reverberate

for years to come. But that was the turning point. The coming of the angel to a Roman soldier in central Palestine would profoundly alter Christianity forever afterward.

QUESTION

Why does Peter say that God is no respecter of persons? Isn't respect for a person a positive trait?

ANSWER

Yes, respect is a positive trait. The problem is that the language has changed in meaning since the days of the King James Version. The word person was derived from the Latin persona, which meant "mask," and referred to the masks worn by the actors in a drama. Thus, the original connotation of person was the outward appearance or circumstances of the individual, including such things as status, wealth, position, dress, or physical appearance. The Greek phrase Luke used means literally "accepter of the face."

QUESTION

So it really means that God is impartial?

ANSWER

Right. God is not like most men. He does not favor one man or group of men over another on the basis of social rank, ancestry, or other such surface qualities.

QUESTION

But is God really totally impartial? Doesn't he bless some of his children more than others?

ANSWER

God's impartiality refers to his basic treatment of his children. Whenever someone is obedient to his laws, he is blessed. Nephi taught that the land of Palestine was taken from its possessors by the Israelites because of this principle. He explained: Read 1 Nephi 17:32–38.

Some men receive more blessings from God because they are more obedient to him. The impartiality exists because the laws form the basis for blessings and not some outward, meaningless criteria.

QUESTION

That doesn't seem very clear. What would be meaningless criteria?

ANSWER

Suppose God said, "Well, you've been obedient but you are a slave; so I can't give you the blessings." That was one mistake of the Jews in the time of Christ. They felt that ancestry gave them some inherent advantage with God. John the Baptist spoke against that notion when he suggested that God could raise up children of Abraham from the stones (Matthew 3:9). Joseph Smith said this was a figurative expression meaning the gentiles. (See Teachings, p. 319.)

QUESTION

But don't some people have an inherent advantage by virtue of their birth, their wealth, or their talents? It seems that a person born today in a land of freedom and in a family active in the Church has a tremendous advantage over someone born in less favorable circumstances. Doesn't that affect one's ability to be obedient to God?

ANSWER

The time, place, and circumstances in which a person is born certainly influence his behavior in profound ways. If that placement at birth was simply a factor of chance, then it could be said that God is partial. But we know that placement in mortality is based on more than chance.

QUESTION

Then what determines where and when you are born?

ANSWER

We don't know in detail all the factors that influence the circumstances into which we are born, but the prophets have clearly taught that the basic rule of obedience to law as the prerequisite for blessings holds true in this matter as well.

QUESTION

Meaning that the kind of life we lived in the premortal existence influenced where we are now?

ANSWER

Yes. In this connection, President Lee made the following statement:

"You are all the sons and daughters of God. Your spirits were created and lived as organized intelligences before the world was. You have been blessed to have a physical body because of your

obedience to certain commandments in that premortal state. You are now born into a family to which you have come, into the nations through which you have come, as a reward for the kind of lives you lived before you came here.” (CR, Oct. 1973, p. 7.)

QUESTION

But it seems as if some who are born into very favorable circumstances are not very obedient.

ANSWER

True, but each person has his agency. If he does not continue to be faithful and obedient, he will lose the Lord’s favor and blessings. Again note what President Lee said about this:

“. . . there are many who were foreordained before the world was, to a greater state than they have prepared themselves for here. Even though they might have been among the noble and great, from among whom the Father declared he would make his chosen leaders, they may fail of that calling here in mortality.” (CR, Oct. 1973, p. 7.)

So the law is still the same. God blesses the faithful regardless of their status, race, ancestry, or any other outward qualities. He is no respecter of persons.

QUESTION

What are the implications of this for my own behavior?

ANSWER

There are two important lessons to be learned. First, if we wish to be godlike in our lives, we cannot base our acceptance of a person on invalid criteria.

QUESTION

Give me an example of invalid criteria.

ANSWER

It would mean not choosing friends on the basis of worldly affluence. It would mean that all men would be judged on the same basis, that girls would not date on the basis of the boy’s car, that dress and fashions would never be the only basis for rejection. If we really wished to emulate this quality of godliness, it would revolutionize our interactions with our fellowmen.

QUESTION

I can see that. What is the second implication?

ANSWER

It has to do with our own attitudes about ourselves. A girl who was quite unattractive by the standards of the culture in which she lived once asked, “Why did God do this to me? Why couldn’t my spirit have been sent to a more attractive body?” If she understood God’s love and his impartiality, she would know that outward appearance is irrelevant to him.

Furthermore, she would see that if her eternal progression were really prevented by the physical appearances she was given, a loving Father would never have allowed that to happen. If she keeps his laws, she will receive every blessing the Lord has to give.

QUESTION

So really, our position or specific situation in life is not as critical as what we do with it?

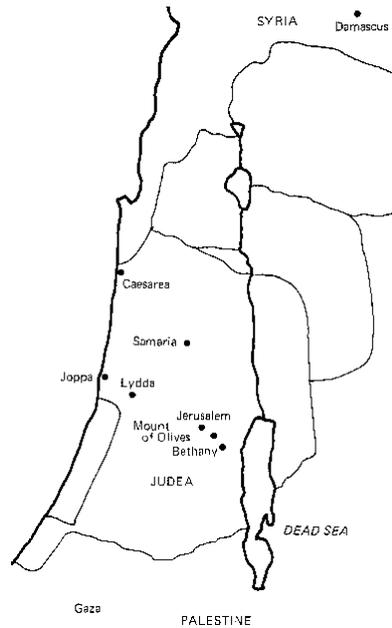
ANSWER

Exactly right. The leper who believed in Christ was better off than the Pharisee who rejected him; the repentant harlot who followed him was more favored than the apostle who betrayed him. Men may be tested by status or lack of it, by wealth or by poverty. In some ways beauty may be a greater challenge than ugliness. Life is sufficiently complex to test and try every man. It matters little whether the test is met in the gilded halls of the palace or the sweltering mud hut in the desert. God is no respecter of persons. What a person is rather than who he is will be the determining factor in the judgment. President Lee explains further: “The Gospel of Jesus Christ was not intended just for a continent or a segment of the earth. The gospel is intended for every soul that walks the earth, they are all the children of God. . . .

“Our responsibility is to bring to the world the message of truth to show the world that within the teachings of the gospel of Jesus Christ are to be found the solutions to every problem that afflicts mankind. . . .

“No matter where they live, whether they are rich or poor, no matter what their station in life, their color or their background, they are loved by us and we desire to help them to achieve their highest expectations. . . .” (Church News, 15 July 1972, p. 4.)

"A CHOSEN VESSEL UNTO ME"



The Acts of the Apostles—Events Occurred ca. A.D. 34–39	
	Acts
Near Damascus, Syria The Savior Appears to Saul	9:1–9
Damascus, Syria Saul Receives His Sight and Is Baptized	9:10–19a
Damascus, Syria; and Jerusalem, Judea Saul Begins His Ministry	9:19b–31
Lydda and Joppa, Judea Peter Heals Aeneas and Raises Tabitha from the Dead	9:32–43

THEME

Paul's call to service on the road to Damascus and his later faithfulness demonstrate how he and all mankind may become chosen vessels unto the Lord.

INTRODUCTION

The gospel of Jesus Christ furnishes you with the first principles of self-respect: you are a child of your Eternal Father, and it is his work and glory not only to give you life, but to give you abundant, even eternal, life. (See John 10:10; Moses 1:39.) Indeed, each of you is a chosen vessel unto the Lord.

In your reading for this lesson you will learn, among other things, of the man Saul and of his call to labor by the Lord. Saul's experience, however, is not totally unique. Each one of you who has made covenants with the Lord is called by him. Of course, like Saul, you may not now know that which the Lord would have you do. You could be in outright opposition to that which the Lord intends; or you may be unaware of his plans or, worse, uncaring.

It is significant that the book of Acts is full of great acts of dedicated men. Saul, for example, "acts" in this chapter and begins to become the great servant of God we all now revere. Ananias acts in his

priesthood and performs gospel ordinances, and Peter literally follows the magnificent acts of his Master and raises Tabitha to life.

It is vital to remember that each of you must write his own book of “Acts.” If, like Saul, you are going the wrong way, you must repent; if, as Ananias, you hold the priesthood, you must minister; and if, like Peter, you are a leader, you must fully follow the Lord. Though foreordained to greatness, you become chosen vessels only by doing the will of the Lord as you walk here on earth.

Before proceeding, read all the scriptural references in the reading block.

INTERPRETIVE COMMENTARY

(31-1) Acts 9:2, 3, 8. What Was the Importance of Damascus?

Claiming to be the world’s oldest city having continuous habitation, Damascus, present-day capital of Syria, was also in the Roman province of Syria in the days of the apostles. Situated some 130 miles northeast of Jerusalem and approximately 65 miles from the Mediterranean Sea, Damascus lies in the heart of a fertile plain.

The supremacy of Damascus among ancient cities is clearly found in the fact of its location. It was the terminus point for three principal trade routes of the ancient Near East.

Its close proximity to Jerusalem made Damascus a city of great importance to ancient Israel and Judah. (See the map at the beginning of chapter 29.) It was from here that Ahaz, king of Judah, took his pattern for the great altar which he set up in the Jerusalem temple, ostensibly to pacify the victorious king of Assyria, Tiglath-pileser III (2 Kings 16:10–16). In time, the city was destroyed just as God’s prophets had prophesied (Isaiah 17:1; Amos 1:4; Jeremiah 49:23–27). Later it was rebuilt on the same site.

In the present-day Christian quarter of the city is located what is thought to have been the famed street called Straight on which was found the house of one Judas, with whom Paul lived for a time following his conversion. The wall from which Paul was let down in a basket by friends at night so as to escape the infuriated Jews of the city (Acts 9:23–25) is, in all likelihood, that which still surrounds the city. As in the days of Paul, so in our present time; the wares of Damascus are sold openly at the street bazaar. Among

the well-known products once produced by the city’s residents were Damascus cloth (damask) and Damascus steel, both treasures to be cherished.

(31-2) Acts 9:4–6. What Are Two Important Lessons We Can Learn from the Accounts of Paul’s Conversion?

“There is a lesson for us all in this Church. Let us, too, recognize the local authority. The bishop may be a humble man. Some of you may think you are superior to him, but he is given authority direct from our Father in heaven. Recognize it. Seek his advice, the advice of your stake presidents. If they cannot answer your difficulties or your problems, they will write to others, the General Authorities, and get the advice needed. Recognition of authority is an important principle.

“The other element in that incident to Paul near Damascus is the great fact that Jesus, our Lord, is interested in his Church, and in the members. As he was interested then, so he is interested today.

“I like to feel that he is watching over us, that he is grieved when we do not comply with the ideals and the standards he has given us in the gospel. He was grieved with Saul, a chosen servant, who was going about blindly to destroy the Church. He is delighted when he finds the brethren whom he has appointed doing their duty and trying to live clean, upright lives, living in accordance with the standards of the gospel.” (David O. McKay in *CR*, Oct. 1951, pp. 159–60.)

(31-3) Acts 9:5. “It Is Hard for Thee to Kick Against the Pricks”

The reference is to a goad, a sharp spear or stick used to prick the hides of animals to make them move ahead. The tendency when pricked is to kick back, to retaliate, literally “to kick against the pricks.” Such a reaction merely brings added distress and drives the wound deeper while having almost no effect upon the goad itself. Elder David O. McKay, in speaking of Paul’s inner feelings, once wrote:

“Damascus is about one hundred and fifty miles north of Jerusalem, so it would take Saul and his attendants about a week to travel the distance. Perhaps during those few days of comparative leisure, he began to wonder whether what he was doing was right or not. Perhaps the shining face of the dying Stephen and the martyr’s last prayer began to sink more deeply into his soul than it had done before. Little children’s cries for their parents whom Saul had bound began to pierce his soul more keenly, and make him feel miserably unhappy as he looked forward to more experiences of

that kind in Damascus. Perhaps he wondered whether the work of the Lord, if he were really engaged in it, would make him feel so restless and bitter. He was soon to learn that only the work of the evil one produces these feelings, and that true service for the Lord always brings peace and contentment.” (*Ancient Apostles*, p. 120.)

(31-4) Acts 9:8. What Blinded Saul on the Road to Damascus?

“But Saul of Tarsus saw Jehovah, the glorified Christ, and heard his voice and conversed with him. Even partially protected as he was, the brilliance of the light from heaven in which he centered—greater than the noonday sun—Paul collapsed to the earth, trembling, shocked. The voice said: ‘I am Jesus whom thou persecutest. . . .’ (Acts 9:5.)

“So intense and brilliant was the light that even with such protection, he was blinded. He said: ‘And when I could not see for the glory of that light, being led by the hand of them that were with me, I came into Damascus.’ (Acts 22:11.)

“A priesthood miracle restored sight to Paul after three days of total darkness. The glory of the Lord! How great and magnificent!” (Spencer W. Kimball in *CR*, Apr. 1964, p. 96.)

(31-5) Acts 9:18. Why Was It Necessary for Paul, Who Saw a Vision, to Submit to Baptism?

“Saul [saw] the resurrected Son of God, received visions, [was] the recipient of miracles wrought on his behalf, and yet none of these sufficed to prepare him for church membership or ministerial service. Baptism is the gate for all—Christ, Paul, every accountable person.” (McConkie, *DNTC*, 2:91.)

(31-6) Acts 9:20–22. What New Problems Did Paul Face Following His Conversion?

As soon as he was a member of the church of Jesus Christ, Paul faced two new problems: one stemming from his former relationship with the Jews, the second from his new situation as a follower of Jesus. Prior to his conversion, his work of persecuting the Christians found full acceptance among the Jewish leaders. Following his conversion, he had to face his former friends and associates and declare he had been wrong. “And straightway he preached Christ in the synagogues, that he is the Son of God.” (Acts 9:20.) Note the forward nature of his testimony. So incensed were the Jews that they “took counsel to kill him.” (Acts 9:23.)

But what of those who knew Paul formerly as their persecutor? How did they receive his testimony of Jesus? Their reaction must have been similar to that of Ananias who, following his call from Christ to minister to Paul’s needs, said: “Lord, I have heard by many of this man, how much evil he hath done to thy saints at Jerusalem: And here [i.e., in Damascus] he hath authority from the chief priests to bind all that call on thy name.” (Acts 9:13, 14.) Was his conversion a mere ruse intended to trap those who truly professed the Christian cause? (See Acts 9:20–22.) Time alone could answer this question and show the actuality of Paul’s conversion.

(31-7) Acts 9:27. Who Was Barnabas?

Barnabas was Paul’s missionary companion during his first mission (Acts 9:27). His first recorded service to the church was the selling of his property in accordance with the agreement among early Christians to have all things in common (Acts 4:36). He was a Jew (a Levite, actually) from the island of Cyprus; his surname was Joses or Joseph. At the time that he and Paul encountered the Lycaonians, Barnabas was given the name of Jupiter, most powerful of the Roman gods (Acts 14:12), evidently in token of his commanding manner, his dignified appearance, and his physical prowess. He was called “a good man, and full of the Holy Ghost and of faith” (Acts 11:24), was chosen with Paul to take the relief funds to the poor of Judea (Acts 11:29, 30), and was a hard worker who supported himself rather than throw himself upon the church for support (1 Corinthians 9:6). Although he had sharp contention with Paul over the issue of taking John Mark, Barnabas’ nephew, with them on the second journey (Acts 15:36–39), he and Paul were later reconciled. He it was who first sought Paul out after the latter’s conversion by going to Tarsus to induce Paul to join him in the ministry (Acts 11:25, 26). He seems to have been an apostle (Acts 14:4, 14).

POINTS TO PONDER

LIKE SAUL ALL MUST CONFRONT THE LORD

(31-8) Every Knee Will Bow

Sooner or later each of us must face God. Even those who live out their lives without God must one day acknowledge that he is, for “every knee shall bow . . . and every tongue shall confess.” (Romans 14:11.) Of course, for all of us, now is the best time to serve the Lord.

“And, if you sense that one day every knee shall bow and every tongue shall confess that Jesus Christ is the Lord, why not do so now? For in the coming of that collective confession, it will mean much less to kneel down when it is no longer possible to stand up!” (Neal A. Maxwell in *CR*, Oct. 1974, p. 16.)

(31-9) We Have Made Covenants with the Lord

As Latter-day Saints, you have a special relationship with the Lord. Even before the foundations of the world were laid you made commitments to and covenants with the Lord. Of course, these have profound effects on that which you are called to do on earth. Certain it is that Paul didn't receive the great blessing of seeing the Lord on the merits of that which he had accomplished in mortality alone.

“But why Saul, why this man who hated the Lord and sought to slay his saints? There can be only one answer—pre-existence; Saul had gained the talents and risen to the spiritual stature in the pre-mortal life which qualified him to stand as an apostolic minister of Him who now chastened him on the Damascus road.” (McConkie, *DNTC*, 2:89.)

And so it is with us. Not that all of us have as far to come as did Saul, who was in rebellion, but all of us are influenced by our pre-earth life. President Kimball indicates that we made covenants before we were born. Note his words:

“We made vows, solemn vows, in the heavens before we came to this mortal life. . . .

“We have made covenants. We made them before we accepted our position here on the earth.

“Now we made this commitment, ‘. . . all things whatsoever the Lord our God shall command us.’ We committed ourselves to our Heavenly Father, that if He would send us to the earth and give us bodies and give to us the priceless opportunities that earth life afforded, we would keep our lives clean and would marry in the holy temple and would rear a family and teach them righteousness. This was a solemn oath, a solemn promise. He promised us an eventful mortal life with untold privileges and providing we qualified in the way of righteousness, we would receive eternal life and happiness and progress. There is no other way to receive these rewards.” (“Be Ye Therefore Perfect,” Address given at the University of Utah Institute Devotional, 10 Jan. 1975, p. 2.)

Thus much of what you receive in the pathway of life has been determined by that which went on before. It ought to give you great hope that you have come so

far with the Lord. You have already rejected Satan once. You have been added upon with glory. (See Abraham 3:26.)

(31-10) We Determine the Course We Pursue

You have the responsibility of determining your course and then pursuing it steadily to the end. To aid you, the Lord has given some special helps—significant ways you can discover him in mortality, as did Saul.

For one thing, all are born with the light of Christ, which is “the true light that lighteth every man that cometh into the world.” (D&C 93:2; see also John 1:9.) It is this that gives you an intense sense of right and wrong. Also, if followed, the light of Christ will lead you to the gospel. This Spirit strove with Amulek and called many times, but “I would not hear . . . I knew . . . yet I would not know.” (Alma 10:6.) It is probable that on the road to Damascus Saul was struggling in the spirit. Elder Howard W. Hunter, speaking of Saul's state of mind as he journeyed, indicates that Saul's earlier persecution of the Saints “weighed heavily upon his conscience.” (*CR*, Oct. 1964, p. 109.) You too have probably felt the Spirit of the Lord striving with you; and if you have heeded, your life, like Saul's, has been drastically altered.

Parents too have a vital stewardship. Goodly parents often act as angels for us. They help us in the way we should go. Nephi, for example, was led to his testimony because of the vision of his father (1 Nephi 11:1). Paul was a spiritual father to Timothy and led that youth in the way he should go. All of us would be wise to honor our parents by listening to their righteous counsel. Their stewardship over us is recognized by the Lord and his Church; and even if they are not all faithful members of the Church, by divine decree they deserve honor.

The great gift of the Holy Ghost, if you truly receive it, will lighten your way.

Certainly the influence of this “first comforter” is vital to our own personal relationship with God.

Saul illustrates another essential way one confronts the Lord. He was administered to by Ananias, one of the Lord's servants. As a matter of fact, most blessings come through the administration of others. That is the established pattern in the kingdom of God—blessings, ordinances, ordinations, administrations, and endowments come through others.

As you grow in the gifts of the Spirit, you may discover the Lord more fully. Finally, when you are

endowed and married in the temple, the door will have been opened to eventual access to all the mysteries of God if you keep your covenants. All of us will have the privilege of confronting the Lord, each in his own way, each in his own time.

THERE ARE SPECIFIC THINGS THE LORD WOULD HAVE US DO

(31-11) “If Ye Love Me, Keep My Commandments”

That Saul was willing to ask the Lord what to do and then to do it tells us much of Saul’s character. As has been noted elsewhere, others—Laman, Lemuel—have seen glorious things, even angels (1 Nephi 3:29–31); but their lives were not changed, because, unlike Saul, they would not respond. The Lord deals with specifics, and once we know his will, we should be willing to obey. To do otherwise is to bring upon ourselves condemnation. Alma the Younger had an experience similar to Saul’s when he saw an angel. The record is clear that he would have been “cast off” (Mosiah 27:16) if he had not repented. Once you confront the Lord in such a manner, it would be better not to have known him if your life is not changed (2 Nephi 31:14). Of course, like Saul, you need a specific course to follow; or as the rich young man responded when the Savior told him to keep the commandments, you may ask, “Which?” (Matthew 19:18.)

In order to do what the Lord intends, we must be aware of the specific commandments he has given. Faithful Saints need constantly to examine themselves (1 Corinthians 11:28).

Examine your own life, using the following scriptural criteria:

1. *I’m aware of the significance of the covenant of baptism, and I’m keeping the covenant (Mosiah 18:8–10; D&C 20:77–79).*
2. *I’m morally clean—specifically so. I refrain from worshiping the God of lust by bridling all my passions (Alma 38:12).*
3. *I keep the Sabbath. I consider it my most important day. I do enter into the Lord’s presence on his day (D&C 84:24). I refrain from doing my own pleasure on this day (Isaiah 58:14).*
4. *I pray with desire. I could say that my heart is often drawn to the Lord in prayer (Alma 34:27). My prayers are more of communication and less of habit.*

5. *Understanding that the Lord has repeatedly admonished his Saints to be in the world but not of it, my lifestyle is consistent with Church standards in the following areas:*

- a. *Manner of dress*
- b. *Language*
- c. *Music*
- d. *Entertainment*
- e. *Eating habits*
- f. *Dancing*

6. *I have felt and can distinguish the power of the Holy Ghost in my life (Smith, Teachings, p. 151.)*

7. *Although my testimony has passed through a number of stages, I can honestly say I now know for myself. I have felt the promptings of the Holy Spirit (Matthew 16:17).*

8. *I would say that I’m a spiritual person. My spirituality is not a theory to me; it is a present consciousness. (David O. McKay has described spirituality as “consciousness of victory over self, and of communion with the Infinite.” [CR, Apr. 1949, p. 17.]*

BEING BORN AGAIN TO A NEWNESS OF LIFE

(31-12) Saul “Arose from the Earth,” and So May All of Us

It is written that whatever the Lord does it is for the benefit of man (2 Nephi 26:24). It was so with Saul. After his experience with the Lord, Saul “arose from the earth.” (Acts 9:8.) As a matter of fact, the rest of his life became a testimony to his foreordination to greatness. He later wrote that he could “do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me.” (Philippians 4:13.) His life is the eloquent testimony of his words. He chronicles some of the happenings of his life—the trials, the blessings, and the glories—in 2 Corinthians, chapters 11 and 12.

Finally, his testimony to Timothy bespeaks his journey to perfection (2 Timothy 4:7, 8). Paul truly had crucified the old man of sin. He was a born-again saint. Saul the persecutor had become Paul the apostle, the saint, the man of God.

Witness Paul’s testimony and ask yourself if you have arisen “from the earth.”

Are you filled with love through the Holy Ghost? Read Romans 5:5.

On what foundation is your testimony built? Read 1 Corinthians 2:5.

How hard have you been striving against sin? Read Hebrews 12:4.

Do you pray with the Spirit? Read Romans 8:26.

Are you making your weak things strong? Read 2 Corinthians 12:7–10. See also Ether 12:27.

Have you crucified the flesh in the sense of bridling your passions and appetites? Read Galatians 5:24.

Are you founded upon the rock of revelation? Read Galatians 1:11, 12.

(31-13) Will It Make a Difference?

And so in the life of Saul—later, Paul the apostle—we see a prime example of one who was called from before the foundations of the world and, because of his acts in his mortal life, was ultimately chosen and who even attained a relative degree of perfection through Christ. (See Galatians 4:12, Inspired Version.) So may it be with you. You have been called. You will sometime be confronted by the Lord on your own road of life. To progress, you must do as the Lord directs. If you fully arise from the earth, you will come to the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ (Ephesians 4:13) and be, indeed, “a chosen vessel unto the Lord.”

"I HAVE SET THEE TO BE A LIGHT OF THE GENTILES"



The Acts of the Apostles—Events Occurred ca. A.D. 45–51 (13:6–18:23) Paul’s First and Second Missionary Journeys	
	Acts
Paphos, Cyprus Paul Curses a False Prophet	13:6–12
Anitoch, Pisidia The Savior Was of the Lineage of David	13:13–25
The Gospel Is Offered to Israel	13:26–41
Paul and Barnabas Teach the Gentiles	13:42–49
Iconium, Galatia Jews Persecute Paul and Barnabas	13:50–52; 14:1–7
Lystra, Galatia Paul and Barnabas Hailed as Gods	14:8–18
Paul Stoned, Revived, Preaches	14:19–28
Jerusalem, Judea The Question of Circumcision	15:1–35
Paul and Silas Become Companions	15:36–41
The Holy Ghost Directs Paul’s Labors	16:1–15
Thyatira, Asia An Evil Spirit Cast Out	16:16–18
Philip, a Jailor, Receives Christ	16:19–40

Thessalonica, Macedonia Paul and Silas Flee Persecution	17:1–14
Athens, Greece Paul Preaches the Unknown God	17:15–34
Corinth, Greece Jew and Greek Hear the Gospel	18:1–11
The Jews Take Paul to Court	18:12–23

THEME

Through his servants the Lord extends an invitation to all men to become his chosen people.

INTRODUCTION

When the Lord told Ananias to go and restore the sight of the stricken Saul, Ananias was dismayed, for Saul had troubled the saints much. But the Lord said, “He is a chosen vessel unto me, to bear my name before the Gentiles. . . . I will shew him how great things he must suffer for my name’s sake.” (Acts 9:15, 16.)

As you see the ministry of Paul unfold, it will become clear indeed that Paul was a chosen vessel, that he would have a mighty mission to the gentiles, and that he would suffer immensely in order to fulfill his mission.

To say that Paul went among the gentiles of his day to offer them the gospel is perhaps not enough, for they were not the only gentile peoples he influenced. To sense Paul's impact, we must also remember that his writings continued to "preach Christ and him crucified" to the spreading gentile nations of the earth long after Paul's death. As awful as the long period of apostasy was, Paul's illustrious career and zealous testimony contributed immeasurably to the survival of Jesus Christ in the minds and hearts of millions of people through the dark ages, and even in our own day.

You will also read of Paul's urgency to plant in the hearts of his fellow Israelites the message of the gospel and a zeal for service. As Jews they understood that they (like Paul) were chosen vessels. Paul taught that as a covenant people, they (like him) were obliged to share their heritage with the gentiles, and that they (like him) might expect to suffer difficulties in order to carry out their divinely-given mission.

And so it is today. We too are a chosen people; and we, like the Israelites, need to be constantly reminded of our obligation to our fellowmen.

Before proceeding, read all the scriptural references in the reading block.

INTERPRETIVE COMMENTARY

(32-1) Acts 13:1–14, 26. What Is the Primary Significance of Paul's First Missionary Journey?

The real significance of Paul's first missionary journey lies in the fact that it led to the establishment of branches of the church in areas far removed from Jerusalem. Many heard and received the gospel message who could otherwise not have done so. In addition, we have an opportunity to see Paul in his new capacity as a leader and an organizer. He enters a town where there are no members, where most have not so much as heard of Jesus Christ. When he leaves, there is a small but thriving branch of the church commissioned to carry on in his absence. We note also Paul's eagerness to preach the gospel to all men, regardless of their station or background. When the Jews reject the word of God, Paul turns to the gentiles. (Where did the first missionary journey take Paul? See map section.)

(32-2) Acts 13:6. "They Found a Certain Sorcerer, a False Prophet"

"My enemies say that I *have* been a true prophet. Why, I had rather be a fallen true prophet than a false prophet. When a man goes about prophesying, and commands men to obey his teachings, he must either be a true or false prophet. *False prophets always arise to oppose the true prophets and they will prophesy so very near the truth that they will deceive almost the very chosen ones.*" (Smith, *Teachings*, p. 365.)

(32-3) Acts 13:7. Who Was Sergius Paulus?

He was the Roman proconsul for Cyprus when Paul and Barnabas traveled to the island on the first missionary journey. He is described as a prudent man who requested that Paul and Barnabas preach to him. When he saw the miracle performed by Paul in causing blindness to come upon Elymas, the sorcerer, he "believed, being astonished at the doctrine of the Lord." (Acts 13:12.)

(32-4) Acts 15:1. "Certain Men Which Came Down from Judea"

"They came from the headquarters of the Church, . . . and were good and acceptable brethren; but on the issue of circumcision they erred, teaching false doctrine and not being led by the Spirit. Since the Lord often leaves his servants to struggle with and work out solutions for difficult problems, before they finally receive his mind and voice by revelation, similar situations arise in the Church today. For instance, brethren who go forth today to preach and to confirm the churches sometimes take it upon themselves to advocate political, educational, and social philosophies which seem right to them—on occasions even claiming such are essential to salvation—which in fact are not the voice of God to his people." (McConkie, *DNTC*, 2:139.)

(32-5) Acts 15:1. "Except Ye Be Circumcised After the Manner of Moses, Ye Cannot Be Saved"

The ordinance of circumcision was instituted by Jehovah himself. It was first given to Abraham and his descendants as a token of the covenant which assured sacred and eternal blessings to all who served the Lord in righteousness (Abraham 2:8–11; Genesis 17). According to the law of Moses, every male child was to be circumcised when he was eight days old (Leviticus 12:3). The prime purpose for the token was to serve as a reminder of God's covenant with Abraham (Genesis 17:9–14).

Following the atoning sacrifice of Jesus Christ, the need for the special token was removed. No longer was the gospel and its blessings exclusively reserved for the Jews; the gospel was for all. In a revelation given to Mormon and recorded in the Book of Mormon, Jesus said: “Little children are whole, for they are not capable of committing sin; wherefore the curse of Adam is taken from them in me, that it hath no power over them; *and the law of circumcision is done away in me.*” (Moroni 8:8. Italics added.) In the days of Jesus and the apostles it was popular to refer to people as those of the circumcision and those of the uncircumcision, the former as a synonym for the Jews and the latter for the gentiles. (See Galatians 2:7). Although the special Council of Jerusalem settled the question by revelation, Paul still found it necessary to combat the problem wherever he went. Many of his converts were Jewish and insisted that all gentile Christians must also obey the Mosaic rite. Paul made it clear that circumcision for either Jew or gentile was done away in Christ. (See Romans 2, 3, 4; 1 Corinthians 7:19; Galatians 5:6; 6:15; Colossians 2:11; 3:11.)

(32-6) Acts 15:7. Why Did the Lord Speak by Peter’s Mouth?

“Peter [was] the president of the Church; he receive[d] and announce[d] the mind and will of Deity on all matters.” (McConkie, *DNTC*, 2:143.)

(32-7) Acts 15:28. “For It Seemed Good to the Holy Ghost, and to Us”

“In this instance the decision apparently was both reached and ratified by following the revealed procedure used by the Prophet in translating the Book of Mormon. That is, the Lord’s agent struggled and labored with the problem, searched the scriptures, sought for possible conclusions, and did the best they could to solve the problem on the basis of the sound principles which they knew. Having arrived at what they considered to be an appropriate solution—that is, adopting James’ statements which were based on Peter’s announcement of principle—they asked the Lord if their conclusions were true and in accord with his mind. (D. & C. 8 and 9.)” (McConkie, *DNTC*, 2:144–45.)

(32-8) Acts 15:40. Who Was Silas?

The Silas spoken of in Acts is thought to be the same person as Silvanus of the Pauline letters (2 Corinthians 1:19; 1 Thessalonians 1:1; 2 Thessalonians 1:1). He was prominent among the leaders of the church at

Jerusalem. In his own right he was a prophet who preached the gospel (Acts 15:32). With Paul, he delivered to Antioch the decision of the Jerusalem Council concerning the requirements for church membership (Acts 15:1–35). When Paul disagreed with Barnabas, Silas was chosen as Paul’s companion to accompany him on the second missionary journey. His missionary experiences and travels include imprisonment at Philippi, where the jailor and his family were converted (Acts 16:16–40); travels to Thessalonica and then Berea, with a short stay at Berea while Paul went to Athens (Acts 17:1–15); and labors with Paul in Corinth (Acts 18:5; 2 Corinthians 1:19). If, in fact, Silas was the same person as Silvanus, he was the scribe for the book of 1 Peter, and he carried that same letter of Peter’s to Asia Minor (1 Peter 5:12). He may have been a Roman citizen (Acts 16:37).

(32-9) Acts 15:40; 18:18. What Are the Significant Elements of Paul’s Second Missionary Journey?

The church appears to have grown as rapidly in the other portions of the empire as it did in and around Jerusalem. The second missionary journey gave Paul an opportunity not only to revisit the churches founded on his first journey but also to establish others in areas hitherto untouched. Thus was established a practice which was to continue throughout Paul’s work as an apostle: to “visit our brethren in every city where we have preached the word of the Lord, and see how they do.” (Acts 15:36.) But Paul did not always go in person to these places; sometimes he sent Timothy or Titus or Silas. Thus we get a clearer perception not only of his ability as an organizer but of his capabilities as an administrator. It became his practice to follow up visits with letters of commendation or admonition, a method Paul was to use throughout the rest of his life in the service of Christ. Finally, there is much to indicate that Paul enjoyed in great measure the blessings of the Holy Ghost in his ministry, for he received visions and instructions constantly concerning the work and demonstrated the power of God on numerous occasions (Acts 16:7–9, 26; 18:9). See the map section for the travels of Paul on his second journey.

(32-10) Acts 16:16. What Is the Spirit of Divination?

Divination is defined as the act of determining the future by such means as cards, horoscopes, dreams, charms, Ouija boards, seances, crystal balls, and so forth. Soothsaying, or the practice of divination, is an

ancient art among the ancients (Isaiah 2:6; Daniel 2:27; 5:11); it was and is forbidden to the Lord's people (Deuteronomy 18:9–14; Joshua 13:22).

(32-11) Acts 16:30–34. Is Belief on the Lord Jesus Christ All That Is Necessary for Salvation?

“. . . belief alone is scarcely the beginning of that course leading to a celestial inheritance if it is isolated as a thing apart, if it is supposed that it does not embrace within its folds both baptism and a subsequent course of enduring to the end. (2 Ne. 31:15–21.) And in the very case at hand, Paul and Silas teach the gospel to the whole group, baptize them, and without question give them the gift of the Holy Ghost, thus starting them out in the direction of salvation.” (McConkie, *DNTC*, 2:152.)

(32-12) Acts 17:3. What Is Meant by the Statement That Paul Was “Opening and Alleging” with the Jews?

The word *allege* as we use it today has a somewhat different meaning from that in use in the days of the King James translators. To us, *allege* means to assert, to state, to set forth a proposition or thesis, all without proof. But to those of the early seventeenth century, it meant to bring forth proof, to present evidence, to back assertions with facts. Surely Paul would not spend three Sabbaths of precious time merely stating his case for Christ without presenting much supporting evidence.

(32-13) Acts 17:18. What Are Epicureans and Stoics?

Epicureanism was named for Epicurus, who lived just before and after 300 B.C. According to his philosophy, the world came into existence by chance and was without either purpose or design. The highest good to which man could attain was that which brought him the greatest pleasure or the greatest absence of sorrow and pain. Contrary to popular notions then and now, Epicureanism did not advocate wholesale licentiousness as an objective in life, but rather those enjoyments which gave to man the longest and fullest personal satisfactions.

Stoicism, on the other hand, recognized a supreme governing power in the universe. According to this philosophy, all things have been ordered and set in motion by a Divine Mind, and the wise man, the true Stoic, is he who accepts conditions as he finds them rather than changes them to be as he wishes them to be. Such acceptance requires great courage and self-control, for man is locked into a never-ending battle

with nature. The body is not a vessel to be punished or catered to; it is to be ignored. In his famous address on Mars Hill, Paul quoted from the “Phaenomena,” a work by Aratus, a Cilician poet: “As certain also of your own poets have said, For we are also his [i.e., God's] offspring.” (Acts 17:28.) Almost these identical words occur in the “Hymn to Zeus” written by Cleanthes. Both men were Stoics. In citing such poets, Paul was probably not attempting to impress his audience with his intellect and training; no doubt he was trying to place himself on a common footing with his listeners in order to gain their confidence and thus win a listening ear for his message.

(32-14) Acts 17:15–34. What Was the Significance of Paul's Visit to Athens?

The city of Athens, capital of Greece, was one of the wonders of the ancient world. Although in a state of general decline by the time of Paul's visit, Athens had formerly been the proud possessor of more intellectual genius, more philosophical inquiry, and more architectural splendor than any other city of ancient times. Its inhabitants, even during the period of decline, prided themselves on their brilliant heritage. Vigorous attempts were made to preserve and restore Athens to its former grandeur.

By the time of the first century A.D., Athens was literally a free city-state, privileged to enjoy the protection of Rome. Many of its most noted buildings were still standing. Famed among them was the Agora, or Marketplace. The chief men of the city gathered there each day to hear debates, to conduct the city's business, to learn, if possible, something new (Acts 17:21). Since Paul's message was new, he was assured of a crowd from the very first. At length, Paul was conducted to the famed Areopagus [i.e., Mars Hill], with his escorts saying, “May we know what this new doctrine, whereof thou speakest, is?” (Acts 17:19.) Although Paul's message was largely rejected, at least one member of the High Court, Dionysius the Areopagite, and Damaris, a local woman, with others unidentified, believed (Acts 17:34).

(32-15) Acts 17:22. “I Perceive That in All Things Ye Are Too Superstitious”

In describing Paul's speech on Mars Hill to the Athenians, our King James translation uses two words which might confuse Luke's intended meanings: *superstitious* and *devotions*. Paul is not insulting his Greek audience by accusing them of being too superstitious; rather, he is praising them for being very religious. The reference to their devotions seems to

imply that Paul had seen a group of men in Athens in the act of worship. But what he really saw was the objects or the gods that they worshiped. Far from insulting his listeners, the prudent apostle was preparing his audience for a message concerning a God that they knew nothing about.

(32-16) Acts 17:26. Was Paul Teaching About the Premortal Existence When He Spoke of the “Times Before Appointed”?

Here is an important doctrinal point that squares precisely with that taught by Moses, who speaks of how God divided “to the nations their inheritance, when he separated the sons of Adam,” and “set the bounds of the people according to the number of the children of Israel.” (Deuteronomy 32:8.) The doctrinal implication of these scriptures is plain: “If the Lord appointed unto the nations the bounds of their habitation, then there must have been a selection of spirits to form these nations.” (Smith, *The Way to Perfection*, p. 47.) President Harold B. Lee explained further:

“ . . . may I ask each of you again the question, ‘Who are you?’ You are all the sons and daughters of God. Your spirits were created and lived as organized intelligences before the world was. You have been blessed to have a physical body because of your obedience to certain commandments in that premortal state. You are now born into a family to which you have come, into the nations through which you have come, as a reward for the kind of lives you lived before you came here and at a time in the world’s history, as the Apostle Paul taught the men of Athens and as the Lord revealed to Moses, determined by the faithfulness of each of those who lived before this world was created.” (CR, Oct. 1973, p. 7.)

POINTS TO PONDER

THE LORD HAS GIVEN US THE RESPONSIBILITY TO HELP ALL MANKIND BECOME A “CHOSEN PEOPLE”

“Separate me Barnabas and Saul for the work whereunto I have called them.” (Acts 13:2.)

The Lord’s direction, “separate me . . . Saul for the work,” gives a clear impression of the distinctness, the chosen status of Paul by virtue of his divine appointment. This is reminiscent of the Lord’s statement to Ananias, which was referred to in the introduction to this lesson, “He is a chosen vessel unto me.”

In the previous lesson, this matter of Paul’s foreordination was considered. Paul had been “chosen” long since; he had been selected in premortality.

As it is with a chosen person—a “chosen vessel”—so it is with a group of chosen persons—a “chosen people.” A people chosen by the Lord to fulfill a mission upon the earth have not been chosen to relax or to boast, but to perform a special service which requires that they be designated and made separate. Of course, a chosen people would be no less foreordained and carefully prepared for their cumulative mission than a chosen person would be for his individual mission.

However, with reference to the opportunity to ultimately have every gospel blessing, there is no “chosen” people, for that opportunity comes to all. When Adam was promised that all his posterity—all mankind—would have access to the gospel’s blessings, he greatly rejoiced (Moses 5:9–12). This same promise was, in effect, repeated when the Lord promised that the descendants of Noah (all mankind after the flood) would eventually be called upon by the Lord and his servants (Moses 7:51, 52).

But there is a sequence, an order, a divine calendar, as it were, which prevails in the work of the Lord. Every one of our Father’s children is on his calendar somewhere, but he times the opportunity for each generation, each nation, and each individual according to his unbounded wisdom and kindness. Notice how Paul expresses this great encompassing truth.

Read Acts 17:26, 27.

Abraham was promised that all those of any nation or lineage who would obey the gospel would be adopted into his literal family and become the children of Abraham (having the right to the blessing of salvation). (See Abraham 2:9–11.)

Paul was an Israelite and served with other Israelites in the church. Through their instrumentality, gentiles—non-Israelites—heard the gospel and were brought by adoption into the family of Abraham to enjoy the promised blessings. But for the most part, the Israelites of Paul’s time had altogether overlooked their mission. They neither embraced the gospel themselves nor brought it to others. So what Isaiah had proclaimed to their forefathers, Paul reproclaimed to them in almost the same words.

Read Acts 13:47; see also Isaiah 49:6.

Theirs was not simply a birthright but a birthright of work and service.

Now, in our day, by the visit of Moses to the Kirtland temple on April 3, 1836, the keys are here to conduct the gathering of Israel. (See D&C 110:11.) The Lord has declared to us, “Ye are the children of Israel, and of the seed of Abraham.” (D&C 103:17.) And once again, He has identified himself as “the God of your fathers, the God of Abraham and of Isaac and of Jacob.” (D&C 136:21.)

The Latter-day Saints, like their Israelite forefathers of old, are chosen people. But chosen for what?

Read D&C 29:4.

After all, we surely are not “chosen” to rest and think well of ourselves, for anyone can do that!

You have read how Paul’s “spirit was stirred in him” in looking upon those who languished in darkness for want of the truth. (Acts 17:16.) You have seen his cheerful willingness to submit to any difficulty, to pay any price, in order to exercise his privilege of bringing salvation to other men (e.g., Acts 16:24–33).

(32-17) To Be “Chosen” Is to Be “Called”

We as Latter-day Saints are “chosen vessels”—a people entrusted with truths and privileges which are sorely needed in the life of each of our fellow beings.

There is a tremendous need for persons willing to do whatever is necessary to share these truths and blessings with our Father’s children, member and nonmember alike.

We need not wait for the Church to extend a formal mission call for us to begin. As we have seen, the call to share our light with others has already been extended, and the assurance that we shall succeed in this most important of labors has been given:

1. We have the fulness of the gospel—knowledge of all the truths, doctrines, and principles needed to teach and prepare a person for salvation and exaltation.
2. If we feel inadequate in our abilities to teach, we should bear in mind that when we are rightfully motivated, we may properly call upon the Holy Ghost to manifest the truthfulness of our testimonies upon the souls of those whom we teach.
3. We labor under the direction of the priesthood, which means that those acts which we perform in righteousness will be accepted and acknowledged by our Father in heaven.

Much like the reassurance given to Paul (Acts 18:10), we are promised that our work and sacrifice will not be in vain, for there are many who await only our testimony to embrace the truth and join in fellowship with the Saints. We should note the call issued to Oliver Cowdery and David Whitmer and liken it unto ourselves: Read D&C 18:9–16.

SECTION 8

PAUL'S WITNESS AS A MISSIONARY

LESSONS

33. The Coming of the Lord Jesus Christ
34. "That Your Faith Should Not Stand in the Wisdom of Men"
35. "This Do in Remembrance of Me"
36. "Covet Earnestly the Best Gifts"
37. Affliction Worketh for Us a More Exceeding Weight of Glory
38. "Whatsoever a Man Soweth, That Shall He Also Reap"
39. "Man Is Justified by Faith"
40. "Heirs of God, and Joint-Heirs with Christ"
41. Elected Before the Foundations of the World

"HOLY MEN OF GOD" WROTE

". . . no prophecy of the scripture is of any private interpretation.

"For the prophecy came not . . . by the will of man: but holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost." (2 Peter 1:20, 21.)

The First Presidency of the Church of Christ Directed All Missionary Work in This Meridian Dispensation

Of the twenty-seven books in the New Testament, fourteen were written by the apostle Paul. This has led some commentators to unjustifiably conclude that the work of this one outstanding apostle, together with the letters he wrote, overshadowed the work of the other apostles. But in your study you must remember that "Peter, James, and John, acted as the First Presidency of the Church in their day." (Joseph Fielding Smith,

Doctrines of Salvation, 3:152.) The work of spreading the gospel had already progressed under the direction of the First Presidency before Paul's work had commenced. It was by their direction that Paul was sent to the gentiles (Galatians 2:9). And it may well be found, when God reveals "many great and important things pertaining to the Kingdom of God" (ninth Article of Faith), that Peter and others of the early brethren traveled as widely and wrote as much as did Paul.

Before reading the letters of these early witnesses, it will be helpful to review what is known of their biographies. These are summarized at appropriate places throughout the course manual and should provide you with some helpful insights as to why the early apostles expressed themselves as they did.

Why the Early Apostles Communicated to the Church by Letter

At the time of Paul's conversion to the gospel, about A.D. 36, the church of Jesus Christ was a small body of believers scarcely known beyond the borders of Judea. Some fifteen or sixteen years later, at the time Paul wrote his first two letters, First and Second Thessalonians, the gospel message had spread to various parts of the Roman Empire. The church then was widely scattered, and modern methods of rapid transportation and communication were unknown. Also, converts to the early church came out of a world of competing and soul-degrading philosophies. The major problem of the authorities of the church in that time, therefore, was keeping the church pure and uncontaminated from the false philosophies and immoral practices of the day, and communicating this direction in the most rapid manner. Communication by courier through direct word, or by letter to local priesthood authorities, was the fastest way that church

authorities could respond to local needs and problems (2 Thessalonians 2:2). It is against this backdrop that Paul, no doubt under the direction of the presidency of the church, was empowered to set in order many of the branches of the church which he had founded. For the most part, this was done by letters, fourteen of which we have in our New Testament. Likewise, in the New Testament canon are found letters of other priesthood officers: Peter, the president of the church; James, an apostle; John, an apostle and, some think, the successor to the president following Peter's martyrdom; and Jude, an apostle. Each of their letters was written to provide encouragement and instruction to the saints scattered abroad or to combat heresy which had crept into the church.

In What Historical Sequence Were the Letters Written?

Because of Luke's detailed historical account in the book of Acts, and other internal allusions within the letters themselves, we have a general notion when most of the letters in the New Testament canon were written. In no case, of course, can we assign an exact date for the letters. Some letters appear to have been written during Paul's second and third missionary journeys, between A.D. 50 and 60; others were penned during the first and second imprisonments in Rome, from about A.D. 61 to 68; still others appear to have been written toward the end of the first century. One, the book of Hebrews, bears no dating marks at all, making it difficult to suggest any accurate time period when the letter was written. The chronology of Paul's letters in this course manual is essentially that which is used by Dr. Sidney Sperry in *The Life and Letters of Paul*. For the chronology of the New Testament writings, see the Chart of New Testament History in the center section.

BIOGRAPHY

Paul the Missionary

Following his conversion, Paul was taken into Damascus where Ananias, who was probably the presiding officer of the local church, helped to heal him of his blindness. Then Paul was baptized, and he received the gift of the Holy Ghost. Because he progressed so rapidly in understanding his new faith,

and because his training in the Old Testament had been so thorough, in a very short time Paul was able to confound the Jewish leaders in Damascus by proving Jesus to be the long-awaited Messiah. About this time, Paul went into Arabia to prepare himself spiritually (Galatians 1:17). There, in desert seclusion, it is possible that his prayers and meditations were of such power that he was taught the gospel by direct revelation from the Savior (Galatians 1:11, 12).

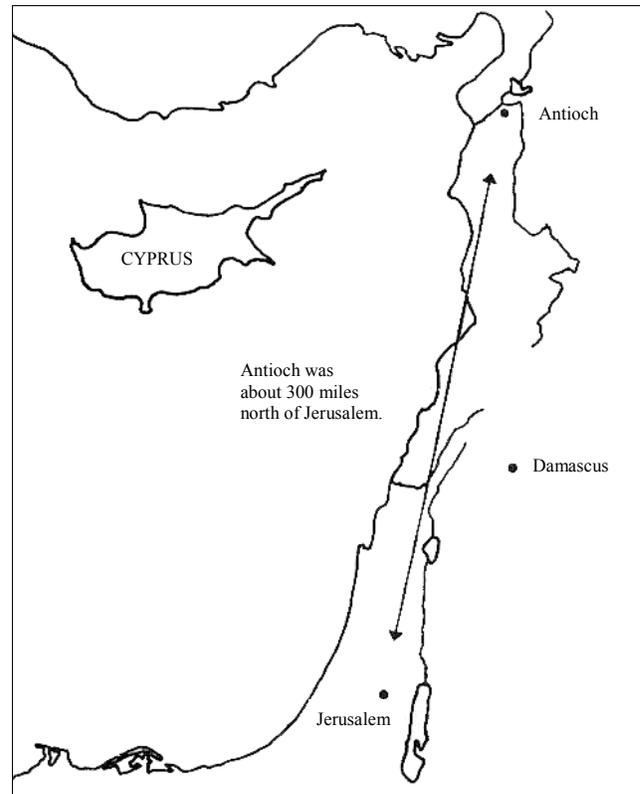
We do not know the exact place or length of Paul's stay in Arabia; we do know that at the end of this time, he was prepared to begin his missionary labors. He returned to Damascus and again taught in the Jewish synagogues. This time his preaching so incensed the Jews that they sought to kill him. Members of the church helped Paul by lowering him down the outside of the city wall in a basket, and the beleaguered man was able to escape to Jerusalem.

Perhaps during his stay in Jerusalem Paul learned much from Peter concerning the mortal life and ministry of the Savior. Paul used the occasion to preach the gospel in the Jerusalem synagogues. Because he reasoned with such vigor and effectiveness, he alienated the Jewish leaders and they determined to kill him. Their plots, however, were ineffective, for the Savior intervened to save Paul's life. The Lord appeared to Paul in a vision while he was praying in the temple and warned him to leave the city. Obedient to this command, Paul fled from Jerusalem, and with the help of the church brethren escaped to Caesarea and then back to Tarsus, his hometown and capital of the province of Cilicia.

While Paul was in Cilicia and the neighboring province of Syria, he preached with great power; so many people were converted that the news of his success was carried to the brethren in Jerusalem (Galatians 1:21–24). Later, when Barnabas needed an assistant in the ministry, no doubt he was influenced by his knowledge of Paul's effectiveness as a missionary. Barnabas sought out Paul in Tarsus and persuaded him to help in the missionary labors in Antioch (Acts 11:25, 26). Relief funds were also gathered for the impoverished members of the church in Jerusalem. Then the two men traveled to Jerusalem to take the much-needed assistance to the saints (Acts 11:29–31).

In Acts we read of Paul's three known missionary journeys and of his five visits to Jerusalem. Paul's letters, many of which were written during his travels, add much to help us understand the details of Paul's life and apostolic ministry. At the end of his third missionary journey, Paul returned to Jerusalem. There Roman soldiers rescued him from certain death at the hands of an angry mob of Jews. When the Roman chief captain learned of Paul's Roman citizenship and of a Jewish conspiracy to kill Paul, he detailed several hundred soldiers to take Paul to Caesarea where he could be protected and judged by Felix, the Roman governor.

Where was Antioch in Relationship to Jerusalem?



THE COMING OF THE LORD JESUS CHRIST



The First and Second Letters of Paul to the Saints at Thessalonica, ca. A.D. 52–53 Written from Corinth During Paul's Second Missionary Journey (1 and 2 Thessalonians)	
	1 Thessalonians
Gospel Comes in Word and Power	1:1–10
Paul's Example in Thessalonica	2:1–12
Faith and Patience of the Converts	2:13–20
Timothy's Mission to Thessalonica	3:1–13
Live in Holiness and Charity	4:1–12
The Saints Saved at Second Coming	4:13–18
Saints Know Season of Second Coming	5:1–11
Be Considerate Saints	5:12–28

	2 Thessalonians
Ungodly Damned at Second Coming	1:1–12
Apostasy to Precede Second Coming	2:1–12
Persevere for Eternal Glory	2:13–17
Pray for Triumph of the Gospel	3:1–5
Withdraw from Apostates	3:6
Stand Against Idleness	3:7–18

THEME

Those who follow the living prophets are prepared for Christ's second coming.

INTRODUCTION

Early in his second missionary journey, Paul came to Thessalonica. What richness of experience and feeling must be hidden in Luke's simple lines about that visit. "And Paul, as his manner was, went in unto them [the Jewish synagogue in Thessalonica], and three sabbath days reasoned with them out of the scriptures." (Acts 17:2.)

This was the Paul whose itinerary and route had twice been changed by the influence of the Holy Spirit to bring him directly to Macedonia. This was the Paul who had been grieved by the tauntings of a young Philippian girl possessed of an evil spirit, and had turned and cast the evil spirit from her. This was the Paul who, though it was midnight and his feet were clamped in prison stocks and his back was torn and bloody from the repeated blows of the lash, sang hymns of praise to God. The apostle who bore witness to the Thessalonians of Christ's power to deliver from sin was the apostle who had, in Philippi, witnessed doors fly open and chains break free with the quaking of the earth. The missionary who came to Thessalonica to baptize was the missionary who ignored the miraculous chance for freedom provided by the earthquake and instead stayed to baptize the terrified jailer.

These were the experiences fresh upon the mind of the apostle as he came to the Thessalonians with the message of Christ. How precious it would be if a record of Paul's sermons on those three successive Sabbaths had been preserved. We know that he spoke to his listeners of Christ (see Acts 17:3), but one cannot help but wonder what questions he asked, what stories he related, what scriptures he quoted. Certainly he discussed the future return of the Savior, for when he was driven from the city by angry Jews and wrote letters back to his converts, this theme ran heavily through them. As you read these two letters, remember the words of President Brigham Young when he asked this question:

"Are you prepared for the day of vengeance to come, when the Lord will consume the wicked by the brightness of his coming? No. Then do not be too anxious for the Lord to hasten his work. Let our anxiety be centered upon this one thing, the sanctification of our own hearts, the purifying of our own affections, the preparing of ourselves for the approach of the events that are hastening upon us. This should be our concern, this should be our study, this should be our daily prayer. . . . Seek to have the

spirit of Christ, that we may wait patiently the time of the Lord, and prepare ourselves for the times that are coming. This is our duty." (Deseret News [Salt Lake City], 1 May 1861.)

Before proceeding, read all the scriptural references in the reading block.

INTERPRETIVE COMMENTARY

FIRST THESSALONIANS

(33-1) 1 Thessalonians 1:1. Why Did Paul Write to the Thessalonians, and When Were the Letters Written?

The missionaries were driven from Thessalonica by angry Jews (Acts 17:5, 10). Paul went from there to Berea, then to Athens, and on to Corinth where Silas and Timothy joined him. Paul then sent Timothy back to Thessalonica to check on conditions in the branch.

While Timothy was with the Thessalonian saints, observing conditions of the novice branch, he probably counseled and comforted the members and reminded them of their gospel duties and commitments. Thereafter, he returned to Corinth and reported to Paul. From Timothy's report, and because of Paul's prior experience in Thessalonica, the apostle was able to write to the saints and praise them for their Christian examples.

He wrote them a message of consolation and encouragement, that they might be able to continue to endure persecution and trials and to remain steadfast in their faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. Written to members, most of whom prior to their baptism appear to have been gentiles and not Jews, the book calls attention to problems which probably were peculiar to gentile converts. Questions of social solidarity, sexual purity, and honest labor were three problems faced by the converts in Thessalonica. Had most of the Thessalonian saints been Jewish converts, it would seem that they would not have had the same problems to such a degree. Why? Because the Jews had enjoyed a background in the law of Moses which encouraged social and especially family ties, discouraged sexual sin, and emphasized the virtue of six days of labor.

The letters to the Thessalonians were, as nearly as can be determined, written from Corinth several months after Paul had left Macedonia, probably near the close of A.D. 52.

(33-2) 1 Thessalonians 1:1. Who Were Silvanus and Timotheus?

Silvanus is another form of the name Silas; this man is thought to be the same who accompanied Paul in the second missionary journey. (See the commentary on Acts 15:40.)

Timotheus is Timothy. (See biographical sketch in the introduction to section 11.)

(33-3) 1 Thessalonians 1:10. How May the Saints Escape the Wrath to Come?

The Prophet Joseph Smith said:

“It seems to be deeply impressed upon our minds that the Saints ought to lay hold of every door that shall seem to be opened unto them, to obtain foothold on the earth, and be making all the preparation that is within their power for the terrible storms that are now gathering in the heavens, ‘a day of clouds, with darkness and gloominess, and of thick darkness,’ as spoken of by the Prophets which cannot be now of a long time lingering. . . .” (*Teachings*, p. 141.)

The “wrath to come” is “the desolation of abomination which awaits the wicked, both in this world and in the world to come.” (D&C 88:85.)

(33-4) 1 Thessalonians 2:2. What Is Meant by Speaking the Gospel “with Much Contention”?

It has been suggested that the word *contention* in verse 2 ought to translate from the Greek as “conflict”—referring to any struggle, outward or inward. Sometimes the word *opposition* is used in place of *contention*. Whichever interpretation is used, what seems to be clear is the fact that Paul was able to preach the gospel only by enduring much conflict with antagonistic Jews and gentiles, by struggling mightily with mental trials, and by experiencing great hardships. Like Paul, missionaries today must endure much hardship and opposition—antagonistic nonmembers, self- and devil-imposed doubt and temptation, and even physical and financial hardships. And like Paul, missionaries today overcome and endure in the same way: by perseverance born of faith in the Lord Jesus Christ.

(33-5) 1 Thessalonians 4:3–5. What Does It Mean to Possess One’s Vessel in Sanctification and Honour?

The word *vessel* in this passage has been interpreted to mean “body.” Men and women are to control their bodies, to respect their bodies as temples of God, and

to treat them with honor. They are not to use them as instruments for lustful self-gratification.

“To be sanctified is to become clean, pure, and spotless; to be freed from the blood and sins of the world; to become a new creature of the Holy Ghost, one whose body has been renewed by the rebirth of the Spirit. Sanctification is a state of saintliness, a state attained only by conformity to the laws and ordinances of the gospel. The plan of salvation is the system and means provided whereby men may sanctify their souls and thereby become worthy of a celestial inheritance.” (McConkie, *Mormon Doctrine*, p. 675.)

(33-6) 1 Thessalonians 5:2. “For Yourselves Know Perfectly That the Day of the Lord So Cometh As a Thief in the Night”

“I do not know when he is going to come. No man knows. Even the angels of heaven are in the dark in regard to that great truth. [See Matthew 24:36, 37.] But this I know, that *the signs that have been pointed out are here*. The earth is full of calamity, of trouble. The hearts of men are failing them. We see the signs as we see the fig tree putting forth her leaves; and knowing this time is near, it behooves you, and all men upon the face of the earth, to *pay heed to the words of Christ, to his apostles and watch*, for we know not the day nor the hour. But I tell you this, it shall come as a thief in the night, when *many of us will not be ready for it*.” (Smith, *Doctrines of Salvation*, 3:52–53.)

Paul compares the coming of the Lord to the coming of a thief in the night. In other words, it will come—

- 1. Unexpectedly.*
- 2. Without warning. See also D&C 106:4, 5.*

But the effect it will have on people will vary because there are two basically different classes of people. Continuing the analogy of night and day, Paul titles these two classes as follows:

The Children of the Night

These are the people of the world who dwell in darkness. Therefore they will not “see” the signs which herald the approach of this great event. The “day of the Lord” shall be a dreadful day for them.

The Children of the Day

These are those who dwell in light and truth. They “see” the warning signs and therefore are spiritually prepared for the coming of Jesus. For them, the “day of the Lord” shall be a great day.

Paul does not further describe or discuss the children of the night, for it takes no special preparation or qualification to be classed as one of these. But he defines clearly how a person may become a child of the day: Those who are the children of the day will be sober; that is, they will recognize the deeply serious nature of life and the need for spiritual preparation. They will let “the solemnities of eternity” rest upon their minds. (See D&C 43:34.) Children of the day will also clothe themselves in three great attributes, namely, faith, love, and the hope of salvation (1 Thessalonians 5:8). In addition they will strive to improve their relationships with both God and man. Paul lists seven specific ways to do both.

Review 1 Thessalonians 5:11–15 and list the steps a Saint should take to improve his relationship with his fellowmen.

Review 1 Thessalonians 5:16–22 and list the steps a Saint should take to improve his relationship with his God.

Paul’s promise is that if we do this, then God will sanctify us. Such sanctification, or cleansing, then makes it possible for our “whole spirit and soul and body [to] be preserved blameless unto the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ.” (1 Thessalonians 5:23.)

(33-7) 1 Thessalonians 5:12, 13. “Know Them Which Labour Among You, and Are over You in the Lord”

Members of the Church are to highly esteem the ecclesiastical leaders who preside over them. Criticism, faultfinding, backbiting, and gossip should be done away with; and an attitude of helpfulness, honest praise, kindness, and forbearance should prevail. This same respect and honor is to be given to all who labor to build up the kingdom. How is such honor for those who bear the priesthood to be obtained? For the men in the Church the following advice is of great value: “If you will honor the Holy Priesthood *in yourself first*, you will honor it in those who preside over you and in those who administer in the various callings throughout the Church.”

For the women of the Church, a corollary is equally true, according to President Smith: “If you will honor the Holy Priesthood in [your husbands and fathers and sons], you will honor [that priesthood and its callings] in those who preside over you and in those who administer in the various callings throughout the

Church.” (Joseph F. Smith, as quoted in F. W. Otterstrom, “A Journey to the South,” *Improvement Era*, Dec. 1917, p. 106.)

(33-8) 1 Thessalonians 5:14. “Comfort the Feebleminded”

The word *feebleminded* is perhaps better written as “fainthearted.” The admonition is to comfort those who lack courage or resolution to live the gospel. (See McConkie, *DNTC*, 3:58.)

(33-9) 1 Thessalonians 5:19. “Quench Not the Spirit”

“In the true Church there will always be powerful manifestations of the Spirit of God. Inclinations to bridle and submerge these is of the world.” (McConkie, *DNTC*, 3:58.)

(33-10) 1 Thessalonians 5:26. What Does Paul Mean by the Expression “Greet All the Brethren with an Holy Kiss”?

This verse in the Inspired Version reads: “Greet all the brethren with a holy salutation.”

SECOND THESSALONIANS

(33-11) 2 Thessalonians 1:9. What Is “Everlasting Destruction”?

To experience everlasting destruction is to partake of spiritual death, “which is to be cast out of the presence of God and to die as pertaining to the things of righteousness.” (McConkie, *DNTC*, 3:61.)

(33-12) 2 Thessalonians 2:2. What Is the Meaning of “Nor by Letter As from Us”?

The Inspired Version reads: “That ye be not soon shaken in mind, or **be troubled by letter, except ye receive it from us**; neither by spirit, nor by word, as that the day of Christ is at hand.” (Emphasis added.)

(33-13) 2 Thessalonians 2:3. What Is the “Falling Away” Which Must First Take Place Before the Second Coming?

The Greek word Paul uses is *apostasia*, the word from which we derive the words *apostasy*, *apostatize*, and *apostate*. The literal meaning of the word is to revolt; but in secular Greek usage it meant political revolt or the changing of governmental forms. The passage in Thessalonians is a reference to the apostasy that was to occur before the Lord returns to the earth to rule and reign in majesty and power.

(33-14) 2 Thessalonians 2:3. Who Is “the Son of Perdition”?

Satan and those with him who rebelled against God in heaven and were cast out are known as sons of perdition. These rebellious spirits “*chose evil by choice after having had the light*. While dwelling in the presence of God they *knowingly entered into their rebellion*. Their mission on earth is to attempt to destroy the souls of men and make them miserable as they themselves are miserable.” (Smith, *Doctrines of Salvation*, 2:219.) The word *perdition* is derived from the Latin *perditus*, meaning “to destroy,” and was a title given to Satan (D&C 76:26). Therefore, in this passage Paul refers to Satan.

(33-15) 2 Thessalonians 2:7. What Is the Mystery of Iniquity?

“The seemingly obscure expression, ‘he who now letteth will let,’ may be more readily understood by remembering that in the older style of English ‘let’ had the meaning of ‘restrain’ or ‘hinder.’ The passage therefore may be understood as a declaration that the spirit of iniquity was already active though restrained or hindered for a time; and that later even this restraint would be removed and the evil one would be in power. In the Revised Version of the New Testament this passage is rendered thus: ‘—lawlessness doth already work: only there is one that restraineth now, until he be taken out of the way.’

“Just who or what is referred to as exercising a restraint on the powers of iniquity at that time has given rise to discussion. Some writers hold that the presence of the apostles operated in this way, while others believe that the restraining power of the Roman government is referred to. It is known that the Roman policy was to discountenance religious contention, and to allow a large measure of liberty in forms of worship as long as the gods of Rome were not maligned nor their shrines dishonored. As Roman supremacy declined ‘the mystery of iniquity’ embodied in the apostate church operated practically without restraint.

“The expression ‘mystery of iniquity’ as used by Paul is significant. Prominent among the early perverters of the Christian faith were those who assailed its simplicity and lack of exclusiveness. This simplicity was so different from the mysteries of Judaism and the mysterious rites of heathen idolatry as to be disappointing to many; and the earliest changes in the Christian form of worship were marked by the introduction of mystic ceremonies.” (Talmage, *The Great Apostasy*, pp. 41–42.)

According to the Inspired Version, the statement “until he be taken out of the way” refers to Satan, who was and still is causing misery, unhappiness, and sin throughout the world. He will continue to do so until he is bound by the Lord at the beginning of the Millennium. (See McConkie, *DNTC*, 3:63.) The Inspired Version reads: “For the mystery of iniquity doth already work, and he it is who now worketh, and Christ suffereth him to work, until the time is fulfilled that he shall be taken out of the way.”

(33-16) 2 Thessalonians 2:9. Does Satan Have Power to Work Signs and Wonders?

Satan has great power to produce false signs and wonders. He has the ability to imitate the miracles of God—witness the efforts of the magicians in Pharaoh’s court when they imitated the miracles of Moses and Aaron (Exodus 7, 8). Satan has power over the elements. He is a master of deceit. He can appear as an angel of light (2 Corinthians 11:14). He is an orator. He has the gift of tongues. Many are the powers of Satan which he uses to lead men astray. Those spirits who followed Satan have these same capacities in lesser degrees (Revelation 16:14). In all this, “the power of the devil is limited; [and] the power of God is unlimited.” (Young, *Discourses of Brigham Young*, p. 68.)

(33-17) 2 Thessalonians 2:11. Does God Seek to Delude Men?

God does not attempt to delude men, for he is a God of truth and he cannot deceive (D&C 62:6; Deuteronomy 32:4). He does allow men to believe as they please. If they choose to accept untruth, he does not force them to think or do otherwise.

“... If man is to be rewarded for righteousness and punished for evil, then common justice demands that he be given the power of independent action. A knowledge of good and evil is essential to man’s progress on earth. If he were coerced to do right at all times, or were helplessly enticed to commit sin, he would merit neither a blessing for the first nor punishment for the second. . . .

“God is standing in the shadow of eternity, it seems to me, deploring the inevitable results of the follies, the transgressions and the sins of His wayward children, but we cannot blame Him for these any more than we can blame a father who might say to his son, ‘There are two roads, my son, one leading to the right, one leading to the left. If you take the one to the right it will lead you to success and to happiness. If you take the one to the left it will bring upon you misery and

unhappiness and perhaps death, but you choose which you will. You must choose; I will not force either upon you.’ . . .” (McKay, *Pathways to Happiness*, pp. 90–91, 93.)

So Paul is suggesting that God allows men to be deluded because they “received not the love of the truth, that they might be saved.” (vs. 10.)

(33-18) 2 Thessalonians 3:6. Are We Really Supposed to Withdraw Our Fellowship “from Every Brother That Walketh Disorderly”?

“Enemies from within, traitors to the Cause, cultists who pervert the doctrines and practices which lead to salvation, often draw others away with them, and added souls lose their anticipated inheritance in the heavenly kingdom. When cultists and enemies become fixed in their opposition to the Church, and when they seek to convert others to their diverse positions, the course of wisdom is to avoid them, as Paul here directs, and to leave them in the Lord’s hands.” (McConkie, *DNTC*, 3:66.)

(33-19) 2 Thessalonians 3:8. What Is Meant by “Neither Did We Eat Any Man’s Bread for Nought”?

“Even Paul and his ministerial associates, who were in fact entitled to temporal help from the saints, chose to set an example of self-support. There are perils in a paid ministry.” (McConkie, *DNTC*, 3:67.)

(33-20) 2 Thessalonians 3:16. How May the Lord “Give You Peace Always”?

“The peace of Christ does not come by seeking the superficial things of life, neither does it come except as it springs from the individual’s heart. Jesus said to his disciples: ‘Peace I leave with you, my peace I give unto you: not as the world giveth, give I unto you. . . .’ (John 14:27.) Thus the Son of Man, the executor of his own will and testament, gave to his disciples and to mankind the ‘first of all human blessings.’ It was a bequest conditioned upon obedience to the principles of the gospel of Jesus Christ. It is thus bequeathed to each individual. No man is at peace with himself, who transgresses the law of right either in dealing with himself by indulging in passion, in appetite, yielding to temptations against his accusing conscience, or in dealing with his fellow men, being untrue to their trust. Peace does not come to the transgressor of law; peace comes by obedience to law; and it is that message which Jesus would have us proclaim among men.” (David O. McKay in *CR*, Oct. 1938, p. 133.)

POINTS TO PONDER

IF YOU ARE PREPARED, YOU NEED NOT FEAR

Sometimes there are people who have great fears about the second coming of the Lord. They are heard to say, “There are so many terrible events prophesied, I hope I die before the Lord comes again!” Are such feelings justified? Is there any hope for the righteous who may live to see the Second Coming?

(33-21) Those Who Follow the Prophets Need Not Fear

“My text today is from a revelation of the Lord to Joseph Smith, the Prophet, at a conference of the Church January 2, 1831, as follows: ‘. . . if ye are prepared ye shall not fear.’ (D&C 38:30.)

“In section 1 of the great Doctrine and Covenants, a volume of modern scripture, we read these words: ‘Prepare ye, prepare ye for that which is to come. . . .’ (D&C 1:12.) Further in this same revelation are these warning words: ‘. . . I the Lord, knowing the calamity which should come upon the inhabitants of the earth . . .’ (D&C 1:17.)

“What are some of the calamities for which we are to prepare? In section 29 the Lord warns us of ‘a great hailstorm sent forth to destroy the crops of the earth.’ (D&C 29:16.) In section 45 we read of ‘an overflowing scourge; for a desolating sickness shall cover the land.’ (D&C 45:31.) In section 63 the Lord declares he has ‘decreed wars upon the face of the earth. . . .’ (D&C 63:33.)

“In Matthew, chapter 24, we learn of ‘famines, and pestilences, and earthquakes. . . .’ (Matt. 24:7.) The Lord declared that these and other calamities shall occur. These particular prophecies seem not to be conditional. The Lord, with his foreknowledge, knows that they will happen. Some will come about through man’s manipulations; others through the forces of nature and nature’s God, but that they will come seems certain. Prophecy is but history in reverse—a divine disclosure of future events.

“Yet, through all of this, the Lord Jesus Christ has said: ‘. . . if ye are prepared ye shall not fear.’ (D&C 38:30.)

“What, then, is the Lord’s way to help us prepare for these calamities? The answer is also found in section 1 of the Doctrine and Covenants, wherein he says:

“Wherefore, I the Lord, knowing the calamity which should come upon the inhabitants of the earth, called upon my servant Joseph Smith, Jun., and spake unto him from heaven, and gave him commandments:

“And also gave commandments to others. . . .’ (D&C 1:17–18.) He has also said: ‘Search these commandments, for they are true and faithful, and the prophecies and promises which are in them shall all be fulfilled.’ (D&C 1:37.)

“Here then is the key—look to the prophets for the words of God, that will show us how to prepare for the calamities which are to come. For the Lord, in that same section, states: ‘What I the Lord have spoken, I have spoken, and I excuse not myself; and though the heavens and the earth pass away, my word shall not pass away, but shall all be fulfilled, whether by mine own voice or by the voice of my servants, it is the same.’ (D&C 1:38.)

“Again, the Lord warned those who will reject the inspired words of his representatives, in these words: ‘. . . and the day cometh that they who will not hear the voice of the Lord, neither the voice of his servants, neither give heed to the words of the prophets and apostles, shall be cut off from among the people.’ (D&C 1:14.)” (Ezra Taft Benson in *CR*, Oct. 1973, p. 89.)

(33-22) Our Only Safety Is Obedience

“Now the only safety we have as members of this church is to do exactly what the Lord said to the Church in that day when the Church was organized. We must learn to give heed to the words and commandments that the Lord shall give through his prophet, ‘as he receiveth them, walking in all holiness before me; . . . as if from mine own mouth, in all patience and faith.’ (D&C 21:4–5.) There will be some things that take patience and faith. You may not like what comes from the authority of the Church. It may contradict your political views. It may contradict your social views. It may interfere with some of your social life. But if you listen to these things, as if from the mouth of the Lord himself, with patience and faith, the promise is that ‘the gates of hell shall not prevail against you; yea, and the Lord God will disperse the powers of darkness from before you, and cause the heavens to shake for your good, and his name’s glory.’ (D&C 21:6.)” (Harold B. Lee in *CR*, Oct. 1970, p. 152.)

What does giving heed to the living prophets mean? Does it simply mean doing what they say when calamities strike?

Only the spiritually prepared shall endure without fear in the days ahead. The General Authorities of the Church give much counsel that, while not directly related to preparing for calamities, is directly related to spirituality. Evaluate honestly in your own heart the following questions:

- *Do you accept and follow the counsel of living prophets?*
- *Does this acceptance apply to such things as the dating, dress, and moral codes as well as to doctrinal teachings?*
- *Though such decisions may yet be future, have you already firmly determined that you will heed the counsel of the prophets about working mothers? the limiting of the family size for reasons of convenience, education, or increased income? or other counsel that at times causes some of the young members of the Church to murmur?*

(33-23) The Present-Day Welfare Program Is One Way to Be Prepared

“For the righteous the gospel provides a warning before a calamity, a program for the crises, a refuge for each disaster.

“The Lord has said that ‘the day cometh, that shall burn as an oven . . .’ (Mal. 4:1), but he assures us that ‘he that is tithed shall not be burned. . . .’ (D&C 64:23.)

“The Lord has warned us of famines, but the righteous will have listened to prophets and stored at least a year’s supply of survival food.

“The Lord has set loose the angels to reap down the earth (see *Discourses of Wilford Woodruff*, p. 251), but those who obey the Word of Wisdom along with the other commandments are assured ‘that the destroying angel shall pass by them, as the children of Israel, and not slay them. . . .’ (D&C 89:21.)

“The Lord desires his Saints to be free and independent in the critical days ahead. But no man is truly free who is in financial bondage. ‘Think what you do when you run in debt,’ said Benjamin Franklin, ‘you give to another power over your liberty.’ ‘. . . pay thy debt and live . . .’ said Elisha. (2 Kings 4:7.) And in the Doctrine

and Covenants the Lord says, ‘. . . it is my will that you shall pay all your debts.’ (D&C 104:78.) . . .

“From the standpoint of food production, storage, handling, and the Lord’s counsel, wheat should have high priority. Water, of course, is essential. Other basics could include honey or sugar, legumes, milk products or substitutes, and salt or its equivalent. *The revelation to store food may be as essential to our temporal salvation today as boarding the ark was to the people in the days of Noah.*

“President Harold B. Lee has wisely counseled that ‘Perhaps if we think not in terms of a year’s supply of what we ordinarily would use, and think more in terms of what it would take to keep us alive in case we didn’t have anything else to eat, that last would be very easy to put in storage for a year . . . just enough to keep us alive if we didn’t have anything else to eat. We wouldn’t get fat on it, but we would live: and if you think in terms of that kind of annual storage rather than a whole year’s supply of everything that you are accustomed to eat which, in most cases, is utterly impossible for the average family, I think we will come nearer to what President Clark advised us way back in 1937.’ (Welfare conference address, October 1, 1966.)

“There are blessings in being close to the soil, in raising your own food, even if it is only a garden in your yard and/or a fruit tree or two. Man’s material wealth basically springs from the land and other natural resources. Combined with his human energy and multiplied by his tools, this wealth is assured and expanded through freedom and righteousness. Those families will be fortunate who, in the last days, have an adequate supply of each of these particulars.” (Ezra Taft Benson in *CR*, Oct. 1973, pp 90–91.)

Some young adult members of the Church may not be in a position as yet to implement fully Elder Benson’s suggestions. Even so, consider the following in determining what can be done to prepare yourself:

- *If you are single, or even newly married, it is unlikely that you have the means for purchasing and storing a year’s supply of food. But are you doing all that is possible for you to do in your*

present situation? Have you encouraged your family to prepare themselves and helped them to do so? What place on the priority list will food storage take for you in the near future?

- *Is there any plot of land, however small, available to you for the planting of vegetables or fruit?*
- *Debt and living within one’s income are things that you can directly control. Are you free from debt? If not, is becoming so one of the important goals of your life? Do you rationalize your indebtedness by insisting that you must have a nicer mode of transportation, a more luxurious place to live, or various recreational equipment? Have you determined that when you are married debt shall be incurred only for necessities that cannot be obtained otherwise? Are you committed to the idea that unresolved debts are just another form of theft? Even though these concerns may be somewhat removed from you at this stage in your life, there are other steps of temporal preparation that you can take.*
- *It is said that today’s generation lives in the knowledge explosion. There is hardly any basic skill that cannot be studied in readily available books, or learned in classes held around us. Sewing skills, cooking and dietary knowledge, basic mechanical abilities, farming know how—all of these can be learned and will be invaluable to you and those around you in times of crisis or shortage. You need not wait for marriage or economic independence to gain these priceless assets. And imagine the self-satisfaction that you would feel if you could say in time of crisis, “Even though I was not able to collect a complete food supply, I have the knowledge to produce food. Even though I have little in terms of temporal goods, I have skills and abilities to contribute to the common cause.”*

What will your decision be? Will you follow the counsel of God’s prophets and thus become a child of light?

“THAT YOUR FAITH SHOULD NOT STAND IN THE WISDOM OF MEN”



The Acts of the Apostles, ca. A.D. 54–58 Paul’s Third Missionary Journey (Acts)	
	Acts
Ephesus Apollos and the Disciples of John	18:24–28; 19:1–7
All Asia Heard the Gospel	19:8–10
Miracles of Healing	19:11, 12
Exorcists Cannot Cast Out Devils	19:13–20
Ephesus The Silversmiths’ Riot—Priestcraft Fights True Religion	19:21–41
Troas Paul Raises Eutychus from Death	20:1–12
Miletus Farewell, Testimony, Counsel	20:13–38
Toward Jerusalem Agabus’ Prophetic Warnings	21:1–17

First Letter of Paul to the Saints at Corinth— Written from Ephesus, c.a. Spring, A.D. 57 (1 Corinthians)	
	1 Corinthians
Dissensions Among the Saints	1:1–16
True and False Wisdom	1:17–31
Christ is Known by the Spirit	2:1–16
Milk Comes Before Meat	3:1–7
Fire Shall Test All Work	3:8–15
“Ye Are the Temple of God”	3:16, 17
Saints Shall Inherit All Things	3:18–23

THEME

Latter-day Saints should put their trust in God rather than rely totally on the wisdom of men.

INTRODUCTION

President Joseph F. Smith indicated in 1914 that there were three threatening dangers facing the membership of the Church. He said:

“There are at least three dangers that threaten the Church within, and the authorities need to awaken to the fact that the people should be warned unceasingly against them. As I see these, they are flattery of prominent men in the world, false educational ideas, and sexual impurity.” (Gospel Doctrine, pp. 312–13.)

Are we still confronting these dangers today? Were these same problems faced by the Corinthian saints in Paul’s day? Your assignment in this lesson is to examine carefully Paul’s teachings to the Corinthians that you might be able to overcome some of the tests of the Adversary.

Before proceeding, read all of the scriptural references in the reading block.

INTERPRETIVE COMMENTARY

(34-1) Acts 18:23; 20:38. Background to Paul’s Third Missionary Journey

Paul’s third missionary journey is the longest of the three, both in terms of time spent (four years) and distance covered. Although much of Paul’s time was occupied with visits to places covered in the first two journeys, Ephesus became his headquarters for three years. It was during this period that we get our finest picture of Paul, for we see him as a theologian, preacher, writer, and faithful servant of Jesus Christ, not only by means of Luke’s brilliant account but also through Paul’s four letters: two to the Corinthians, one to the Romans, and the one to the Galatians. One of Paul’s prime concerns on the third journey was to collect funds for the poor in Jerusalem. (See center map section for an outline of the third missionary journey.)

(34-2) Acts 21:9. Can Women Prophecy?

“Though men are appointed to hold rule in the home and in the Church, women are not one whit behind them in spiritual endowments. They prophesy, receive visions, entertain angels (Alma 32:23), enjoy the gifts of the Spirit, and qualify with their husbands for full exaltation in the highest heaven.” (McConkie, *DNTC*, 2:181.)

(34-3) Acts 21:10–14. Should Paul Have Come to Jerusalem When Warned Against It?

“Should Paul have gone to Jerusalem? Did the journey accord with the will and purposes of the Lord?”

“Whatever the answers to these questions may be, it is clear that Paul was forewarned of the persecutions and trials that would attend such a journey. He had received whisperings from the Spirit saying that bonds and afflictions awaited him in Jerusalem (Acts 20:22–24). Now . . . Agabus, apparently learning of Paul’s determination to face persecution and even death in Jerusalem, comes and tells him in the Lord’s name that in Jerusalem he will be bound by the Jews and delivered to the Gentiles.

“However, out of his journey to Jerusalem came the arrest which enabled him, while in Roman custody, to testify before the Jews of Jerusalem, before Festus and then Agrippa, on the island of Melita, and in Rome itself. To take the witness of Christ to kings and rulers, it oftentimes seems to require the arrest and trial of the Lord’s servants. Surely Paul’s trip to Jerusalem tested his metal and ennobled his soul, and because of it, he gained opportunities to stand in defense of truth and righteousness, which otherwise would have been denied him.” (McConkie, *DNTC*, 2:181.)

FIRST CORINTHIANS

(34-4) Why Did Paul Write to the Corinthians, and What Was the Approximate Date of Writing?

“One of the fascinating subjects in the life of the apostle is the exchange of communications and news between him and his converts in Corinth. The communications revealed that there were factions forming in the branch with different views regarding moral conduct and doctrine. Some of the converts were assuming a libertine or freethinking attitude with respect to the doctrines which had been taught to them by Paul and the missionaries who worked with him. Some were defending loose sexual standards that were rampant in the notorious city. These problems came into being because of the background of the new converts and the conditions of the time and place in which they were living. They were reactions to the new faith which had been taught to them against the old background which had been part of their former conduct and thinking.

“It was his concern over these disappointing happenings and also the questions that had been asked of him in the communications that caused Paul to

write a letter to the saints at Corinth at Easter time, the anniversary of the resurrection of Jesus.” (Howard W. Hunter in *CR*, Apr. 1969, p. 136.)

In addition to rebuking the Corinthians for their loose manner of living, Paul wrote for at least two other reasons: (1) to correct certain misapprehensions which had arisen from a former letter, now lost, and (2) to answer certain questions posed by the Corinthians in their return letter, also lost. Unfortunately we can only surmise from Paul’s comments in First Corinthians as to the contents of his first letter or the reply thereto (1 Corinthians 7:1). We are thus in much the same position as one who has found an old letter: we are privileged to read only one side of the correspondence and must guess what the questions and issues were that prompted the reply given.

As with Paul’s other epistles, so with First Corinthians: no precise date can be placed upon it. However, Paul’s reference to tarrying at Ephesus “until Pentecost” (i.e., April–May) and his expressed expectation to “winter” with the saints in Corinth (1 Corinthians 16:6–8) seems to indicate that the epistle was written some time in the early spring. Putting these statements together with what else is known concerning Paul’s life, we may tentatively assign a date of sometime during March or April of the year A.D. 57.

(34-5) 1 Corinthians 1:14. Who Was Crispus?

Where the size of a congregation permitted, the Jewish synagogue was presided over by a college of elders (Luke 7:3), who in turn were under control of one who was “the chief of the synagogue” (Luke 8:41; 13:14). Crispus was one of these. He was in charge of the synagogue in Corinth at the time that Paul ministered the gospel in that city. He was converted by Paul’s words and shortly thereafter baptized, with his household, by the great apostle to the gentiles. Paul mentions him specifically as being one of the few he baptized in Corinth.

(34-6) 1 Corinthians 1:17. Why Does Paul Say That the Lord Sent Him Not to Baptize?

Some have used this scripture passage to support the notion that Paul saw no real significance to the act of baptism and did not consider it to be essential in God’s sight. To argue thus is to ignore the many other passages in which Paul speaks of the ordinance not only in an approving way but in a manner to suggest its absolute necessity for all who would enjoy a valid relationship with Christ. (See Romans 6:3, 4; Ephesians 4, 5; Galatians 3:27; Colossians 2:12.) The

context in which Paul’s statement appears is that of chastising the Corinthian saints for their tendency to stir up division and strife, even on the smallest of issues. He begs them to cease such practices and to be “joined together in the same mind and in the same judgment.” (1 Corinthians 1:10.) The Greek word for divisions, *schismata*, is very expressive of Paul’s true feelings. It was as if the great apostle was so thoroughly ashamed of such factionalism that he refused to be identified with it. The test of one’s effectiveness as a representative of Jesus Christ is not how many he baptizes but how well he spreads the word of God so that all who *will* hear and obey *may* do so.

(34-7) 1 Corinthians 1:23. Why Was the Crucifixion of Jesus a Stumblingblock to the Jews?

In setting forth the idea that the crucifixion was a “stumblingblock” to the Jews, Paul used a metaphor common to both Greeks and Hebrews. The word in the original Greek is *skandalon*, the same from which we derive our word *scandal*. The *skandalon* was the movable triggerstick of a trap or snare which, when struck by the foot, caused the striker to be caught by the trap. It is often used in the New Testament as a symbol of Christ because his appearance and brief sojourn among men was so different from that which the Jews anticipated. They expected a mighty king of glory who would throw off the hated yoke of Rome in one miraculous stroke and establish a messianic kingdom in which faithful Jews would reign supreme. As far as many of the Jews were concerned, Jesus was nailed to a cross just as hundreds of others had been. This was indeed the triggerstick that caused them to stumble and fall into the trap. The prophet Jacob in the Book of Mormon also spoke of this stumbling (Jacob 4:14, 15).

(34-8) 1 Corinthians 1:26–31. “God Hath Chosen the Weak Things of the World to Confound the Things Which Are Mighty”

“Question: Who is better qualified to preach the gospel, a fifty-year-old college president of world renown who has many scholastic degrees, or a nineteen-year-old high school graduate who has no scholastic stature whatever?”

“Answer: The one who has a testimony of the gospel and who is so living as to have the companionship and guidance of the Holy Spirit.

“Question: How is it that the weak things of the earth confound the mighty and strong?”

“Answer: True religion is not a matter of intellectuality or of worldly prominence or renown, but of spirituality; and they are not weak but strong in the realm of spiritual things.

“Question: How is it that weak and untried persons have spiritual powers and understanding which is often denied the learned and worldly wise?

“Answer: It is in large measure a matter of pre-existent preparation. Some people developed in the pre-mortal life the talents to recognize truth, to comprehend spiritual things, to receive revelation from the Spirit; others did not. Those so endowed spiritually were foreordained and sent to earth to serve at God’s command as his ministers.” (McConkie, *DNTC*, 2:316–17.)

(34-9) 1 Corinthians 1:28. Why Would God Choose the “Base Things of the World” to Do His Work?

Here is an example of how words can change through the centuries by acquiring a meaning almost opposite to that which they originally conveyed. In the English of the 1600s, *base* meant “lowly” or “humble,” whereas today it carries with it the idea of “lewd and evil.”

(34-10) 1 Corinthians 2:1–8. “My Speech and My Preaching Was Not with Enticing Words of Man’s Wisdom”

“There was of old, there is now, and to all eternity there shall be only one approved and proper way to preach the gospel—Preach by the power of the Spirit. Anything short of this is not of God and has neither converting nor saving power. All the religious learning, of all the professors of religion, of all the ages is as nothing compared to the Spirit-born testimony of one legal administrator. . . .

“If there is any truth of salvation that Deity has made imperishably clear, it is the first and last, in all ages, now and forever, among the learned and the ignorant for all races and peoples, and for that matter on all the endless worlds of the great Creator, there is one formula and one formula only for conveying saving truth to men—Preach by the power of the Spirit.” (McConkie, *DNTC*, 2:318.)

For centuries the Greeks had glorified wisdom and man’s ability to achieve. Socrates, Plato, Aristotle—these were the men of reverence. Even the very word philosopher means “lover of wisdom.” But Paul’s point is that true wisdom comes only from God, and

that therefore only those who are spiritually minded can understand and receive true wisdom. Notice the phrases Paul uses in contrasting the two kinds of wisdom in 1 Corinthians 2:6, 7. The core of Paul’s whole line of reasoning is summed up in 1 Corinthians 2:14. The unspiritual (or natural) man misperceives truth because it is perceived only by the Spirit. He has already shown that the Corinthian saints had serious misconceptions. Therefore, what is the obvious conclusion about the saints there?

POINTS TO PONDER

ONLY AS WE PUT OUR FULL TRUST IN GOD WILL WE FIND ULTIMATE HAPPINESS

The scriptures indicate that in the latter days, Satan will make war with the Saints of God and “encompasseth them round about.” (D&C 76:29.) Because you desire to serve the Lord, the adversary will strive to cause you to fall. His methods, as President Spencer W. Kimball has indicated, are very subtle:

“He will use his logic to confuse and his rationalizations to destroy. He will shade meanings, open doors an inch at a time, and lead from purest white through all the shades of gray to the darkest black.” (Faith Precedes the Miracle, p. 152.)

As you have learned, the Corinthian saints faced a similar problem to the one Nephi saw you would be faced with today. Read carefully 2 Nephi 28:9–16. What are some of the precepts of men that could cause even the “humble followers of Christ” to go astray? Consider the following statements by Elder Ezra Taft Benson:

“The world teaches birth control. Tragically, many of our sisters subscribe to its pills and practices when they could easily provide earthly tabernacles for more of our Father’s children. We know that every spirit assigned to this earth will come, whether through us or someone else. There are couples in the Church who think they are getting along just fine with their limited families but who will someday suffer the pains of remorse when they meet the spirits that might have been part of their posterity. The first commandment given to man was to multiply and replenish the earth with children. That commandment has never been altered, modified, or cancelled. The Lord did not say to multiply and replenish the earth if it is convenient, or if you are wealthy, or after you

have gotten your schooling, or when there is peace on earth, or until you have four children. The Bible says, 'Lo, children are an heritage of the Lord: . . . Happy is the man that hath his quiver full of them. . . .' (Ps. 127:3, 5.) We believe God is glorified by having numerous children and a program of perfection for them. So also will God glorify that husband and wife who have a large posterity and who have tried to raise them up in righteousness.

"The precepts of men would have you believe that by limiting the population of the world, we can have peace and plenty. That is the doctrine of the devil. Small numbers do not insure peace; only righteousness does. After all, there were only a handful of men on the earth when Cain interrupted the peace of Adam's household by slaying Abel. On the other hand, the whole city of Enoch was peaceful; and it was taken into heaven because it was made up of righteous people.

And so far as limiting the population in order to provide plenty is concerned, the Lord answered that falsehood in the Doctrine and Covenants when he said:

"For the earth is full, and there is enough and to spare; yea, I prepared all things, and have given unto the children of men to be agents unto themselves.' (D&C 104:17.) . . .

". . . Let us listen and learn from the following wise words of this seer, President Clark:

" . . . Many influences (more than ever before in my lifetime) are seeking to break down chastity with its divinely declared sanctity. . . .

"In schoolrooms the children are taught what is popularly called "the facts of life." Instead of bringing about the alleged purpose of the teaching, that is, strengthening of the morals of youth, this teaching seems to have had directly the opposite effect. The teaching seems merely to have whetted curiosity and augmented appetite. . . ." (Relief Society Magazine, December 1952, p. 793.) . . .

"And so the precepts of men are at work on our youth in so many ways. Said President Clark, ' . . . a tremendous amount of the modern art, of the modern literature and music, and the drama that we have today is utterly demoralizing—utterly.' (Relief Society Magazine, December 1952, p. 792.)

"Have you been listening to the music that many young folks are hearing today? Some of it is nerve-jamming in nature and much of it has been deliberately designed to promote revolution, dope, immorality, and a gap between parent and child. And some of this music has invaded our church cultural halls.

"Have you noticed some of our Church dances lately? Have they been praiseworthy, lovely, and of good report? 'I doubt,' said President McKay, 'whether it is possible to dance most of the prevalent fad dances in a manner to meet LDS standards.' And what about modesty in dress? . . .

"Now what kind of magazines come into your home? With perhaps one or two exceptions, I would not have any of the major national slick magazines in my home. As President Clark so well put it, ' . . . take up any national magazine, look at the ads and, if you can stand the filth, read some of the stories—they are, in their expressed and suggestive standards of life, destructive of the very foundations of our society.' (Conference Report, Apr. 1951, p. 79.)

"Now hear this test proposed by President George Q. Cannon: 'If the breach is daily widening between ourselves and the world . . . we may be assured that our progress is certain, however slow. On the opposite hand, if our feelings and affections, our appetites and desires, are in unison with the world around us and freely fraternize with them . . . we should do well to examine ourselves. Individuals in such a condition might possess a nominal position in the Church but would be lacking the life of the work, and, like the foolish virgins who slumbered while the bridegroom tarried, they would be unprepared for his coming. . . .' (Millennial Star, Oct. 5, 1861 [Vol. 23], pp. 645–46.)" (CR, Apr. 1969, pp. 12–15.)

Now read carefully the following statement by Nephi: 2 Nephi 28:31.

Are there decisions in your life right now that need the guidance of the Lord? Have you put your trust in him? Have you asked for his help and then sought for strength to do his will?

Read Proverbs 3:5, 6.

“THIS DO IN REMEMBRANCE OF ME”



First Letter of Paul to the Corinthian Saints Written During Paul's Third Missionary Journey from Ephesus, ca. Spring, A.D. 57 (1 Corinthians 4–11)	
	1 Corinthians
Apostles Suffer, Minister, Keep the Faith	4:1–21
Why the Church Cannot Fellowship Sinners	5:1–13
Take Civil Cases to Church Courts	6:1–11
The Body is Not for Immorality	6:12–20
Marriage Is Ordained of God	7:1–24
Missionaries—Married or Single?	7:25–40
Gods Many and Lords Many	8:1–13
Paul Rejoices in Christian Freedom	9:1–12
Gospel Preached Without Cost	9:13–18
Paul: All Things to All Men	9:19–27
Christ Is the God of Israel	10:1–4
Ancient Israel Rebelled Against Christ	10:5–15

The Sacrament vs. Idolatry	10:16–33
The Status of Man and Woman	11:1–16
Why We Partake of the Sacrament	11:17–34

THEME

To worthily partake of the sacrament, we must strive to forsake all wickedness and live a Christlike life.

INTRODUCTION

Paul was a mighty apostle, a special witness of the Master in sermon and by works. Under the direction of Peter, James, and John, who were the First Presidency in his day, Paul trod over “all the country” in his assigned stewardship, being led by the Spirit, “strengthening all the disciples.” (Acts 18:23.) This third journey to set in order the branches of the church under his care had commenced at Antioch. Three arduous years took him through the Taurus Mountains, past the lakes of Pisidia to Ephesus on the Aegean coast, by ship to Troas and Philippi, on to Thessalonica, and down the

Macedonian Peninsula to Corinth. This loyal man could not rest; visited by the martyred Abel, taught by the translated Enoch, custodian of truths he was forbidden to teach, whose preaching almost resembled the roaring of a lion, he was a man with a witness and with a call. Like a faithful soldier, his labors were unceasing. (See Smith, Teachings, pp. 63, 169–70, 180, 304–5.) “For how knoweth a man the master,” King Benjamin had asked, “whom he has not served and . . . is far from the thoughts and intents of his heart?” (Mosiah 5:13.) Certain it is that Paul knew his Master, his Redeemer—ever close to the thoughts and intents of his heart.

By the spring of A.D. 57, Paul was back in Ephesus. And from there he wrote to the Corinthians—sound counsel: to be united, and to accept truth by the witness of the Spirit and by power.

Now you will consider chapters in which Paul charged the saints to come out of and be separate from the wickedness of the world, chapters where he taught of covenants, of the sacrament, and of promises to remember Christ and do his will.

Before proceeding, read all the scriptural references in the reading block.

INTERPRETIVE COMMENTARY

(35-1) 1 Corinthians 4:16. “Be Ye Followers of Me”

To some, Paul’s counsel may seem prideful and arrogant, but it is not. In at least eleven cases, the King James translation uses the word *follow* or *followers* as equivalent to the Greek words for “imitate” or “imitators.” With the New Testament as yet unwritten and the Christlike ideal as yet imperfectly understood, the Corinthians needed a living pattern. Paul wanted no disciples of his own for his personal sake and glory. His urging was simply, “Follow me, for I follow Christ.”

(35-2) 1 Corinthians 5:1, 11. Did Paul Use the Word *Fornication* As We Use It Today?

In today’s modern world, and in the Church as well, fornication has taken on a more technical meaning than it had during the time of the King James translation. Today it is defined as sexual intercourse between unmarried people. But the word which Paul used is *porneia* (the root word for our *pornography*) and meant any extramarital intercourse. Perhaps it might be well to point out here that Corinth had a

worldwide reputation in the ancient world for its immorality. It was located very close to two major ports and therefore subject to many of the vices and evils which accompany centers of commerce and trade. In addition, Corinth was the site of the famous temple of Aphrodite (Venus), the goddess of love, where there were a thousand “priestesses.” They were actually nothing more than prostitutes glorified by the cloak of religious worship. Anciently, Corinth’s reputation was such that to “Corinthianize” meant to engage in reckless debauchery, and Corinthians were usually portrayed on the stage as drunkards. Even in modern English a person is sometimes called a Corinthian, meaning that he is given totally over to licentious desires. It is not surprising, then, that in this and the following chapter, Paul sharply condemns immorality and the lusts of the flesh.

“Apparently a member of the Church in Corinth had married his stepmother, either because she was a widow or had been separated from her prior husband. Such marriages were forbidden by the Mosaic code under penalty of excommunication. (Lev. 18:6–8, 29.) Paul endorses the Mosaic prohibition, describes the intimacies resulting from such unions as fornication, condemns his Corinthian brethren for winking at the offense, and directs the excommunication of the offender. If the sinner were left in the Church, Paul reasons, his influence, as leaven, would spread throughout the whole Church. The Church must, therefore, purge out this old leaven of wickedness and replace it with a new influence or leaven of righteousness.” (McConkie, *DNTC*, 2:335.)

(35-3) 1 Corinthians 6:2, 3. “Know Ye Not That We Shall Judge Angels?”

“The man who passes through this probation, and is faithful, being redeemed from sin by the blood of Christ, through the ordinances of the gospel, and attains to exaltation in the kingdom of God, is not less but greater than the angels, and if you doubt it, read your Bible, for there it is written that the Saints shall ‘judge angels,’ and also they shall ‘judge the world.’ And why? Because the resurrected, righteous man has progressed beyond the pre-existent or disembodied spirits, and has risen above them, having both spirit and body as Christ has, having gained the victory over death and the grave, and having power over sin and Satan; in fact, having passed from the condition of the angels to that of a God. He possesses keys of power, dominion and glory that the angel does not possess—and cannot possess without gaining them in the same

way that he gained them, which will be by passing through the same ordeals and proving equally faithful.” (Smith, *Gospel Doctrine*, pp. 18–19.)

(35-5) 1 Corinthians 7:7. Was the Apostle Paul a Married Man?

It is possible that Paul, who had once been married, was a widower at the time of his writing of First Corinthians. His heart was thoroughly set on missionary work, and thus he might have chosen not to remarry. Hence his counsel to those in similar circumstances was “I would that all men were even as I myself.”

Aside from the fact that marriage is an eternal command of God, which Paul, an apostle of Jesus Christ, would know as well as anyone, there are some other compelling reasons why the answer to the question Was Paul married? should be yes.

In the first place, Paul’s writings indicate a positive attitude toward marriage. Some of the finest counsel given in scripture on the subject comes to us from Paul (Ephesians 5:21–6:4; Colossians 3:8–21). It would be presumptive indeed for Paul to give such counsel if he had not obeyed the law of God himself.

In 1 Corinthians 9:5 Paul argues that apostles have as much right to marry as anyone else, “Have we not power to lead about a sister, a wife, as well as other apostles, and as the brethren of the Lord, and Cephas?” But marriage is more than a right; it is a solemn duty. Hence Paul writes in 1 Corinthians 11:11: “Nevertheless neither is the man without the woman, neither the woman without the man, in the Lord.” The need for all to marry if they would find approval “in the Lord” is thus undisputed.

Faithful Jews regarded marriage as a religious obligation and a condition of extraordinary importance. It was the custom for Jewish men and women to marry at an early age, generally between sixteen and eighteen but sometimes as early as fourteen. Paul, a strict Pharisee (Acts 26:5) was “taught according to the perfect manner of the law of the fathers, and was zealous toward God” (Acts 22:3), as faithful Jews were enjoined to be. Thus “there would seem to be no good reason . . . why Paul, a trained and ardent Pharisee, should fail to honor an obligation esteemed so sacred in the eyes of his people.” (Sperry, *Paul’s Life and Letters*, p. 9.) When a list of 613 precepts contained in the law of Moses was first drawn up, marriage was listed as number one. If Paul “lived unmarried as a Jerusalem Pharisee,

his case was entirely exceptional.” (Farrar, *The Life and Work of St. Paul*, p. 46.)

Most scholars acknowledge that Paul was either a member of the Jewish ruling body, the Sanhedrin, or a close associate thereof (Acts 8:3; 9:1, 2; 22:5; 26:10). If he were indeed a member of the Sanhedrin, Paul would have been expected to be in compliance with the special requirements for membership in the body, one of which was marriage. If he were not a member, Paul would still, as an official representative of the ruling group, be expected to be in harmony with all accepted Jewish customs. Only such a condition would prevent his being charged with advocating obedience to laws with which he himself was not in strict compliance.

What, then, of those who contend that Paul was unmarried and taught others to be likewise? The passage cited as evidence is 1 Corinthians 7:7, 8 wherein Paul says: “For I would that all men were even as I myself. . . . I say therefore to the unmarried and widows, It is good for them if they abide even as I.” Elder Spencer W. Kimball has commented on this passage as follows: “Taking such statements in conjunction with others [Paul] made it is clear that he is not talking about celibacy, but is urging the normal and controlled sex living in marriage and total continence outside marriage. (There is no real evidence that Paul was never married, as some students claim, and there are in fact indications to the contrary.)” (*Miracle of Forgiveness*, p. 64.)

(35-6) 1 Corinthians 7:9. What Did Paul Mean by “It Is Better to Marry Than to Burn”?

The meaning of Paul’s counsel is not entirely clear. The Greek word which the King James translators have rendered *burn* is a passive infinitive used to convey the idea of being inflamed with passion, lust, or anger. The Prophet Joseph Smith’s inspired account is even more explicit than the King James: “But if they cannot abide, let them marry; for it is better to marry than that any should commit sin.”

(35-7) 1 Corinthians 7:14. What Is the Interpretation of This Verse As Given in Latter-day Revelation?

Read D&C 74:2–7.

Paul is referring here to marriages where the husband or wife has converted to Christianity but the other partner has not. Though in this context “unbelieving” refers to Jewish parents who wanted to continue

circumcising their children, the principle of spiritual damage to children from such marriages holds true in all generations. When a man or woman who are faithful members of the church marry those without a strong testimony of the gospel, not only is the marriage itself endangered but the spiritual training of the children will be severely limited. A child needs the spiritual testimony and training of both parents without conflict or schism.

(35-8) 1 Corinthians 7:25–40. Paul’s Views on Marriage in Light of the Inspired Version

Clearly Paul is here wrestling with difficult problems presented to him by the Corinthian saints. On some things he can reply authoritatively; on others he renders a personal judgment. Verses 25–40 deal with special questions to those involved in missionary or other priesthood service requiring absence from home for prolonged periods. Carefully compare the following changes as found in Joseph Smith’s Inspired Version with your King James translation.

26 I suppose therefore that this is good for the present distress, for a man so to remain that he may do greater good.

28 But if thou marry, thou hast not sinned; and if a virgin marry, she hath not sinned. Nevertheless, such shall have trouble in the flesh. For I spare you not.

29 But I speak unto you who are called unto the ministry. For this I say, brethren, the time that remaineth is but short, that ye shall be sent forth unto the ministry. Even they who have wives, shall be as though they had none; for ye are called and chosen to do the Lord’s work.

30 And it shall not be with them who weep, as though they wept not; and them who rejoice, as though they rejoiced not, and them who buy, as though they possessed not;

31 And them who use this world, as not using it; for the fashion of this world passeth away.

32 But I would, brethren, that ye magnify your calling. I would have you without carefulness. For he who is unmarried, careth for the things that belong to the Lord, how he may please the Lord; therefore he prevaieth.

33 But he who is married, careth for the things that are of the world, how he may please his wife; therefore there is a difference, for he is hindered.

36 But if any man think that he behaveth himself uncomely toward his virgin whom he hath espoused, if

she pass the flower of age, and need so require, let him do what he hath promised, he sinneth not; let them marry.

38 So then he that giveth himself in marriage doeth well; but he that giveth himself not in marriage doeth better.

‘It is clear from the Inspired Version corrections and additions that ministerial service of a missionary nature was involved, and the main questions seemed to be: Should engaged persons who are called on missions marry first, or go out on the Lord’s errand while single? And if they should serve while single, should certain ones who were already married, receive divorces prior to such service?’

“In our day when an elder who is engaged to be married is called on a mission, more often than not he fulfills his mission prior to his marriage; occasionally he marries first and leaves his wife for the assigned period of ministerial service. In the earlier days of this dispensation recently married brethren were frequently called to leave their wives and perform missionary service. Obviously the same rule need not and should not apply in every case. A host of personal circumstances and situations are always involved. Ordinarily, and Paul specified this as his opinion, marriage should be deferred.” (McConkie, *DNTC*, 2:346–47.)

(35-9) 1 Corinthians 7:32. What Does Paul Mean by “I Would Have You Without Carefulness”?

A similar expression is found in Philippians 4:6 in which Paul is represented as saying, “Be careful for nothing.” It means “Have no anxiety about anything.” Paul was in fact counseling his readers to refrain from anxieties and tensions rather than from carefulness as we know it today.

(35-10) 1 Corinthians 8:5. Does the Phrase “Gods Many and Lords Many” Have Reference to Heathen Gods?

“Paul says there are Gods many and Lords many. I want to set it forth in a plain and simple manner; but to us there is but one God—that is *pertaining to us*; and he is in all and through all. . . .

“. . . You know and I testify that Paul had no allusion to the heathen gods. I have it from God, and get over it if you can. I have a witness of the Holy Ghost, and a testimony that Paul had no allusion to the heathen gods in the text.” (Smith, *Teachings*, pp. 370–71.)

(35-11) 1 Corinthians 9:1. Was Paul an Ordained Apostle, and If So, by Whom?

“We are extremely lacking in information in relation to many important details that failed to seep through the ages to our day, and we are left in darkness to know when and where Paul was ordained. . . .

“. . . The fact may be correctly surmised that Paul did find time to mingle with his brethren [of the Twelve] and that through the divine inspiration the apostleship was conferred on him by their action. . . . We have no reason to believe that Paul received his ordination independent of the action of the other apostles.” (Smith, *Answers to Gospel Questions*, 4:99–100.)

(35-12) 1 Corinthians 9:22. “I Am Made All Things to All Men”

“Paul here says he made himself all things to all men in an effort to get them to accept the gospel message; that is, he adapted himself to the conditions and circumstances of all classes of people, as a means of getting them to pay attention to his teachings and testimony. And then, lest any suppose this included the acceptance of their false doctrines or practices, or that it in any way involved a compromise between the gospel and false systems of worship, he hastened to add that he and all men must obey the gospel law to be saved.” (McConkie, *DNTC*, 2:353.)

(35-13) 1 Corinthians 10:24. “Let No Man Seek His Own, but Every Man Another’s Wealth”

The word *wealth* as used in the days of the King James translators conveyed not only the idea of riches but of well-being and welfare. Unless we understand this, the statement quoted above seems to be an open invitation to robbery and theft. Far from that, Paul was really inviting his readers to acts of true Christian charity. The Inspired Version renders it thus: “Let not man therefore seek his own, but every man another’s good.”

(35-14) 1 Corinthians 10:25. What Did Paul Mean When He Said the Saints Could Eat That Which Is Sold in the Shambles?

Paul’s meaning becomes clear when it is understood that the word *shambles* meant “meat market” in Paul’s day. Very often when sacrificing animals to pagan gods, only a portion of the carcass was required; the rest could be, and often was, sold to the local butcher for resale to the poorer class. There would be, of course, no way for a Christian to know whether the meat offered for sale came from animals slaughtered for food or for temple sacrifices. Some of Paul’s

converts were anxious about keeping the letter of the law and refused to buy anything from the local markets. Paul indicates that such scrupulousness is uncalled for. One can keep the letter of the law and still violate its spirit if he provides, by his example, an excuse for a weaker brother to sin (1 Corinthians 8). On the other hand, one can keep the law so precisely as to the written letter that he moves to a Pharisaical extreme and forgets the very purpose for which the law was given in the first place.

(35-15) 1 Corinthians 11:11. “Neither Is the Man Without the Woman, Neither the Woman Without the Man, in the Lord”

“The house of the Lord is a house of order and not a house of confusion; and that means that the man is not without the woman in the Lord, neither is the woman without the man in the Lord; and that no man can be saved and exalted in the kingdom of God without the woman, and no woman can reach the perfection and exaltation in the kingdom of God alone. That is what it means. God instituted marriage in the beginning. He made man in his own image and likeness, male and female, and in their creation it was designed that they should be united together in sacred bonds of marriage, and one is not perfect without the other. Furthermore, it means that there is no union for time and eternity that can be perfected outside of the law of God, and the order of his house. Men may desire it, they may go through the form of it, in this life, but it will be of no effect except it be done and sanctioned by divine authority, in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Ghost.” (Smith, *Gospel Doctrine*, p. 272.)

POINTS TO PONDER

THE BLESSINGS OF THE SACRAMENT COME TO THOSE WHO ARE PREPARED

Janice is a member of the Church. She is active. She attends her meetings and is an officer in the Young Adult Relief Society. But she is frustrated. She doesn’t feel that she is getting as much out of her membership in the Church as she would like to get.

Every so often Janice has a chance to talk heart to heart with her dad, who is also the bishop of the ward. Let’s look in on them for just a moment, to follow their conversation:

Janice

That, basically, sums it up, Dad. I go to church. I attend all my meetings. I pay tithing and fast

offerings on the money I make. I try to study the gospel as best I can. But sometimes I just don't feel that I am getting the spiritual experiences or blessings that I ought to get. I have sometimes wondered if there is something the matter with me. I know it isn't right, Dad, but sometimes I really get discouraged.

Her Father

I have an idea of what those feelings are like. But, Janice, we must never forget that every blessing we seek is in the hands of the Lord. Even if our own lives are completely in order, he still blesses us "in his own time, and in his own way, and according to his own will." (D&C 88:68.) But there is another thing, Janice, that we must always remember. The Lord is pure. He is holy—absolutely so. When we are the best we know how to be, we are still far below his level of purity and holiness. We are taught in the Church that we are God's children and that we can become like him. Sometimes I think we talk too loosely about that. It is true that we can become like him, but it is also true that he is perfectly pure. If we become like him, we must strive with all our hearts to become pure like he is.

Janice

I need some help with that, Dad. How is it possible for me to strive to become that pure? I'm trying now to do the best I can. I wouldn't even know where to start to try and do better.

Have you had some of the feelings that Janice has? Can you understand why the blessings Janice seeks can be given only in the Lord's own time and way? Can you see why, even though people like Janice may be doing a lot of good, they still may not be pure enough to receive the understanding and spiritual blessings they would like to receive? Do you know how pure the Lord really is? Do you understand Paul's counsel? "Ye cannot drink the cup of the Lord, and the cup of devils: Ye cannot be partakers of the Lord's table, and of the table of devils." (1 Corinthians 10:21.)

(35-16) How Pure Must We Be to Be Like the Lord?

Read these passages and consider the questions.

Matthew 17:2

Compare 3 Nephi 19:25. What radiated from Jesus to the Nephite disciples who were praying to him? What

words are used to describe the glory of Jesus? Why do you think that Jesus was able to have that glory in and around him?

2 Corinthians 7:1

Paul says we must rid ourselves of *all* filthiness. What does the word *all* mean? How strict is the standard of holiness in the presence of God? Compare 3 Nephi 27:19. How many sins must a man repent of before he may be permitted to enter into the presence of God?

Helaman 13:38

The first part of this verse does not apply to you, of course. But how total and complete is the righteousness of God? What will lead to real happiness? Compare Romans 12:1, 2. How soon should people try to repent of all in their lives that may offend God?

Alma 11:37

Can a person be saved if he has not repented of all his sins? Again, what does the word *all* mean? What must a man do to get into the kingdom of heaven?

The Prophet Joseph Smith said, "If a man gets a fullness [of the blessings] of the priesthood of God he has to get it in the same way that Jesus Christ obtained it, and that was by keeping *all* the commandments and obeying all the ordinances of the house of the Lord." (*Teachings*, p. 308. Italics added.) Can you get that fulness in any other way? Is it a commandment of God that you become pure just as he is pure, and that you be separate from the wickedness of the world? Do you think God would make it possible for you to do that? Read Philippians 4:13. Compare 1 Nephi 3:7. Then read D&C 93:11–20.

Christ, of course, was always pure. But even then, did Jesus receive a fulness of the Father's glory and power all at once? Why do you think the Lord wants you to understand the process by which he overcame the world and received a fulness of the glory and power of the Father? What does the word *fulness* mean? Would the Lord give that glory and power to you if you were not *fully* prepared and worthy to receive it?

The Prophet Joseph Smith taught this: "When you climb a ladder, you must begin at the bottom, and ascend step by step, until you arrive at the top; and so it is with the principles of the Gospel—you must begin at the first, and go on until you learn all the principles of exaltation. But it will be a great while after you have passed through the veil before you will have learned them [all]." (*Teachings*, p. 348.) In this

statement the Prophet is not talking about repentance. He is saying that our obligation is to strive to live by and obey all the truth we receive in this world, but that we will not receive *all* truth in this world.

Do you think the Lord will excuse you if you do not try to be as perfect in this world as it is possible to be? Elder Joseph Fielding Smith has said this: “Here we lay the foundation. . . . It is our duty to be better today than we were yesterday, and better tomorrow than we are today. Why? Because we are on that road . . . to perfection, and that can only come through obedience and the desire in our hearts to overcome the world.” (*Doctrines of Salvation*, 2:18–19.)

As you determine in your life to overcome the world and be separate from its wickedness, consider these questions: Will you be able to do it all at once? Is it something you can achieve without prayer? Will it take hard work to conquer your weaknesses? Do you think the ordinance of the sacrament is involved in any way?

Let’s listen in on Janice and her dad again.

Janice

I know that Jesus died for us, Dad, and when I take the sacrament, I try to think about him and what he did for me.

Her Father

But what you do during the week, Janice, is also important. You can be humble and pay attention in the sacrament service, and even shed tears. But if you haven’t done anything about your weaknesses during the week, then renewing your covenants can’t make you any better.

Janice

What do you mean, Dad? What can I do during the week?

(35-17) What Is Involved in the Sacrament?

Before you can meaningfully participate in the sacrament, you need to know something of what is involved and how you can prepare during the week. Consider each of these points in turn.

For four thousand years, from Adam to Christ, God commanded his people to offer sacrifice. Those who were obedient offered the firstlings of the flock, animals without spot or blemish as a figure of the innocence and purity of Christ, who himself would die

as a sacrifice for the sins of those who repent. Those who offered sacrifice before the birth of Christ looked forward. We must look backward. That is the only real difference. It is inconceivable that God would ever accept ancient sacrifices if those who offered them were not sincere and truly repentant. It would be as though they offered up their sacrifices in vain.

The ordinance of the sacrament has many elements and conditions of sacrifice.

Read these scriptures about the sacrament and answer the questions that follow:

1 Corinthians 11:23–30

D&C 46:4

3 Nephi 18:28–32

How serious a matter is it for someone to presume to enjoy the benefits of the sacrament when he does not offer up a broken heart, a contrite spirit, and genuine sorrow for the sins and weaknesses he should be struggling to overcome?

(35-18) How Can You Prepare?

There is a way that you can prepare during the week to partake of the sacrament, for God would never issue such strict commands about the sacrament without providing a way for the commands to be obeyed. (See 1 Nephi 3:7.)

The process is outlined here:

- 2 Corinthians 13:5. Make a list of your most serious sins and temptations. This should not be done in a class or in public. It is a private matter between you and the Lord.
- Next, classify the things you have written on your list. Rank them in order of seriousness or difficulty. You can enjoy the blessings of the Spirit of God only according to the level of your most serious unrepented personal sin. So if you start working on less serious matters first, you still will not receive the blessings you desire. Sometimes men will repent of less serious matters, outward things, and then complain that they do not feel any more spiritual, when, in reality, they should start with the most serious sin or temptation in their life. Can you see why it is necessary that you work on the most serious or difficult first?
- 3 Nephi 12:23, 24. If there are some things on your list that need to be discussed with your

bishop, or if there are those whom you may have offended, what must you do? And after you have done that, what promise does the Lord make to you, in verse 24? (Compare Matthew 5:23, 24.)

- Treat each day as a stewardship. In your morning prayers, plead with the Lord to help you overcome that most serious problem. Report to him each night. And as you strive to overcome it, continue to pray for forgiveness for past mistakes.
- D&C 59:9, 11, 12. How would this process prepare you to participate in the sacrament on Sunday? Would renewing your covenants be more meaningful if you prepared in this way?
- Ether 12:27. There is a great power that comes from Christ to a man who is trying to overcome sin and weaknesses. Without that power man could never overcome the world; but with it, weaknesses can be overcome and replaced by strengths. Why does the Lord give you an understanding of your weaknesses? When you feel that you have conquered your most serious problem, seek the Lord's witness. He has ways to let you know if you have really mastered your most serious sin. President Harold B. Lee taught this:

“The most important of all the commandments of God is that one that you’re having the most difficulty keeping today. If it’s one of dishonesty, if it’s one of unchastity, if it’s one of falsifying, not telling the truth, today is the day for you to work on that until you’ve been able to conquer that weakness. Then you start on the next one that’s most difficult for you to keep.” (*Church News*, 5 May 1973, p. 3.)

The biggest problem that you will have as you try to overcome your weaknesses is that Satan will try to discourage you. But if you make up your mind to do it, if you “search diligently, pray always, and be believing, [then] all things shall work together for your good, if ye walk uprightly and remember the covenant.” (D&C 90:24.)

SINCERE EFFORT IS REWARDED WITH HEAVENLY POWERS

Now that you have learned some ways to help you overcome the sins and weaknesses in your life, do you think the Lord would be pleased with you if you went to sacrament meeting not having sincerely tried to be a stronger, more worthy member than you were the week before?

Consider this promise to those who work honestly in the process that has been outlined.

- *The Prophet Joseph Smith said that “the nearer man approaches perfection, the clearer are his views, and the greater his enjoyments, till he has overcome the evils of his life and lost every desire for sin; and like the ancients, arrives at that point of faith where he is wrapped in the power and glory of his Maker and is caught up to dwell with Him. But we consider that this is a station to which no man ever arrived in a moment.” (Teachings, p. 51.)*

Now what of you? Like Janice, no one else can do it for you or make you what you should become. You must first reach out and partake of those heavenly powers for yourself; then the Lord can enter into your life and perfect you through his grace.

“Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest unto your souls.

“For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light.” (Matthew 11:29, 30.)

“For if you keep my commandments you shall receive of his fulness, and be glorified in me as I am in the Father; therefore, I say unto you, you shall receive grace for grace.” (D&C 93:20. Emphasis added.)

“These are they who are just men made perfect through Jesus the mediator of the new covenant, who wrought out this perfect atonement through the shedding of his own blood.” (D&C 76:69.)

"COVET EARNESTLY THE BEST GIFTS"



First Letter of Paul to the Corinthian Saints Written During His Third Missionary Journey from Ephesus, ca. Spring, A.D. 57 (1 Corinthians 12–16)	
	1 Corinthians
The Holy Ghost Bears Witness of Christ	12:1–3
Spiritual Gifts of the Church	12:4–11
The Importance of Each Member	12:12–31
Charity: The Pure Love of Christ	13:1–13
Tongues and Prophecy Compared	14:1–28
Prophecy—the Greatest Gift	14:29–40
The Reality of the Resurrection	15:1–22
The Order of Resurrection	15:23–28
Baptism in Behalf of the Dead	15:29
A Better Resurrection	15:30–34
Resurrection into Kingdoms of Glory	15:35–53
Christ Triumphed over Death	15:54–58
“Stand Fast in the Faith”	16:1–24

THEME

The Lord gives us gifts of the Spirit so we may bless, encourage, and strengthen one another in love.

INTRODUCTION

Do you remember those times in past years when an anniversary, birthday, Christmas celebration or other special occasion gave you the opportunity to give of yourself to someone you loved? Remember the questions that tumbled over and over through your mind? What shall I do for her? How can I please him? What does she need? And the long hours of secretive labor, all the while motivated by that inner anticipation of pleasing? Can you think back to those deeper pleasures that came as you labored with your hands and heart to shape, polish, perfect? And then at last the moment came. Hands plucked at the wrappings as you watched in joyful anxiety, wondering if, now that it was too late to do otherwise, you had chosen wisely after all. And then you knew. Deep within the eyes shone that verification which made it all exquisitely worth it. The hours and days of effort were fully repaid in that instant and you felt the deep and honest joy of the giver.

“If ye then, being evil, know how to give good gifts . . . how much more shall your Father which is in heaven give good things to them that ask him?” (Matthew 7:11.) If we, in our weaknesses and imperfections, can feel the pure joy of giving without selfish motive, how much more perfect must be the giving of the Lord? Can you contemplate the implications of the phrase “the gifts of the Spirit?” If our gifts bring joy to those we love, how great must be the joy that accompanies the gifts bestowed by the Holy Ghost.

It is of these gifts that Paul speaks to the Corinthians. As we saw in Chapter 34, the Corinthians were plagued with problems that sprang from their lack of spiritual power. There were schisms in the church, immorality, doctrinal questions, lack of unity. Even the spiritual gifts were being misunderstood. Evidently, to the saints in Corinth, speaking in tongues had become proof positive of spiritual power. Rather than seeking the companionship of the Holy Ghost, from whence flow these perfect gifts, they were seeking only the gift itself.

In a way, we can be grateful that such was the case in Corinth, for from their problem we received Paul’s teachings on the gifts of the Spirit. In a powerful analogy of the physical body, the apostle showed the foolishness of exalting one spiritual gift above another and then seeking to prove its presence by outward show. There are a diversity of spiritual gifts, he says, and all function together to create unity in the body of Christ—the church. And in one of the most sublime and beautiful passages in all literature, Paul shows us the more excellent way, the gift that validates and activates all others. This is the gift which brings the highest of all joys.

Turn now and read these chapters in 1 Corinthians. Measure your own spiritual power. Assess the gifts you have been and can be given and the joy that can result in your life because of them.

Before proceeding, read all of the scriptural references in the reading block.

INTERPRETIVE COMMENTARY

(36-1) 1 Corinthians 12:3. “No Man Can Say That Jesus Is the Lord, but by the Holy Ghost”

Men may say things without the aid of the Holy Ghost, but they may not be assured of eternal truths without the influence of that member of the Godhead.

The Prophet Joseph Smith said that 1 Corinthians 12:3 should be translated “no man can *know* that Jesus is the Lord, but by the Holy Ghost.” (*Teachings*, p. 223. Italics added.)

(36-2) 1 Corinthians 13:1–13. Paul’s Teachings on Charity—Some Further Insights

Charity, of course, is here being used in the sense of the pure love of Christ (Moroni 7:47) and not in the sense of the giving of money or services to those in need. Some of the Old English words obscure the vividness of Paul’s beautiful language here. The following are some helps in that regard:

- Vs. 4: The word translated *vaunt* comes from the Greek word for “braggart.”
- Vs. 5: *Easily provoked* comes from the word meaning “irritable” or “exasperated.”
- Vs. 5: The word *thinketh* is better translated as “reckons” or “takes account of.”
- Vs. 7: *Beareth* comes from the word meaning “to cover” and is used of roofs and the hull of ships. “It keeps out resentment as the ship keeps out water, or the roof the rain.” (Vincent, *Word Studies*, 2:795.)
- Vs. 8: The word translated *faileth* really means “to fall off” and was used of leaves or flowers. In other words, love is not removed from its place.
- Vs. 12: The word translated *glass* is actually *mirror*. To those of us accustomed to the high quality mirrors of today, Paul’s imagery is not clear. “The thought of imperfect seeing is emphasized by the character of the ancient mirror, which was of polished metal, and required constant polishing, so that a sponge with pounded pumice-stone was generally attached to it.” (Vincent, *Word Studies*, 2:795–96.)

(36-3) 1 Corinthians 14:1–22. Are All the Gifts of the Spirit Observable like the Gift of Tongues?

“There are several gifts mentioned here, yet which of them all could be known by an observer at the imposition of hands?”

“The word of wisdom, and the word of knowledge, are as much gifts as any other, yet if a person possessed both of these gifts, or received them by the imposition of hands, who would know it? Another might receive the gift of faith, and they would be as ignorant of it. Or suppose a man had the gift of healing or power to

work miracles, that would not then be known; it would require time and circumstances to call these gifts into operation. Suppose a man had the discerning of spirits, who would be the wiser of it? Or if he had the interpretation of tongues, unless someone spoke in an unknown tongue, he of course would have to be silent; there are only two gifts that could be made visible—the gift of tongues and the gift of prophecy. . . .

“The greatest, the best, and the most useful gifts would be known nothing about by an observer. It is true that a man might prophesy, which is a great gift, and one that Paul told the people—the Church—to seek after and to covet, rather than to speak in tongues; but what does the world know about prophesying? Paul says that it ‘serveth only to those that believe.’ But does not the Scriptures say that they spake in tongues and prophesied? Yes; but who is it that writes these Scriptures? Not the men of the world or mere casual observers, but the Apostles—men who knew one gift from another, and of course were capable of writing about it. . . .” (Smith, *Teachings*, p. 246.)

(36-4) 1 Corinthians 14:26–40. What Are Some Things We Should Know in Relation to Speaking in Tongues?

The Prophet Joseph Smith had a great deal to say on the subject of tongues. The following excerpts help to summarize his counsel in relation to this subject:

The Devil Also Speaks in Tongues

“Speak not in the gift of tongues without understanding it, or without interpretation. The devil can speak in tongues; the adversary will come with his work; he can tempt all classes; can speak in English or Dutch. Let no one speak in tongues unless he interpret, except by the consent of the one who is placed to preside; then he may discern or interpret, or another may.” (*Teachings*, p. 162.)

There Is a Specific Purpose for the Gift of Tongues

“. . . the gift of tongues by the power of the Holy Ghost in the Church, is for the benefit of the servants of God to preach to unbelievers, as on the day of Pentecost. When devout men from every nation shall assemble to hear the things of God, let the Elders preach to them in their own mother tongue, whether it is German, French, Spanish or Irish, or any other, and let those interpret who understand the language spoken, in their own mother tongue, and this is what the Apostle meant in First Corinthians 14:27.” (*Teachings*, p. 195.)

There Are Definite Cautions About the Gift of Tongues

“Be not so curious about tongues, do not speak in tongues except there be an interpreter present; the ultimate design of tongues is to speak to foreigners, and if persons are very anxious to display their intelligence, let them speak to such in their own tongues. The gifts of God are all useful in their place, but when they are applied to that which God does not intend, they prove an injury, a snare and a curse instead of a blessing.” (*Teachings*, pp. 247–48.)

“If you have a matter to reveal, let it be in your own tongue; do not indulge too much in the exercise of the gift of tongues, or the devil will take advantage of the innocent and unwary. You may speak in tongues for your own comfort, but I lay this down for a rule, that if anything is taught by the gift of tongues, it is not to be received for doctrine.” (*Teachings*, p. 229.)

(36-5) 1 Corinthians 14:34, 35. Should Women Keep Silent in Church?

In both of these verses, Joseph Smith changed the word *speak* to *rule* in the Inspired Version. Elder Bruce R. McConkie wrote:

“May women speak in Church? Yes, in the sense of teaching, counseling, testifying, exhorting, and the like; no, in the sense of assuming rule over the Church as such, and in attempting to give direction as to how God’s affairs on earth shall be regulated: ‘A woman has no right to found or organize a church—God never sent them to do it.’ (*Teachings*, p. 212.) Paul is here telling the sisters they are subject to the priesthood, that it is not their province to rule and reign, that the bishop’s wife is not the bishop.” (*DNTC*, 2:387–88.)

(36-6) 1 Corinthians 15:29. “Else What Shall They Do Which Are Baptized for the Dead?”

“Every man that has been baptized and belongs to the kingdom has a right to be baptized for those who have gone before; and as soon as the law of the Gospel is obeyed here by their friends who act as proxy for them, the Lord has administrators there to set them free. A man may act as proxy for his own relatives; the ordinances of the Gospel which were laid out before the foundations of the world have thus been fulfilled by them, and we may be baptized for those whom we have much friendship for; but it must first be revealed to the man of God, lest we should run too far.” (*Teachings*, p. 367.)

(36-7) 1 Corinthians 15:33. “Evil Communications Corrupt Good Manners”

The word *communications* as used here does not mean corrupt, degrading language or talk; it means companionships or associations. The Greek word, here translated *communications*, refers to the length and breadth of social interaction, of which clean speech and uplifting language are but a small part. Far more than good manners are at stake; one’s basic character patterns or ethical choices are also involved. Paul was simply saying that one’s standards are often determined by the company he keeps.

(36-8) 1 Corinthians 15:44–49. “It Is Raised a Spiritual Body”

“And the spirit and the body are the soul of man.

“And the resurrection from the dead is the redemption of the soul.’ (D&C 88:15–16.)

“There is a separation of the spirit and the body at the time of death. The resurrection will again unite the spirit with the body, and the body becomes a spiritual body, one of flesh and bones but quickened by the spirit instead of blood. Thus, our bodies after the resurrection, quickened by the spirit, shall become immortal and never die. This is the meaning of the statements of Paul that ‘there is a natural body, and there is a spiritual body’ and ‘that flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God.’ The natural body is flesh and blood, but quickened by the spirit instead of blood, it can and will enter the kingdom.” (Howard W. Hunter in *CR*, Apr. 1969, p. 138.)

(36-9) 1 Corinthians 15:45. “The Last Adam Was Made a Quickening Spirit”

“An immortal soul or person, consisting of a resurrected body housing an eternal spirit everlastingly. It is Christ, as a quickening spirit, who ‘quickeneth all things,’ thus bringing to pass ‘the redemption of the soul.’ (D. & C. 88:17.)” (McConkie, *DNTC*, 2:402.)

(36-10) 1 Corinthians 15:50. “Flesh and Blood Cannot Inherit the Kingdom of God”

The Prophet Joseph Smith taught the following concerning resurrected bodies:

1. “God Almighty Himself dwells in eternal fire; flesh and blood cannot go there, for all corruption is devoured by the fire. . . . When our flesh is quickened by the Spirit, there will be no blood in this tabernacle.” (*Teachings*, p. 367.)

2. “Flesh and blood cannot go there [i.e., into God’s presence]; but flesh and bones, quickened by the Spirit of God, can.” (*Teachings*, p. 326.)

3. “As concerning the resurrection, . . . all will be raised by the power of God, having spirit in their bodies, and not blood.” (*Teachings*, p. 199–200.)

(36-11) 1 Corinthians 16:22. What Is the Meaning of the Words *Anathema* and *Maranatha*?

This strange inclusion of two Aramaic words together in Paul’s closing words of the epistle has raised many questions. The meaning of both words is known, but the strange combination is what puzzles most scholars. *Anathema* means literally “something set apart or consecrated,” and came to carry the meaning of “cursed” or “accursed.” This is the word Paul uses in Galatians 1:8 when he says that anyone preaching another gospel than the true one should be accursed. *Maranatha* has been variously translated as “the Lord comes,” “the Lord will come,” “the Lord is at hand,” and so on. It seems to have been a common Christian greeting or watchword. As far as the combination of the two are concerned, two basic interpretations are made. Some versions assume that there should be a period between the two. Thus it reads: “If anyone has no love for the Lord, let him be accursed. Our Lord, come!” Most scholars seem to prefer this separation. But one has suggested that Paul combines them deliberately, using an old Syriac exclamation, “Let him be accursed, the Lord is at hand,” suggesting that at the Lord’s coming, punishment will be meted out. (See Fallows, *The Popular and Critical Bible Encyclopedia and Scriptural Dictionary*, 1:104.)

POINTS TO PONDER

A DIVERSITY OF GIFTS IS MADE AVAILABLE TO EVERY SAINT WHO DESIRES THEM IN HUMILITY AND RIGHTEOUSNESS

You have previously read Paul’s sermon on the spiritual gifts. In all probability you have asked yourself this question: “How may I identify and develop my own gifts?” It would be helpful for you to prepare a compilation of the various gifts of the Spirit so you may appreciate their diversity and perhaps recognize some of your own.

It is suggested that you obtain a piece of paper, a pencil, and a ruler. Next, prepare a chart with three columns. In the first column, list the ten gifts Paul speaks of in 1 Corinthians 12:4–11. Next, read

Moroni's account in Moroni 10:8–18 and place his list of nine gifts in the second column. Finally, turn to a modern revelation given to Joseph Smith in 1831 (D&C 46:8–33) for fourteen gifts.

Having pondered and prayerfully considered these gifts, perhaps you should now ask, "Why are these gifts made available to me?" Paul explained that spiritual gifts are "given to every man to profit withal." (1 Corinthians 12:7. Emphasis added.) To profit is to reap an advantage. There are many types of profit men seek after in life that would grant them advantages. Unfortunately, selfishness is often the motivation for seeking them; their associated pleasures are of short duration and are of little eternal value.

By way of contrast, we may learn a valuable lesson from a visionary experience of the prophet Lehi. He was asked by a heavenly being to undertake a long and arduous journey through a dark and dreary wilderness. Seeking relief of the Lord through faith and prayer, Lehi discovered a fruit tree of transcendent beauty and value. After he partook of its fruit, he found that it represented the love which Christ extends to all who seek him. Lehi immediately sought to share the fruit with his family, hoping to strengthen and edify them. (See 1 Nephi 8, 11.)

After having wandered through a spiritual wasteland of his own making, Paul too partook of the fruit, and then, motivated by the love of Christ, he began his labors in behalf of mankind. Paul, like Lehi, learned that his God-given gifts were made profitable only when shared with others in the context of Christlike love. Thus it was that Paul gave some important counsel to the Corinthians saints about spiritual gifts made active by charity.

After teaching the saints in Corinth about the diversity of spiritual gifts and how they are to function in unity, Paul tells them about "a more excellent way." (1 Corinthians 12:31.) That way is the way of charity, or the pure love of Christ. (See Moroni 7:47.)

When we do not have the love that Christ had, i.e., a pure and perfect love, then, Paul says, the spiritual gifts are meaningless. Of what use is prophecy or healing or tongues or even the sacrifice of one's life without the pure motives of Christlike love? Of what benefit is mountain-moving faith, the speech of angels, or even total knowledge when love is not?

Then Paul defines this love of which he speaks. He does not define it philosophically; he defines it behaviorally. In other words, he does not tell us what love is or is not; he tells us what love does or does not do. Note the simple but profound measuring rod it provides.

1 Corinthians 13

The pure love of Christ does—

1. *Have patience (is long-suffering). (vs. 4)*
2. *Rejoice in the truth. (vs. 6)*
3. *Bear all things. (vs. 7)*
4. *Believe in all things. (vs. 7)*
5. *Hope for all things. (vs. 7)*
6. *Endure all things. (vs. 7)*
7. *Persist without failing. (vs. 8)*
8. *Have preeminence among the spiritual qualities. (vs. 13)*

The pure love of Christ does not—

1. *Envy. (vs. 4)*
2. *Vaunt (or exalt) itself. (vs. 4)*
3. *Have puffed up or inflated ideas of its own worth. (vs. 4)*
4. *Behave itself unseemly. (vs. 5)*
5. *Seek its own ends. (vs. 5)*
6. *Provoke easily. (vs. 5)*
7. *Think evil. (vs. 5)*
8. *Rejoice in iniquity. (vs. 6)*

(36-12) All Spiritual Powers Are Activated by the Pure Love of Christ

Under the overarching power of Christ's pure love all spiritual powers are activated. Without it religious behavior becomes sterile and fruitless. The point does not need to be belabored. Surely you have seen the application of Paul's yardstick to your own life. Does it infuse your spiritual life? Do you exercise the spiritual gifts you have been given under its influence? Or, like the Corinthian saints, do you sometimes find yourself seeking spiritual power without seeking the love that makes those powers operate?

(36-13) Motivated by the Pure Love of Christ, We Are Prepared to Receive and Exercise Our Spiritual Gifts

Many persons will bear witness that as they have received calls to serve within the Church, their accompanying blessings have included the endowment of spiritual gifts to enable them to more effectively accomplish their labors. Missionaries rapidly learn difficult languages and are blessed with words with which to defend the truth; fathers give inspired blessings to their children; through faith mothers assist their husbands in healing ill family members; teachers are granted special thoughts while preparing and delivering lessons so that the students are edified. Testimonies grow, people are healed, directions are given, knowledge and wisdom come to the thirsting unenlightened—all based on the love which transforms the giver into a Christlike servant who blesses, encourages, and strengthens others in love.

THE CHURCH HATH NEED OF EVERY MEMBER

Read D&C 84:109–10. (See also 1 Corinthians 12:12–27.) Do you now understand that you are as

needed in building the kingdom of God as is every other member? The Lord has need of you! Not only are you blessed with certain gifts of the Spirit, but you can channel their powers through your unique personality, experience, influence, and preparation to aid you in performing important acts of service to mankind. No one else will ever see with your eyes, hear with your ears, discern with your understanding. No one else will ever be able to minister with your particular ability and sensitivity. If you are willing to develop these spiritual gifts and abilities and exercise humility and faith, the Lord and his angels stand ready to assist you in any way they can. Always remember the assurance given the Saints by President Heber J. Grant:

“I rejoice . . . that every Latter-day Saint, every humble son and daughter of God that has embraced the Gospel and become a member of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints has received the witness of the Holy Spirit, that the gift of tongues, the gift of prophecy, of healing, and other gifts and blessings, are found in the Church, and are not confined to men that hold responsible positions in the Church.” (Heber J. Grant in CR, Apr. 1901, p. 64.)

"AFFLICTION WORKETH IN US A MORE EXCEEDING WEIGHT OF GLORY"



Second Letter of Paul to the Corinthian Saints Written During His Third Missionary Journey from Macedonia, ca. Winter, A.D. 57 (2 Corinthians)	
	2 Corinthians
God Cares for the Saints	1:1–24
Saints Love and Forgive One Another	2:1–17
The Gospel Is Greater Than the Law of Moses	3:1–18
The Gospel Light Shines Through the Darkness	4:1–6
Mortal Trials and Eternal Hopes	4:7–18
Saints Seek Tabernacles of Immortal Glory	5:1–11
The Gospel Reconciles Man to God	5:12–21
How God's Ministers Gain His Approval	6:1–10
Avoid Union with Nonbelievers	6:11–18
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The Blessings of True Charity	9:1–15
Paul Glories in the Lord	10:1–18; 11:1–11
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Strength in Weakness	12:7–10
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Saints Should Prove Themselves	13:5–14

THEME

The Lord may call upon us to bear afflictions and tribulations so that we may become as he desires us to be.

INTRODUCTION

Paul, who was ever tireless in his persuasions for the cause, left Ephesus in company with others and sailed north to Troas. There he hoped to meet Titus,

who would be returning from Corinth and from whom Paul desired to learn how the saints there had received Paul's first epistle. But Titus was not at Troas; and Paul, increasingly anxious for news of the welfare of the Corinthian church, hastened by ship west across the Aegean Sea into Macedonia, where he worked among the branches of the church and waited for Titus.

Paul was an example of a true believer. He had an opportunity at Troas to preach the gospel, and his devotion to the cause of preaching to the gentiles is of record; but Paul had a flock at Corinth, already in the fold, whom he had just recently corrected. And now, with all the feeling of a tender shepherd, his soul yearned to take them into his arms and assure them of his love. Before he could go to Corinth, Paul wanted to meet Titus and receive his report.

Finally, in the fall of A.D. 57, at Philippi, Titus arrived. Paul was able to hear his report with gladness, for those who were errant among the saints at Corinth had repented and were anxious to see Paul again.

Titus' report and Paul's anxiety for the Corinthian church prompted Paul to write a second letter—tender and kindly in many respects—of how God shall comfort the saints in tribulation and bear them up against all the purposes that combine in mortality to make earth life a probation and a test. He wrote of other themes as well in this epistle, some of them personal. Study carefully all the themes, but take particular note in these passages of his counsel to the downtrodden, of his encouragement to the oppressed, and of his comfort to those whose hearts waver in the quest of wresting victory from the burdens of a fallen world.

The prophets have offered similar encouragement and counsel to the Saints of every age. Joseph Smith is quoted as saying this:

“You will have all kinds of trials to pass through. And it is quite as necessary for you to be tried as it was for Abraham and other men of God, and (said he) God will feel after you, and He will take hold of you and wrench your very heart strings, and if you cannot stand it you will not be fit for an inheritance in the Celestial Kingdom of God.” (Joseph Smith, as reported by John Taylor in *JD*, 24:197.)

Before proceeding, read all the scriptural references in the reading block.

INTERPRETIVE COMMENTARY

PAUL'S SECOND LETTER TO THE CORINTHIANS

(37-1) 2 Corinthians. Paul Defends the Conduct of His Ministry

Of all of Paul's known writings, Philippians and Philemon are generally acknowledged to be the most personal. From 2 Corinthians we get a deep insight into Paul's sensitive nature—how it hurt him to be falsely accused by fair-weather saints who had not borne the heat and the burden of the ministry as he had. We learn much concerning the church of Jesus Christ in the apostolic age and how members struggled with rivalry, jealousy, and fear, but we find little of a deep doctrinal nature. We get occasional outbursts of human feeling that help to illuminate the character of the man we know as Paul the apostle. Openly accused by some in Corinth who wished to see his influence reduced, Paul vigorously defends his personal character as well as his conduct as an apostle of Jesus Christ.

(37-2) Background Information

Paul wrote at least three letters to the Corinthian saints. The first apparently has been lost to us; we have copies of the second and third letters. These last two are known as First Corinthians and Second Corinthians, respectively. Second Corinthians is a follow-up letter to First Corinthians.

It was from Macedonia, as evidence within the epistle itself suggests, that Paul wrote 2 Corinthians (2 Corinthians 2:13; 7:5–7; 9:2–4). Since Luke places Paul's visit to Macedonia near the end of Paul's third missionary journey, the letter was likely written in A.D. 57.

The letter reveals that Paul wrote for at least five reasons: (1) to defend his work in the ministry; (2) to commend the Corinthian saints for their improvements since he last wrote; (3) to defend his personal character and conduct; (4) to encourage a generous financial gift for the impoverished saints of Jerusalem; and (5) to speak of an impending third visit to Corinth.

When the letter was completed, and there is good evidence to suggest that it was written in haste, Paul sent it with Titus on a return journey to Corinth. Titus was accompanied by two companions (2 Corinthians 8:18, 22), one of whom may have been Luke. Paul commends Titus and his party strongly to the

Corinthians and urges them to make “proof” of their love and of Paul’s boasting in their behalf by making a generous contribution for the poor and sending it back with Titus (2 Corinthians 8:24; 9:5).

(37-3) 2 Corinthians 1:22. “Who Hath . . . Given the Earnest of the Spirit in Our Hearts”

Earnest is a technical term which came from the ancient world of finance and means “a guarantee” or “caution money.” It is used in exactly the same sense we use it today in the phrase “earnest money.” It was an initial sum of money given as a guarantee that the remainder owing would later be paid. What Paul suggests is that we have been given the Holy Ghost, an initial payment of blessedness which serves as a guarantee of a much fuller payment in the future if we continue faithful.

(37-4) 2 Corinthians 2:5. What Does Paul Mean When He Says “That I May Not Overcharge You”?

This verse and those that follow it provide an interesting insight into the love and compassion of Paul. We do not know whether the transgressor Paul refers to here is the fornicator mentioned in his first letter (1 Corinthians 5:1) or one of the false teachers in the church who had led a revolt against Paul and his teachings. But it is evident that the church has taken action against the men, and now Paul cautions them against withholding their love from him. In verse 5 he hastens to point out that he was upset with the news of this brother, not because his own feelings were hurt but because the man was doing damage to the entire church in Corinth. Now Paul encourages them to forgive and comfort this man so that he will not be lost from fellowship. (vss. 6–12). This attitude of firmness on adherence to church rules and procedure, but loving forgiveness when the transgressor shows true repentance and corrects the errant behavior, is a mark of the church of Jesus Christ today as well as in former times.

(37-5) 2 Corinthians 2:17. The Vivid Imagery of Paul Talking About Those Who Corrupt

Corrupt here is taken from the Greek word for a peddler. “The term included dealers in victuals and all sorts of wares, but was especially applied to retailers of wine, with whom adulterations and short measures were a matter of course.” (Vincent, *Word Studies*, 2:813.) This class of merchants had such an unsavory reputation for unscrupulousness and dishonesty in their trading that in some cases they were barred from

holding public office. False teachers in the church were of the same mentality, watering down or changing the word of God at will so they could further their own selfish ends. Thus we get a picture of Paul, who is not only capable of slowing great love but is also able to demonstrate great sharpness in condemning those who would bring havoc upon the church.

(37-6) 2 Corinthians 3:6, 14. Is Paul Talking About the Bible When He Refers to the Old and New Testament?

The word *testament* is a translation of the Latin *testamentum*, which was the translation of the Greek word for “covenant.” A person’s last will and testament (or death covenant) is an example of the true meaning of the word. However, when *new testament* and *old testament* are used, most of us immediately think of the two divisions of the Bible. We should remember that those two divisions were so called because the first continued the writings and records of the people of God under the old covenant (the Mosaic law) and the second, his dealings under the new covenant (the law of Christ). The New Testament, as we know it in the Bible, was not even compiled until long after Paul’s death. So in verse 6, Paul states that they are ministers of the new covenant of Christ, which does away with the old. Even in verse 14, though it is obvious that Paul refers to the scriptural records when he talks of the reading of the old testament, he is not using it in the same sense we think of the Old Testament, but rather in the sense of the Mosaic law, or the old covenant.

(37-7) 2 Corinthians 5:19. The Use of the Word *Wit*

The word *wit* is an old English verb which literally means “to know” or “to find out.” When combined with the word *to*, the expression “to wit” usually means “that is” or “namely.” This is the use made of it here. However, the expression in 2 Corinthians 8:1, “we do you to wit of the grace of God,” means “we want you to know of the grace of God.”

(37-8) 2 Corinthians 6:2. “Now Is the Day of Salvation”

Read Alma 34:31–33.

(37-9) 2 Corinthians 6:12. “Ye Are Not Straitened in Us, but Ye Are Straitened in Your Own Bowels”

As used in scripture, the word *bowels* very often refers to the center of pity or kindness. When we feel love or compassion for someone or something, we usually

experience pain within. “Let thy bowels be full of charity towards all men” (D&C 121:45) means, “Demonstrate a Christlike love for others.” As used here the word *bowels* is part of a larger expression, “ye are straitened in your own bowels.” It is simply Paul’s way of telling the Corinthians that they had not been restricted by any lack of affection on his part but rather by their own failure to show a proper love and compassion. Similar uses of the word in the New Testament are found in Philippians 1:8; 2:1; Colossians 3:12; and 1 John 3:17.

(37-10) 2 Corinthians 6:14. “Be Ye Not Unequally Yoked Together with Unbelievers”

“What are we to do then; Shall we bring upon ourselves the unhappiness of a divided household? Shall we profit by the voice of experience and marry within our own faith?

“. . . The obvious answer to everyone is, marry within your own faith. If you are a Presbyterian, marry a Presbyterian. If you are a Catholic, marry a Catholic. If you are of the house of Judah, marry within your own faith. If you are a Mormon, marry a Mormon.” (Mark E. Petersen in *CR*, Apr. 1958, p. 106.)

(37-11) 2 Corinthians 7:8–10. “For Godly Sorrow Worketh Repentance to Salvation Not to Be Repented Of”

“Often people indicate that they have repented when all they have done is to express regret for a wrong act. But true repentance is marked by that godly sorrow that changes, transforms, and saves. To be sorry is not enough. Perhaps the felon in the penitentiary, coming to realize the high price he must pay for his folly, may wish he had not committed the crime. That is not repentance. The vicious man who is serving a stiff sentence for rape may be very sorry he did the deed, but he is not repentant if his heavy sentence is the only reason for his sorrow. That is the sorrow of the world.

“The truly repentant man is sorry before he is apprehended. He is sorry even if his secret is never known. . . . Repentance of the godly type means that one comes to recognize the sin and voluntarily and without pressure from outside sources begins his transformation.” (Kimball, *Miracle of Forgiveness*, p. 153.)

(37-12) 2 Corinthians 11:24. What Was It Like to Be Scourged by the Jews?

In Deuteronomy 25:1–3, Moses set down the principle that a guilty man could be lashed forty times. The

Jewish rabbis had reduced that to thirty-nine, lest there should be a miscount and he be whipped more than forty times. (Moses warned against exceeding that number, and so the extra caution.) By Paul’s time this had developed into a brutally painful punishment meted out with great precision. To anyone familiar with the Jewish scourging, Paul’s claim that he endured such punishment five times is an impressive claim indeed, for often the victim died under the lashing. Farrar has given us a detailed description of the practice.

“Both of [the victim’s] hands were tied to . . . a stake a cubit and a half high. The public officer then tore down his robe until his breast was laid bare. The executioner stood on a stone behind the criminal. The scourge consisted of two thongs, one of which was composed of four strands of calf-skin, and one of two strands of ass’s-skin, which passed through a hole in a handle. . . . The prisoner bent to receive the blows, which were inflicted with one hand, but with all the force of the striker, thirteen on the breast, thirteen on the right, and thirteen on the left shoulder. While the punishment was going on, the chief judge read aloud [Deuteronomy 28:58, 59; 24:9; and Psalms 78:38, 39 which dealt with God’s commandments, the punishment for their nonobservance, and the Lord’s compassion on the sinner] . . . If the punishment was not over by the time that these three passages were read, they were again repeated, and so timed as to end exactly with the punishment itself. Meanwhile a second judge numbered the blows, and a third before each blow exclaimed ‘*Hakkehu*’ (strike him).” (Farrar, *The Life and Works of St. Paul*, pp. 715–16.)

One cannot help but wonder why Paul would submit to these at the hands of the Jews when he claimed Roman citizenship on other occasions and escaped this dreadful punishment (Acts 22:24–29). Again we turn to Farrar for a possible answer. He says that once a person was so lashed, he was viewed as being fully restored, having paid completely any debt incurred by his wrongdoing.

Then Farrar adds: “To have refused to undergo it by sheltering himself under the privilege of his Roman citizenship would have been to incur excommunication, and finally to have cut himself off from admission into the synagogue.” (Farrar, *St. Paul*, p. 717).

As we saw from Acts, Paul’s typical missionary approach was to enter the synagogue and begin preaching. To be cut off from such access would have been a serious curtailment of his efforts. When one

contemplates the determination it would take to undergo such a flogging a second time, after suffering it once, one gets some idea of the extent of Paul's commitment to Christ. Little wonder that he is peeved by the empty boasting and petty criticism of the false teachers at Corinth!

(37-13) 2 Corinthians 12:2–4. “I Knew a Man in Christ . . . Caught Up to the Third Heaven”

The man whom Paul knew was Paul himself. Joseph Smith reports: “Paul ascended into the third heavens, and he could understand the three principal rounds of Jacob's ladder—the telestial, the terrestrial, and the celestial glories or kingdoms, where Paul saw and heard things which were not lawful for him to utter.” (*Teachings*, pp. 304–5.)

(37-14) 2 Corinthians 12:7–9. “There Was Given to Me a Thorn in the Flesh”

The word Paul uses here literally means “a Pale” (as in *impaled*) or “a stake.” It was used to refer to sharpened stakes, to surgical instruments, or to fishhooks. The very term suggests something that was extremely painful and troublesome to Paul. There have been endless debates on what such an infirmity might be, and the suggestions have included a bitter and shrewish wife who turned against Paul at his conversion, epilepsy, a serious eye affliction, malaria, and some spiritual weakness with which he was constantly troubled. There is no way of knowing from the present records what Paul meant. What we can be sure of is that each of us has weaknesses, spiritual as well as physical, which Satan will use to challenge us. Elder Harold B. Lee said: “The Lord has told us in the scriptures that Satan is an enemy of all righteousness; because of that fact, those who are standing in high places in our Father's kingdom will become the objects of his attacks. You may well expect, as the Apostle Paul understood, that you who preside in the various places in our Father's kingdom will be subject to the devil's onslaughts.

“. . . Sometimes there is given infirmity, difficulty, hardship upon you to try your souls; and the powers of Satan seem to be enrolled against you, watching and trying to break down your powers of resistance: but your weakness, through those infirmities, will give you the power of God that shall rest upon you even as the Apostle Paul was reconciled and comforted by the thought that through his trials the power of God might rest upon him.” (*CR*, Oct. 1949, 57.)

POINTS TO PONDER

GOD HAS PURPOSE AND DESIGN IN THE TRIALS AND TRIBULATIONS THAT COME UPON HIS PEOPLE

(37-15) We Bear Some Afflictions as Punishment for Disobedience

God has purposes in sometimes allowing suffering and affliction to come upon his children. If his children break his laws and go contrary to what they know is right, God may provide punishments, burdens, and trials to teach them that it is not wise to do what they know is wrong.

If men were perfectly obedient to *every* requirement then it would be possible for them to be sanctified without affliction (compare *Discourses of Brigham Young*, p. 350). But since “none were ever perfect but Jesus” (*Teachings*, p. 187), then all must endure affliction of some degree or another.

Read 1 Peter 2:20.

“Peter didn't want us to take any credit upon ourselves for the suffering we endure because of our own mistakes. He was willing to see us take credit for the suffering we endure because of discipleship, but not because of our own stupidity or our own sin.” (Neal A. Maxwell, “For a Small Moment,” *Speeches of the Year*, 1974, p. 447.)

Read Revelation 3:19–21.

Did John say that the saints should repent when they are called to suffer? Can you see why this is one of the great purposes of suffering—to cause God's children to correct their ways, and return and be obedient?

Disobedience is not the only reason for trial and affliction. There is another purpose as well.

Read Malachi 3:2–4.

David watched as the gold ore was unloaded into the crushers—rocks, great hunks of stone—ill shapen, rough—none of it looked a bit like gold. He knew these rocks would be ground and processed and end up in a furnace which blazed with intense heat, breaking down, searching, melting—fire is an agent that cannot be deceived. Impurities and dross in the gold ore would be literally burned away. And when the furnace had been endured, all that would remain

of the ore would be the gold itself, pure and beautiful. David could see how very hot and terrible the heat of the furnace must be; and yet it did not harm the gold in any way, but, rather, purified it and made it better.

“ . . . God hath said that He would have a tried people, that He would purge them as gold. . . . ”
(Smith, *Teachings*, p. 135.) *What does Malachi say the Lord is like? What are some of the fires that the Lord may allow to come to his people in order to purify and purge them?*

It is for God to declare the furnace, and the day and the time; and it is for man to submit and endure, for gold becomes gold by passing through fire and men may become what God has designed they become only by passing through trial.

Now what is trial? You know of Abraham’s trial, and of the suffering strewn in the path of Joseph Smith, of which President Brigham Young recalled:

Joseph could not have been perfected, though he had lived a thousand years, if he had received no persecution. If he had lived a thousand years, and led this people, and preached the Gospel without persecution, he would not have been perfected as well as he was at the age of thirty-nine years. You may calculate, when this people are called to go through scenes of affliction and suffering, are driven from their homes, and cast down, and scattered, and smitten, and peeled, the Almighty is rolling on his work with greater rapidity.” (*Discourses of Brigham Young*, p. 351.)

But what is trial and affliction? It is as Paul said: stripes, shipwreck, perils, physical wants, and on through the entire tapestry of life and experiences.

Read the following scriptures relating to the experiences of Job and Paul and carefully consider the questions which follow:

Job 2:3

Was there a fault for which Job was being afflicted? Had he done something wrong? (Compare Job 9:17; 16:17.)

Job 23:6, 10–14

What were the purposes of God in allowing Job to suffer as he did? Did Job understand what God was doing with him? Did Job immediately jump down on his knees and beg the Lord to remove the difficulty? Or did he determine that he would get from the burdens all that God wanted him to obtain?

Job 1:12; 2:4–6

Are there limits placed upon the difficulties and burdens that God allows to come to his children? (Compare D&C 122:9; Alma 13:28.)

2 Corinthians 11:24–33

Did Paul know about suffering? Do you think there is any relationship between the affliction that was heaped upon him, and the power of his ministry and the great wisdom that flowed from the pen of his experience? (Compare 1 Nephi 20:10.)

2 Corinthians 12:7–10

Does it appear from these passages that there was a connection between the intensity of Paul’s afflictions and the degree to which the power of Christ could rest upon him?

Now what of you? For surely you have trials. Surely you are no stranger to affliction. Do you bring them upon yourself by disobedience or lack of wisdom?

Read D&C 98:3.

May it be that some trials come to you because God has in his design to refine you and make you pure? Do you pray that God will take from you the very experiences and trials which he has designed to improve you? Do you submit to them (Mosiah 3:19) and learn from them, and trust them as having come from an all wise and loving Father?

Read D&C 58:2–4.

Do you allow trials to work in you a more exceeding weight of glory, as Paul said (2 Corinthians 4:17)? Will you bear well your trials, and learn to examine them? For there will come a day when you will understand.

(37-16) SUMMARY

President John Taylor, who bore in his body bullet wounds from the martyrdom at Carthage, and during whose administration the wrath of a belligerent nation rained down upon the Church with near devastating effect, taught:

“It is necessary that we pass through certain ordeals in order that we may be purified. People sometimes do not comprehend these things. . . .

“We have learned many things through suffering, we call it suffering; I call it a school of experience. . . . What are these things for? Why is it that good men should be tried? . . . that we may learn to place our

dependence upon God, and trust in Him, and to observe his laws and keep his commandments. . . . I have never looked at these things in any other light than trials for the purpose of purifying the Saints of God, that they may be, as the Scriptures say, as gold that has been seven times purified by the fire. [See Psalms 12:6.]” (*JD*, 23:334–36.)

To the Saints of our generation who are burdened with trials, President Marion G. Romney offers this counsel:

“I say to you and all the rest of us who are being tried in the crucible of adversity and affliction: Take courage; revive your spirits and strengthen your faith. In these lessons so impressively taught in precept and example by our great exemplar, Jesus Christ, and his

Prophet of the restoration, Joseph Smith, we have ample inspiration for comfort and for hope.

“If we can bear our afflictions with the understanding, faith, and courage, and in the spirit in which they bore theirs, we shall be strengthened and comforted in many ways. We shall be spared the torment which accompanies the mistaken idea that all suffering comes as chastisement for transgression. We shall be comforted by the knowledge that we are not enduring, nor will we be required to endure, the suffering of the wicked who are to ‘be cast out into outer darkness [where] there shall be weeping, and wailing, and gnashing of teeth.’ (Al. 40:13.)” (Marion G. Romney in *CR*, Oct. 1969, p. 59.)

“WHATSOEVER A MAN SOWETH, THAT SHALL HE ALSO REAP”



A Letter of Paul to the Saints in the Province of Galatia Written from Corinth During Paul's Third Missionary Journey, ca. A.D. 57 (Galatians)	
	Galatians
A Warning Against False Preachers	1:1–10
Paul's Call to the Ministry	1:11–24
The Meeting at Jerusalem	2:1–10
Peter and Paul of Antioch	2:11–14
Salvation Comes Through Christ	2:15–21
The Spirit Comes by Faith	3:1–5
How the Mission of Abraham Is Extended to the Gentiles	3:6–18
The Purpose of the Law	3:19–22
Saints Are God's Children by Faith	3:23–29
How Saints Become Sons of God	4:1–8
Galatians Called Back to Assist	4:9–20
The Two Covenants: Hagar and Sarah	4:21–31
Christian Liberty	5:1–12
Liberty and Charity	5:13–15

Walk in the Spirit	5:16–26
Bear One Another's Burdens	6:1–6
“As Ye Sow, So Shall Ye Reap”	6:7–18

THEME

Only those who endure in righteousness unto the end will receive eternal life.

INTRODUCTION

*In morning's dawn so fresh and fair
Two lads began to climb.
Mid scenes removed from strife and care
They played away their time.*

They came from the same rural neighborhood, the same country lane. Inseparable as youngsters, they dug in sandpiles, climbed trees, swung on old tires that dangled on long ropes, wore straw hats and overalls, and went without shoes through long summer months. They fished with makeshift poles, hunted pheasant nests, and talked—oh how they talked and dreamed and wondered what grown-up years would bring.

*But broader years would try their souls,
And sterner times, their hearts,*

*To batter down their quest for goals
And drive them far apart.*

The Great Depression came, and with it, the years of school and seeking jobs and struggling to make their way in the world. They were separated, careers and families came, the war intervened, and then more of work and families and challenge. One sought to be honest, moral, and upright, always and in every way. Any advantage had at the expense of character was not for him. The other sought his ends by any means and by any sacrifice. Virtue, family, integrity—all gave way before his grasping for success.

*Then in the twilight years they came,
Each to his former place,
To spend their final years in peace,
Familiar scenes embrace.*

Both had accumulated considerable means. They patched up their old family homes, made improvements, and prepared to live out the quiet years in homes along a lane that was still rural, remote and apart from the pace of the world. The good man, as he settled in his chair through those years and watched the seasons pass, had distill upon him a gentle peace and quiet contentment, almost as if nature itself approved of his course; and all his days were marked by quiet happiness. The other man could not rest. Peace did not come. Anxiety, fear, distrust, discontent—all these began to weigh down upon his aging shoulders with a grinding, crushing force. His final years were years of hell, until his senses forsook him, his tormented heart gave way, and he died a frightened death in the home in which he was reared.

*The bar of nature's God is fair,
His judgment always right.
Those lives full sown with good and love
Shall yield up peace and light.*

Before proceeding, read all the scriptural references in the reading block.

INTERPRETIVE COMMENTARY

(38-1) The Book of Galatians—Freedom and the Gospel

The theme of this letter is that true freedom can be found only in the gospel of Jesus Christ. Paul shows clearly and powerfully that adoption of the teachings of the Judaizers (Jewish Christians who insisted on the

observance of the Mosaic law) would limit or even destroy the new freedom the saints had found in Christ. Paul demonstrates that although the Mosaic law was of value for the children of Israel prior to Christ's mortal ministry, its need is now superseded by the higher law.

(38-2) Place and Date of Writing

Though neither the place nor date of writing of the letter to the Galatian saints can be established with any positive certainty, the evidence favors the conclusion that it was written from Corinth during the third missionary journey in approximately A.D. 57.

(38-3) Special Problems

The most significant debate about the letter itself concerns the identity of the Galatian saints. The term *Galatia* could refer to two different areas, depending on whether its user was speaking ethnically or politically. The ethnographic usage of the term referred to that area just below the Black Sea in Asia Minor where the area was inhabited by Gauls.

When the Roman legions brought these Gaulic tribes under subjection, the territory was made a Roman province called Galatia. This included a much broader territory, since it encompassed more southerly sections of Asia Minor. This provincial title was the political use of the term *Galatia*.

Which sense did Paul have in mind when he used the term? That is the point of debate. Two basic theories have resulted. The first is called the North Galatian Theory. Those who hold this view assume that Paul is using the term ethnically and therefore Galatia is limited to the northern parts of the province. The greatest problem with this theory is that there is no record of any preaching activity there, nor does Paul or Luke ever make any reference to the major cities of northern Galatia.

Those who accept the South Galatian Theory hold that Paul always uses provincial titles when he refers to established churches. (He refers to Achaia, Arabia, Asia, Cilicia, Dalmatia, and so on.) If this is so, then Galatia, as Paul uses it, would include the southern regions of Asia Minor, including such towns as Antioch, Derbe, Lystra, Iconium—towns he visited on the first missionary journey (Acts 13:13–14:23 and Acts 16:1–9). This theory, then, is supported by what we know from both the record of Acts and Paul's other incidental references.

While the interpretation and value of the book is not affected by the correctness of either theory, we shall assume that the South Galatian Theory is correct and that Paul is writing to those churches established on his first missionary journey.

(38-4) Galatians 1:8, 9. Those Who Would Introduce False Teachings into the Church

Elder Howard W. Hunter spoke of this problem in a general conference:

“From the earliest days of the Christian church, spurious gospels have been taught—not really gospels, as Paul pointed out, for there is only one gospel of Christ. Today is not different. We are surrounded by frustrations and advances in thought and learning which raise questions and doubts. These seem to drag men down and destroy faith and morality. Where, then, is hope in this world of frustration and moral decay? It lies in the knowledge and understanding of the truths taught by the Master, which must be taught by the Church of Christ without deviation and believed in and lived by its membership. These are eternal truths and will be so in perpetuity regardless of changing circumstances in society, development of new scientific achievements, or increase of man’s knowledge.” (CR, Oct. 1973, p. 66.)

President Harold B. Lee warned about false teachings arising from within the Church itself.

“There are some as wolves among us. By that, I mean some who profess membership in this church who are not sparing the flock. And among our own membership, men are arising speaking perverse things. Now *perverse* means diverting from the right or correct, and being obstinate in the wrong, willfully, in order to draw the weak and unwary members of the Church away after them.

“And as the apostle Paul said, it is likewise a marvel to us today, as it was in that day, that some members are so soon removed from those who taught them the gospel and are removed from the true teachings of the gospel of Christ to be led astray into something that corrupts the true doctrines of the gospel of Christ into vicious and wicked practices and performances.

“These, as have been evidenced by shocking events among some of these splinter groups, have been accursed, as the prophets warned; and they are obviously in the power of that evil one who feeds the gullible with all the sophistries which Satan has employed since the beginning of time.” (CR, Oct. 1972, p. 125.)

(38-5) Galatians 2:2–4, 9. Does Paul’s “Running in Vain” Imply Doubts About His Mission?

The implication that is sometimes derived from the English rendering of verse 2 is that Paul had inner doubts about his commission to the gentiles and went to the apostles to see if he was “running in vain.” But that implication is not found in the original language. The feeling conveyed there is that Paul sought official sanction for the work he was engaged in (probably in answer to the criticisms that were already being started by the Judaizers). Verse 4 shows that he received that official approval without reserve, for Titus was not required to be circumcised, as demanded by those who were opposed to Paul. This full and unqualified support of the brethren is further shown in verse 9, where Paul says he and Barnabas were offered the right hand of fellowship—a Greek and Hebrew idiom showing full partnership, alliance, or unity.

(38-6) Galatians 2:11–21. How Could Paul, an Apostle, Correct Peter, the President of the Church?

“Peter and Paul—both of whom were apostles, both of whom received revelations, saw angels, and were approved of the Lord, and both of whom shall inherit the fulness of the Father’s kingdom—these same righteous and mighty preachers disagreed on a basic matter of church policy. Peter was the President of the Church; Paul, an apostle and Peter’s junior in the church hierarchy, was subject to the direction of the chief apostle. But Paul was right and Peter was wrong. Paul stood firm, determined that they should walk ‘uprightly according to the truth of the gospel’; Peter temporized for fear of offending Jewish semi-converts who still kept the law of Moses.

“The issue was not whether the Gentiles should receive the gospel. Peter himself had received the revelation that God was no respecter of persons, and that those of all lineages were now to be heirs of salvation along with the Jews. (Acts 10:21–35.) Further, the heads of the Church, in council assembled, with the Holy Ghost guiding their minds and directing their decisions, had determined that the Gentiles who received the gospel should not be subject to the law of Moses. (Acts 15:1–35.) The Jewish members of the Church, however, had not been able to accept this decision without reservation. They themselves continued to conform to Mosaic performances, and they expected Gentile converts to do likewise. Peter sided with them; Paul publicly withstood the chief apostle and won the debate, as could not otherwise have been the case. Without

question, if we had the full account, we would find Peter reversing himself and doing all in his power to get the Jewish saints to believe that the law of Moses was fulfilled in Christ and no longer applied to anyone either Jew or Gentile.” (McConkie, *DNTC*, 2:463–64.)

(38-7) Galatians 2:13. What Is the Meaning of the Word *Dissimulation*?

Paul used a very strong word, of which the English *dissimulation* is an excellent translation. The English is based on the word *simulate*, which means “to make similar.” *Dissimulate* therefore means “to hide under false appearance. The Greek word *hypokrisei* is a derivative of the same root as our word *hypocrite*. These Judaizers were hypocrites because they pretended to be extremely faithful in their obedience to gospel principles even while they were working in a manner contrary to true gospel standards.

(38-8) Galatians 2:16. What Did Paul Mean by “the Law,” “the Works of the Law,” and “Justification by Faith”?

As we have already seen, the major thrust of this particular letter was an attempt to show the Galatian saints that obedience to the Mosaic law was not only unnecessary but actually contrary to the gospel. Technically, “the law” referred to the first five books of the Old Testament. In Hebrew those were called the Torah. Paul used the word in that sense in 4:21, 22 when he called attention to the example of Sarah and Hagar. But by the time of Jesus, the phrase “the law” had also come to mean the whole set of rules, rituals, and practices of the Mosaic code, both those included specifically in the writings of Moses, and the mass of oral traditions that had been formulated throughout the following centuries. It is in this sense that Paul most typically uses law in Galatians.

Very briefly, *justification* means “to be declared righteous,” and also “to be put back into the right relationship with a person.” Therefore, what Paul was saying is that no man can be made righteous and reestablish the proper relationship with God exclusively by the words of the Mosaic law or, for that matter, by any law of works alone. This can come only through the atoning sacrifice of the Savior and through the obedience to the principles and ordinances of the gospel. (Paul outlined this doctrine much more completely and systematically in the first few chapters of his letter to the Romans. Therefore, a detailed and complete treatment of these important doctrines will be reserved for that section.)

(38-9) Galatians 3:8. Did Saints Before Christ Have the Gospel Preached to Them?

“It will be noticed that, according to Paul, (see Gal. 3:8) the Gospel was preached to Abraham. We would like to be informed in what name the Gospel was then preached, whether it was in the name of Christ or some other name. If in any other name, was it the Gospel? And if it was the Gospel, and that preached in the name of Christ, had it any ordinances? If not, was it the Gospel? And if it had ordinances what were they? Our friends may say, perhaps, that there were never any ordinances except those of offering sacrifices before the coming of Christ, and that it could not be possible before the Gospel to have been administered while the law of sacrifices of blood was in force. But we will recollect that Abraham offered sacrifice, and notwithstanding this, had the Gospel preached to him.” (Smith, *Teachings*, p. 60. See also Jacob 4:5.)

(38-10) Galatians 3:19. To What Was the Law of Moses Added Because of Transgression?

“It is said again, in Gal. [3:19], that the law (of Moses, or the Levitical law) was ‘added’ because of transgression. What, we ask, was this law added to, if it was not added to the Gospel? It must be plain that it was added to the Gospel, since we learn that they had the Gospel preached to them. From these few facts, we conclude that whenever the Lord revealed Himself to men in ancient days, and commanded them to offer sacrifice to Him, that it was done that they might look forward in faith to the time of His coming, and rely upon the power of that atonement for a remission of their sins. And this they have done, thousands who have gone before us, whose garments are spotless, and who are, like Job, waiting with an assurance like his, that they will see Him in the *latter day* upon the earth, even in their flesh.” (Smith, *Teachings*, pp. 60–61.)

(38-11) Galatians 3:24. How Was the Law a Schoolmaster to the Children of Israel?

The translators of the King James Version used the word *schoolmaster* to translate the Greek word Paul used here because it had come directly into English and by then had come to mean “a teacher.” The Greek word is *paidagogus*, from which comes our *pedagogue*, or teacher. But it had a special usage in Paul’s time which lends even more power to the image he was creating. A *paidagogos* was a special tutor hired by the more wealthy families; he was not only responsible for the child’s education, but he was also expected to prepare and train the child in all ways so

that he was brought to maturity. The closest equivalent we have in modern times would be the English nanny or governess, who lived right in the house and had direct responsibility for the children's upbringing.

Paul's usage of the word here would immediately convey the true purpose of the Mosaic law—to prepare the children of Israel (who were literally children in the spiritual sense) for maturity and the “adult” laws and ordinances of the gospel. The prophet Abinadi had this very thing in mind when he explained the reasons why the Israelites were given the law of Moses. (See Mosiah 13:29–31.)

Abinadi's statement that all these things were “types” of things to come is an important one. *Type* is a common scriptural synonym for *symbol*. So not only was the law of Moses a set of strict laws designed to tutor the children of Israel in the ways of obedience and bring them to spiritual maturity, but also it contained deeply spiritual symbolism pointing the mind to Jesus as the Redeemer and Messiah. Clearly, the law of Moses was designed to prepare God's people for the gospel which was to come.

(38-12) Galatians 3:27. Can a Wicked Person Really Put On Christ Through Repentance and Baptism?

“When a physical body is filthy, the process of cleansing is a thorough bath, the brushing of teeth, the shampooing of hair, the cleaning of fingernails, and the donning of fresh, clean clothing. When a home is renovated, roofs are mended or replaced, walls washed or painted, floors swept and scrubbed, furniture repaired and dusted, curtains laundered and metals polished. When a defiled man is born again, his habits are changed, his thoughts cleansed, his attitudes regenerated and elevated, his activities put in total order, and everything about him that was dirty, degenerate or reprobate is washed and made clean. . . .

“ . . . When one is washed and purged and cleansed, he is no longer an adulterer. The washing, purging, cleansing process is mentioned many times, many places, by many prophets.

“The effect of the cleansing is beautiful. These troubled souls have found peace. These soiled robes have been cleansed to spotlessness. These people formerly defiled, having been cleansed through their repentance—their washing, their purging, their whitening—are made worthy for constant temple service and to be found before the throne of God associating with divine royalty.” (Kimball, *Miracle of Forgiveness*, pp. 352–53.)

(38-13) Galatians 4:6. What Is the Significance of the Title “Abba, Father”?

Paul suggested that through the atonement of Christ we can be adopted as sons of God, and then the Spirit shall help us cry “Abba, Father.” *Abba* is Aramaic (a cognate of Hebrew) and carries more than just the connotation of *father*. It is the intimate and personal diminutive of the word *father* used by children in the family circle. The closest equivalent we have is *papa* or *daddy*, although neither can really convey fully the impact of the word. The point is that God is not only Father (the formal title and name), but he is also *Abba*, the parent of love and guidance that knows us intimately and whom we can approach without fear.

(38-14) Galatians 4:21–31. The Allegory of Sarah and Hagar

“Paul here uses the life of Abraham as an allegory to dramatize the superiority of the gospel over the law of Moses—a mode of teaching designed to drive his doctrine home anew each time his hearers think of Abraham and his life.

“Hagar, the bondwoman, bore Ishmael; and Sarah, the free-woman, brought forth Isaac. Ishmael was born after the flesh, while Isaac, as a child of promise, came forth after the Spirit. Hagar is thus made to represent the old covenant, the law of Moses, the covenant under which men were subject to the bondage of sin; while Sarah symbolizes the new covenant, the gospel, the covenant under which men are made free, free from bondage and sin through Christ.

“Mt. Sinai, from whence the law came, and Jerusalem, from whence it is now administered, symbolize the law, and their children are in bondage. But the spiritual Jerusalem, the heavenly city of which the saints shall be citizens, is symbolized by Sarah, and she is the mother of freemen. Sarah, who was so long barren, as our spiritual mother, has now made us all, like Isaac, heirs of promise.

“But it is now, as it was then, those born after the flesh war against those born of the Spirit. And as God rejected Ishmael and accepted Isaac, so does he now reject those who cleave to the law of Moses and accept those who turn to Christ.” (McConkie, *DNTC*, 2:477–78.)

(38-15) Galatians 5:2. Why Would Circumcision in Paul's Day Have Negated the Power of Christ?

“Circumcision, as a religious ordinance, is the token and sign certifying belief in, acceptance of, and conformity to the whole Mosaic system, and therefore

for the Christians of that day it constituted a rejection of Christ and his gospel which replaced the law. See Acts 15:1–35.” (McConkie, *DNTC*, 2:479.)

(38-16) Galatians 5:16–26. The Natural and the Spiritual

“. . . man is a dual being, and his life a plan of God. That is the first fundamental fact to keep in mind. Man has a *natural* body and a *spiritual* body. . . .

“Man’s body, therefore, is but the tabernacle in which his spirit dwells. Too many, far too many, are prone to regard the body as the man, and consequently to direct their efforts to the gratifying of the body’s pleasures, its appetites, its desires, its passions.” (David O. McKay, “The Abundant Life in a Selfish World,” *Improvement Era*, Sept. 1949, p. 558.)

(38-17) Galatians 6:17. I Bear in My Body the Marks of the Lord Jesus

Our English word *stigma* is drawn from the Greek word which was used here, *stigmata*. It meant a wound or scar and came originally from the brands with which slaves were marked. Since generally that was a mark one was not proud of, such marks were generally looked upon with some negative connotations—thus our use of the word *stigma*. But here Paul seems to refer to them not as a mark of shame, but of faithfulness in the face of persecution. Perhaps the *stigmata* that he bore were partially received in Galatia itself. It should be remembered that on the first missionary journey, Paul and Barnabas were expelled forcibly from Antioch in Pisidia (Acts 13:50). Then they were forced to flee from Iconium to avoid stoning (Acts 14:5), only to have the angry Jews follow them to Lystra and carry through with their intent, stoning Paul and leaving him for dead outside the city (Acts 14:19).

POINTS TO PONDER

Paul’s concern was that the Galatian saints had turned from their evil ways, had repented and received baptism, and had been wrought upon by the power of God and given a new birth, but were now returning to their former practices (Galatians 4:9). They did the thing that wasted the effort of their ever having repented in the first place: they returned to seek God by outward and fleshy things, to seek happiness by means that cannot touch the inward man. Consider Ezekiel 18:21–24.

Many who were converted to the truth in Paul’s day and who had turned away from their former lives,

after a season and a time began to miss their former associations and the yoke of the law of Moses to which they had been subjected. They did not want to forsake the truth directly, but they wanted to bring into the truth all of their former practices and pollutions.

John

But why would someone want to return to and bring into their life the errors which they formerly had forsaken?

David

Not everyone who makes a mistake is willfully and deliberately wicked. Some may be well-intentioned, although wrong. These converts wanted to stay in the church; but because of pride or maybe other reasons, they felt that if they could introduce their former sins into the church, they could appear to justify their former participation in them.

John

I’m not sure I understand. How could bringing my former sins into the church justify what I may have done before baptism?

David

Let’s suppose that before you joined the Church, you belonged to a Protestant congregation that did not forbid the drinking of tea. Then you hear the missionaries; and among other new concepts, they teach that you should not drink tea. You now have two alternatives: (1) you can be humble and repent and never drink tea again, or (2) you can justify yourself and try to force your peculiar views upon the Church.

John

How could I try to do that?

David

You might join the Church and then find a weak member who likes to drink tea. So you invite him to drink tea with you, and you try to get other members and even leaders in the ward or stake to drink tea with you, because the larger your group, the more you may think to have justified your former behavior. Perhaps you may agitate to have the standards changed and the ideals reduced, not because you necessarily are convinced it is right to drink tea, but because it is hard for you to forsake things that have been so familiar to you and perhaps because it would be easier to justify continuing your former behavior than to repent.

(38-18) You Shall Always and Forever Reap Just As You Sow

Emma Jane struggled with the handrail as she edged her way up the steps of the church and into the foyer. She had been brought up in the faith, had married and reared a family, her husband had passed away recently, her children lived far away, and she felt just a little lonely as she made her way on through the foyer and into the aisle that led to her usual seat near the front of the chapel. She was bent with age, and it was only with great effort that she could prepare to attend her Church meetings. But she enjoyed the meetings, and today was a special day, for the young, new bishop was going to address the ward members. She liked him and marveled that he could be prepared at such a young age to preside over a ward. She hoped he would say something pleasant for a change, for the previous bishops seemed to speak only about sin and worthiness and repentance. The sacrament was administered, and soon the bishop was speaking.

“Oh no!” thought Emma Jane. “He’s going to speak about repentance and sin, too. I’m old. I’m entitled to hear about sweeter things now. “Why all this talk about morality? When will we ever hear the end of that . . .”

Her silent questions trailed off as her mind flashed back to that one time now almost fifty years ago. She had been pretty and young, and a little too careless, and had slipped just once. In her subsequent courtship and marriage in the temple to another man, she had rationalized that since it had just been one mistake, she needn’t tell anyone, especially the bishop who had interviewed her. Certainly, she had convinced herself she must have been strong and good or she would have made many more mistakes than one in those carefree years.

The bishop was saying that repentance must be complete, and that included confession of major sins. “But mine was not a major sin because I was so young and I never did it again. Oh, why must we hear of sin when our services should be filled with peace?” Her mind recalled the graveside service of her late husband. She had been pleased that he had never known, and yet as she had stood there by his grave on that lonely day, she couldn’t help but feel that she had been a deceiver and that where he was now he probably knew. The bishop was speaking of how our former sins will remain with us always unless and until we resolve them. How could you know if your sins were resolved? the bishop was asking. If you could hear a sermon on the subject of your former sins and still feel at peace.

Emma Jane did not feel peace! “Oh I wish he would quit,” she thought. Her mind was tormented now as it had been many times before by the suggestion that she should see her bishop about that trouble so many years ago. Throughout the rest of the meeting she could hardly refrain from crying out. “Oh, why can’t I forget? Why must I always feel like this?”

The people were leaving now, and she among them. She silently hoped that her profound anxiety inside did not show on her face. Then all of a sudden there he was, her new bishop, smiling, with his hand stretched through the crowd.

“Good afternoon, Sister Emma, how good to see you here.” She stared up at him; she could not bring herself to speak; the tears welled up in her eyes and she felt as if she could not move.

“Are you feeling well?” the bishop asked, still clasping her hand. Still she could not speak; but the tears continued to flow, and she became unaware of the other members of the congregation. Gently, the bishop led her by the arm into his office, where she collapsed into a chair. Then, almost before she could think about it, the story came gushing out—her grave mistake of fifty years ago and all the aching, tormented years since. Within minutes it was done, and then her sobbing stopped. After some words and reassurance, her young bishop sat back in his chair and was quiet for a long time. At last he said: “Oh, I wish that you had cleared this up before now. The years . . .”

Her mind trailed off. “Yes,” she thought, “the long years, all of them, but always I knew—deep inside I knew that I would one day have to come back to the bar of nature’s God and pay, pay in deep pain and tears.”

E’en down to old age, all my people shall prove
My sovereign, eternal, unchangeable love;
And then, when gray hair shall their temples
adorn,
Like lambs shall they still in my bosom be borne.
(“How Firm a Foundation,” *Hymns*, 66.)

Before considering the following questions, read again Galatians 6:7–9.

Is the way in which Emma Jane reaped as she had sown the only way in which that law may apply?

Is that law of return operating in your own life even now? When the seeds that you are sowing now in terms of honesty, virtue, and obedience have grown and bloomed and become fully ripe, what kind of

person will you be? What thoughts will consume your time, what great desires surge within your breast?

Galatians 6:7

Can a man fool God and succeed in a false effort to reap joy by sowing wickedness? (Compare Helaman 13:38.) Why does Paul say, “Be not deceived”? Are there those who would try to deceive you to think that wickedness might really bring happiness?

Galatians 6:8

If a man seeks to gratify the flesh, and lives just to satisfy base allurements that have their origin in a fallen world—pride, appetites, passions, inordinate honors and plaudits—what must he eventually receive? What shall be his returns if he strives to live his life in an upright and wholesome way? Now, are you thinking of yourself in this analysis?

Galatians 6:9

Does Paul indicate that we shall necessarily receive our rewards immediately? Anyone can live righteously for one day. It is no measure of a man’s character if he sows generously and bestows service graciously for one day or one week. It is dedicated, calculated obedience, given over time, over years and years and years, throughout a life, that shows the true measure of the man.

Do you understand now why the prophet Nephi stresses that we must endure in good works to the end of our lives in order to obtain exaltation? (See 2 Nephi 31:20.) The law of return is always at work. Are you prepared to make the commitment to sow the seeds of holiness and purity and service from now on so that they may bring back to you a bumper harvest of glory, exaltation, and eternal lives?

"MAN IS JUSTIFIED BY FAITH"



A Letter of Paul to the Church at Rome Written from Corinth (?) During Paul's Third Missionary Journey, ca. Winter, A.D. 57–58 (Romans 1–5)	
	Romans
The Power of God unto Salvation	1:1–17
God's Anger Against the Unrepentant Depraved	1:18–32
All Men Are Judged by Gospel Standards	2:1–11
Man Is Not Justified by the Law of Moses	2:12–29; 3:1–20
Man Is Justified by Faith	3:21–31
Abraham Was Justified by Faith, Works, and Grace	4:1–25
Man Is Justified Through the Blood of Christ	5:1–11
Adam Fell, Christ Atoned, Man Saved	5:12–21

THEME

Justification comes by the grace of Christ through faith.

INTRODUCTION

It had been more than twenty years since Paul had started on the road to what he thought would lead him only to Damascus but which, instead, began a far longer and more glorious journey. He had left Jerusalem that day seeing but blind; he had come to Damascus blind but seeing. When he had set out, he had in his hand the edict of the high priest: bind the followers of the way and bring them to the prisons of Jerusalem. When he had arrived, he had in his heart the edict of Christ: unbind the gentiles and bring them to the mansions of the heavenly Jerusalem. For more than seven thousand days now, the man from Tarsus had labored to fulfill that edict. He had crossed and recrossed eight or more provinces of the Roman empire. He had personally established a number of branches of the church. His converts must have numbered well into the thousands. He had been beaten, stoned, scourged, jailed, and shipwrecked and had endured hunger, thirst, cold, fatigue, rejection, insults, scorn, and desertion—and all this while afflicted with his own “thorn in the flesh.” Surely now he had done enough? Surely now he could return to Jerusalem and pass the baton on to younger hands?

But of course such would be unthinkable to Paul. With characteristic simplicity Luke reports, “After these things were ended, Paul purposed in the spirit . . . to go to Jerusalem, saying, After I have been there, I must also see Rome.” (Acts 19:21.) And so he had come to Corinth to spend the winter, waiting for safe sailing weather. It must have been a time of reflection and planning and concern. It was evidently during these months that reports arrived saying that Galatia was being ravaged by the onslaughts of the Judaizers. “True righteousness is based in the law of Moses,” they were saying, “Believing in Christ is all well and good, but you must not leave the foundation principles of circumcision, dietary law, and Levitical ritual.” They maligned Paul and his office, wooing many away from the teachings of the great apostle.

Paul had written to the churches in Galatia and sharply condemned the false teachings. “O foolish Galatians, who hath bewitched you?” he asked in sorrow. (Galatians 3:1.) It was shortly after this that the apostle wrote his letter to Rome, alerting the saints there of his intent to visit them. The reports from Rome were positive. The saints were believing, growing, testifying. But the concern for the growing threat of the false teachers must still have weighed heavily on his mind, for the book of Romans contains Paul’s powerful defense of true righteousness and his rejection of any system of salvation that is not based on faith in Jesus Christ.

How ironic that the letters to Rome and Galatia should be used in later centuries as the basis for the doctrine that works are unessential for salvation. Can you imagine the retort of the man who had been five times scourged of the Jews to those who would say that all you must do to be saved is confess with your mouth that Jesus is the Christ? Can you picture the response of the man who for two decades had devoted his life to good works to those who say that good works are not a requirement for salvation? But on the other hand, you must also recognize that Paul rejected the idea fostered by the Judaizers, namely, that man can achieve righteousness by his own efforts. The ideas are opposite ends of the grace and works continuum, but both are false. In order to find the true middle ground, let us now turn to a careful study of what Paul wrote to the saints in Rome. What is the proper relationship between our own works and the grace of God? If a man is justified by faith, just what does that mean? As you study this lesson and ponder such questions, remember Paul the man.

Remember the experiences that had molded and shaped him as he sat in Corinth and wrote his letter to the saints in Rome.

Before proceeding, read all the scriptural references in the reading block.

INTERPRETIVE COMMENTARY

ROMANS

(39-1) What Is the Theme of Romans?

“For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ; for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth; to the Jew first, and also to the Greek.” (Romans 1:16.) In this brief but powerful statement, Paul sounds the theme of his letter. The rest of the epistle is spent in developing this theme and showing that justification by faith brings eternal salvation. Paul expands this theme, showing that true faith requires personal righteousness and obedience to gospel principles, a truth often overlooked by those who stress salvation by faith alone.

(39-2) Where and When Was It Written?

Though it is always difficult to state with absolute certainty the location from which a certain epistle was written and when, in the case of the letter to the Romans, Paul gives several clues within the letter that correspond with the record in Acts. For example, he mentions that while he has not yet been to Rome, he intends to come there as soon as he makes a trip to Jerusalem to deliver money collected for the poorer saints in Judea (1:10; 15:19–27). Also, the more formal and well-thought-out nature of this epistle suggests a period of relative peace and stability for its composition. In Acts 20:2, 3 Luke tells us that during Paul’s third missionary journey the apostle spent three months in Corinth. He was probably waiting for good sailing conditions before departing for Jerusalem. From these clues it can be said with some certainty that the letter to Rome was written from Corinth near the end of the third journey, most likely during the winter months of A.D. 57–58.

(39-3) What Are Some of the Significant Contributions of Romans?

“Romans defines the gospel and summarizes the laws by obedience to which full salvation comes. It speaks plainly of Adam’s fall, which brought death, and Christ’s atoning sacrifice, which brought life. It tells how the law of justification works, how men are

justified by faith and works, through the blood of Christ. In it are some of the most explicit Biblical teachings on the election of grace, the status of the chosen race, on why salvation cannot come by the law of Moses alone, on why circumcision was done away in Christ, and on how and why salvation was taken to the Gentiles. And it is a chief source of the glorious doctrine of joint-heirship with Christ, that marvelous principle under which men, through celestial marriage and the continuation of the family unit in eternity, can gain exaltation in the highest celestial heaven. . . .

“In its very nature Romans is an epistle capable of differing interpretations. Those without prior and full knowledge of the doctrines involved find it exceedingly difficult to place Paul’s comments about these doctrines into their true perspective. For instance, it is on a misunderstanding of the Apostle’s statement about justification by faith alone that the whole sectarian world is led to believe that men are not required to work out their own salvation; and it was this very passage that enabled Martin Luther to justify in his own mind his break with Catholicism, an eventuality of vital importance to the furtherance of the Lord’s work on earth.” (McConkie, *DNTC*, 2:212–13.)

(39-4) Romans 1:7, 8. Paul Writes to the Saints in Rome

“To whom was the Epistle to the Romans written? To the Gentiles in Rome? To the world in general? To sectarian Christians today? Not by any means. If there is any truth the world can gain from this Epistle, such is all to the good. But Paul wrote it to the saints, to members of the Church, to those who already had the gift of the Holy Ghost, to those who had been born again, to those who held the priesthood and enjoyed the gifts of the Spirit. Hence he was writing to the people who already knew the doctrines of salvation, and his teachings can only be understood by people who have the same background, the same knowledge, and the same experience as the original recipients of the message. Romans is a sealed book to the sectarian world; it is an open volume of inspiring gospel truth to the saints of God.” (McConkie, *DNTC*, 2:216.)

(39-5) Romans 1:26, 27. How Serious Is the Sin of Homosexuality?

“Of the adverse social effects of homosexuality none is more significant than the effect on marriage and home. The normal, God-given sexual relationship is

the procreative act between man and woman in honorable marriage. . . .

“. . . where stands the perversion of homosexuality? Clearly it is hostile to God’s purpose in that it negates his first and great commandment to ‘multiply and replenish the earth.’ If the abominable practice became universal it would depopulate the earth in a single generation. It would nullify God’s great program for his spirit children in that it would leave countless unembodied spirits in the heavenly world without the chance for the opportunities of mortality and would deny to all the participants in the practice the eternal life God makes available to us all.

“Because of the seriousness of this sin it carries a heavy penalty for the unrepentant. The offender may realize that disfellowshipment or excommunication is the penalty for heavy petting, adultery, fornication and comparable sins if there is not adequate repentance, yet he often supposes that because his acts have not been committed with the opposite sex he is not in sin. Let it therefore be clearly stated that the seriousness of the sin of homosexuality is equal to or greater than that of fornication or adultery; and that *the Lord’s Church will as readily take action to disfellowship or excommunicate the unrepentant practicing homosexual as it will the unrepentant fornicator or adulterer.* . . .

“After consideration of the evil aspects, the ugliness and prevalence of the evil of homosexuality, the glorious thing to remember is that it is curable and forgivable. The Lord has promised that all sins can be forgiven except certain ones enumerated, and this evil was not among those named. Thus it is forgivable if totally abandoned and if the repentance is sincere and absolute. Certainly it can be overcome, for there are numerous happy people who were once involved in its clutches and who have since completely transformed their lives. Therefore to those who say that this practice or any other evil is incurable, I respond: ‘How can you say the door cannot be opened until your knuckles are bloody, till your head is bruised, till your muscles are sore? It can be done.’

“. . . Many have been misinformed that they are powerless in the matter, not responsible for the tendency, and that ‘God made them that way.’ This is as untrue as any other of the diabolical lies Satan has concocted. It is blasphemy. Man is made in the image of God. Does the pervert think God to be ‘that way’? . . .

“Sometimes not heavenly but earthly parents get the blame. Granted that certain conditions make it easier for one to become a pervert, the second Article of Faith teaches that a man will be punished for his own sins. He can, if normal, rise above the frustrations of childhood and stand on his own feet. . . .

“A man may rationalize and excuse himself till the groove is so deep he cannot get out without great difficulty. But temptations come to all people. The difference between the reprobate and the worthy person is generally that one yielded and the other resisted. And if the yielding person continues to give way he may finally reach the point of ‘no return.’ The Spirit will ‘not always strive with man.’ (D&C 1:33.)” (Kimball, *Miracle of Forgiveness*, pp. 80–86.)

(39-6) Romans 2:6–13. The Importance of Works

Those churches that make much of Paul’s doctrines of justification by faith and salvation by grace either skip or gloss over the powerful teaching of Paul in these verses. Paul clearly teaches that good works are rewarded and evil works punished, concluding with these powerful words: “For not the hearers of the word are just before God, but the doers of the law shall be justified.”

(39-7) Romans 3:1–31. Man Must Be Justified by Grace

Since, as Paul says, all men sin, then no man can be justified (or restored to a proper relationship with God) by works alone. Some intervening power must bridge the gap. That power was provided by Jesus Christ. He lived the law perfectly, had no sin, and therefore never estranged himself from God. In addition, he sacrificed himself so that he could pay the debt of sin with his own holiness for all men who would come unto him. His grace becomes the source of their justification with God.

President Joseph Fielding Smith clearly pointed out the role of both grace and works in our salvation.

“There is a difference between the Lord Jesus Christ and the rest of mankind. We have no life in ourselves, for no power has been given unto us, to lay down our lives and take them again. That is beyond our power, and so, being subject to death, and being sinners—for we are all transgressors of the law to some extent, no matter how good we have tried to be—we are therefore unable in and of ourselves to receive redemption from our sins by any act of our own.

“This is the *grace* that Paul was teaching. Therefore, *it is by the grace of Jesus Christ that we are saved.* And

had he not come into the world, and laid down his life that he might take it again, or as he said in another place, to give us life that we may have it more abundantly we would still be *subject to death* and be *in our sins*. . . .

“So it is easy to understand that we must accept the mission of Jesus Christ. *We must believe that it is through his grace that we are saved, that he performed for us that labor which we were unable to perform for ourselves, and did for us those things which were essential to our salvation, which were beyond our power; and also that we are under the commandment and the necessity of performing the labors that are required of us as set forth in the commandments known as the gospel of Jesus Christ.*” (Smith, *Doctrines of Salvation*, 2:309–11.)

Question: If a person is doing all he can do to overcome the world, do his works “earn” for him the companionship of the Spirit, or does he merely merit that companionship?

Answer: Mosiah 2:20, 21.

Question: Then God’s blessings are worth more than a man’s good works could ever earn? Does that mean that I am justified by grace after all I can do?

Answer: Yes, see 2 Nephi 25:23; Moroni 10:32, 33.

(39-8) Romans 4:4. Eternal Life—a Gift or a Wage?

Paul’s suggestion here is that if a man were justified by the works of the law, then he would have reason to glory, for then the reward he received from the Father would be a debt owed for services rendered and not a gift of grace. But, of course, this was not the case. No man could earn salvation on his own. This shattered the Jewish concept that somehow one could earn God’s pleasure and eternal glory through obedience to the law. In this connection, it is interesting to note that even the very terminology the Lord uses makes it clear that nothing man could have done himself would have earned for him the celestial kingdom. Whenever the Lord speaks of his glory and kingdom being transmitted to man, the verb used is *inherit* and the noun is *gift*. While there is no suggestion that the gift is given unconditionally, that it is a gift is always clear. The Doctrine and Covenants illustrates that balance perfectly. “If thou wilt do good, yea, and hold out faithful to the end, thou shalt be saved in the kingdom

of God, which is the greatest of all the gifts of God; for there is no gift greater than the gift of salvation.” (D&C 6:13.)

“What price must men pay for this precious gift? Not conformity to Mosaic standards, not compliance with the ordinances and performances of a dead law, but the price of faith, faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, faith that includes within itself enduring works of righteousness, which faith cannot so much as exist unless and until men conform their lives to gospel standards.

“Does salvation come, then, by works? No, not by the works of the law of Moses, and for that matter, not even by the more perfect works of the gospel itself. Salvation comes through Christ’s atonement, through the ransom he paid, the propitiation he made; without this no good works on the part of men could redeem them from temporal death, which redemption is resurrection, or redeem them from spiritual death, which redemption is eternal life.” (McConkie, *DNTC*, 2:231.)

(39-9) Romans 4:16. How Are Men Justified?

“Therefore ye are justified of faith and works, through grace, to the end the promise might be sure to all the seed; not to them only who are of the law, but to them also who are of the faith of Abraham; who is the father of us all.” (Romans 4:16, Inspired Version.)

(39-10) Romans 5:20. What Is Meant by the Phrase “the Law Entered, That the Offense Might Abound”?

The Greek word Paul uses here that is translated *entered* means literally “to come in by the side of.” In classical Greek it was often used of actors in the theaters who played a supporting role and who would come on stage from the wings, play their part, and disappear again. Such a word used to describe the law of Moses points out the same things that Paul suggested in Galatians when he called the law a “schoolmaster.” (See the note on Galatians 3:24.)

POINTS TO PONDER

MAN IS JUSTIFIED BY FAITH THROUGH THE GRACE OF GOD

As you have read, Paul was fortifying the Roman saints against the Judaizers, who claimed that obedience to the Mosaic law was the means to salvation. This explains his strong emphasis on the grace of Christ. Should Paul have had the

opportunity to write to modern saints who are confronted with the teachings that salvation is by grace alone, it is likely that he would strongly emphasize the need for personal righteousness.

Let’s explore the concept of justification by faith a little more deeply to find the proper balance between grace and works in the process of being saved in the kingdom of God.

Study the following dialogue:

Justification by Faith

Inquirer

Paul said that a man is justified by faith. Just what does he mean by justification?

Teacher

Well, anciently the term carried the connotation of being vindicated or made righteous just as it does today. In addition, however, it was closely associated with the idea of relationship. Being justified meant to be put back into the right relationship with a person whom you had offended by your wrongdoing.

Inquirer

So if I am justified, I am put back into the right relationship with God?

Teacher

Yes. When we sin we estrange ourselves from God; we cut ourselves off from the relationship we had with him. This is so because he is a perfectly righteous and holy being. No unclean thing can dwell in his presence. When we sin we become what the scriptures call “the natural man.” The natural man is an enemy to God. (See Mosiah 3:19.) When we are made righteous, or in other words are justified, then we can come back into his presence, be reconciled to him, and thus reestablish our original relationship with him.

Inquirer

But how can you be made righteous and reestablish the relationship with God without actually being righteous?

Teacher

You can’t. As Elder McConkie puts it, the law of justification means that

“... all covenants, contracts, bonds, obligations, oaths, vows, performances, connections, associations, or expectations’ (D. & C. 132:7), in which men must abide to be saved and exalted, must

be entered into and performed in righteousness so that the Holy Spirit can justify the candidate for salvation in what has been done. (1 Ne. 16:2; Jac. 2:13–14; Alma 41:15; D. & C. 98; 132:1, 62.) An act that is justified by the Spirit is one that is sealed by the Holy Spirit of Promise, or in other words, ratified and approved by the Holy Ghost. This law of justification is the provision the Lord has placed in the gospel to assure that no unrighteous performance will be binding on earth and in heaven, and that no person will add to his position or glory in the hereafter by gaining an unearned blessing.” (DNTC, 2:230.)

Inquirer

Doesn't that say that a man is justified by his works? He must be righteous to be justified.

Teacher

Yes, he must be righteous, but it is not his own personal effort that justifies him. The only way a man could be justified through his works alone would be to keep all the laws of God perfectly. Even one violation would estrange him from God, though, of course, no one sins just once. All men are sinful, violating the laws numerous times. This was what Paul was teaching when he said, “For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God.” (Romans 3:23.)

Inquirer

I can see that, but certainly personal righteousness helps to save us.

Teacher

Of course! Man cannot be saved without being righteous. But he must not think that somehow he can save himself through his own obedience. Only one person was justified by his works, and that was Christ. The rest of us must be justified, or made righteous, or be put back into the proper relationship with God, by faith in Jesus Christ.

Inquirer

Then Christ is really the key to justification, isn't he?

Teacher

Well, a better comparison would be to say that Christ provides the doorway to salvation and faith in him is the key.

Inquirer

Just how does faith justify a person?

Teacher

Before we can answer that, we must define what faith is. Here is how Joseph Smith defined faith:

“By this we understand that the principle of power which existed in the bosom of God, by which the worlds were framed, was faith; and that it is by reason of this principle of power existing in the Deity, that all created things exist; so that all things in heaven, on earth, or under the earth exist by reason of faith as it existed in HIM.

“Had it not been for the principle of faith the worlds would never have been framed neither would man have been formed of the dust. It is the principle by which Jehovah works, and through which he exercises power over all temporal as well as eternal things. Take this principle or attribute—for it is an attribute—from the Deity, and he would cease to exist.” (Lectures on Faith, Lecture First, vss. 15, 16.)

So simply put, faith is the power of God, and only this power of God can justify a person. Does that remind you of something Paul wrote to the Romans?

Inquirer

Yes, he said he was not ashamed of the gospel of Jesus Christ, for it was the power of God unto salvation. (See Romans 1:16.)

Teacher

That brings a new perspective to that verse, doesn't it? Only in the gospel of Jesus Christ can one find the power of God, or develop true faith.

Inquirer

But, obviously, this kind of faith—true faith as you call it—is something much more than just intellectual belief.

Teacher

Oh yes. And this is where a man's need for personal righteousness comes in. Joseph Smith said there were three things necessary for the development of faith: first, an idea of God's existence; second, a correct idea of his attributes; and third, the knowledge that your life is in accordance with the will of God. (See Lectures on Faith, Lecture Third, vss. 2–5.)

Inquirer

So the only way you can know that your life is pleasing to God is to live according to his will.

Teacher

Exactly! Here is what the Prophet Joseph Smith went on to say about the development of the third condition.

“Let us here observe, that a religion that does not require the sacrifice of all things never has power sufficient to produce the faith necessary unto life and salvation; for, from the first existence of man, the faith necessary unto the enjoyment of life and salvation never could be obtained without the sacrifice of all earthly things. It was through this sacrifice, and this only, that God has ordained that men should enjoy eternal life; and it is through the medium of the sacrifice of all earthly things that men do actually know that they are doing the things that are well pleasing in the sight of God. When a man has offered in sacrifice all that he has for the truth’s sake, not even withholding his life, and believing before God that he has been called to make this sacrifice because he seeks to do his will, he does know, most assuredly, that God does and will accept his sacrifice and offering, and that he has not, nor will not seek his face in vain. Under these circumstances, then, he can obtain the faith necessary for him to lay hold on eternal life.” (Lectures on Faith, Lecture Sixth, vs. 7.) So, personal righteousness is absolutely essential, and may be best developed through our willingness to sacrifice to the Lord all that he requires. This helps formulate the expression of faith through which we may be justified. Once we have true faith, what will result in our lives?

Inquirer

I’m not sure what you mean.

Teacher

Faith is the first principle of the gospel. What is the second?

Inquirer

Repentance.

Teacher

Yes. True faith in Jesus Christ will always lead a man to repent of his sins. And since faith is power, the repentance will be effective and sincere. Then what follows?

Inquirer

We are baptized.

Teacher

Why?

Inquirer

To have our sins remitted.

Teacher

What exactly does that mean?

Inquirer

That through the blood of Christ we are sanctified, or cleansed, from those sins.

Teacher

And if the sins we have committed are taken away through the atoning power of Christ’s sacrifice, what does that do for the man?

Inquirer

He becomes without sin; he is righteous.

Teacher

And eventually what will happen to him if he remains without sin?

Inquirer

He can go back into God’s presence. But no one lives perfectly, even after baptism.

Teacher

That’s true, but we’ll come back to that in a moment. First, what did we call the process that makes a man righteous and brings him back into a relationship with God?

Inquirer

Justification.

Teacher

And does the power that justifies a man lie in the ordinance of baptism alone?

Inquirer

Not really. Baptism is the symbolic representation of what should be taking place spiritually. If it hasn’t taken place inwardly, baptism will not cleanse us from sin.

Teacher

Partly right. The outward ordinance is required of God too, of course, but the power to make those inward, spiritual changes comes from faith. So we are justified by faith. Now let’s go back to your question. After we are baptized, then what?

Inquirer

We are given the gift of the Holy Ghost.

Teacher

Why can't we get that gift before we are baptized?

Inquirer

I'm not really sure. We can have his influence and power before baptism but not the gift.

Teacher

There is a very important and logical reason. The Holy Ghost is a member of the Godhead; or, in other words, he is a God. What is the eternal rule about dwelling with Gods?

Inquirer

No unclean thing can dwell in their presence. I see now. So we must become holy, or cleansed from sin, before he can dwell with us.

Teacher

And the cleansing comes because we repent, which results from our faith. Now, obviously, even after baptism men will continue to make mistakes. But the closer they draw to the Holy Ghost, the more they can be influenced to live righteously. No man can live perfectly by himself, but with the help of God (the Holy Ghost) he can progress to the point where he triumphs over all sins.

Inquirer

But what about those sins which he commits between the time of his baptism and the time when he is perfected?

Teacher

If he continues to exercise faith, truly repent, and renew the covenants he made at baptism each week when he partakes of the sacrament, what happens?

Inquirer

Those sins will be taken from him by the same process. And the key to all of this is faith.

Teacher

The key is faith in Jesus Christ! Without him all would be to no avail. Our personal righteousness is essential at every step of our progression, but it would always be insufficient without his grace and power. That is what Nephi meant when he said, "For we know that it is by grace that we are saved, after all we can do." (2 Nephi 25:23.)

Inquirer

Yes, and now I can see the sublime wisdom of Paul when he said, "Therefore ye are justified of faith and works through grace. . . ." (Romans 4:16; Inspired Version.)

HEIRS OF GOD, AND JOINT-HEIRS WITH CHRIST



A Letter of Paul to the Church at Rome Written from Corinth (?) During Paul's Third Missionary Journey, ca. Winter, A.D. 57–58 (Romans 6–8)	
	Romans
A New Life Begins with Baptism	6:1–11
Holiness, Not Sin, Should Be One's Master	6:12–14
The Christian Is Freed from the Slavery of Sin	6:15–19
The Reward of Sin and the Reward of Holiness	6:20–23
The Law of Moses Is Fulfilled in Christ	7:1–6
The Law of Christ Replaces the Law of Moses	7:7–25
The Law of Christ Brings Life and Peace	8:1–13
The Sons of God Are Joint-Heirs with Christ	8:14–19
Faithful Men Receive the Hope of Eternal Life	8:20–25
How the Spirit Intercedes for Man	8:26, 27
God's Elect Are Foreordained to Eternal Life	8:28–34
Christ Intercedes for Men	8:34–39

THEME

Man's highest potential is to become an heir to all that the Father has.

INTRODUCTION

Mighty Rome! Seat of empire! Umbrella of order and stability under which the fledgling church of Christ was struggling to grow and fulfill the divine mandate to evangelize the world. Corrupt, ruthless, autocratic, Rome was nevertheless an undaunted hedge against the sweeping ravages of barbarous anarchy that marked affairs beyond her borders. And in the relative calm thus vouchsafed to the Mediterranean world by Roman legions, Paul and other representatives of the Master ranged far from Jerusalem, bearing the gladsome news that Christ had risen from the dead, establishing and strengthening branches of the church, and raising a warning voice to the citizens of those cities penetrated by their zeal. There was a branch of the church at Rome, converted Jews and others, some whose membership possibly dated from their pilgrimage to Jerusalem and participation there in the scenes of Pentecost shortly after the resurrection of Jesus. The branch at Rome was established, well ordered, and thriving, albeit under the burdens of

influence incident to life in the commercial, cultural, and political center of a pagan empire.

In the spring of A.D. 58 Paul was at Corinth, ordering the church, defending his apostleship, and making preparations to return to Jerusalem. He also found time at Corinth to write to the church at Rome. That the Roman saints were generally faithful and diligent seekers after truth seems evident from Paul's readiness to write to them of profound doctrinal concepts, understandable to those who have matured in their possession of the gift of the Holy Ghost, who are spiritually inclined, and who already perceive the purposes and objectives for man in God's great plan of salvation. For he wrote to them that man may obey the gospel and become like God the Father, and inherit, possess, and retain in eternity all that the Father has.

Read these passages carefully, and ponder upon the significance of the messages they contain.

Before proceeding, read all the scriptural references in the reading block.

INTERPRETIVE COMMENTARY

(40-1) Romans 6:1–6. What Is the Symbolism of Baptism?

“Baptism cannot be by any other means than immersion of the entire body in water, for the following reasons:

“1. *It is in the similitude of the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus Christ, and of all others who have received the resurrection.*

“2. *Baptism is also a birth and is performed in the similitude of the birth of a child into this world.*

“3. *Baptism is not only a figure of the resurrection, but also is literally a transplanting or resurrection from one life to another. . . .*” (Smith, *Doctrines of Salvation*, 2:323–24.)

(40-2) Romans 7:1–6. The Law of Moses Is like a Deceased Husband

“Paul was an absolute genius at devising illustrations to drive home his gospel teachings. Here he compares Israel's allegiance to the law of Moses with that of a wife to her husband. As long as her husband lives, a wife is bound to him, must obey his laws, and if she be with another, she is an adulteress. But when the husband dies, he can no longer direct her actions, and she is free to marry another; she can no longer be

subject to him that is dead.

“So with Israel and the law. As long as the law lived, and was therefore in force, Israel was married to it and required to obey its provisions. If she went after other gods, or followed other religions, it was as adultery. But now the law is fulfilled; it no longer lives; it has become dead in Christ; and Israel is married to another, even to Christ, whose gospel law must now be obeyed.

“As a matter of fact, whenever the Melchizedek Priesthood—which ‘administereth the gospel’ (D. & C. 84:19)—was found in ancient Israel, the law of Moses was dead, and the people were alive in Christ. Hence, we find Nephi saying, some six hundred years before Christ, ‘Notwithstanding we believe in Christ, we keep the law of Moses, and look forward with steadfastness unto Christ, until the law shall be fulfilled. For, for this end was the law given; wherefore the law hath become dead unto us, and we are made alive in Christ because of our faith; yet we keep the law because of the commandments.’ (2 Ne. 25:24–25.)” (McConkie, *DNTC*, 2:253–54.)

(40-3) Romans 8:4–6. The Meaning of the Words *Carnal* and *Flesh*

This passage, as much as any other, has given rise to the idea that Paul viewed the physical body as an inherently evil thing. This is unfortunate, for a careful reading of Paul's language leads to another conclusion.

Our English word *carnal* is a derivative of the Latin *carnalis*, meaning “the flesh” or “the body.” Ironically enough, there is no separate word for *carnal* in the Greek. What we have here is the adjectival form of the Greek noun meaning “flesh.” So in verse 6 of this passage, where the King James Version translates it “carnally minded,” literally the Greek reads “the mind of the flesh.”

A close examination of Paul's use of the term *flesh* makes it clear that he does not see it as an inherently evil thing. Perhaps the greatest insight into Paul's idea of the flesh is given in Galatians 5:13 where he employs an interesting Greek term in reference to the flesh. The word he chooses is *aphormay*, which the King James Version translates as *occasion*. This was a military word in classical Greek and was used to describe the point from which a commander launched an attack upon the enemy. Literally, then, it should be translated as *bridgehead* or *base of operations*. This is an appropriate metaphor, since the needs of our bodies often become the vulnerable base of operations. How many souls have been won by Satan as they

surrendered to bodily appetites? How many eternal lives have been lost because they were not spiritually minded but, rather, were dominated by “the mind of the flesh”?

(40-4) Romans 8:17. What Does Paul Imply When He Says, “We Shall Be Joint-Heirs with Christ”?

“In the important doctrinal discourse known as the ‘King Follett Sermon’ the Prophet Joseph Smith, referring to those who ‘shall be heirs of God and joint-heirs with Jesus Christ,’ described joint-heirship as inheriting the same power, the same glory, and the same exaltation, until an individual ascends to the station of Godhood and rises to the throne of eternal power sharing the rewards with all the faithful who have preceded him. A joint-heir legally inherits and shares all equities and gifts in equal interest with all other heirs. Nothing is excluded nor adjusted in value between the participating joint-heirs. . . .

“If we are led by the Spirit of God in our lives, we are promised heirship with him and joint-heirship with Christ our Lord in the great estate of God’s kingdom and glory. We ‘suffer with Christ’ as we sacrifice the things of the world and yield complete obedience to every truth, principle, and ordinance of the gospel plan. Whatever we contribute in honest tithes and other contributions along with unselfish participation and service to our fellow men to build the kingdom of God on the earth, increases our personal joy and happiness in heirship with Christ the Lord.” (Delbert L. Stapley in *CR*, Apr. 1961, p. 66.)

(40-5) Romans 8:29, 30. Did Paul Believe in Predestination?

The dictionary defines predestination as determining beforehand one’s state, condition, and actions in life by divine decree. There is no room for free agency. Latter-day Saints are sometimes disturbed to find Paul using the word *predestination* in his letter. There are three factors that help us to understand Paul’s meaning.

First, there is nothing in the original Greek word, which the King James Version chose to translate as *predestinate*, which implies a loss of free agency. It is a compound word formed from the prefix *pro*, meaning “before,” and the verb *horizo*, meaning “to define.” The verb itself was derived from *horos*, a boundary. (Our English *horizon* comes from this verb.) Literally, the word means “to determine beforehand, or decide beforehand.” Some modern biblical translations use the word *foreordain* to translate *prohoridzo*.

Elder Joseph Fielding Smith wrote the following:

“Just what Paul might have had in mind may not be too clearly expressed in the translation that has come to us. That he taught that some men are destined to be damned must be rejected; likewise that some were predestined to be saved without a trial of their faith. Those who rejected the truth and rebelled were cast out with Lucifer because of the great gift of free agency.

“We have reason to believe that all who were privileged to come to this mortal world came because they were entitled by pre-mortal qualifications. It is absurd to think that Paul would teach that in the beginning before the earth was formed, some souls were destined to come to earth, receive tabernacles and then be consigned to perdition and some to be saved. Such a doctrine is contrary to all that has been revealed.” (*Answers to Gospel Questions*, 4:153.)

POINTS TO PONDER

MEN MAY OBEY THE GOSPEL AND BECOME LIKE GOD THE FATHER

*As little ones to big ones grow
From birth to autumn, measured, slow,
There is no evil in their course—
The calf to cow, and foal to horse,
And crawling things to butterflies
Who stretch their wings against the skies.
Then what of man?*

*Then what of man, this son of Power?
First bud, then bloom, and thence the flower,
Who bears the seeds of heaven’s King.
From fallen earth, and petty things
To mount to realms of light and space
And be as one with God’s own race!
O what of man!*

Inquirer

You teach that man may become like God. I say, How could he? For God is so far in advance of man.

Joseph Smith

“God himself was once as we are now, and is an exalted man, and sits enthroned in yonder heavens! That is the great secret. If the veil were rent today, and the great God who holds this world in its orbit, and who upholds all worlds and all things by his power, was to make himself visible,—I say, if you were to see him today, you would see him like a man

in form—like yourselves in all the person, image, and very form as a man. . . .” (Teachings, 345; compare D&C 130:22.)

Inquirer

Am I to understand that God has not always been a God?

Joseph Smith

“. . . it is necessary we should understand the character and being of God and how he came to be so; for I am going to tell you how God came to be God. We have imagined and supposed that God was God from all eternity. I will refute that idea, and take away the veil, so that you may see.

“These are incomprehensible ideas to some, but they are simple. It is the first principle of the Gospel to know for a certainty the Character of God, and to know that we may converse with him as one man converses with another, and that he was once a man like us; yea, that God himself, the Father of us all, dwelt on an earth, the same as Jesus Christ himself did; and I will show it from the Bible.” (Teachings, pp. 345–46.)

Inquirer

I can see from what you say that God was once a man; but was he really like us, limited and finite?

Brigham Young

“While He was in the flesh, as we are, He was as we are. But it is now written of Him that our God is as a consuming fire [Hebrews 12:29], that He dwells in everlasting burnings, and this is why sin cannot be where He is.” (JD, 4:54.)

Inquirer

Then perhaps it is possible for me to become like Him. If God was once finite and just as we are now, how did he become what he is now?

Joseph F. Smith

“It is absolutely necessary that we should come to the earth and take upon us tabernacles; because if we did not have tabernacles we could not be like God, nor like Jesus Christ. God has a tabernacle of flesh and bone.

“. . . We must go through the same ordeal in order to attain to the glory and exaltation which God designed we should enjoy with him in the eternal worlds. In other words, we must become like him; peradventure to sit upon thrones, to have dominion,

power, and eternal increase. God designed this in the beginning. We are the children of God. . . . We are precisely in the same condition and under the same circumstances that God our heavenly Father was when he was passing through this, or a similar ordeal.” (Gospel Doctrine, p. 64. Emphasis added.)

Inquirer

If we must go through the same ordeal to reach the glory that God has, then it must be that when he was a man and lived on an earth, he was baptized, ordained, received his endowments, and was married.

Wilford Woodruff

“. . . He has had His endowments long ago; it is thousands and millions of years since He received His blessings. . . .” (JD, 4:192.)

Can you see why your strivings to become like God must not be lessened by any fear that you cannot make it, or that his mortal situation was different?

Inquirer

Then it is not improper for me to have hope that I may advance and progress until I become just like He is?

(40-6) Our Goal Should Be to Become as God

“We have been promised by the Lord that if we know how to worship, and know what we worship, we may come unto the Father in his name, and in due time receive of his fulness. We have the promise that if we keep his commandments, we shall receive of his fulness and be glorified in him as he is in the Father. [See D&C 93:11–20, 26–28.]

“This is a doctrine which delighted President Snow, as it does all of us. Early in his ministry he received by direct, personal revelation the knowledge that (in the Prophet Joseph Smith’s language), ‘God himself was once as we are now, and is an exalted man, and sits enthroned in yonder heavens,’ and that men ‘have got to learn how to be Gods . . . the same as all Gods have done before. . . .’ [Teachings, pp. 345–46.]

“After this doctrine had been taught by the Prophet, President Snow felt free to teach it also, and he summarized it in one of the best known couplets in the Church in these words:

“‘As man now is, God once was;
As God now is, man may be.’

“This same doctrine has of course been known to the prophets of all the ages, and President Snow wrote an excellent poetic summary of it, which came to him as a result of pondering what some of the ancient prophets had written on the subject.

“Paul wrote: ‘Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus: Who, being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God.’ [Philippians 2:5, 6.]

“The Beloved Disciple John wrote:

“Behold, what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God: therefore the world knoweth us not, because it knew him not.

“Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that, when he shall appear, we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is.

“And every man that hath this hope in him purifieth himself, even as he is pure.’ [1 John 3:1–3]

“Then President Snow, addressing himself to Paul and referring to the words written by John, penned these lines:

Dear Brother:

Hast thou not been unwisely bold,
Man’s destiny to thus unfold?
To raise, promote such high desire,
Such vast ambition thus inspire?

Still ’tis no phantom that we trace
Man’s ultimatum in life’s race;
This royal path has long been trod
By righteous men, each now a God:

As Abra’m, Isaac, Jacob, too,
First babes, then men—to gods they grew.
As man now is, our God once was;
As now God is, so man may be,—
Which doth unfold man’s destiny.

For John declares: When Christ we see
Like unto him we’ll truly be.
And he who has this hope within,
Will purify himself from sin.

Who keep this object grand in view,
To folly, sin, will bid adieu,
Nor wallow in the mire anew;

Nor ever seek to carve his name
High on the shaft of worldly fame;
But here his ultimatum trace:
The head of all his spirit-race.

Ah, well: that taught by you, dear Paul,
’Though much amazed, we see it all;
Our Father God, has ope’d our eyes,
We cannot view it otherwise.

The boy, like to his father grown,
Has but attained unto his own;
To grow to sire from state of son,
Is not ’gainst Nature’s course to run.

A son of God, like God to be,
Would not be robbing Deity;
And he who has this hope within,
Will purify himself from sin.

You’re right, St. John, supremely right:
Whoe’er essays to climb this height,
Will cleanse himself of sin entire—
Or else ’twere needless to aspire.

(Improvement Era 22:660–61 [June 1919].)

“Now I hold this glorious hope out to you as the goal toward which all members of the Church should strive. Our whole purpose in life should be to do those things which will enable us to gain eternal life, and eternal life is the name of the kind of life possessed by the Father and the Son; it is exaltation in the eternal realms.” (Joseph Fielding Smith, Address at Snow College, 14 May 1971, pp. 3–7.)

(40-7) We Can Become like God Because We Have the Seed of Deity Within Us

When Jesus was created after the fashion and in the likeness of the Father, and was therefore in the image of his Father, did he strive also to become like God in every other way? What does the word equal mean? And since Jesus thought that it was not robbery for him to become like God, what does Paul say you should strive to do as well? (See Philippians 2:5–8, 12; 3 Nephi 27:27.)

Inquirer

Then because I am a child of God, I have within me the seeds of Deity, which, by my obedience and righteousness, I may nurture and mature until I become just like my Heavenly Father? (See Romans 8:18, 19.)

Lorenzo Snow

“We are the offspring of God, begotten by Him in the spirit world, where we partook of His nature as children here partake of the likeness of their parents. Our trials and sufferings give us experience, and establish within us principles of godliness.” (JD, 26:368.)

Inquirer

Then if I am pure enough, I will have glory just like that of God and will be able to go where he is and feel comfortable in his presence?

Brigham Young

“When you are prepared to see our Father, you will see a being with whom you have long been acquainted, and he will receive you into His arms, and you will be ready to fall into His embrace and kiss Him, as you would your fathers and friends that have been dead for a score of years, you will be so glad and joyful. Would you not rejoice? When you are qualified and purified, . . . you can endure the glory of eternity, so that you can see your Father. . . .” (JD, 4:54–55.)

Inquirer

How could I become like Him completely, since He would have been a God for so much longer than I? Wouldn't He be different . . .

MAN MAY BECOME A JOINT-HEIR IN ETERNITY TO ALL THAT THE FATHER HAS

(40-8) An Heir Is One Who Inherits

An heir is one who is entitled to inherit from a progenitor or others, property, titles, or other benefits. But heirs in an eternal sense involve more than inheritance, and must be designated on the basis of righteousness and obedience to divine law. All mankind are God's sons and daughters in the spirit, but only those who qualify themselves by baptism, priesthood, and faithfulness may become his heirs in the ultimate sense and inherit the fulness of that which he may bestow. (Compare Moses 6:64–68; D&C 84:31–34.)

In the worldly sense, the giver must die before the heir may inherit that which the giver has designated for him. In an eternal sense the *Giver* continues to live.

In the worldly sense, the giver is left with nothing after his gift has been delivered to his heir. But in the eternal sense, both the Giver and the heir continue to live and possess jointly and mutually all things. God

does not forfeit or lose his power when he gives his power to others, nor does he surrender his perfect knowledge when his children come to know all things.

Did Jesus eventually have all that the Father had? (Compare Matthew 28:18; 3 Nephi 12:48.)

Now read D&C 93:26–28.

Did Jesus receive a fulness of truth—was there any truth that he did not know? Can man receive the same fulness if he does not obey God's commandments? If a man does obey, how much of truth shall he receive and how much shall he know?

Inquirer

Will it be possible for those who become like the Father to know everything that the Father knows?

Joseph Fielding Smith

“Those who receive exaltation in the celestial kingdom are promised the fulness thereof. ‘All things are theirs, whether life or death, or things present, or things to come.’ [D&C 76:59.] Our Father in heaven is infinite; he is perfect; he possesses all knowledge and wisdom. However, he is not jealous of his wisdom and perfection, but glories in the fact that it is possible for his children who obey him in all things and endure to the end to become like him.

“Man has within him the power, which the Father has bestowed upon him, so to develop in truth, faith, wisdom, and all the virtues, that eventually he shall become like the Father and the Son; this virtue, wisdom, and knowledge on the part of the faithful does not rob the Father and the Son, but adds to their glory and dominion. Thus it is destined that those who are worthy to become his sons and joint-heirs with our Redeemer, would be heirs of the Father's kingdom, possessing the same attributes in their perfection, as the Father and the Son now possess.” (Doctrines of Salvation, 2:35.)

Inquirer

Do they receive from the Father such that they share his dominion as well?

Read D&C 84:38.

(40-9) Through Christ We Can Receive All That the Father Has

“Now, how are they to receive all that the Father hath, if something is withheld? And if something is not withheld, how can they receive all that he hath and not become as he is, that is, be gods themselves? . . .

“How can the saints receive of his fulness and be equal with the Lord and not be as he is, that is, gods?”

“The Father has promised through the Son that all that he has shall be given to those who are obedient to his commandments. *They shall increase in knowledge, wisdom, and power, going from grace to grace, until the fulness of the perfect day shall burst upon them.* They shall, through the glory and blessing of the Almighty, become *creators*. All power, and dominion, and might shall be given to them, and they shall be the only ones upon whom this great blessing shall be bestowed. . . .

“If the faithful, who keep the commandments of the Father, are his sons, then they are heirs of the kingdom and shall receive of the fulness of the

Father’s glory, even until they become like the Father. And how can they be perfect as their Father in heaven is perfect if they are not like him? . . .

“Now, if they overcome all things, then there are not some things which they do not overcome. If these are to receive ‘of his *fulness* and of his *glory*,’ and if into their ‘hands the Father has given *all things*,’ then the Father has not withheld some of the fulness of his glory, or some things. And if they receive his fulness and his glory, and if ‘all things are theirs, whether life or death, or things present, or things to come, all are theirs,’ *how can they receive these blessings and not become gods? They cannot.*’ (Smith, *Doctrines of Salvation*, 2:35–36, 39.)

'The earth! the earth! I can see it; how beautiful it is! . . .' Then following these cries of ecstasy, there issued from out of the depth of the abyss a sweet song of gentleness and expectancy, in reference to which the author says: *'It is the song of the mothers coming out to meet them.'*

"Maeterlinck's fairy play is not all fantasy or imagination, neither is Wordsworth's 'Ode on Intimations of Immortality' wherein he says:

*Our birth is but a sleep and a forgetting,
The Soul that rises with us, our life's Star,
Hath had elsewhere its setting
And cometh from afar;
Not in entire forgetfulness,
And not in utter nakedness
But trailing clouds of glory do we come
From God, who is our home.*

(David O. McKay, as cited by Harold B. Lee, Address to BYU Sixth Stake, 27 Apr. 1969, p. 20.)

And so you see, all have come, and each with a program of divine appointments keyed into his immortal soul, appointments that act and react throughout the sojourn of his tenure in this world, that whisper of friendships long since forged and of associations and relationships and communion that death itself will never defeat. That is what membership in the family of Israel is—an eternal privilege that commenced in the premortal realms, that continues even now, and that shall continue, if you are faithful, forever and without end.

In his epistle to the Romans, Paul continued to remind the saints of these great and profound truths, which members of the Church even now should not soon forget.

Study these passages, for the messages they contain apply to you as well as to those Roman saints to whom they were addressed. As you ponder the significance of their themes, you may experience something of which Elder John Taylor wrote:

"When truth shall touch the cords of your heart they will vibrate; then intelligence shall illuminate your mind, and shed [its] lustre in your soul, and you shall begin to understand the things you once knew, but which had gone from you; you shall then begin to understand and know the object of your creation." *(The Mormon [New York City], 29 Aug. 1857.)*

Before proceeding, read all the scriptural references in the reading block.

INTERPRETIVE COMMENTARY

(41-1) Romans 9:11. How Does the Law of Election Operate?

"Paul here tells how the election of grace fits in to the gospel scheme. His Roman readers knew what he was talking about because they already understood the doctrine of election. Since the sectarian world has little or no comprehension of pre-existence and eternal progression, upon which doctrines the principles of election are based, it is no wonder that these and other teachings of Paul are so completely misconstrued by them.

"This doctrine of the election of grace is as follows: 'As part of the new song the saints will sing when they "see eye to eye" and the millennial era has been ushered in will be these words, "The Lord hath redeemed his people, Israel, According to the election of grace, Which was brought to pass by the faith And covenant of their fathers.'" (D. & C. 84:98–102; Rom. 11:1–5.) This election of grace is a very fundamental, logical, and important part of God's dealings with men through the ages. To bring to pass the salvation of the greatest possible number of his spirit children the Lord, in general, sends the most righteous and worthy saints to earth through the lineage of Abraham and Jacob. This course is a manifestation of his grace or in other words his love, mercy, and condescension toward his children.

"This election to a chosen lineage is based on pre-existent worthiness and is made "according to the foreknowledge of God." (1 Pet. 1:2.) Those so grouped together during their mortal probation have more abundant opportunities to make and keep the covenants of salvation, a right which they earned by pre-existent devotion to the cause of righteousness. As part of this election, Abraham and others of the noble and great spirits were chosen before they were born for the particular missions assigned them in this life.' (Abra. 3:22–24; Rom. 9.)" (McConkie, *DNTC*, 2:273–74.)

(41-2) Romans 9:13. Did the Lord Hate Esau?

While it is likely that the names Esau and Jacob stood for the nations that had sprung from these two brothers, namely, Edom and Israel, it still seems strange that God should choose one to hate and one to love. But while the Greek word used here does mean "hate" in the same sense that we use it, Paul is quoting a phrase from Malachi 1:3. In Hebrew the verb translated to *hate* carried many shades of meaning, including "rejection," "strong displeasure," or, very

commonly, “loving less than.” The important point in Paul’s discussion is that this acceptance of Jacob and rejection of Esau was on the basis of personal righteousness, not on some arbitrary judgment.

“God chose Jacob over Esau while the two were yet in Rebecca’s womb and before either, as far as the works of this life are concerned, had earned any preferential status. Why? It is a pure matter of pre-existence. Jacob was coming into the world with greater spiritual capacity than Esau; he was foreordained to a special work; he was elected to serve in a chosen capacity.

“Then through the lineage of Jacob, God sent those valiant spirits, those noble and great ones, who in his infinite wisdom and foreknowledge he knew would be inclined to serve him. Through Esau came those spirits of lesser valiance and devotion. Hence, in the very nature of things, many of Jacob’s seed were righteous in this life, and many of Esau’s were wicked, causing Malachi to say in the Lord’s name, some fifteen hundred years later, that God loved the house of Jacob and hated the house of Esau. (Mal. 1:2–3.)” (McConkie, *DNTC*, 2:277.)

(41-3) Romans 10:9, 10. Can One Achieve Salvation Simply by Confessing with the Mouth?

These two verses of scripture have been quoted very often by those who believe that salvation comes by grace alone and is not dependent in any way upon man’s good works. Some groups even go so far as to say that if a man should confess Jesus before he is killed in an accident he will be saved in the kingdom of God, even if he had lived a wicked life prior to that time. Not only does this idea go contrary to the vast weight of Paul’s own teachings (some within the Roman epistle itself—for example, 2:5–13; 6:13, 16; all of chapters 12–14), but it is also a gross misinterpretation of what Paul is really saying.

The passage in question comes in the section where Paul is talking about Israel’s rejection of the gospel. He begins by pointing out that while the Jews are zealous for God (that is, eagerly trying to be obedient to his commandments), they have missed a vital point of the gospel by trying to rely on their own righteousness alone. Paul then quotes rather freely from the Old Testament to show that no man could accomplish what Christ did in coming down from heaven and in coming out of the great pit of death, no matter how hard they tried. What men must do in order to qualify for Christ’s blessings is to confess their Lord openly before the world. This they can do only with a heart that “believeth unto righteousness” (vs. 10).

The heart (in Greek *kardia*) was seen as the seat of man’s inner self. “Believing with the heart” implies much more than intellectual assent. It implies commitment, behavioral evidence of that commitment, and an inner change. Obviously, if one truly believes things, he will live accordingly. Confession with the mouth is not sufficient.

(41-4) Romans 10:14, 15. Acceptance of Christ Requires Acceptance of His Prophets

“Now it is not possible, in my judgment, for people in the world to accept Christ and come to salvation, unless at one and the same time they accept the prophets whom Christ has sent and receive the administration of holy ordinances under their hands.

“Christ and his prophets are one. We could not believe in Christ if there were not prophets to declare Christ and his saving truths unto us. The Apostle Paul reasoned on this subject, and he said: ‘. . . how shall they believe in him of whom they have not heard? and how shall they hear without a preacher?’

“‘And how shall they preach, except they be sent?’ (Romans 10:14–15.)

“Except for Christ, there would be no salvation. Except for the prophets of God, sent in the various ages of the earth’s history, the testimony of Christ would not be borne, the message of salvation would not be taught, and there would be no legal administrators who could perform the ordinances of salvation for men, that is, perform them so they will be binding on earth and sealed eternally in the heavens.

“So it is that the Lord has sent prophets. No one would suppose that he could believe in Christ and reject Peter, James, and John. The Lord and his prophets go hand in hand. Christ said, ‘I am the true vine, and my Father is the husbandman’; then he said to his Apostles, ‘Ye are the branches.’ (John 15:1, 5.) The branches and the vine are connected. He taught also that if the branches were torn away from him, they would wither and die and be cast into the fire. If people in the world would pick the fruit of eternal life off the branches, they have to accept the prophets, for the branches are the prophets.” (Bruce R. McConkie in *CR*, Oct. 1951, p. 147.)

(41-5) Romans 10:17. How Does Faith Come?

“Faith comes by hearing the word of God, through the testimony of the servants of God; that testimony is always attended by the Spirit of prophecy and revelation.” (Smith, *Teachings*, p. 148.)

(41-6) Romans 11:2. What Is the Meaning of the Word *Wot*?

Wot is the present tense of the now obsolete English word *wit*, which means to know. *Wist* is its past tense. Paul is asking, “Know you not?”

(41-7) Romans 11:13. “I Magnify Mine Office”

“Sometimes we hear brethren refer to ‘magnifying the priesthood.’ While many of us are guilty of making this erroneous statement, it isn’t the priesthood we magnify; it is one’s office and calling in the priesthood. It cannot be enlarged upon because there is no authority or power greater in the universe.

“To magnify is to intensify, to increase in significance, to enlarge upon, and to cause to be held in greater esteem or respect.

“President Joseph F. Smith said, ‘There is no office growing out of this Priesthood that is or can be greater than the Priesthood itself. It is from the priesthood that the office derives its authority and power. No office adds to the power of the Priesthood. But all offices in the church derive their power, their virtue, their authority, from the Priesthood.’ (Joseph F. Smith, *Gospel Doctrine* [Salt Lake City: Desert Book Co., 1939], p. 148.)

“The apostle Paul stated, ‘Inasmuch as I am the apostle of the gentiles, I magnify mine office.’ (Romans 11:13.) And Jacob teaching the people of Nephi states, ‘I, Jacob, according to the responsibility which I am under to God, to magnify mine office with soberness, . . .

“‘Ye yourselves know that I have hitherto been diligent in the office of my calling; but I this day am weighed down with much more desire and anxiety for the welfare of your souls than I have hitherto been.’ (Jacob 2:2, 3.)

“There can be no office or calling that is higher than the priesthood. President John Taylor noted, ‘Honor proceeds from works, not from office, . . . but by a person magnifying his office and calling.’ (John Taylor, *Gospel Kingdom*, comp. G. Homer Durham [Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Co., 1944], p. 133.)” (Delbert L. Stapley in *CR*, Aug. 1972, p. 64.)

(41-8) Romans 11:17–24. The Grafting In of the Wild Olive Branches

Some Bible scholars have been quick to point out that Paul made an evident blunder here when he drew upon a symbol from the olive culture to make his point. While the grafting of branches from one olive tree to

another so as to change the nature of the tree was a common practice, it was always done in the reverse order that Paul mentions; that is, a good branch from a tame olive tree could be grafted into a wild olive and make the wild olive tame. But if the process is reversed, so are the results. The tree is pulled in the direction of the grafted branches, not vice versa, as in Paul’s little allegory. Therefore, these scholars conclude that Paul was ignorant of olive culture and made a rather obvious error in his symbol.

But it is difficult to believe that a man as educated and well traveled as Paul would not know the basic facts of olive grafting, which were fairly commonly known in his time. The better explanation is that in the very paradox of the symbol he teaches profound and important doctrines. For one thing, the conversion of the gentiles (changing wild olives into tame) was contrary to the expectations of Israel and thus was not what one would expect to happen naturally. Secondly, Paul’s symbol makes it clear that the source of nourishment is still the covenant that God made with Abraham (the roots of the tree). The power flows from the Abrahamic covenant and not from the gentiles. To reverse that symbolism would be contrary to the truth. The gentiles were not the root of the tree; they are only branches. The third point in Paul’s defense is that he himself clearly indicates that he knew what he was saying was contrary to nature. The implication, therefore, is that he chose the paradoxical symbolism purposefully in order to teach the gentiles their true relationship to the covenant people. Paul may have been relying upon the writings of an ancient prophet, Zenos, who spoke in a similar vein. (See Jacob 5, 6 in the Book of Mormon.)

(41-9) Romans 11:25. What Is Meant by the Fulness of the Gentiles?

“For the nearly two thousand years between Abraham and Christ, the statutes and judgments of God were reserved almost exclusively for the seed of Abraham and for the house of Israel. During the mortal ministry of our Lord, the message was limited to Israel, to the Jews, and it was not then offered to the Gentiles. After Jesus’ resurrection, Peter opened the door to the preaching of the gospel of the Gentiles, and Paul became their chief apostolic advocate and teacher. Thus there was a period or time for the Gentiles to take precedence. The times of the Gentiles is the period during which the gospel goes to them on a preferential basis, and this will continue until they have had a full opportunity to accept the truth, or in other words until the fulness of the Gentiles. Then the

message will go again to the Jews, meaning to the Jews as a nation and as a people.” (McConkie, *DNTC*, 2:290. See also D&C 45:19, 25, 28–30.)

(41-10) Romans 12:1. What Does It Mean to Be a Living Sacrifice?

“Paul is here alluding to the fact that the old sacrifices, those unto death, are abolished, that they have been replaced with a new order, sacrifices unto life. As with almost all doctrines, this is taught in the Book of Mormon with greater plainness and perfection than in the Bible. To the Nephites, after his resurrection, the Lord Jesus said: ‘Ye shall offer up unto me no more the shedding of blood; yea, your sacrifices and your burnt offerings shall be done away, for I will accept none of your sacrifices and your burnt offerings. And ye shall offer for a sacrifice unto me a broken heart and a contrite spirit. And whoso cometh unto me with a broken heart and a contrite spirit, him will I baptize with fire and with the Holy Ghost.’ (3 Ne. 9:19–20.) Thus to present one’s body as a living sacrifice is to come forth with a broken heart and a contrite spirit through obedience.” (McConkie, *DNTC*, 2:292.)

(41-11) Romans 13:1–7. Who Are the “Powers That Be”?

Joseph Smith added some significant phrases to these verses that make it clear that Paul was not speaking of governmental authorities, as is commonly supposed, but of those who are the ruling authorities in the church. Compare your King James Version with the following rendition by the Prophet Joseph Smith:

“Let every soul be subject unto the higher powers. For there is no power in the church but of God; the powers that be are ordained of God.

“But first, render to all their dues, according to custom, tribute to whom tribute, custom to whom custom, that your consecrations may be done in fear of him to whom fear belongs, and in honor of him to whom honor belongs.” (Romans 13:1, 7, Inspired Version.)

“To gain salvation the saints must be subject to God’s ministers. The doctrines and ordinances of the gospel cannot be separated from those appointed to teach Christ’s gospel and perform his ordinances. Those who accept the gospel do so by submitting to the will and dictation of Christ. They come to the legal administrators who teach the doctrines of Christ and who perform the ordinances of salvation in his name and by his authority.” (McConkie, *DNTC*, 2:296.)

(41-12) Romans 14:23. “Whatsoever Is Not of Faith Is Sin”

“This law applies to the saints, to those who have the light, who know that salvation is in Christ, to those who are under covenant to keep the commandments. It is not applicable to the world in general, for sin is not imputed where there is no law. Thus the saints are guilty of sin when they fall short of those high standards they are obligated to attain.” (McConkie, *DNTC*, 2:302.)

(41-13) Romans 15:24, 28. Did Paul Ever Get to Spain?

The record of Acts ends with Paul’s first imprisonment, and the official account of Paul’s known life is closed. From that point on, the scholars are uncertain, but there is strong evidence that Paul was eventually acquitted and freed, during which time he would naturally have continued his missionary labors. Since he had expressed intent to go to Spain, many have assumed he succeeded in doing so before he was arrested again and put to death under a wave of Christian persecution. Clement of Rome (about A.D. 100) states that Paul had “gone to the extremity of the West,” which would seem to imply Spain. Others of the early Christian fathers also reported that he labored in Spain. Thus, Paul’s intentions to go to Spain may have been eventually realized.

POINTS TO PONDER

YOU ARE FAVORED BECAUSE OF YOUR CONDUCT IN PREMORTAL LIFE

You belong to the family of Israel. By inheritance or adoption you may lay claim to every blessing reserved for Israel. Not all the reasons for your blessings are because of your conduct in this world; some go back into the beginning with God. Review the following scriptures and carefully study the dialogue between David and John.

Romans 9:11, 12

Did God bestow the same favors on Jacob and Esau? Was mortal performance the basis for God’s favoring Jacob over Esau—had there been opportunity for either child to do either good or evil at the time of the indication of favor?

Romans 9:14

Does the fact that God favored Jacob over Esau even at the time of birth mean that God arbitrarily selects those upon whom his favors will be bestowed without reference to their worthiness or obedience?

Romans 9:18–20

When we look at God's dealings with men from a purely mortal perspective, it is difficult to see why he gives to one blessings that he may withhold from another. The questions in verse 19 are the questions asked by those who have no understanding of a premortal life. Is it appropriate to challenge God, or to suggest that he is not fair in placing us in the stations we occupy in this world? If two souls are born into this world in seemingly unequal circumstances, and God is just, what had to occur to justify God's placing them in unequal circumstances?

David

If some of the circumstances in which I find myself are based upon my conduct before, where did I begin? When did I start?

John

*Well, first of all, there is an eternity of spirit matter. "Our spirit matter was eternal and co-existent with God, but it was organized into spirit bodies by our Heavenly Father." (Kimball, *Miracle of Forgiveness*, p. 5.) "All men were first born in pre-existence as the literal spirit offspring of God our Heavenly Father. This birth constituted the beginning of the human ego as a conscious identity. By the ordained procreative process our exalted and immortal Father begat his spirit progeny in pre-existence." (McConkie, *Mormon Doctrine*, p. 84.) "All men and women are in the similitude of the universal Father and Mother, and are literally the sons and daughters of Deity." (The First Presidency [Joseph Smith, John R. Winder, and Anthon H. Lund], "The Origin of Man," *Improvement Era*, Nov. 1909, p. 78.)*

David

If I was born in the premortal world, what experiences did I go through there that provided God with a basis to favor or restrict me in this world?

John

We lived there in the home of our Father in heaven. "He is a resurrected and holy and perfected man, and we are his offspring. We are his spirit children. He lives in the family unit. We are members of his family. We lived in this premortal life with him for an

infinite period of time. We were on probation; we were being schooled and tested and examined; we were given the laws and the circumstances so that we could progress and advance. . . .

"This system was given to us, and for an infinite period of time, we advanced and progressed and did things that enabled us to go along the course leading to exaltation and dominion and godhood. . . .

*"In this prior life, this premortal existence, this pre-existence, we developed various capacities and talents. Some developed them in one field and some in another. The most important of all fields was the field of spirituality, the ability, the talent, the capacity to recognize truth." (Bruce R. McConkie, as cited in *When Thou Art Converted, Strengthen Thy Brethren*, A Study Guide for the Melchizedek Priesthood Quorums of the Church, 1974–75, pp. 8–9.)*

*"Our spirit bodies went through a long period of growth and development and training and, having passed the test successfully, were finally admitted to this earth and to mortality." (Kimball, *Miracle of Forgiveness*, p. 5.)*

"Preexistence is not some remote and mysterious place. All of us are but a few years removed from the Eternal Presence, from him whose children we are and in whose house we dwelt. . . .

". . . We know we had friends and associates there. We know we were schooled and trained and taught in the most perfect educational system ever devised, and that by obedience to his eternal laws we developed infinite varieties and degrees of talents. . . .

". . . When we come into mortality, we bring the talents, capacities, and abilities acquired by obedience to law in our prior existence." (Bruce R. McConkie in CR, Apr. 1974, pp. 101–3.)

David

I am to understand, then, that I was born as the spirit son of God in heaven, that I lived there with my Father and mother in heaven and with my spirit brothers and sisters, and that I had opportunities to learn, to be tested, and to develop talents and abilities?

John

That is right. Some accounts that we have of the premortal life teach that we "were on the same standing" (Alma 13:5), and that we were "innocent" in the beginning (D&C 93:38). We were given laws and agency, and commandments to have faith and

repent from the wrongs that we could do there. “. . . Man could and did in many instances, sin before he was born. . . .” (Smith, *The Way to Perfection*, p. 44.)

“God gave his children their agency even in the spirit world, by which the individual spirits had the privilege, just as men have here, of choosing the good and rejecting the evil, or partaking of the evil to suffer the consequences of their sins. . . . some even there were more faithful than others in keeping the commandments of the Lord. . . .

“The spirits of men . . . had an equal start, and we know they were all innocent in the beginning; but the right of free agency which was given to them enabled some to outstrip others, and thus, through the eons of immortal existence, to become more intelligent, more faithful, for they were free to act for themselves, to think for themselves, to receive the truth or rebel against it.” (Smith, *Doctrines of Salvation*, 1:58–59.)

Many responded to the spirit of God there. They were favored and foreordained to receive privileges.

“. . . And it was on account of their exceeding faith and repentance, and their righteousness before God, they choosing to repent and work righteousness rather than to perish; therefore they were called after this holy order, and were sanctified, and their garments were washed white through the blood of the Lamb.” (Alma 13:10, 11; compare McConkie, *Mormon Doctrine*, p. 477.)

“Now this is the doctrine of foreordination; this is the doctrine of election. This is the reason why the Lord has a chosen and favored and peculiar people on earth; and this is why he said: ‘My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me.’” (Bruce R. McConkie in CR, Apr. 1974, p. 103.)

David

But what of those in premortality who rejected the Spirit of God and did not exercise exceeding great faith and repentance and righteousness before God? (See Alma 13:4, 10.)

John

They were not able to enjoy the great privileges that others were foreordained to receive. (See Alma 13:4.) They “did not show the loyalty to their Redeemer that they should.” (Smith, *Way to Perfection*, p. 43.)

David

But weren't they allowed to come into the world innocent, too?

John

Yes. They were innocent at the time of their mortal birth. (See D&C 93:38.) Elder Joseph Fielding Smith said this:

“Their sin was not one that merited the extreme punishment which was inflicted on the devil and his angels. They were not denied the privilege of receiving the second estate, but were permitted to come to the earth-life with some restrictions placed upon them. . . . Yet, like all other spirits who come into this world, they come innocent before God so far as mortal existence is concerned, and here, under certain restrictions, they may work out their second estate.” (*Way to Perfection*, pp. 43, 44. Emphasis added.)

Hence, some in this world receive great privileges and opportunities to receive the gospel because they chose to do good in preexistence. Others are limited here because they were not as “noble and great” there. (See Abraham 3:22.)

David

And how does the concept of Israel enter into this?

John

The family of Jacob is somehow involved in preexistence.

“Israel is an eternal people. Members of that chosen race first gained their inheritance with the faithful in the premortal life. Israel was a distinct people in pre-existence. Many of the valiant and noble spirits in that first estate were chosen, elected, and foreordained to be born into the family of Jacob, so as to be natural heirs of all of the blessings of the gospel. It was to their pre-existent status that Moses alluded when, in speaking to mortal Israel, he said: ‘Remember the days of old, consider the years of many generations: ask thy father, and he will shew thee; thy elders, and they will tell thee. When the most High divided to the nations their inheritance, when he separated the sons of Adam, he set the bounds of the people according to the number of the children of Israel. For the Lord's portion is his people; Jacob is the lot of his inheritance.’ (Deut. 32:7–9.) Those of mortal Israel who walk uprightly in this second estate shall have eternal inheritance with Israel in the world to come.” (McConkie, *DNTC*, 2:284.)

David

So the fact that I am here now and receiving the blessings and opportunities that I now receive means

that I have already passed the test, under different circumstances and conditions?

John

Yes. And if you succeed here in this second estate, you shall not only be entitled to advantages in the world to come (D&C 130:19), but you “shall have glory added upon [your head] for ever and ever.” (Abraham 3:26.)

YOU MUST BE FAITHFUL HERE TO RETAIN YOUR BIRTHRIGHT AND MERIT THE BLESSINGS YOU WERE ELECTED TO RECEIVE

Does birthright by itself secure your eternal destiny?

Will Israel be saved just because they are of Israel?

Read Romans 10:11–13.

Of course, the gentiles in Paul’s day had not had the same opportunities to receive the gospel as had members of the house of Israel. But did members of the house of Israel receive the rewards of the gospel just because they had the advantage of hearing about the gospel before the gentiles?

“The house of Israel was a distinct people in pre-existence; that is, by obedience and devotion, certain of the spirit children of the Father earned the right to be born in the lineage of Abraham, of Isaac, and of Jacob, and of being natural heirs to the

blessings of the gospel. But some of them, after such a favored birth, after being numbered with the chosen seed, turn from the course of righteousness and become children of the flesh; that is, they walk after the manner of the world, rejecting the spiritual blessings held in store for Israel. They are disinherited; they shall not continue as children in the family of the prophets when the chosen race continues as a distinct people in the eternal worlds. Thus they are descendants of the prophets in this life but shall not inherit with the sons of God in the life to come.” (McConkie, DNTC, 2:276–77.)

“. . . there are many among us who because of their faithfulness in the spirit world were ‘called’ to do a great work here, but like reckless spendthrifts they are exercising their free agency in riotous living and are losing their birthright and the blessings that were theirs had they proved faithful to their calling.” (Lee, Youth and the Church, p. 172.)

Now what of you? For all that has been said of Israel applies to you. You were vitally interested and personally involved there.

What shall you do, and what shall you be, here? You came from God, and you have been given great privileges and blessings here because of your faithfulness. But you will go back one day, and you will answer for all these blessings, for as Paul wrote, “Every one of us shall give account of himself to God.” (Romans 14:12.)

SECTION 9

PAUL'S WITNESS FROM PRISON

LESSONS

42. "As Thou Hast Testified of Me in Jerusalem, so Must Thou Bear Witness Also at Rome" (Acts 21–28; Colossians).
43. "Ye Are . . . Fellow Citizens with the Saints" (Ephesians; Philemon)
44. "Be Thou an Example of the Believers" (Philippians; 1 Timothy)

BIOGRAPHY

Paul's Imprisonment

At Caesarea Paul had a hearing before Felix, the Roman governor. At this time Paul was accused of treason, heresy, and sacrilege. The hearing did not bring about Paul's release. For two years, the apostle remained at Caesarea awaiting a final hearing. When Felix was recalled to Rome, Paul was left behind in prison. About A.D. 60, Felix was succeeded in the governor's chair by Porcius Festus. Festus, willing to do the Jews a favor, desired that Paul stand trial in Jerusalem. This Paul refused to do, knowing that the Jews did not intend to give him a fair trial. Instead, he appealed to Caesar, which was his right as a Roman citizen. The appeal was granted (Acts 24:1–26:32).

During his journey to Rome, Paul suffered many hardships. After a three-month stay on the island of Malta, the result of a shipwreck at sea, Paul and his companions traveled on and eventually reached Rome.

There, Paul lived in a house of his own hiring and enjoyed some liberty. Paul taught all who visited him during this period and wrote several of his letters to the saints abroad.

From tradition and from inferences drawn from some of his letters, we conclude that Paul was released after two years' imprisonment. It seems probable that Paul immediately began to engage himself in missionary service. Possibly he journeyed as far west as Spain; perhaps his travels took him to Macedonia. It is also surmised that he may have traveled to Ephesus and then to other branches of the church in southern Asia.

At some point in the apostle's travels, probably in A.D. 67 or 68, Paul was arrested and taken to Rome again. This second imprisonment was different from the first in that Paul's freedom was almost totally restricted. Paul was placed in chains and forbidden to preach openly. It appears that his friends found it dangerous to visit the apostle. When the time of Paul's hearing arrived, no one stood in his defense but himself. When his case was held over for a second hearing, the apostle sensed that his mortal ministry was drawing to a close. Death appeared imminent. Paul had fought the good fight. He had finished his course. He had kept the faith. He had earned that crown of righteousness which is reserved by the Lord for all those who keep the faith and endure to the end (2 Timothy 4:7, 8).

“AS THOU HAS TESTIFIED OF ME IN
JERUSALEM, SO MUST THOU BEAR
WITNESS ALSO AT ROME”



The Acts of the Apostles Paul's Arrest and Imprisonment, ca. A.D. 58–60		Paul's Letter to the Saints at Colossae— Written from His Imprisonment in Rome, ca. A.D. 61–63 (Acts 25–28; Colossians)	
	Acts		Acts
Jerusalem The Gradual Process of Conversion	21:18–26		
Paul Persecuted, Arrested, Bound	21:27–39	Paul Appeals to Caesar	25:1–22
The Story of Paul's Conversion	21:40; 22:1–16	Paul Testifies Before King Agrippa	25:23–27; 26:1–32
Paul's Vision of Jesus	22:17–21	Departure for Rome	27:1–8
The Protection of Roman Citizenship	22:22–29	Crete Shipwreck at Fair Havens	27:9–44
Appearance before the Sanhedrin	22:30; 23:1–10	Melita (Malta) Paul Heals the Sick	28:1–10
The Lord Again Appears to Paul	23:11	From Malta to Rome	28:11–15
The Jewish Conspiracy Against Paul	23:12–22	Rome Paul Preaches in Rome	28:16–31
Caesarea Paul Transferred to Caesarea	23:23–35		
The Case Before Felix	24:1–27		

	Colossians
Gospel Brings Hope, Blessings, Salvation	1:1–12
Christ Created All Things	1:13–19
The Colossians Share in Salvation	1:20–29
Paul Warns Against False Doctrines	2:1–23
Rules of Christian Behavior	3:1–17
Saints Should Be Wise in All Things	3:18–25; 4:1–18

THEME

The Lord will strengthen and inspire those who courageously seek to declare his message in conditions of adversity.

INTRODUCTION

There is a unifying thread that runs through the story of Paul’s capture in Jerusalem which led to his imprisonment in Rome. These last seven and a half chapters of Acts are a testimony of Paul’s courage and of his devotion to Christ, and his words and deeds serve as a witness to our Lord’s divinity.

Paul came to Jerusalem from the Greek city of Corinth, possibly late in February, A.D. 58. He wanted to be there by Pentecost (Acts 20:16). The plan was to sail to Syria (Acts 20:3); and some of his party did go by boat. But Paul had to travel by land to Philippi to thwart a plot against his life. The party reunited at Troas near the western tip of what is now Turkey. Then they proceeded together, mostly by boat through the Aegean Sea and the eastern Mediterranean, finally arriving in Jerusalem.

Many friends tried in vain to persuade Paul to turn aside from this his fifth visit to Jerusalem since his conversion. But it meant a lot to him to meet again with the “brethren” and to bring alms from Macedonia and Achaia for the poor at Jerusalem. Then, too, he may have known that he had to face the trials that awaited him, for they gave him the opportunity to testify before kings and rulers, for which purpose the Lord had called him (Acts 9:15).

Like Paul, we are often confronted by persons who seek to turn us from our spiritual commitments—people with attitudes of indifference, criticism, and even condemnation; people who desire to win us over to the goals and philosophies of men. However, using the example of Paul in his days of imprisonment, we

can courageously remain true to our principles and confidently share them with others.

Before proceeding, read all the scriptural references in the reading block.

INTERPRETIVE COMMENTARY

(42-1) Acts 21:28, 29. What Charge Did the Jews Make Against Paul?

Trophimus was an Ephesian, a gentile, one to whom the inner courts of the temple were closed. The charge that Paul had thus violated the sacred precincts was a serious one, even though untrue. It was a capital offense for which Paul could have been stoned. That he was not seriously hurt was due to the intervention of the chief captain of the Roman soldiers stationed in Jerusalem to maintain order.

(42-2) Acts 21:38. “Art Not Thou That Egyptian?”

Josephus, the Roman-Jewish historian, tells us of an Egyptian Jew who raised a large following in the wilderness and brought them to the Mount of Olives. (See Josephus, *Flavius Josephus*, Wars 2. 13. 5.) He promised his followers that the walls of Jerusalem would crumble when they approached and they could drive out the Romans with ease. Felix, the Roman governor, met them with his army and totally defeated them. However, the leader was not captured, and the chief captain mistakenly thought Paul was this man.

(42-3) Acts 25:11. “I Appeal unto Caesar”

Under Roman law, each citizen accused of crime had the right and privilege of being heard before the imperial seat. Authorities on Roman law assert that local magistrates had a discretionary power where appeal was concerned. They could decide if the case warranted such a privilege where guilt was obvious and the crime of such enormity that a delay would thwart true justice.

(42-4) Acts 26:25. “I Am Not Mad, Most Noble Festus; but Speak Forth the Words of Truth and Soberness”

As with Paul, so with Joseph Smith and others of the Lord’s prophets. Men who are spiritually out of tune with eternal truths simply cannot believe a humble testimony when they hear it. Joseph Smith described his personal dilemma in these words: Read Joseph Smith—History 1:24, 25.

Many people with testimonies of the gospel do not commit their lives to Christ because they have persuaded themselves that it would be too difficult and costly to give up their friends, their habits, their comfortable way of life. Yet Paul cared little for the possessions, the fashions, the opinions of men. He was willing to give up life itself for his testimony. Are you “almost persuaded”? (See Acts 26:28.) What have you learned thus far from the example of Paul that has helped you to become totally committed to the Savior?

(42-5) Acts 27:9. What Is the Significance of Paul’s Statement “The Fast Was Now Already Past”?

Luke’s reference to the fact that sailing was dangerous because “the fast” was already past is a probable reference to the Hebrew Day of Atonement. It marked the period during which it was generally regarded as unsafe to travel upon the waters until the weather moderated. The Day of Atonement was the last of ten solemn days set aside for penitential reverence and personal purification. It fell on the tenth day of Tishri, the seventh month of the Hebrew calendar, and corresponded to our latter part of September and early part of October. It also marked the yearly entrance of the high priest into the most sacred Holy of Holies to make a universal atonement for the sins of the people and called for abstinence from all food and labor. The Jews did much of their dating by means of their yearly festivals and holy days.

(42-6) Acts 28:16–31. What Do We Know Concerning Paul’s Activities While He Was Imprisoned in Rome?

Luke gives us little information respecting Paul’s imprisonment in Rome. That Paul had been intending for some time to go there is certain (Acts 19:21 and Romans 1:9–11), though perhaps not as a political prisoner. That Paul was not inactive during the period of his confinement is more than a safe guess; it is a virtual certainty. Besides his native predisposition to hard work, Luke tells us that “Paul was suffered to dwell by himself with a soldier that kept him” (Acts 28:16) and that he “received all that came in unto him” and taught them of Jesus Christ, “with all confidence, no man forbidding him.” (Acts 28:30, 31.)

It is generally recognized that Paul wrote at least four of his epistles during his first imprisonment, namely, Philippians, Colossians, Ephesians, and Philemon.

That Paul entertained strong hopes of acquittal is evident from some of his letters. To the saints at Philippi he wrote: “I trust in the Lord that I also

myself shall come shortly.” (Philippians 2:24.) To Philemon he wrote, “But withal prepare me also a lodging: for I trust that through your prayers I shall be given unto you.” (Philemon 22.) As for the trial itself, it would have to await the whim of Nero, most likely, so that much of Paul’s time was taken up with waiting.

COLOSSIANS

(42-7) The Letter to the Colossians—Jesus Is the Only Mediator Between God and Man

Paul wrote this letter to counteract the effect of Judaic and gentile thought, both of which demeaned the preeminent status of Jesus Christ and his mission. Paul affirms that Jesus is the Savior and the only mediator between man and the Father. Only in Jesus does all fulness of the Father dwell. He alone is able to raise men to the status of godhood. Men ought, therefore, to focus their affections on the things of Jesus Christ.

(42-8) Place and Date of Writing

Paul wrote this letter to the saints at Colossae and to the members in the nearby cities of Laodicea and Hierapolis (Colossians 4:12, 13, 16). The time of his writing was almost certainly during his first Roman captivity.

(42-9) Background Information

Colossae was a small, relatively unimportant city located in Phrygia on the famous trade route which connected East with West. In the fifth century B.C., the city had achieved some degree of commercial importance; however, by Paul’s day its influence had significantly declined as Hierapolis and Laodicea, two neighboring cities, grew and thereby attracted much of the trade which Colossae formerly enjoyed.

Some scholars reason that Paul never visited Colossae prior to his Roman imprisonment (Colossians 2:1). Thus the question arises as to how a branch of the church came to be established in that city. They believe that Epaphras, who was native to Colossae, may have been converted by Paul while Paul preached at Ephesus during his third missionary journey. Perhaps this same Epaphras was the missionary who spread the gospel message in Colossae and the surrounding area (Colossians 1:7, 8; 4:12, 13). Others feel Paul did visit Colossae on his third missionary journey, either to establish the church in the area or else to lend his support to an already existing church (Acts 18:23; 19:1; see Sperry, *Paul’s Life and Letters*, p. 234). In either case, it is apparent that Paul greatly desired to visit Colossae after his Roman imprisonment (Philemon 22).

(42-10) Colossians 1:5, 6. What Does the Phrase “in All the World” Mean?

The Inspired Version renders the phrase “in all the world” as “in all generations.” Elder Bruce R. McConkie interprets it to mean “in all dispensations.” (*DNTC*, 3:23.) The scripture appears to mean that the gospel has been preached by holy prophets and teachers such as Adam, Enoch, Noah, Abraham, Moses, John the Baptist, Jesus Christ, the Prophet Joseph Smith, and Spencer W. Kimball in every dispensation of time during the history of this world.

(42-11) Colossians 1:9. How May One Know the Will of God?

“All the saints of whom we have account, in all the revelations of God which are extant, obtained the knowledge which they had of their acceptance in his sight through the sacrifice which they offered unto him; and through the knowledge thus obtained their faith became sufficiently strong to lay hold upon the promise of eternal life, and to endure as seeing him who is invisible; and were enabled, through faith, to combat the powers of darkness, contend against the wiles of the adversary, overcome the world, and obtain the end of their faith, even the salvation of their souls.” (*Lectures on Faith*, Lecture Sixth, vs. 11, p. 59.)

(42-12) Colossians 1:19. How Does “All Fulness” Dwell in the Son?

It has pleased the Father to vest in Jesus, the Son, a fulness of all power both in heaven and in earth (Matthew 28:18), to set him on high at the Father’s hand, and to make him perfect even as the Father is perfect (Ephesians 1:23; Colossians 2:9; 3 Nephi 12:48). The son “is also the express image and likeness of the personage of the Father, possessing all the fullness of the Father, or the same fullness with the Father. . . . And he being the Only Begotten of the Father, *full* of grace and truth, and having overcome, received a *fulness* of the glory of the Father, possessing the same mind with the Father. . . .” (*Lectures on Faith*, Lecture Fifth, vs. 2, pp. 48–49. Italics added.)

(42-13) Colossians 1:26–29. What Is “The Mystery Which Hath Been Hid from . . . Generations”?

Paul refers to Christ as a mystery, and so he is to all who try to understand him through the carnal mind. Christ is known only by the spiritual man.

(42-14) Colossians 2:8. What Is the Danger of the Learning of the World?

“The Lord has sternly warned against the egotism and arrogance, the foolish pride and rebelliousness that sometimes accompany learning. Acquiring and applying knowledge with intelligence—‘the light of truth’—and with humility, is indispensable to our happiness and exaltation.

“ . . . O the vainness, and the frailties, and the foolishness of men! When they are learned they think they are wise, and they hearken not unto the counsel of God, for they set it aside, supposing they know of themselves, wherefore, their wisdom is foolishness and it profiteth them not. And they shall perish.

“‘But to be learned is good if they hearken unto the counsels of God.’ (2 Nephi 9:28, 29.)” (Hanks, *Now and Forever*, p. 126.)

Most of your college instructors probably deserve your attention and respect for their knowledge and preparation in their chosen fields. However, can they be relied upon to be all-knowledgeable in matters of faith and morals? Do they have all the answers to the questions posed by life? To whom may you turn for trustworthy advice? A well-balanced education should always include a religion class or course of individual study each quarter or semester. Danger can occur if such studies are neglected. Elder Marion D. Hanks relates the story of a college graduate who lost her testimony in part because of her intellectual training at a university:

“I wish it were appropriate to tell you all the details of a conversation I once had with a young lady, a lovely person, who was professionally qualified in an important field. I would not want you to know those details, so I simply share a headline. She was about to make a decision that would influence her and her generations. She came into my office reluctantly, but she came because both she and I loved her parents. She was not really interested in anything I had to say and acknowledged it openly when I asked her. I said to her, ‘When did you last do any serious reading about the Church?’

“‘Oh,’ she said a bit blithely, ‘in the ninth grade. We were reading the Book of Mormon. I quit, though.’

“I said, ‘Did you also quit praying and going to church?’

“‘Yes,’ she said.

“‘And pretty soon you stopped living the life of the Church?’

“‘Yes.’

“I said, ‘I really just have one other question to ask you. The new Church Office Building is about ready to be completed—all those many stories. Your specialty will be involved in its completion. I’d like to do what I could to get you the job to work on that great big building. Would you like that?’

“Looking a little dubious, she said, ‘Well, sure!’

“I said, ‘All right, I think I can do it on one condition. You agree to perform your professional specialty on that building on the basis of what you knew about it in the ninth grade.’

“She looked a long time at the floor before the teardrops came, and she said, ‘Oh, Brother Hanks, I’m in terrible trouble. Can you help me?’

“I said, ‘Yes, I think I can now.’” (“Appreciate Your Opportunities,” *Speeches of the Year*, 1975, pp. 281–82.)

The poet John Milton said, that the end of all learning is to know God and to live and imitate him. It is wise to learn that lesson early in our education for life!

(42-15) Colossians 2:11. What Is “the Circumcision of Christ”?

It is a “spiritual circumcision, which consists in accepting Christ and living his gospel, of cutting away, not a part of the body, but one’s whole carnal nature. The contrast is with carnal or literal circumcision, which had in times past been a symbol of conformity to the law of carnal commandments which God gave Moses to remind Israel of her duties.” (McConkie, *DNTC*, 3:33.)

(42-16) Colossians 2:13. What Does It Mean to Be Quickened by Jesus, Having Once Been Dead in Sin?

To be quickened means to be made alive. One who has been spiritually dead because of sin can be made spiritually alive through submission to the first principles and ordinances of the gospel. He is raised to a newness of life in Jesus Christ through forgiveness of past sins.

“Our loving Father has given us the blessed principle of repentance as the gateway to forgiveness. All sins but those excepted by the Lord—basically, the sin against the Holy Ghost, and murder—will be forgiven

to those who totally, consistently, and continuously repent in a genuine and comprehensive transformation of life. There is forgiveness for even the sinner who commits serious transgressions, for the Church will forgive and the Lord will forgive such things when repentance has reached fruition.” (Kimball, *Miracle of Forgiveness*, p. 14.)

(42-17) Colossians 2:18, 19. What Does Paul Mean by the Worshiping of Angels?

The Gnostic philosophy held that God was not directly approachable by man but had to be contacted through a series of angelic mediators or less divine spirits. Paul is here denouncing this idea of worshiping angels, which led the saints away from allegiance to the true head (Christ), and only true mediator between man and God.

(42-18) Colossians 3:3. What Is Meant by “Ye Are Dead, and Your Life Is Hid with Christ in God”?

This verse refers to those who were dead to sin and sealed up unto eternal life. On this same subject, the Prophet Joseph Smith said:

“Your life is hid with Christ in God, and so are many others. Nothing but the unpardonable sin can prevent you from inheriting eternal life for you are sealed up by the power of the Priesthood unto eternal life, having taken the step necessary for that purpose.” (Smith, *HC*, 5:391; see also D&C 86:8–11.)

(42-19) Colossians 3:5. How Should the Saints “Mortify Therefore [Their] Members Which Are upon the Earth”?

Mortify, as used here, means “to put to death.” Therefore, the implication is this:

“Deaden and control your carnal desires; discipline your appetites; control your worldly desires.” (McConkie, *DNTC*, 3:36.)

(42-20) Colossians 3:11. The Equality Brotherhood in Christ

“I might say, using a part of the apostle Paul’s language: We are neither English, nor German, nor French, nor Dutch, nor Spanish, nor Italian, but we are all one as baptized members of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, and also, we are ‘Abraham’s seed,’ as the apostle Paul declared, and therefore ‘heirs according to the promise.’ All of us as children of God have been baptized by those who have been authorized to preach the gospel and to administer in the ordinances thereof.” (Harold B. Lee in *European Area CR*, Aug. 1973, pp. 5–6.)

(42-21) Colossians 3:17. “In Word or Deed, Do All in the Name of the Lord Jesus”

“Any word which cannot be spoken in the name of Christ should be left unsaid, any deed that cannot properly bear our Lord’s name should be left undone.” (McConkie, *DNTC*, 3:38.)

(42-22) Colossians 3:18. How Should a Wife “Submit” to Her Husband?

In Greek the word *submit* does not imply that women are inferior to men. Rather, it means a willingness to put oneself under the guidance or direction of another. The same word is used in Luke 2:51 wherein Luke portrays how Jesus returned to Nazareth with Mary and Joseph where he was subject unto them. In any organization, including that of the family, someone must govern; and Paul here suggests that man has that priesthood assignment and that the woman should recognize it and submit herself to it. In the very next verse, Paul charges the man to love his wife; so he provides no justification for verbal or physical abuse or for a dictatorship of any kind in the home. (See Ephesians 5:22–31.)

(42-23) Colossians 3:19. “Husbands, Love Your Wives”

“There are those married people who permit their eyes to wander and their hearts to become vagrant, who think it is not improper to flirt a little, to share their hearts, and have desire for someone other than the wife or the husband, the Lord says in no uncertain terms: ‘Thou shalt love thy wife with *all* thy heart, and shall cleave unto her and none else.’ (D&C 42:22. Italics added.)

“And, when the Lord says *all* thy heart, it allows for no sharing nor dividing nor depriving. And, to the woman it is paraphrased: ‘Thou shalt love thy husband with *all* thy heart and shall cleave unto him and none else.’ The words *none else* eliminate everyone and everything. The spouse then becomes preeminent in the life of the husband or wife, and neither social life nor occupational life nor political life nor any other interest nor person nor thing shall ever take precedence over the companion spouse. We sometimes find women who absorb and hover over the children at the expense of the husband, sometimes even estranging them from him. The Lord says to them: “. . . Thou shalt cleave unto *him* and none else.’

“Marriage presupposes total allegiance and total fidelity. Each spouse takes the partner with the understanding that he or she gives self totally to the

spouse: all the heart, strength, loyalty, honor, and affection with all dignity. Any divergence is sin—any sharing the heart is transgression. As we should have ‘an eye single to the glory of God’ so should we have an eye, an ear, a heart single to the marriage and the spouse and family.” (Spencer W. Kimball in *CR*, Oct. 1962, p. 57.)

See also interpretive commentary on Ephesians 5:22, 23.

POINTS TO PONDER

YOU CAN PREPARE TO ACT WITH THE SAME COURAGE THAT PAUL EXHIBITED IN PRESENTING THE MESSAGE OF JESUS CHRIST

When the Lord met Paul on the road to Damascus, a chain of events started which culminated in Paul’s martyrdom. When Paul arrived in Jerusalem this fifth time since his conversion, could he have escaped from the hatred of the Jews that had been growing in intensity since he began his ministry? What would be the price of such escape? Repudiation of Christ and of his Christian brethren? Even if the Jews had been agreeable, could Paul have found it in his nature to do such a thing? Any answer would have to take into account the courage that Paul showed in every situation.

As to the Romans, they offered Paul a way out every time there was a confrontation. And does not King Agrippa imply that he would have been easy to deal with? Paul likely could have saved his life if he had been willing to back down from the firm stand he always took in support of his beliefs.

Every good cause advances on the shoulders of those who are willing to carry responsibility. It always takes moral courage. Sometimes it takes physical courage. Paul lived in a day when it took great physical and moral courage, because he lived among a people that the Book of Mormon calls “the more wicked part of the world.” (2 Nephi 10:3–6.) Often it takes a good deal of hard work, but always it takes the courage to act responsibly.

Courage Is Often Needed to Act Responsibly

Elder Lawrence and his companion had been asked by the Ridgeleys to teach their eighteen-year-old son, Richard. Richard investigated, prayed, received the witness of the Spirit, and requested baptism. Now the elders were on their way to the Ridgeleys’ to ask permission to baptize Richard.

Mrs. Ridgeley met them at the door, and Elder Lawrence stated the purpose of their visit. To his surprise, his announcement that Richard wanted to be baptized was met with tears and anger. Among other things, Mrs. Ridgeley stated that she would have preferred to see Richard anything but a Mormon. After much discussion, including Richard's humble pleas, Mrs. Ridgeley agreed to accept her husband's decision, whatever it would be. He was not at home and so another visit was necessary.

When the elders found Mr. Ridgeley a few days later, he was up on a ladder painting his house. The elders were greeted by some abuse and much silence as Mr. Ridgeley applied the brush with a ferocity which displayed his anger.

Elder Lawrence put the issue to him: "We have come to ask permission to baptize Richard."

Freely translated, the answer was no. To Elder Lawrence's companion, it seemed logical to beat a retreat and regroup before the verbal abuse was followed by a bucket of paint. But Elder Lawrence felt that he owed Richard his very best effort. He thought about the paint; he thought about the physical damage this strong, mature man could inflict; and he thought of the Christians in the arena with the lions. He decided to wait until Mr. Ridgeley came down, and he hoped he could think of something to say.

The Spirit rewarded his resolute action and took over completely. It was as though he were watching and hearing himself. As Mr. Ridgeley reached the bottom of the ladder and turned around, Elder Lawrence caught him by the hand and, looking into his eyes,

said, "Mr. Ridgeley, if you do not wish us to baptize your son, we will not do it because there is a rule in the church of Jesus Christ that we must honor the rights of parents in these matters until children are of age and can make their own decisions. However, before you turn Richard down, you had better be sure that this is not the true church of Jesus Christ as Richard believes it is and as we know it is. If we are right, the responsibility for denying Richard an opportunity to be saved will be on your shoulders."

Mr. Ridgeley's entire attitude and appearance changed. He became kindly and eager to please and cooperate. The baptism was arranged with no further problems.

You Can Emulate Paul's Courageous Life

Using the life of Paul as an example, do those things that will make courage become a reality:

- 1. Maintain personal purity so the Lord's Spirit can be a constant source of inspiration.*
- 2. Seek knowledge by every good means and from every proper source.*
- 3. Keep current with the counsel of the Brethren and obey it.*
- 4. Pray sincerely and often for guidance.*
- 5. Labor diligently for the kingdom.*
- 6. Have charity.*

If you do these things, the Lord will strengthen you so that you can teach and defend the gospel of Jesus Christ with power and be an influence for good.

"YE ARE . . . FELLOW CITIZENS WITH THE SAINTS"



Paul's Letters to the Saints at Ephesus and to Philemon of Colossae Written from His Imprisonment in Rome, ca. A.D. 61–63 (Ephesians; Philemon)	
	Ephesians
Saints Foreordained to Receive Gospel	1:1–8
Gospel to Be Restored in Last Days	1:9–12
Saints Sealed by the Holy Spirit of Promise	1:13–14
The Godhead Is Known by Revelation	1:15–23
Salvation Through Grace and Faith	2:1–10
Jew and Gentile Reconciled Through Christ	2:11–18
Gentile Converts Become Fellow Heirs	2:19–22; 3:1–13
Love Christ and Gain God's Fulness	3:14–21
The Organization of Christ's Church	4:1–16
Christ's People Live New Lives	4:17–32; 5:1–21
Love Between Husbands and Wives	5:22–33
Relationships of Parents and Children	6:1–4
The Judgment of Servants and Masters	6:5–9
Girding for the Spiritual Battle	6:10–24

	Philemon
Gospel Changes a Servant into a Brother	1–25

THEME

Latter-day Saints can become more united as they bear one another's burdens and extend the hand of fellowship to one another.

INTRODUCTION

Paul had defended himself before King Agrippa with such force of certainty and testimony that Agrippa was almost persuaded to become a believer in Christ. Because he had appealed his cause to Caesar, Paul was placed under the custody of a centurion and sent on his way from Caesarea to Rome. He was put aboard a ship with some other prisoners and sailed north to Sidon and finally on to Myra in Lycia. At Myra the centurion, who treated Paul with great respect, secured passage for his company in a boat bound for Italy, which immediately put to sea in hopes of reaching Syracuse in Sicilia before the lateness of the season and the attendant storms would prevent progress. But the storms came as Paul had prophesied, and drove them for many days. Finally the boat was dashed upon the shores of Melita, without the loss of life, again as Paul had

prophesied. That was Paul's fourth shipwreck. But neither this peril nor any other could dissuade him from his ministry or from his witness of the risen Lord. After the winter season had passed, the centurion brought his wards into an Egyptian grain ship bound for Italy. Without incident, they arrived at Puteoli, and from there, via the Appian Way, to Rome. At Rome Paul was subjected only to house arrest and was afforded great liberty, which he used to advantage, preaching and writing: preaching in "the palace, and in all other places" (Philippians 1:13); writing to the Philippians, the Colossians, the Ephesians, to Philemon, and probably to many others.

Our subject in this chapter is what Paul wrote to the Ephesians of the necessity for a church of unity, and the obligation of saints to bear one another's burdens, to extend the hand of fellowship, and to be as one.

Before proceeding, read all the scriptural references in the reading block.

INTERPRETIVE COMMENTARY

EPHESIANS

(43-1) What Is the Theme of Paul's Letter to the Ephesians?

Determining a theme in this letter is difficult. It does not seem to have the specific purpose of combating errors of doctrine or evil practices, as do most of his other letters. It is more like a deeply spiritual sermon than a call to repentance. It seems to be directed to members of the church who have maturity and understanding, and therefore it reflects great depth in its concepts.

Perhaps its theme could best be summarized as a concise and beautiful outline of how a person sets aside the things of this world in order to partake of the unity and fellowship of the church. It describes in some of the most doctrinally beautiful passages of the New Testament the ways in which the true saint takes upon himself the powers of godliness so that he may withstand the powers of evil.

(43-2) Where and When Was It Written?

Ephesians is generally classed as one of the prison epistles. (See Ephesians 3:1; 4:1; 6:20.) This helps us to determine with some accuracy the place and date of writing. Most scholars agree that it was written from Rome during Paul's first imprisonment. That would place its date between A.D. 61 and 63.

(43-3) What Are Some of the Significant Contributions of This Letter?

Perhaps no other New Testament book contains so many doctrines that today are thought of as being distinctively Latter-day Saint as does Ephesians. In it we find reference to the doctrine of foreordination, the dispensation of the fulness of times, the importance of apostles and prophets in the church, the idea that there is only one true and unified church, and the doctrine that the organization of the church is essential. In this letter we find some of the most sublime teachings on the role of the family and the importance of proper family life that are found anywhere in scripture. Elder Bruce R. McConkie has aptly put it this way:

"Ephesians is an epistle for all the world, for Jew and Gentile, for husband and wife, for parent and child, for master and servant. It was the mind and will of God in Paul's day; it is the voice of inspiration in our day; it is an epistle of universal appeal and application." (DNTC, 2:489.)

(43-4) Ephesians 1:3, 4. On What Basis Did the Lord Choose His Saints Before the World Was?

"There must be leaders, presiding officers, and those who are worthy and able to take command. During the ages in which we dwelt in the premortal state we not only developed our various characteristics and showed our worthiness and ability, or the lack of it, but we were also where such progress could be observed. It is reasonable to believe that there was a Church organization there. The heavenly beings were living in a perfectly arranged society. Every person knew his place. Priesthood, without any question, had been conferred and the leaders were chosen to officiate. Ordinances pertaining to that pre-existence were required and the love of God prevailed. Under such conditions it was natural for our Father to discern and choose those who were most worthy and evaluate the talents of each individual. He knew not only what each of us *could* do, but also what each of us *would* do when put to the test and when responsibility was given us. Then, when the time came for our habitation on mortal earth, all things were prepared and the servants of the Lord chosen and ordained to their respective missions." (Smith, *The Way to Perfection*, pp. 50-51.)

(43-5) Ephesians 1:5, 11. Why Does Paul Say We Are Predestined?

When used by the King James translators, the word *predestination* did not have the same connotation as it does today. Most modern versions translate the Greek word as "foreordain." (For a discussion of Paul's

teachings about predestination, see the interpretive commentary on Romans 8:29, 30.)

(43-6) Ephesians 1:10. “The Dispensation of the Fulness of Times”

Except for this single reference, the phrase “the dispensation of the fulness of times” is one that is unique to Latter-day Saints. We know from latter-day scripture that it is the dispensation in which we are presently living (D&C 27:13; 112:30; 124:41). Also, latter-day prophets have explained in some detail what this concept actually means.

“This is the dispensation of the fullness of times, and we see running into it, as mighty streams rush into the ocean, all the former dispensations, putting us in touch with them, putting them in touch with us; and we see that God has had but one great purpose in view from the beginning, and that has been the salvation of His children. And now has come the final day, the final dispensation, when truth and light and righteousness must flood the earth.” (B. H. Roberts in *CR*, Oct. 1904, p. 73.)

(43-7) Ephesians 1:18. “The Eyes of Your Understanding Being Enlightened”

Literally the original Greek phrase reads “having been enlightened as to the eyes of your heart.” Anciently, as now, the heart was viewed as the seat of moral character and spirituality. Paul’s words imply more than just illumination of the mind and its understanding; they indicate an actual enlightenment of the whole man through the gospel of Jesus Christ.

(43-8) Ephesians 1:23. “The Fulness of Him That Filleth All in All”

“In the Lectures on Faith, Joseph Smith describes the Father and the Son as ‘filling all in all’ because the Son, having overcome, has ‘received a fulness of the glory of the Father,’ and possesses ‘the same mind with the Father.’ Then he announces the conclusion to which Paul here only alludes: ‘And all those who keep his commandments shall grow up from grace to grace, and become heirs of the heavenly kingdom, and joint-heirs with Jesus Christ; possessing the same mind, being transformed into the same image or likeness, even the express image of him who fills all in all; being filled with the fulness of his glory, and become one in him, even as the Father, Son and Holy Spirit are one.’ (*Lectures on Faith*, pp. 50–51.)” (McConkie, *DNTC*, 2:497.)

(43-9) Ephesians 2:8–10. What Does Paul Mean When He Says That Works Do Not Save Us?

“I am not unmindful of the scripture that declares: ‘by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God.’ (Ephesians 2:8.) That is absolutely true, for man in his taking upon himself mortality was impotent to save himself. When left to grope in a natural state, he would have become, and did become, so we are told in modern scripture, ‘carnal, sensual, and devilish, by nature.’ (Alma 42:10.) But the Lord, through his grace, appeared to man, gave him the gospel or eternal plan whereby he might rise above the carnal and selfish things of life and obtain spiritual perfection. *But he must rise by his own efforts and he must walk by faith.*”

“‘He who would ascend the stairway leading upward to eternal life must tread it step by step from the base stone to the summit of its flight. Not a single stair can be missed, not one duty neglected, if the climber would avoid danger and delay and arrive with all safety and expedition at the topmost landing of the celestial exaltation.’ The responsibility is upon each individual to choose the path of righteousness, of faithfulness and duty to fellow men. If he choose otherwise and as a result meets failure, misery, and death, he alone is to blame.” (David O. McKay in *CR*, Apr. 1957, p. 7. Italics added.)

(43-10) Ephesians 2:14. To What Was Paul Referring When He Spoke of “the Middle Wall of Partition”?

As can be noted in the outline of this letter, Paul is pointing out that the gentiles who accept the gospel are now brought in and made part of the “covenant people.” In the great temple of Jerusalem, the temple proper was shielded from gentile influences. A special barrier was erected, and if a gentile passed beyond it, he could be put to death. Archaeologists have even found one of the marble blocks of this barrier with this inscription: “let no foreigner enter within the screen and enclosure surrounding the sanctuary. Whosoever is taken so doing will be the cause that death overtaketh him.” It will be remembered that it was the accusation that Paul had ignored this warning and brought gentiles beyond the barrier that led to the riot and his arrest (Acts 21:28).

(43-11) Ephesians 2:20. How Is Jesus the Chief Cornerstone?

To the Jewish leaders, Jesus described himself as the stone which the builders had foolishly rejected in their construction, which now had become the “head of the

corner” (Matthew 21:42), or as Paul says it, the chief cornerstone. The symbolism is an apt one in this section of Paul’s discourse, for the cornerstone anciently was the massive stone laid at the corner to bind fast the two separate walls into one solid whole. In Christ, both Jew and gentile are bound together inseparable, not to form two separate walls, but to create one unified people forming a temple of the Lord.

Jacob used a similar figure in the Book of Mormon when he prophesied that the Jews in Jesus’ day would reject “the stone upon which they might build and have safe foundation . . . the only sure foundation, upon which the Jews can build.” (Jacob 4:15, 16; see also Helaman 5:10–12.)

(43-12) Ephesians 4:8. What Is the Meaning of the Phrase “He Led Captivity Captive”?

“He overcame death; all men were the captives of death until Christ captured the captivator and made death subject to him, or, as the Psalm from which Paul is quoting continues to say, ‘He that is our God is the God of salvation; and unto God the Lord belong the issues from death.’ (Ps. 68:20.)” (McConkie, *DNTC*, 2:509.)

(43-13) Ephesians 4:14. “That We Henceforth Be No More Children, Tossed To and Fro . . . With Every Wind of Doctrine”

“The authorities which the Lord has placed in his Church constitute for the people of the Church a harbor, a place of refuge, a hitching post, as it were. No one in this Church will ever go far astray who ties himself securely to the Church Authorities whom the Lord has placed in his Church. This Church will never go astray; the Quorum of the Twelve will never lead you into bypaths; it never has and never will. There could be individuals who would falter; there will never be a majority of the Council of the Twelve on the wrong side at any time. The Lord has chosen them; he has given them specific responsibilities. And those people who stand close to them will be safe. And, conversely, whenever one begins to go his own way in opposition to authority, he is in grave danger. I would not say that those leaders whom the Lord chooses are necessarily the most brilliant, nor the most highly trained, but they are the chosen, and when chosen of the Lord they are his recognized authority, and the people who stay close to them have safety.” (Spencer W. Kimball in *CR*, Apr. 1951, 104.)

(43-14) Ephesians 5:22–25. Husband and Wives: Love Each Other

“. . . One of the most provocative and profound statements in holy writ is Paul’s instructions to husbands and wives concerning their duty to each other and to their families. First he commands the women:

“‘Wives, submit yourselves unto your own husbands, as unto the Lord.’ (Ephesians 5:22.)

“‘As unto the Lord.’ ‘As unto the Lord, subject yourselves unto your own husbands,’ he says. ‘As unto the Lord.’ Can you conceive that? Does that mean something to you as you listen to the Lord’s counsel, do his will, follow his righteous precepts, serve him faithfully?

“‘For the husband is the head of the wife, even as Christ is the head of the church. . . .’ (Ephesians 5:23.)

“Can you find in all the holy scriptures where the Lord Jesus Christ ever failed his church? Can you find any scripture that says he was untrue to his people, to his neighbors, friends, or associates? Was he faithful? Was he true? Is there anything good and worthy that he did not give? Then that is what we ask—what he asks of a husband, every husband. That is the goal. Can you think of a single exception in his great life? There should be none in yours.

“‘Therefore as the church is subject unto Christ, so let the wives be to their own husbands in every thing.’ (Ephesians 5:24.)

“Many misconceptions, many errors, are creeping into the thoughts of great numbers of people in our day. . . . Much is said in Paul’s words ‘as unto the Lord.’ Let it sink deep into your hearts. A woman need have no fear of being imposed upon or being subject to any dictatorial measures or improper demands when her husband is thoughtful, self-sacrificing, and worthy. One would think that no intelligent woman would hesitate to submit herself to her own truly righteous husband in everything, but sometimes we are shocked to see the wife take over the leadership, naming the one to pray, the place to be, the things to do.

“Husbands are commanded:

“‘Love your wives, even as Christ also loved the church, and gave himself for it.’ (Ephesians 5:25.)

“There is a scripture which says, ‘Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends.’ (John 15:13.) Your wife is your friend. You

should be willing to go even to the extent of giving your life for her if the need should appear. Would you give your life for her?

“You need to ask yourself, ‘Can I love my wife even as Christ also has loved the Church?’ Can you think of how he loved the church? Its every breath was important to him. Its every growth, its every individual, was precious to him. He gave to those people all his energy, all his power, all his interest. He gave his life—and what more could one give?” (Spencer W. Kimball, Address to Religious Educators in the Assembly Hall, 12 Sept. 1975, pp. 3–5.)

(43-15) Ephesians 6:5–9. The Christlike Relationship Between Master and Servant

Elder Spencer W. Kimball has shown that Paul’s advice still has application today, even though slavery has virtually been abolished.

“Paul speaks of ‘unholy masters’ and surely has reference to those who would defraud servants or employees and would not properly compensate for labors done or goods furnished. He likely has in mind men who are unkind, demanding and inconsiderate of their subordinates. [See Ephesians 6:9.]

“In short, the employer should treat his employees according to the golden rule, remembering that there is a Master in heaven who judges both employer and employee. Paul likewise enjoined a lofty standard upon employees: [See Ephesians 6:5, 6.]

“We may take this to mean, on modern terms, that the servant and employee should consistently give honest service, full and complete, and do for his employer what he would want an employee to do for him if he himself were the employer. Any other course calls for repentance.” (*Miracle of Forgiveness*, p. 51.)

(43-16) Ephesians 6:11. What Does It Mean for a Latter-day Saint to Put On the Whole Armour of God?

“Now notice the nature of the armour that [Paul] puts on the man whom he is now preparing to withstand the powers of darkness. He said, ‘Therefore stand, having your loins girt about with truth.’ Now the loins is that part of the body between the lower rib and the hip in which you will recognize are the vital organs which have to do with reproduction . . . he was saying that that part of the body was one of the most vulnerable. We should have our loins girt about with armour. And then the next we would have a breastplate over the heart. Now in the scriptures you will remember that the heart has always been used to

typify our conduct. . . . And so we would have a breastplate over the heart.

“And then he said we would have the feet shod with the kind of armour that would protect our feet, suggesting the feet as the objectives, the goals of life which we should have [guarded] by some kind of armour and protected from getting off on the wrong foot. And finally we should have a helmet on our heads. Now there we have the four parts of the body that the apostle Paul saw to be the most vulnerable to the powers of darkness. The loins, typifying virtue, chastity. The heart typifying our conduct. Our feet, our goals or objectives in life, and finally our head, our thoughts.

“Now the kind of armour that was to protect us is even more interesting. . . . We should have our loins girt about with truth. What is truth? Truth, the Lord said, was knowledge of things as they are, things as they were and things as they are to come. . . . What is going to guide us along the path of proper morals or proper choices? It will be the knowledge of truth. There must be a standard by which we measure our conduct, else how shall we know which is right? And how shall we know which is wrong? . . . ‘Our loins shall be girt about with truth,’ the prophet said.

“And the heart, what kind of a breastplate shall protect our conduct in life? We shall have over our hearts a breastplate of righteousness. Well, having learned truth we have a measure by which we can judge between right and wrong and so our conduct will always be gauged by that thing which we know to be true. Our breastplate to cover our conduct shall be the breastplate of righteousness.

“With what shall we protect our feet, or by what shall we gauge our objectives or our goals in life? All through the scriptures there runs a phrase suggested by the kind of armour the Apostle Paul would put upon the feet. Listen to what he says: ‘Your feet should be shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace.’ (Ephesians 6:15.) Interesting? What is the gospel of peace? The whole core and center of the gospel of peace was built around the person of Him who was cradled in the manger. . . . How fortunate are you if in your childhood in the home of your father and mother you were taught the doctrine of repentance, faith in Christ, the Son of the living God; the meaning of baptism and what you gain by the laying on of hands for the gift of the Holy Ghost. Fortunate is the child who has been taught to pray and who has been given those steps to take on through life. Feet shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace! . . .

“And then finally the helmet of salvation. Did you ever hear of that kind of helmet? The helmet of salvation. What is salvation? Salvation is to be saved. Saved from what? Saved from death and saved from sin. . . .

“. . . When those two things are missing from this earth and when it has been sanctified and cleansed of its impurity, this shall be the place of salvation. On this earth will be the celestial kingdom, for there will be no more sin, no more death, no more crying, for all the former things are done away. By whom? By the atonement of the Lord Jesus Christ. The apostle Paul said, in effect, ‘A helmet of salvation shall guide our thinking all through our days.’ . . .

“Well, now, the apostle Paul went one step further. He didn’t leave the man just with the armour on and expect him to cope against an army, seen or unseen. He had his armoured man holding in his hand a shield and in his other hand a sword, which were the weapons of those days. That shield was the shield of faith, and the sword was the sword of the spirit which is the Word of God. I can’t think of any more powerful weapons than faith and a knowledge of the scriptures in the which are contained the Word of God. One so armoured and one so prepared with those weapons is prepared to go out against the enemy [and] is more to be feared than the enemies of the light.” (Harold B. Lee, “Feet Shod with the Preparation of the Gospel of Peace,” *Speeches of the Year*, 1954, pp. 2–4, 6–7.)

PHILEMON

(43-17) What Is the Theme of Paul’s Letter to Philemon?

The purpose of the letter is a plea from Paul to Philemon to accept back into his good graces a former Greek slave, Onesimus, who had run away from his master and gone to Rome, perhaps hoping to get lost in the city throngs. While in Rome, however, Onesimus was somehow brought into contact with Paul. The aging apostle used his influence to induce the younger man to return home and make amends. The trip to Rome was not in vain, however, for Onesimus had joined the church (vs. 10).

(43-18) Background Information

Philemon was a resident of Colossae, a city near Ephesus, and appears to have been converted by Paul (vss. 19, 20). He seems also to have been a zealous member, who generously lent his house and means for the use of the church (vss. 2, 5).

Paul makes it clear in his letter that he had entertained the notion of keeping Onesimus, Philemon’s runaway slave, with him, for he was a valuable friend. Paul could not do so, however, since the young convert-slave was the property of another man (vss. 12–14). The punishment for a runaway slave was death, but Paul begs Philemon to receive Onesimus as he would receive Paul himself (vs. 17). Paul offers to make up any financial loss suffered by Philemon following the apostle’s release from prison (vss. 18, 19).

(43-19) Significant Contributions of Philemon

This epistle gives one of the finest pictures of the meaning of forgiveness and repentance that can be found in Paul’s writings. The apostle stands revealed as a model of Christ-like love and compassion. Encased in prison walls, Paul’s tender feelings reveal themselves as he pleads the cause of a poor runaway who has naught but Paul to recommend him. The letter is poignant in its beauty. “The epistle is tactfully and sweetly written and does more to reveal the personal feelings of its author than to contribute to the body of Christian doctrine.” (McConkie, *DNTC*, 3:129.)

(43-20) Philemon 2. Who Were Apphia and Archippus?

It is highly probable that these two persons were members of the church in Colossae and friends, perhaps converts, of Paul during his stay in Ephesus on his third mission. Some have even suggested that Apphia was Philemon’s wife and Archippus, his son. Nothing more is said of Apphia in Paul’s writings, but the letter to the Colossians, written about this same time, admonishes Archippus as follows: “Take heed to the ministry which thou hast received in the Lord, that thou fulfill it.” (Colossians 4:17.) Precisely what this ministerial call was is unknown. There is an ancient tradition which holds that Philemon became bishop of Colossae and, during the persecution under Nero when Peter and Paul met their deaths, was martyred in Colossae with his wife, Apphia, his son Archippus, and his slave, Onesimus.

(43-21) Philemon 7, 12, 20. “Refresh My Bowels in the Lord”

As formerly noted in another connection (see interpretive commentary for 2 Corinthians 6:12), the word *bowels* as used by the King James translators was a synonym for feelings and affections. When Paul speaks of having his bowels refreshed by the saints in Colossae, he meant that his emotions had been heightened by the kindly and righteous responses of

his Colossian friends. “We would say: ‘The hearts of the saints are refreshed.’” (McConkie, *DNTC*, 3:131.)

(43-22) Philemon 8. Did Paul Appeal to Philemon on Grounds of Convenience?

It may seem strange that Paul would appeal to Philemon to accept Onesimus back on the basis of “convenience.” The word chosen by the King James translators, however, has changed from its original meaning. The Greek word is formed from the verb which means “to come up to” and carries with it the idea of measuring up to a certain mark or standard. Paul’s choice of the word gives the delicate hint that Philemon’s forgiveness of his runaway slave would be the most fitting or becoming thing a true follower of Christ could do.

(43-23) Philemon 9. How Old Was Paul at the Time He Wrote to Philemon?

Paul refers to himself as “the aged” here in the King James translation, and some have wondered just how old the apostle really was at this time. We do not know the time of Paul’s birth, but from such evidence as is available, we conclude that he was probably born between, A.D. 1 and 6. If he was writing about A.D. 62, he would have been between fifty-five and sixty years of age. However, the Greek word from which the expression “the aged” was translated is *presbyteis*, which literally means “elder.” It could be that Paul had reference to his priesthood title (an apostle is an elder) or he may have meant that he was older than Philemon.

(43-24) Philemon 10, 11. What Does the Word Onesimus Mean?

The word *Onesimus* literally means “helpful” or “profitable” and was a very common name for slaves during this period. Under Roman law, the slave was viewed as property, and the master would sometimes bestow a name such as this if he was particularly optimistic about his slave’s potential. Note the clever play on words which Paul uses in verses 10 and 11.

(43-25) Philemon 16. What Was the Roman Practice Regarding Slavery?

In the days of Philemon and Onesimus, slaves were completely at the mercy of their owners. Even trivial offenses were often punished in the most cruel manner. Indicative of the unrestricted authority enjoyed by the masters is this statement by Vincent: “The attitude of the law toward the slave was expressed in the formula *servile caput nullum jus*

gabet; the slave has no right. The master’s power was unlimited. He might mutilate, torture, or kill the slave at his pleasure. Pollio, in the time of Augustus, ordered a slave to be thrown into a pond of voracious lampreys. Augustus interfered, but afterward ordered a slave of his own to be crucified on the mast of a ship for eating a favorite quail. Juvenal describes a profligate woman ordering a slave to be crucified. Some one remonstrates. She replies: ‘So then a slave is a man, is he! “He has done nothing,” you say. Granted. I command it. Let my pleasure stand for a reason’ (vi., 219). Martial records an instance of a master cutting out a slave’s tongue. The old Roman legislation imposed death for killing a plough-ox; but the murderer of a slave was not called to account. Tracking fugitive slaves was a trade. Recovered slaves were branded on the forehead, condemned to double labor, and sometimes thrown to the beasts in the amphitheatre. The slave population was enormous. Some proprietors had as many as twenty thousand.” (Vincent, *Word Studies in the New Testament*, 2:921.)

POINTS TO PONDER

THE CHURCH HAS NEED OF EVERY MEMBER

When Paul wrote to the Ephesians, “Ye are no more strangers and foreigners, but fellowcitizens with the saints, and of the household of God” (Ephesians 2:19), he was emphasizing to these gentile-born converts that they now belonged to the kingdom of God. This is a message that every convert to the Church and every member for that matter, needs to receive—YOU BELONG!

(43-26) The Hand of Fellowship Can Help People Feel That They Belong

“It was back in the days when we had stake conference in the afternoon. I was in a stake; it had been cold; it was winter. We came in out of the cold for the afternoon session, and everybody had had too much to eat and the room was hot. Everybody fell asleep, and it was my turn to speak. I was too sleepy to gather my thoughts, and not knowing what else to do, I asked for a show of hands of all who had come into the Church in the last two years. There was a fine young man and his wife and two children right there. I said to the man, ‘I know this is an unkind thing to do, but wouldn’t you like to come up and take ten minutes and tell us how you came into the Church and what it meant to you.’”

“He stood up, a really handsome young man. He said, ‘You know, I came here from Palo Alto to work in this big chemical plant out here on the desert. I got my doctorate in chemistry and my wife has her degree in literature at Stanford. I knew all about chemistry; she knew all about literature, but we didn’t know anything about getting along with one another. We had been to see a marriage counselor; all we got was talk. We had been to see a psychologist; all we got was a big bill. We loved our children too much to be separated. That was the only thing that held us together; we both wanted the children. We disliked one another.

“My wife said, ‘Let’s try religion; we’ve tried everything else.’ I said, ‘Okay, what religion?’ She said, ‘The Mormon religion.’ She had worked for a Mormon in San Francisco who she thought was the finest man she ever knew. We went one day, one Sunday morning. We drove around the block the first time. No sign in front of the building to tell what time church started. We had to case the place. So, the next Sunday we came and very sheepishly came in that door. A man reached out his hand and took me by the hand, and said, ‘Good morning, glad to see you. Haven’t seen you before. Where’ve you been? What ward did you come from?’ I was puzzled. I didn’t know what he meant by a ward. Finally he got the idea that I wasn’t a member of the Church, but *he made us feel at home*. Took us to our classes in Sunday School; sat with us; took the children to their classes. At the close of the meeting *he invited us to come to dinner on Wednesday*. We came. The missionaries were there and five weeks later we were baptized.

“When we were baptized, the bishop was there, and when we were dressed, he took me by the hand and my wife by the hand and said, ‘Brother and Sister Romney, *I want to welcome you into the Church and extend to you the hand of fellowship*. Now, Brother Romney, everybody has something to do in this Church. We have a responsibility for you; we will put you in charge of the hymn books. Sister Romney, we will make you assistant secretary of the Primary. Brother Romney, priesthood meeting starts at eight o’clock on Sunday morning; Sunday School at ten; and sacrament meeting at six. We would like you here fifteen minutes early to see that all hymn books are in place. Will you be there?’ I didn’t know what else to do but say yes. I’d been saying yes for five weeks.

“One cold winter day when a blizzard was blowing, I plowed over through the snow with my little boy. We were all alone there in the meetinghouse passing out hymn books, and I stopped and said, ‘Joe, what’s

wrong with you? Here you are a PhD in Chemistry and you are passing out hymn books, coming over through a blizzard like that.’ I did it, but it wasn’t long after that I got another job.’

“Then with tears rolling down his face after he had spoken of going to the temple three months before, he said, ‘There’s bishop so and so. I want to express my appreciation to him for giving me an assignment on the day I was baptized—an assignment commensurate with my ability.’” (Gordon B. Hinckley, Seminar for Regional Representatives of the Twelve, 4 Oct. 1973, pp. 6–7. Italics added.)

(43-27) The Message “You Belong” Needs to Be Given to All

“Well, there is a lot to be done. There’s brotherhood, and fellowship, and love, and a welcome to be offered. Let me mention the new members and the less active people. When I saw the people coming into the Church . . . I thought of the parable of the sower. There was some of the seed, as you know, that burned because it had no roots. These wonderful folks often . . . need the anchors of their faith sunk more deeply. They need to know they belong to something and to somebody who will take the place of what they have given up, the associations and friendships that are behind them. . . .

“Let me only note what a new convert said to us in the mail in England. ‘You feel like you never are going to be lonely again,’ she wrote. And she shouldn’t ever be lonely again in this Church because she had become, as Paul wrote to the Ephesians, ‘fellowcitizens with the saints, and of the household of God.’ (Ephesians 2:19.)” (Hanks, *The Gift of Self*, pp. 105–7.)

MEMBERS OF THE CHURCH HAVE COVENANTED TO BEAR ONE ANOTHER’S BURDENS

Oftentimes there are those who have the idea that whether they actually fellowship others doesn’t really matter. “After all,” they say, “I’m only one person. Whether I’m friendly or not won’t matter.” How important are you to the strength of the Church? (See Mosiah 18:8, 9.) What does it mean to “bear one another’s burdens” and to “comfort those that stand in need of comfort”?

Consider this conversation. Note some of the answers that you ought to be prepared to give as you strive to bear the burdens of and extend the hand of fellowship to those around you.

New Convert

The missionaries emphasized to us the fact that the church of Jesus Christ today in its restored state has the same organization as did the church of Jesus Christ in the days of the early apostles. I don't question that statement. What I want to understand is why this is necessary.

Priesthood Leader

While it is true that the Church today has the same offices that existed in the church of Jesus Christ in the days of the apostles, this fact alone is not what makes the Church true, powerful, or distinctive. The importance of these offices was emphasized by the apostle Paul. Read Ephesians 4:11–16.

You will see in this letter the following purposes of these offices:

1. The perfecting of the saints
2. The work of the ministry
3. The edifying (or building up) of the body of Christ (members of the church of Christ)

These offices within the priesthood were to remain till “we all come in the unity of the faith . . . unto a perfect man.” The degree of that perfection was to be “the stature of the fulness of Christ” or the status and glory enjoyed by Christ.

New Convert

I guess what I'm trying to understand is how these offices serve those purposes.

Priesthood Leader

Let's see if I can explain this. All offices in the priesthood grow out of the Melchizedek Priesthood. The office, in other words, is supplemental to the priesthood itself. The purpose of the office is to help bring a man to a state of godliness, perfection, and unity with Christ.

New Convert

How does an office do that?

Priesthood Leader

Offices exist in the priesthood to perform these functions:

1. To preach the gospel and administer the ordinances of salvation
2. To preside over congregations of saints
3. To provide by revelation blessings and patriarchal lineage to the Saints.

By latter-day revelation, the Lord has broadly defined the functions of offices in the priesthood by these designations:

1. Those who travel to teach the gospel are called traveling ministers. Examples would be seventies and apostles. (See D&C 107:33, 97.)
2. Those who preside or conduct the affairs of congregations in branches, wards, stakes, or districts are called standing ministers. Examples are deacons, teachers, priests, and elders. (See D&C 84:11.)
3. Those who are appointed by revelation to give patriarchal blessings are called evangelical ministers. (See D&C 107:39.)

New Convert

I'm not certain that I understand the difference between these designations.

Priesthood Leader

Let's see if I can explain the difference by applying their function to a common pattern in the Church today.

Whenever we introduce the gospel to any areas in the world, a mission is created. The purpose of a mission is to teach the gospel of Jesus Christ to “strangers or foreigners,” or nonmembers of the kingdom of God. Who introduces the gospel in various areas of the world? It is done by apostles, seventies, and elders called to be missionaries.

When sufficient priesthood strength is established in a mission by virtue of convert baptisms, then under the direction of God's prophet, a stake is created. Stakes are created to perfect the saints. This is done by administering the ordinances of salvation and teaching the principles of the gospel. Who administers these ordinances and does the teaching? It is done by deacons, teachers, priests, and elders—in other words, the standing ministers. We see examples of their work in both branches and wards in the administration of the sacrament, the teaching of classes, home teaching, and other presiding responsibilities such as presiding over quorums of the priesthood.

New Convert

I see. You mentioned another office in the ministry—an evangelist, I believe it was.

Priesthood Leader

Yes, the office of an evangelical minister. (See D&C 107:39.)

New Convert

Is that like an evangelist in other churches?

Priesthood Leader

No, an evangelical minister is a patriarch. The Prophet Joseph Smith said that “there should be a patriarch for benefit of the posterity of the saints, as it was with Jacob in giving his patriarchal blessing unto his sons.” (Teachings, p. 151.) There will be an appropriate time when you will want such a blessing, which in the words of one of the prophets contain “paragraphs from your eternal possibilities.” (Lee, Stand Ye in Holy Places, p. 117.)

Now, let’s go back to what Paul said in the text: that God gave “some, apostles; and some, prophets [traveling ministers]; and some, evangelists [evangelical ministers]; and some, pastors and teachers [standing ministers]” for the purposes of (1) perfecting the saints; (2) the work of the ministry; (3) the building up or strengthening of the church of God, until we achieve a state of perfection and become like Jesus Christ.

New Convert

In other words, all these offices function out of the priesthood for a particular responsibility in the ministry.

Priesthood Leader

Yes; and because of the many duties in the Church, and the fact that God has endowed his children with different gifts and talents to perform these specialized functions, these offices are all essential. Paul dramatized this by comparing the offices of the church to a human body, adding that the eye cannot say to another member of the body, “I have no need of thee,” or “I am greater than thee.” All are important to this vital, unified organism, for the church members must be as one. (See 1 Corinthians 12:14–31.) Thus these offices “are and always will be in the true Church of Christ as long as the earth shall stand.” (Delbert L. Stapley in CR, Apr. 1958, p. 116.)

New Convert

I see now! The whole purpose of the Church—its programs and organizations—is to help bless the lives of people.

Priesthood Leader

That’s right. What does that concept mean to you?

Convert

Well, now that I’m a member of Christ’s church I have the responsibility to serve when I’m called.

Priesthood Leader

Is that all?

Convert

No. I guess I also have the responsibility to fellowship every person with whom I come in contact, to make him feel he is a part of Christ’s church.

Priesthood Leader

That’s exactly right. We have all covenanted to fellowship and love one another. Unity can be achieved in no other way.

WHAT COULD THIS MEAN TO YOU?

Can you see how important the Church is? Can you see how important you are?

Do you understand why the Church has been organized? Can you understand why each member is important in the success of the whole? (See D&C 38:27.)

Can you determine in your own life to strive to bear burdens and extend fellowship to those around you, and to strive to be one with the saints?

Can you strive to make a special effort to make someone feel welcome and a part of Christ’s church? That was Paul’s message to the Ephesians, and it is his message to you.

“BE THOU AN EXAMPLE OF THE BELIEVERS”



A Letter from Paul to the Saints in Philippi, Macedonia Written While Under Arrest in Rome, ca. A.D. 63 (Philippians)			
	Philippians	Christ Came to Save Repentant Sinners	1:12–17
		Timothy's Responsibility	1:18–20
Paul's Experiences in Teaching Christ	1:1–26	Prayers of Thanks Are Pleasing to Our Mediator	2:1–8
Be of One Spirit and One Mind	1:27–30; 2:1–4	The Conduct of Women in Worship Services	2:9–15
The Equality of Father and Son	2:5–8	Requirements for a Bishop	3:1–7
All Men Shall Bow and Confess Christ	2:9–11	Description of a Worthy Deacon	3:8–13
“Work Out Your Own Salvation”	2:12–18	The Mystery of Godliness	3:14–16
The Mission of Timothy and Epaphroditus	2:19–30	Signs of Latter-day Apostasy	4:1–11
The Way of Salvation	3:1–21	“Be Thou an Example of the Believers”	4:12–16
“Stand Fast in the Lord”	4:1–9	Saints Commanded to Care for Their Worthy Poor	5:1–16
Paul's Thanks for Aid	4:10–23	The Responsibility of Elders	5:17–25
Paul's First Letter to Timothy Written from Macedonia to Ephesus, ca. A.D. 66 (1 Timothy)		Slaves Are to Respect Their Masters	6:1, 2
	1 Timothy	Sound Teaching About Wealth	6:3–10
Teach Only True Doctrine	1:1–11	Timothy—Fight the Good Fight	6:11–21

THEME

Latter-day Saint youth have been reserved for this time so their spiritual strength and example as believers may combat the forces and doctrines of evil.

INTRODUCTION

“It was the best of times, it was the worst of times, it was the age of wisdom, it was the age of foolishness, it was the epoch of belief, it was the epoch of incredulity, it was the season of Light, it was the season of Darkness, it was the spring of hope, it was the winter of despair, we had everything before us, we had nothing before us, we were all going direct to Heaven, we were all going direct the other way. . . .” (Charles Dickens, *A Tale of Two Cities*, p. 3.)

So begins the narrative in Dickens’s classic tale of the French Revolution; yet he could well have been writing of the latter part of the twentieth century, so timely is his description. Brilliant developments in science and technology have created a civilization unlike the ages of the past. Yet the basic moral problems of mankind have worsened. People are more self-centered and more calloused to spiritual things, to motherhood, and to the joys of family life. Gratification and pleasure and possessions seem to be a dominate aim of many.

Paul raised a warning voice to our generation:

“Now the Spirit speaketh expressly, that in the latter times some shall depart from the faith, giving heed to seducing spirits, and doctrines of devils.” (1 Timothy 4:1.)

Yet a bright ray of hope remains—in you, the youth of Zion. You were prepared and reserved by the Lord to come forth in this time to show, by your example, the blessings of living a godlike life; to present a message of hope to a generation of despair.

Paul in Rome: Building the Cause of the Master

By appealing his rights of Roman citizenship, Paul had been brought to Rome to stand trial before Nero’s court. There in a hired residence near the Imperial Palace on the Palatine hill, and for two whole years, Paul was confined to house arrest. Whatever motives his enemies had in pressing for the delay of his trial, or if legitimate purposes may account for the wait, Paul used those years to build in Rome the cause of the Master. He was guarded day and night by a sequence of soldiers, many of whom, together with others from the royal household,

became convinced by the steady faith and persuasions of Paul that Jesus was indeed the Lord and Redeemer whom they should serve. His preaching in those years was incessant, and his letters to the church never tired.

In the last of his letters from Rome, to the saints at Philippi, Paul gave encouragement and persuasions to steadiness in the cause. To the Philippians he asserted that he had learned to be content in all conditions to which he might be subjected. He counseled them to seek after every good and wholesome thing the world might contain and promised them as their reward for faithfulness the “peace of God, which passeth all understanding.” (Philippians 4:7.)

When Paul’s cause was finally heard, we have reason to believe he was acquitted and released. Subsequently he traveled, probably to Philippi to rest, then to Ephesus to strengthen the church, and perhaps even to Spain, before his return to Ephesus and, finally, Macedonia. It was probably from Macedonia that he wrote the first letter to Timothy.

Now you will consider Philippians, and also 1 Timothy where Paul cautioned Timothy about many things, prophesied of doctrines of devils that might destroy the faith of the saints, and urged Timothy to “be thou an example of the believers.” (1 Timothy 4:12.)

Read these passages carefully and ponder the messages they contain.

Before proceeding, read all the scriptural references in the reading block.

INTERPRETIVE COMMENTARY

THE LETTER TO THE PHILIPPIANS: FRIENDSHIP, CONFIDENCE, AND GOOD CHEER

(44-1) It Is a Classic of Spiritual Autobiography

“This Epistle is a letter of friendship, full of affection, confidence, good counsel and good cheer. It is the happiest of St. Paul’s writings, for the Philippians were the dearest of his children in the faith. . . .

“ . . . it is a classic of spiritual autobiography. . . . Philippians reveals the spring of his inward peace and strength. It admits us to St. Paul’s prison meditations and communings with his Master. We watch his spirit ripening through the autumn hours when patience fulfilled in him its perfect work.” (Dummelow, *A Commentary on the Holy Bible*, p. 969.)

(44-2) Place and Date of Writing

This letter was possibly the last letter Paul wrote during his first imprisonment at Rome. The letter was sent sometime about A.D. 63.

(44-3) Background Information

Paul traveled to the country of Macedonia after he received a special vision in the night wherein he saw a man who said, “Come over into Macedonia, and help us.” (Acts 16:9.) Philippi, which Luke describes in Acts as “the chief city of that part of Macedonia” (Acts 16:12), was the first city on the European continent to receive the gospel. Lydia, “a seller of purple,” and her household were Paul’s first converts in Philippi (Acts 16:14, 15). Paul used his priesthood powers to cast a demon from a young woman, for which act Paul and Silas were persecuted, cast into prison, scourged, and put into stocks. The persecution continued until the magistrates learned of the Roman citizenship of the two men, after which time Paul and Silas were asked to leave the city (Acts 16:39).

The city of Philippi was located in eastern Macedonia, at the foot of Mount Pangaeus, on the East-West Egnation Highway which linked Rome and Asia. Between the time when Paul first preached in the city and the writing of Philippians, approximately ten years had passed. News of Paul’s Roman imprisonment may have been the motivation for the Philippian saints to remember Paul again. Whatever the reason, they sent a gift, carried by a member of the branch whose name was Epaphroditus. It was apparently their intent to have Epaphroditus stay with Paul and help him in every possible way.

It is possible that Epaphroditus brought Paul a letter which detailed the state of affairs among the saints. From Paul’s letter to the Philippians it appears that the members were still firm in their faith in the Lord Jesus. No great schism or heresy, no major error of doctrine or practice appears to have occasioned Paul’s letter. Clearly, the letter is not one of chastisement. Even reference to the legalism of the Judaizers may indeed have been written merely to call attention to a potential and not a real threat to the saints. When Epaphroditus decided to return home, Paul sent the Philippian letter back with him.

(44-4) Significant Contributions

Like Philemon, the letter to the Philippians is one of Paul’s most personal letters. “Philippians is not a mighty dissertation, one to shake the earth or serve as a guidepost to Christendom, but it is a sweet and

refined statement into which a number of gospel doctrines are woven. And our Bible is greatly enriched by its presence there.” (McConkie, *DNTC*, 2:525.)

This letter depicts Paul’s triumphant faith. It shows his total commitment to Jesus Christ. And it is obvious from the letter, as it is so apparent from his other writings, that Paul is diligent in carrying out his commission to preach. In it Paul proclaims this good news of the gospel, the glad tidings of faith and exaltation in and through the Savior, Jesus Christ.

(44-5) Philippians 1:19. What Is “the Spirit of Jesus Christ”?

See D&C 84:46, 47 and Moroni 7:16, 18.

(44-6) Philippians 2:5–8. Of the Equality and Nature of the Father and the Son

“Wherein, then, lies our Lord’s equality with his God and our God? Is it not in that Jesus, crowned now himself with exaltation, has received from the Father all knowledge, all truth, all wisdom, and all power? Is it not in the same sense that all of the sons of God, as joint-heirs with Christ, shall receive all that the Father hath? (D. & C. 76:54–60; 84:38; 132:20.) Is it not in that, treading in the tracks of the Father, those who are adopted as his sons gain exaltation of their own?” [See *Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith*, pp. 347–48.] (McConkie, *DNTC*, 2:531.)

(44-7) Philippians 2:12. “Work Out Your Own Salvation with Fear and Trembling”

“An outstanding doctrine of the Church is that each individual carries the responsibility to work out his own salvation, and salvation is a process of gradual development. The Church does not accept the doctrine that a mere murmured belief in Jesus Christ is all that is necessary. A man may say he believes, but if he does nothing to make that belief or faith a moving power to do, to accomplish, to produce soul growth, his professing will avail him nothing. ‘Work out your salvation’ is an exhortation to demonstrate by activity, by thoughtful, obedient effort the reality of faith. But this must be done with a consciousness that absolute dependence upon self may produce pride and weakness that will bring failure. With ‘fear and trembling’ we should seek the strength and grace of God for inspiration to obtain the final victory.

“To work out one’s salvation is not to sit idly by dreaming and yearning for God miraculously to thrust bounteous blessings into our laps. It is to perform daily, hourly, momentarily, if necessary, the

immediate task or duty at hand, and to continue happily in such performance as the years come and go, leaving the fruits of such labors either for self or for others to be bestowed as a just and beneficent Father may determine.” (David O. McKay in *CR*, Apr. 1957, p. 7.)

(44-8) Philippians 3:2. What Did Paul Mean When He Said, “Beware of Dogs, Beware of Evil Workers, Beware of the Concision”?

Paul was attacking the Judaizers—those Jewish Christians who demanded complete obedience to the Mosaic law as a condition for salvation. He used the word *dogs* to imply that they were unclean and unholy. His use of the words *evil workers* indicates those who thought they were righteous and in fact were not. In sarcasm he used the word *concision*, which means “mutilation,” instead of *circumcision*, which is the normal adjective used to define Jews.

(44-9) Philippians 3:15. Was Paul Suggesting That the Saints Were Perfect?

“When those apostles wrote letters to the members of the Church they addressed them as saints. A saint is not necessarily a person who is perfect, but he is a person who strives for perfection—one who tries to overcome those faults and failings which take him away from God. A true saint will seek to change his manner of living to conform more closely to the ways of the Lord.

“It is true that we each have imperfections to overcome. Life is a constant series of challenges and trials. Notwithstanding, we should never fail to strive for that perfection of life which can bring us closer into harmony with God.” (Theodore M. Burton in *CR*, Oct. 1973, p. 151.)

(44-10) Philippians 4:14. How Did the Philippian Saints “Communicate with [Paul’s] Affliction”?

The word is used in the sense of “share” or “sharing.” Thus, here Paul had reference to gifts of material value which the saints had shared with Paul.

THE FIRST LETTER TO TIMOTHY

(44-11) Be True to Your Trust

Proper care of the church by Timothy and other appointed leaders is the central theme of this letter. Paul encourages Timothy to teach only the true doctrines of the kingdom, to keep the faith, to pray diligently, and to walk in all holiness. Paul’s letter challenges Timothy, and for that matter, all other

priesthood leaders, to be true to their trust in the ministry.

An old tradition has it that the letter was written from Laodicea; however, the possibility exists that it was written from Macedonia. Whatever the place of writing, it appears to have been written during the time between Paul’s first and second imprisonments in Rome. The year was approximately A.D. 66.

(44-12) Background Information

At the time when Timothy received this letter, he was a priesthood leader in the church at Ephesus and had major administrative responsibilities. He was a church leader of proven worth whom Paul regarded highly. Timothy was left by Paul to be in charge of the Ephesus church and to persuade the membership to adhere to the principles of the gospel. Most likely some of the prominent members were older than Timothy and experienced difficulty in accepting the younger man’s authority. This appears to have been a major reason why Paul sent Timothy this letter.

(44-13) Significant Contributions

Church administration, the conscientious performance of duties, the teaching of correct doctrine, the faithful conduct of an appointed servant in Christ’s church—these are some of the topics written of in Paul’s first letter to Timothy. Interwoven into the text are some of the references to Jesus Christ, to salvation, to the great latter-day apostasy, and to the necessity for obedience to the principles of the gospel.

(44-14) 1 Timothy 1:4; 4:7. What Were the Fables and Endless Genealogies?

“The Jews had scrupulously preserved their genealogical tables, till the advent of Christ . . . but we are told that Herod destroyed the public registers: he, being an Idumean, was jealous of the noble origin of the Jews: and that none might be able to reproach him with his descent, he ordered the genealogical tables, which were kept among the archives in the temple, to be burned. . . . From this time the Jews could refer to their genealogies only from *memory*, or from those imperfect tables which had been preserved in private hands; and to make out any regular line from these, must have been *endless* and uncertain. It is probably to this the apostle refers; I mean the endless and useless labor which the attempt to make out these genealogies, must produce; the authentic tables being destroyed.’

“So we may well conclude that Paul’s denunciation was towards doubtful and untruthful genealogies

which had been tampered with for improper purposes.” (Smith, *Answers to Gospel Questions*, 1:214–15.)

Paul may also have had reference to the Jewish tendency to take great pride in their ancestry and in their belief that genealogical descent was a proof of God’s favor (John 8:37–45). This, Paul says, is a fable. God’s favor is given on the basis of righteousness, not ancestry.

(44-15) 1 Timothy 3:3. What Is “Filthy Lucre”?

“Now, all money is not lucre—all money is not filthy. There is clean money—clean money with which to buy food, clothes, shelter, and other necessities and with which to make contributions toward the building of the kingdom of God.

“Clean money is that compensation received for a full day’s honest work. It is that reasonable pay for faithful service. It is that fair profit from the sale of goods, commodities, or service. It is that income received from transactions where all parties profit.

“Filthy lucre is blood money; that which is obtained through theft and robbery. It is that obtained through gambling or the operation of gambling establishments. Filthy lucre is that had through sin or sinful operations and that which comes from the handling of liquor, beer, narcotics and those other many things which are displeasing in the sight of the Lord. Filthy lucre is that money which comes from bribery, and from exploitation.

“Compromise money is filthy, graft money is unclean, profits and commissions derived from the sale of worthless stocks are contaminated as is the money derived from other deceptions, excessive charges, oppression to the poor and compensation which is not fully earned. I feel strongly that men who accept wages or salary and do not give commensurate time, energy, devotion, and service are receiving money that is not clean. Certainly those who deal in the forbidden are recipients of filthy lucre.” (Spencer W. Kimball in *CR*, Oct. 1953, p. 52.)

(44-16) 1 Timothy 3:6. Why Does Paul Say a Bishop Should Not Be a Novice?

Paul used the word *neophyton* to refer to one who is newly converted. This word is a compound of *neos*, “new, recently born” and *phyow*, which in the passive means “to be born, to spring up, to grow,” thus expressing the concept of a new convert or one newly

born. A bishop, in particular, should be an experienced priesthood holder.

(44-17) 1 Timothy 3:12. Should Deacons Be Married?

“It was the judgment of Paul that a deacon in that day should be a married man. That does not apply to our day. Conditions were different in the days of Paul. In that day a minister was not considered qualified to take part in the ministry until he was thirty years of age. Under those conditions deacons, teachers, and priests were mature men. This is not the requirement today. There are in all kinds of churches today ministers who are under that age, and there is no requirement in the Church in this dispensation that a person must be a matured man before he can take part in the ministry or hold the priesthood. Nor was it the rule in very ancient times, for we learn that Noah was only ten years of age when he was given the priesthood under the hands of Methuselah.” [D&C 107:52.] (Smith, *Answers to Gospel Questions*, 1:129.)

(44-18) 1 Timothy 4:3. “Forbidding to Marry”

Since eternal life may only be achieved through celestial marriage, Satan does all within his power to “forbid” men and women to marry. Celibacy, living together out of wedlock, homosexuality, adultery, abortion, and birth control are but a few of the many methods employed to pervert men’s minds and prevent the creation and continuance of this holy union. In the words of President Harold B. Lee, “Satan’s greatest threat today is to destroy the family, and to make mockery of the law of chastity and the sanctity of the marriage covenant.” (*Church News*, 19 Aug. 1972, p. 3.)

Paul prophetically recognized this major problem of “forbidding to marry” in the latter times, and accordingly he has given us a specific warning against such an apostate practice.

(44-19) 1 Timothy 4:3–5. Are the Mosaic Restrictions on Eating Certain Meats and Foods Still in Force?

“Whoso forbiddeth to abstain from meats, that man should not eat the same, is not ordained of God; For, behold, the beasts of the field and the fowls of the air, and that which cometh of the earth, is ordained for the use of man for food and for raiment, and that he might have in abundance.” (D. & C. 49:18–19.)” (See also D&C 89:12, 13.)

“God has removed the Mosaic restrictions where the eating of certain meats and foods are concerned. These are now clean (sanctified, as it were); there are no longer any ceremonially unclean or forbidden foods.” (McConkie, *DNTC*, 3:86.)

(44-20) 1 Timothy 4:8. Does Paul Condemn Bodily Exercise?

The word order as arranged in the King James Version is an unfortunate one, for it conveys something different from what was intended. Literally, the Greek reads, “Bodily exercise for a little is profitable, but godliness for all things profitable is.” The meaning is not that physical exercise is worthless, but, rather, that its usefulness is limited; it is profitable only in a few ways. But godliness (or spiritual exercise) has unlimited usefulness; it is profitable in every way. Physical exercise profits the body, which shall perish, but godliness profits both the body and the spirit.

(44-21) 1 Timothy 5:1–18. What Principles of Temporal Welfare Are Endorsed by Paul?

Three specific welfare principles are taught by Paul in these verses. They are as follows:

[1.] “Gospel standards provide that members of the Church should work and support themselves. When this fails, they are to gain temporal assistance from their family, including children and grandchildren. Only when these resources do not suffice is there justification for calling on the Church itself for temporal assistance. . . .

[2.] “To qualify for church assistance, under the welfare system then in operation, widows were: To be in need; to be without children or relatives who could support them; to be 60 years of age; to have been faithful to their husbands; to have lived the gospel in general, as shown by the fact of rearing children, of lodging strangers, of washing the clothes of the saints, of relieving the afflicted, and of general proper living. Young widows were counseled to marry again and raise families.

[3.] “There are times when elders, spending their full time in the ministry, should receive temporal help from the Church, especially for their families.” (McConkie, *DNTC*, 3:90–91; see D&C 75:24.)

(44-22) 1 Timothy 5:22. “Lay Hands Suddenly on No Man”

“Brethren should be seasoned, tried, and found worthy before they are ordained and set apart to serve in positions of power and influence in the Church.” (McConkie, *DNTC*, 3:92.)

POINTS TO PONDER

RECOGNIZE AND RESIST “DOCTRINES OF DEVILS” THAT SEEK TO DESTROY THE FAITH OF THE SAINTS

In his first letter to Timothy, Paul warned that in the latter days certain apostate doctrines would become so popular among members of the Church that they would constitute a most serious threat to the faith. (1 Timothy 4:1, 2.) Even so today, members of the Church are confronted with social practices and false beliefs so serious in nature that those who embrace them may lose their testimonies and their Church membership, and do irreparable damage to future generations. If you heed the counsel given, you may be the means by which your friends may avoid similar pitfalls.

What are some of the doctrines of the devil that some, even in the Church, would begin to believe?

Paul cites two “doctrines of devils” (1 Timothy 4:1) as examples: first, forbidding to marry, and second, commanding people not to eat meats (certain foods).

The exclusion of long lists of prohibited foods from our diets is certainly not as important in our relationship to the Lord as the Jew of Paul’s time made it to be; nevertheless, today some take liberties with what the Lord has said and suppose that the Word of Wisdom means more than it really means.

“Some unstable people become cranks with reference to this law of health. It should be understood that the Word of Wisdom is not the gospel, and the gospel is not the Word of Wisdom. As Paul said, ‘The kingdom of God is not meat and drink; but righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost.’ (Rom 14:17.)

*“There is no prohibition in Section 89, for instance, as to the eating of white bread, using white flour, white sugar, cocoa, chocolate, eggs, milk, meat, or anything else, except items classified under the headings, tea, coffee, tobacco, and liquor. As a matter of fact those who command that men should not eat meat, are not ordained of God, such counsel being listed by Paul as an evidence of apostasy. God has created ‘meats,’ he says, ‘to be received with thanksgiving of them which believe and know the truth.’ (1 Tim. 4:3.)” (Bruce R. McConkie, *Mormon Doctrine*, pp. 845–46.)*

Sadly, some persons become so involved in their interpretation and practice of the Word of Wisdom that they overlook other matters which are of great

significance to their exaltation. Paul said that one of the most important of these is marriage. If Satan or one of his advocates came to Church members and said, "You should never marry," few if any members of the Church would accept this idea. But we are extremely naive if we suppose that Satan would try such a direct, boldfaced approach to try to get us to accept his program. Satan is more subtle than that. (See Moses 4:1–6, for instance.)

Today many couples live together without marriage. They justify themselves by arguing that their "commitment" to one another is more important than a marriage ceremony. Fortunately, most Latter-day Saint men and women do not choose to follow this evil practice. They acknowledge the value and importance of the marriage contract. But what of those who choose a civil ceremony when a celestial sealing is available? If Satan can persuade you not to marry, or to postpone marriage in the temple, what may be the eternal consequences? In May of 1843 the Prophet Joseph Smith gave inspired instruction which indicates how much the Lord values celestial marriage. Read D&C 131:1–4.

Even after people are married, Satan continues his relentless battle. Listed here are some of the lies he is using in his attempt to destroy marriage; also listed are the answers given by our modern prophets. This is a good opportunity for you to check your own attitude on these matters so that you may be assured you are in harmony with the Lord's servants.

SATAN'S LIE: Physical gratification before marriage should be emphasized.

Can young people indulge in improper relationships before marriage without detrimental effect to their eventual marriage? President McKay has given this answer:

"It is important for young people to realize that intelligent home building begins with a young man and a young girl in their teens. Often the health of children, if a couple be blessed with such, depends upon the actions of parents before marriage. . . .
"Every young man, particularly, should prepare for the responsibility of fatherhood by keeping himself physically clean, that he might enter into that responsibility not as a coward or deceiver, but as one honorable and fit to found a home. The young man who, in unfitness, takes upon himself the responsibility of fatherhood is worse than a deceiver. The future happiness of his wife and children depends upon his life in youth.

"Let us also teach girls that motherhood is divine, for when we touch the creative part of life, we enter into the realm of divinity. It is important, therefore, that young womanhood realize the necessity of keeping their bodies clean and pure, that their children might enter the world unhampered by sin and disease. An unshackled birth and an inheritance of noble character are the greatest blessings of childhood. No mother has the right to shackle a child through life for what seems in youth to be a pleasant pastime or her right to indulge in harmful drugs and other sinful practices. Those who are to be the mothers of the race should at least so live as to bear children who are not burdened from birth by sickness, weakness, or deformity. . . ." (CR, Apr. 1969, p. 6.)

SATAN'S LIE: Birth control should be practiced.

Is the commandment to "multiply and replenish the earth" still in force? Can you see how the violation of this commandment will have a deteriorating, disintegrating effect on marriage?

President Spencer W. Kimball has said:

"The first commandment recorded seems to have been 'Multiply and replenish the earth.' Let no one ever think that the command came to have children without marriage. No such suggestion could ever have foundation. When God had created the woman, he brought her unto the man and gave her to him as his wife, and commanded, 'Therefore shall a man leave his father and his mother, and shall cleave unto his wife: and they shall be one flesh' (Genesis 2:24). . . .

"There seems to be a growing feeling that marriage is for legal sex, for sex's sake. Marriage is basically for the family; that is why we marry—not for the satisfaction of the sex, as the world around us would have us believe. When people have found their companions, there should be no long delay. Young wives should be occupied in bearing and rearing their children. I know of no scriptures where an authorization is given to young wives to withhold their families and to go to work to put their husbands through school. There are thousands of husbands who have worked their own way through school and have reared families at the same time. Though it is more difficult, young people can make their way through their educational programs. On most campuses there are married student buildings for their living. It's a good experience to learn to save and to scratch and to economize." ("Marriage Is Honorable," *Speeches of the Year*, 1973, pp. 262, 63.)

SATAN'S LIE: Legal opportunities for abortion should be increased.

When couples may destroy unwanted children simply because they want to, what does the institution of marriage become? In what ways does this weaken marriage? The First Presidency (Spencer W. Kimball, N. Eldon Tanner, Marion G. Romney) has stated:

“The Church opposes abortion and counsels its members not to submit to, be a party to, or perform an abortion except in the rare cases where, in the opinion of competent medical counsel, the life or health of the woman is seriously endangered or where the pregnancy was caused by forcible rape and produces serious emotional trauma in the victim. Even then it should be done only after counseling with the local bishop or branch president and after receiving divine confirmation through prayer.

“Abortion is one of the most revolting and sinful practices in this day, when we are witnessing the frightening evidence of permissiveness leading to sexual immorality.

“Members of the Church guilty of being parties to the sin of abortion are subject to the disciplinary action of the councils of the Church as circumstances warrant. In dealing with this serious matter, it would be well to keep in mind the word of the Lord stated in the 59th section of the Doctrine and Covenants, verse 6. ‘Thou shalt not steal; neither commit adultery, nor kill, nor do anything like unto it.’

“As far as has been revealed, the sin of abortion is one for which a person may repent and gain forgiveness.” (Ensign, July 1976, p. 76.)

SATAN'S LIE: Reduce the contact children have with parents.

Is it natural for children to be raised by other than their parents? How does it affect children if they are taken from the home a great deal during those early years of their greatest need for parental love and training? The First Presidency of the church has declared:

“This divine service of motherhood can be rendered only by mothers. It may not be passed to others. Nurses cannot do it; public nurseries cannot do it; hired help cannot do it—only mother, aided as much as may be by the loving hands of father, brothers, and sisters, can give the full needed measure of watchful care.” (The First Presidency [Heber J. Grant, J. Reuben Clark, Jr., David O. McKay], Oct.

1942, as cited by Spencer W. Kimball, CR, Apr. 1974, p. 9.)

“By bringing these choice spirits to earth, each father and each mother assume towards the tabernacled spirit and towards the Lord Himself by having taken advantage of the opportunity He offered, an obligation of the most sacred kind, because the fate of that spirit in the eternities to come, the blessings or punishments which shall await it in the hereafter, depend, in great part, upon the care, the teachings, the training which the parents shall give to that spirit.

“No parent can escape that obligation and that responsibility, and for the proper meeting thereof, the Lord will hold us to a strict accountability. No loftier duty than this can be assumed by mortals.” (Message of the First Presidency [Heber J. Grant, J. Reuben Clark, Jr., David O. McKay], presented by J. Reuben Clark, Jr., in CR, Oct. 1942, p. 12.)

SATAN'S LIE: Divorce is the solution for unhappy marriages.

As it becomes easier and easier to obtain a divorce, will couples who otherwise might work out a successful marriage be tempted to break their marriage apart without making a real effort? In what way does this cheapen marriage and weaken it as a means to hold society together? Are lax divorce laws simply a symptom of the low spiritual level of society? President Spencer W. Kimball has said:

“With all conditions as nearly ideal as possible, there are still people who terminate their marriages for the reason of ‘incompatibility.’ We see so many shows and read so much fiction and come in contact with so many society scandals that the people in general come to think of ‘marrying and giving in marriage,’ divorcing and remarrying, as the normal patterns.

“The divorce itself does not constitute the entire evil, but the very acceptance of divorce as a cure is also a serious sin of this generation. The fact that a program or a pattern is universally accepted is not evidence that it is right. Marriage never was easy. It may never be. It brings with it sacrifice, sharing, and a demand for great selflessness.

“Many of the TV screen shows and stories of fiction end with marriage: ‘They lived happily ever after.’ Since nearly all of us have experienced divorce among our close friends or relatives, we have come to realize that divorce is not a cure for difficulty, but is merely an escape, and a weak one. We have come

to realize also that the mere performance of a ceremony does not bring happiness and a successful marriage. Happiness does not come by pressing a button, as does the electric light; happiness is a state of mind and comes from within. It must be earned. It cannot be purchased with money; it cannot be taken for nothing. . . .

“Every divorce is the result of selfishness on the part of one or the other or both parties to a marriage contract. Someone is thinking of self—comforts, conveniences, freedoms, luxuries, or ease. Sometimes the ceaseless pinpricking of an unhappy, discontented, and selfish spouse can finally add up to serious physical violence. Sometimes people are goaded to the point where they erringly feel justified in doing the things which are so wrong. Nothing, of course, justifies sin.” (“Marriage and Divorce,” BYU Devotional, 7 Sept. 1976, pp. 3, 6.)

(44-23) Strive to Be an Example of the Believers

With regard to the lies of Satan listed earlier, what should a “believer” do? If you are to be “an example of the believers,” how would you respond to Satan’s lies?

If you are determined to be an example of the believers, how would you respond in your personal

life to the question of whether it is wrong to eat any meat?

These are the last days, and it is no coincidence that you have come to the earth at this time. President Joseph Fielding Smith said:

“Our young people are among the most blessed and favored of our Father’s children. They are the nobility of heaven, a choice and chosen generation who have a divine destiny. Their spirits have been reserved to come forth in this day when the gospel is on earth, and when the Lord needs valiant servants to carry on his great latter-day work.

“May the Lord bless you, the youth of Zion, and keep you true to every covenant and obligation, cause you to walk in paths of light and truth, and preserve you for the great labors ahead.” (“Our Concern for All Our Father’s Children,” *Improvement Era*, June 1970, p. 3.)

Will you be faithful to this birthright about which Elder Lee spoke? Will you resist Satan’s lies which Paul prophesied would deceive some of the saints in the latter-days? Will you strive with all your might to be “an example of the believers”? For Saturday night is drawing to a close, and a glorious Sabbath morning shall greet those who have been faithful.

SECTION 10

PAUL'S WITNESS TO PRIESTHOOD LEADERS

LESSONS

45. "I Have Fought a Good Fight, I Have Finished My Course, I Have Kept the Faith" (2 Timothy)
46. "Let Us Go On unto Perfection" (Hebrews 1-7)
47. "By the Blood Ye Are Sanctified" (Hebrews 8-10)
48. Faith: Evidence of Things Not Seen (Hebrews 11-13)

BIOGRAPHIES

Paul's Faithfulness

"... in Paul's last letter to Timothy, which was written just previous to his death,—he says: 'I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith: henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, shall give me at that day: and not to me only, but unto all them also that love His appearing.' No one who believes the account, will doubt for a moment this assertion of Paul which was made, as he knew, just before he was to take his leave of this world. Though he once, according to his own word, persecuted the Church of God and wasted it, yet after embracing the faith, his labors were unceasing to spread the glorious news: and like a faithful soldier, when called to give his life in the cause which he had espoused, he laid it down, as he says, with an assurance of an eternal crown. Follow the labors of this Apostle from the time of his conversion to the time of his death, and you will have a fair sample of industry and patience in promulgating the Gospel of Christ. Derided, whipped, and stoned, the moment he escaped the hands of his persecutors he as zealously as ever proclaimed the doctrine of the Savior. And all may know that he did not embrace the faith for honor in this life, nor for the gain of earthly goods. What, then, could have induced him to undergo all this toil? It was, as he said, that he might obtain the crown of righteousness from the hand of God. No one, we presume, will doubt the faithfulness of Paul to the end. None will say that he did not keep the faith, that he did not fight the good

fight, that he did not preach and persuade to the last. And what was he to receive? A crown of righteousness. And what shall others receive who do not labor faithfully, and continue to the end? We leave such to search out their own promises if any they have; and if they have any they are welcome to them, on our part, for the Lord says that every man is to receive according to his works. Reflect for a moment, brethren, and enquire, whether you would consider yourselves worthy [of] a seat at the marriage feast with Paul and others like him, if you had been unfaithful? Had you not fought the good fight, and kept the faith, could you expect to receive? Have you a promise of receiving a crown of righteousness from the hand of the Lord, with the Church of the Firstborn? Here then, we understand, that Paul rested his hope in Christ, because he had kept the faith, and loved His appearing and from His hand he had a promise of receiving a crown of righteousness." (Smith, *Teachings*, pp. 63-64.)

Timothy was born of a Greek father and a devoutly Jewish mother, Eunice (Acts 16:1; 2 Timothy 1:5). He lived at either Lystra or Derbe where he was converted by Paul during the first missionary journey. While completing the second missionary journey, Paul took Timothy to be his secretary and companion (Acts 16:1-4; 1 Thessalonians 3:2) after ordaining and circumcising him to please the Jews (2 Timothy 1:6; Acts 16:3).

Timothy remained with Silas in Berea after Paul was forced to flee the city (Acts 17:14). Not long afterwards, he joined Paul in Corinth (Acts 18:1, 5).

At a later time, Timothy was sent back to Corinth to deal with disorders in the church, and there he may have labored until Titus took his place (1 Thessalonians 3:6; Acts 19:22; 1 Corinthians 4:17; 16:11; 2 Corinthians 7:6, 13; 8:6, 16, 23; 12:18).

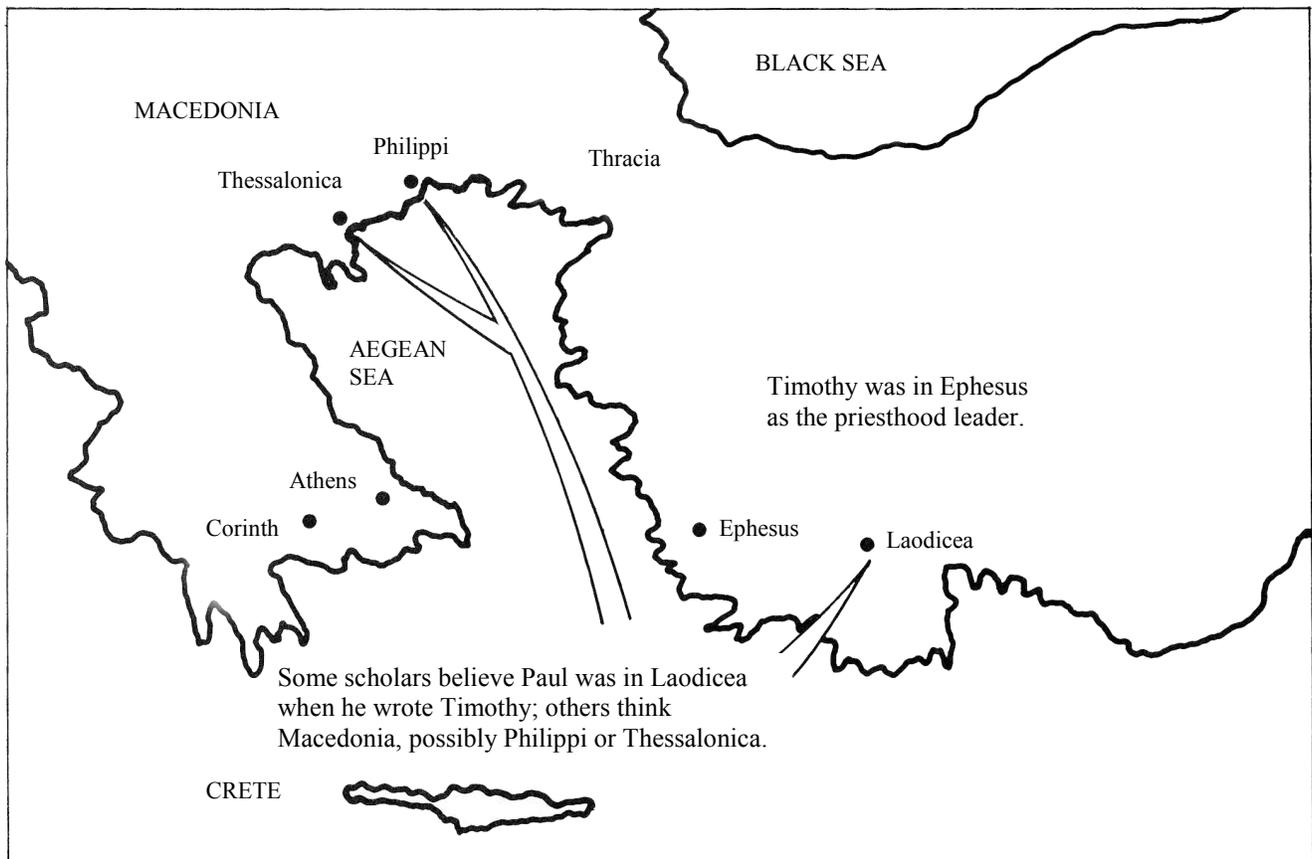
After helping to organize a collection for the Jerusalem church, he accompanied Paul as far as Troas, though it isn't certain whether he continued to Jerusalem (Acts 20:4-6). Nor is there indication that he was with Paul in Rome during the first

imprisonment. What is known is that Timothy was with Paul when Philipians, 2 Corinthians, Colossians, and Philemon were written. No other information about the travels of Timothy is available.

Referred to as a young man (1 Timothy 1:3), Timothy is considered by Paul to be a capable and beloved soldier of Christ. In Paul's letters to Timothy, the apostle bolsters, encourages, and challenges Timothy to remain firm in the faith in spite of opposition from Judaizers, licentious members, and heathen nonmembers. The last reference to Timothy in the New Testament tells of his release from a Roman prison wherein he may have languished during the final days of Paul's life (Hebrews 13:23).

Titus, a Greek convert of Paul's (Titus 1:4) and whose parents were probably gentiles (Galatians 2:3), was one of Paul's foremost companions in the work of the ministry (2 Corinthians 8:23). Titus accompanied Paul

from Antioch to Jerusalem where Judaizers desired to have him circumcised and where the leaders of the church determined not to require him to submit to that Mosaic ritual (Acts 15:2, 23-29; Galatians 2:1, 3). When Titus was sent to Corinth (1 Corinthians 4:17; 16:10), his conciliatory measures were successful and peace was restored (2 Corinthians 7:5-15). Later, no doubt because of his influence among the Corinthian saints, Titus was again asked by Paul to visit Corinth to complete a collection for the members at Jerusalem (2 Corinthians 8:6-16). Several years later, he was assigned to labor in Crete until he was called to meet with Paul (Titus 1:4, 5). Tradition holds that he was the church leader in Crete and that he performed missionary labors in Dalmatia, which is now part of Yugoslavia (2 Timothy 4:10). It is thought by some that he was in Rome during Paul's final imprisonment.



"I HAVE FOUGHT A GOOD FIGHT,
I HAVE FINISHED MY COURSE,
I HAVE KEPT THE FAITH"



A Letter from Paul to Titus Written from Macedonia to Crete, ca. A.D. 67–68 (Titus)	
	Titus
Paul Foreordained to Gain Eternal Life	1:1–4
Appointment of Bishops	1:5–9
Opposing False Teachers	1:10–16
Instruction in Moral Living	2:1–15
How to Live After Baptism	3:1–8a
Personal Advice to Titus	3:8b–15

THEME

By following the pattern established by Christ, strength can be developed to overcome all obstacles to spiritual sensitivity and growth.

INTRODUCTION

The final scene of Paul's ministry is Rome. Three decades of strenuous service have seen the transformation of Saul of Tarsus into Paul the zealous apostle of Jesus Christ. Imprisoned once

The Second Letter of Paul to Timothy in Ephesus Written from Roman Imprisonment, ca. A.D. 68 (2 Timothy)	
	2 Timothy
Timothy's Gifts of the Spirit	1:1–18
How Timothy Should Face Hardships	2:1–7
Christ Gives Eternal Glory to the Elect	2:8–13
Shun Contention, Seek Godliness	2:14–26
Dangers of the Last Days	3:1–13
Scriptures Guide Man to Salvation	3:14–17
Timothy Exhorted to "Preach the Word"	4:1–5
Paul and All Saints Assured of Exaltation	4:6–22

again, he now faces what appears to be certain conviction and death. Fearfully, friends desert him; others betray him. Yet he remains calm and even exultant. "I am now ready to be offered," he writes without remorse or pity. "The time of my departure is at hand." (2 Timothy 4:6.)

Nevertheless Paul is not without concerns. His thoughts turn to his brethren who remain in the ministry. Even before his final imprisonment he had written Titus to guide him in his duty. Now he writes to his “dearly beloved” Timothy. With death approaching, his counsel reflects eternal perspective. He speaks movingly of the trials which the youthful Timothy must face. Above all he reveals the key both to his own strength and to Timothy’s future happiness: the need to build spirituality.

Paul had learned this lesson for himself. “We ourselves . . . were sometimes foolish, disobedient, deceived, serving divers lusts and pleasures, living in malice and envy, hateful, and hating one another,” Paul confessed about his early life. (Titus 3:3.) What had transformed him? Now, before his impending death, how could he speak confidently of exaltation? What had he learned that enabled him to replace fear with strength, love, and self-control? (See 2 Timothy 1:7.)

This is the message of Titus and 2 Timothy. Turn and read these letters. Remember, these are Paul’s last words, solemnized by his approaching death. They are his final bequest, the distillation of his experience and wisdom. You will find that Paul warns his “sons” of dangers similar to our own times.

But even more importantly, he lists the means by which you can build spirituality, the formula by which you can successfully complete your life’s journey and secure the deep and full joy which our Savior promises (John 16:24).

Before proceeding, read all the scriptural references in the reading block.

INTERPRETIVE COMMENTARY

TITUS

(45-1) The Letter to Titus

“Titus is the epistle of obedience. Writing in his old age, Paul seems increasingly impressed by the Spirit to counsel his beloved Titus, and through him all the saints, of the overpowering need to walk in paths of truth and righteousness. . . .

“Titus is written to and for the saints. It is a sermon of practical exhortation to those in the fold, a common sense approach to the problem of living in the world without being of the world.” (McConkie, *DNTC*, 3:119.)

(45-2) Place and Date of Writing

Paul probably wrote this letter not long after his return to Ephesus, about A.D. 67 or 68, sometime between his first and second imprisonments. There are no clues as to the letter’s point of origin.

(45-3) Background Information

Sometime prior to writing, Paul and Titus had visited the island of Crete. When it became apparent that Paul would be unable to remain on the island, he left Titus behind to set in order the church (Titus 1:5). Paul’s letter, written to strengthen and encourage Titus, provides definite instructions about the duties of those who minister in the church. Specifically, the apostle warns Titus to beware of false ministers and doctrines. He also speaks regarding the character and conduct befitting one who is called to assume priesthood leadership.

(45-4) Titus 1:9. Who Were “the Gainsayers”?

This word is derived from the old Anglo-Saxon word *gegn*, which means “contrary to” or “in opposition of.” We see this same root in our word *against*, which is close to a perfect synonym for *gain* as it is used in verse 9. When used in the word *gainsayers*, this root means “those who speak against something in order to enrich oneself at the expense of others.”

(45-5) Titus 1:12. The Nature and Character of the Cretans

Paul’s reference to Cretans as “liars, evil beasts, slow bellies” may have been borrowed from Epimenides, a Greek poet who lived in the sixth century B.C. Using this admittedly strong language, Paul condemns the false teachers on Crete for perverting the gospel in order to make money (vs. 11). This corresponds with the reputation of the Cretans for greed and avariciousness, as reported by such ancient writers as Cicero, Livy, Plutarch, and Polybius. Historically, the name Cretan came to be synonymous with dishonesty. Their reputation for lying became so commonly known that the name became both a verb (*kretidzein*, meaning “to speak like a Cretan” or “to lie”) and a noun (*kretismos*, literally, “Cretan behavior,” which equaled “lying”). *Slow bellies* is better translated *idle bellies* and carries the idea of lazy gluttony that leads to extreme obesity. Some argue that Paul, an apostle, would not slur a whole group of people in making his point. But as you read it carefully, Paul is applying it to those who would bring false teachings into the church. In all of his letters, he does not hesitate to speak sharply and strongly about such wickedness.

(45-6) Titus 1:15. Who Are “the Pure”?

That purity spoken of is purity of mind and body. It includes sexual purity. It is of the greatest importance, and it cannot be neglected as we strive to develop perfect lives. Elder McConkie has written:

“The *pure in heart* are those who are free from moral defilement or guilt; who have bridled their passions, put off the natural man and become saints through the atonement (Mosiah 3:19); who have been born again, becoming the sons and daughters of Christ (Mosiah 5:7); who are walking in paths of uprightness and virtue and seeking to do all things that further the interests of the Lord’s earthly kingdom. . . .

“One of the chief identifying characteristics of a saint is that he has a pure mind. (2 Pet. 3:1)” (McConkie, *Mormon Doctrine*, pp. 612–13.)

(45-7) Titus 2:10. What Is Meant by the Word *Purloining*?

This word carried a meaning of “to put far away from another,” and thus it came to mean “to appropriate something of another’s for one’s own use.” It is secret rather than open theft. Servants are exhorted by Paul not to take for their own use the things which belong to their masters. Rather, they are to show fidelity; they are to be trustworthy in all things.

(45-8) Titus 3:5. Are Men Saved by the “Works of Righteousness”?

“There is no salvation in good works as such. That is: There are no good works which men may do which—standing alone—will cause them to be resurrected or to gain eternal life. Immortality and eternal life come through the atonement of Christ, the one being a free gift, the other being offered freely to all who will be baptized and who then keep the commandments.” (McConkie, *DNTC*, 3:126–27.)

(45-9) Titus 3:5. What Is the “Washing of Regeneration”?

“Baptism in water, so named to signify that baptized converts are regenerated; that is, they become new again spiritually; they become like little children, alive in Christ and without sin.” (McConkie, *DNTC*, 3:127.)

(45-10) Titus 3:9. Why “Avoid Foolish Questions, and Genealogies, and Contentions, and Strivings About the Law”?

“There is no converting power in debate and contention. Christ’s ministers are to teach, not to argue. Missionaries go forth, for instance, to “declare

glad tidings,” with this restriction: ‘Of tenets thou shalt not talk’ (D. & C. 19:20–31), meaning they are to teach and explain the basic doctrines of salvation and not engage in contentions and strivings about the doctrines of sectarianism.

“Linked here with contentions and strivings about the Law of Moses, these refer to the false Jewish tradition that salvation was for the chosen seed as such was known by genealogical recitations. In this dispensation, the Lord has commanded genealogical research as an essential requisite in making salvation available to those who do not have opportunity to receive the gospel in this life.” (McConkie, *DNTC*, 3:127.)

(45-11) Titus 3:10, 11. What Is the Sin of Heresy?

One is considered to be a heretic when he belongs to the church yet adheres to any religious opinion which is contrary to the official doctrine of the church. Heresy is the belief and espousal of false doctrine. The true doctrines of the kingdom are to be found in the scriptures, the conference reports, and the words of the living prophets, as these were and are inspired by the Holy Ghost.

(45-12) Titus 3:10. Is Any Man to Be Rejected?

“There comes a time when it is wise to shun and avoid those who rebel against the light and whose hearts are set on promulgating false and damning doctrines. A modern illustration of such is those cultists who leave the Church to advocate and practice plural marriage in a day when the President of the Church has withdrawn from all men the power to perform these marriages.” (McConkie, *DNTC*, 3:128.)

2 TIMOTHY

(45-13) The Second Letter to Timothy

Second Timothy is a letter of encouragement to Timothy and to all priesthood leaders. It is a warning against spiritual apostasy and a clear manifestation of Paul’s triumphant faith.

This letter probably was written from Rome near the end of Paul’s second imprisonment and just prior to his martyrdom, about A.D. 68. It is very likely the last of Paul’s letters.

(45-14) Background Information

Paul’s second imprisonment was different from the first in that the Roman authorities did not treat Paul with the same deference which they had shown to him

before. The attitude of the Roman government toward the early church had undergone a radical shift. Nero placed the blame for the great fire of Rome upon the saints and launched a series of intense but limited persecutions against the Christians in Rome. Both Paul and Peter were caught up in this new hostility and were martyred, along with many other members of the church. During the period of his second imprisonment, friends still visited Paul, but evidence indicates that his freedom to preach the gospel was greatly restricted. At his trial no one came forth to plead his cause. Apparently only Luke remained with him.

In spite of the negative and adverse circumstances in which he found himself, he remained optimistic and buoyed up by his faith in Christ. Second Timothy stands as one of the great monuments to faith and hope in the face of loneliness and adversity.

(45-15) Significant Contributions

Timothy is a priesthood leader in the kingdom. Paul's second letter to Timothy is a challenge for him to magnify the calling to which he has been ordained and to endure to the end. Paul counsels his young friend in the ministry to be strong in the faith, to keep the commandments, to shun contention, to strive for complete victory over the temptations of the world, to study the holy scriptures, and to preach the word with power.

Today, the same advice applies to priesthood leaders throughout the world. In this world gone mad with wickedness, this letter serves as a concise, powerful description of the great apostasy. It is a graphic and prophetic picture of that fearful spiritual pollution which covers this latter-day world. This, Paul's final letter, is a timeless letter for all mankind.

(45-16) 2 Timothy 2:1–7. What Kind of Devotion to the Work Did Paul Require of Timothy?

Paul admonished Timothy to be strong in the faith. In doing so, he used three metaphors.

The military metaphor referred to the fact that a soldier was to be a soldier and nothing else. He was not to entangle himself in other business. He was to be valiant, for only valiant soldiers receive the favor of their captain. Like a stalwart warrior, Timothy was to be whole-souled in his devotion to Jesus if the great battle between light and darkness was to be won (vss. 3, 4).

The second metaphor dealt with athletics. It indicated that a man wins the prize only by conforming his life to the rigorous training and contest rules of the game. Timothy was challenged to keep all of the commandments if he was to win the great prize of eternal life (vs. 5).

A third metaphor, taken from agriculture, implied that if Timothy diligently labored in the Lord's vineyard, he would reap salvation to his own soul (vs. 6. and see D&C 4 and John 4:36).

(45-17) 2 Timothy 2:14, 16, 23–25. Why Is It of No Profit to Strive About Words?

“Contention and division are of the devil. Agreement and unity are of God. Since true religion comes by revelation, man's sole purpose in trying to understand and interpret gospel principles should be to find out what the Lord means in any given revelation. This knowledge can be gained only by the power of the Spirit. Hence, there is no occasion to debate, to argue, to contend, to champion one cause as against another. ‘Those who have the Spirit do not hang doggedly to a point of doctrine or philosophy for no other reason than to come off victorious in a disagreement. Their purpose, rather, is to seek truth by investigation, research, and inspiration. Cease to contend one with another,’ the Lord has commanded. (D. & C. 136:23; Tit. 3:9.)” (*Mormon Doctrine*, 2nd ed., p. 161.)” (McConkie, *DNTC*, 3:105; see also 3 Nephi 11:28–30.)

(45-18) 2 Timothy 2:15. How Should Men Rightly Divide the Word of Truth?

“Not all truth is of equal value. Some scientific truths may benefit men in this life only; the truths of revealed religion will pour out blessings upon them now and forever. But even revealed truth is not all of the same worth. Some things apply only to past dispensations, as the performances of the Mosaic system; others are binding in all ages, as the laws pertaining to baptism and celestial marriage.” (McConkie, *DNTC*, 3:105–6.)

(45-19) 2 Timothy 2:17. What Was the Meaning of the Word *Canker*?

Paul admonishes the saints against contention and foolish arguments. He uses the example of a canker to teach the principle. Today a canker is a spreading, painful sore. In the Greek, though, the word is *gangreina*, from which we take our word *gangrene*.

Gangrene is not just a painful sore but is associated with the death of living cells and tissues from lack of blood. Contention and arguments choke off the life-giving spiritual sustenance of the Holy Ghost and bring death to spirituality. If tolerated, such contention can destroy the faith of the saints.

(45-20) 2 Timothy 2:18. Why Did Some Argue That the Resurrection Was Past?

“Satan’s ministers delight in spiritualizing away the prophecies and doctrines of the gospel. Probably what was here involved was the allegorical teaching that the resurrection consisted in imparting new life to the soul through acceptance of the gospel. Such a view is on a par with the sectarian heresy that the Second Coming is past, meaning that the Lord already has returned to dwell in the hearts of the faithful.” (McConkie, *DNTC*, 3:106.)

(45-21) 2 Timothy 3:1–4. To What Extent Has Paul’s Prophecy About Perilous Times Been Fulfilled in Our Day?

“We see our world sinking into depths of corruption. Every sin mentioned by Paul is now rampant in our society.

“Men and women are ‘lovers of their own selves.’ They boast in their accomplishment. They curse. They blaspheme. Another sin is disobedience of children to parents and parents’ disobedience to law. Many are without the natural affection, which seems to be eroding family life as they seek to satisfy their own selfish wants.

“There are said to be millions of perverts who have relinquished their natural affection and bypassed courtship and normal marriage relationships. This practice is spreading like a prairie fire and changing our world. They are without ‘natural affection’ for God, for spouses, and even for children.” (Spencer W. Kimball in *CR*, Apr. 1971, p. 7.)

(45-22) 2 Timothy 3:4. What of Those Who Love Pleasure More Than They Love God?

“Paul speaks of ‘lovers of pleasure more than lovers of God.’ Does that not describe the wanton sex permissiveness of our day?

“Paul speaks of those who ‘creep into houses, and lead captive silly women laden with sins, led away with divers lusts.’ (2 Tim. 3:6.)

“Immorality seems to now receive the wink of approval of the once honorable people. Debauchery

never gave birth to good of any kind, and Paul said: ‘But she that liveth in pleasure is dead while she liveth.’ (1 Tim. 5:6.) But now comes a heavenly voice. ‘Thou shalt not commit adultery; and he that committeth adultery, and repenteth not, shall be cast out.’ (D&C 42:24.)” (Spencer W. Kimball in *CR*, Apr. 1971, p. 8.)

(45-23) 2 Timothy 3:5. What Is “a Form of Godliness” Without “the Power Thereof”?

“A form of godliness without saving power! A hollow shell shattered into many fragments! An illusive image without substance! An imitation of what God had aforesaid revealed through Peter and Paul! A system of so-called Christianity which worshipped a God without a power, a God who gave no revelations, unfolded no visions, worked no miracles, and had forgotten the unchangeable pattern of the past! All Christendom wallowing in the mire and filth of apostasy!” (McConkie, *DNTC*, 3:111.)

(45-24) 2 Timothy 3:7. “Ever Learning and Never Able to Come to the Knowledge of the Truth”

“Among the signs of the last days was an increase of learning. . . .

“. . . Is not knowledge increased? Was there ever a time in the history of the world when so much knowledge was poured out upon the people? But sad to say, the words of Paul are true—the people are ‘ever learning and never able to come to the knowledge of the truth.’ (2 Tim. 3:7.)” (Joseph Fielding Smith in *CR*, Apr. 1966, pp. 13–14.)

(45-25) 2 Timothy 3:8. Who Were Jannes and Jambres?

According to Jewish tradition, these were the two Egyptian magicians who opposed Moses. (See Exodus 7:9–13 and Smith, *A Dictionary of the Bible*, rev. ed., s.v. “Jannes and Jambres.”)

(45-26) 2 Timothy 3:16. Will the Scriptures Alone Save Us?

“‘But,’ says an objector, ‘have we not the Bible, and are not the Holy Scriptures able to make us wise unto salvation?’ Yes, provided we obey them. ‘*All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness; that the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works.*’ The ‘good works’ are the great desideratum. The Bible itself is but the dead letter, it is the Spirit that giveth

life. The way to obtain the Spirit is that which is here marked out so plainly in the Scriptures. There is no other. Obedience, therefore, to these principles is absolutely necessary, in order to obtain the salvation and exaltation brought to light through the gospel.” (Joseph F. Smith, *Gospel Doctrine*, pp. 101–2.)

(45-27) 2 Timothy 4:2. How Did Joseph Smith Revise This Verse?

“Preach the word. Be instant in season. Those who are out of season, reprove, rebuke, exhort with all long-suffering and doctrine.” (Inspired Version, taken from the original manuscript by Robert J. Matthews. Note the punctuation changes in addition to the word changes made by the Prophet.)

(45-28) 2 Timothy 4:4. What Did Paul Mean by the Use of the Word *Fables*?

“All false doctrines are *fables*. That is, they are stories which have been imagined, fabricated, and invented as opposed to the gospel which is real and true. (2 Pet. 1:16.) Apostasy consists in turning from true doctrine to fables.” (McConkie, *Mormon Doctrine*, p. 261.)

(45-29) 2 Timothy 4:6, 7. Was Paul to Be Martyred Before His Time?

“It will be recalled that Peter was released from prison by an angel and protected in many ways ’till his work was finished. And Paul likewise. No violence could take his life until he had borne his testimony to Rome and Greece and other lands. But finally he made the prophetic statement to Timothy: ‘For I am now ready to be offered, and the time of my departure is at hand. I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith.’ (2 Tim. 4:6, 7.) There was no fear in his approach to eternity—only assurance and calm resignation to the inevitable martyrdom which he faced. He did not want to die but was willing thus to seal his testimony of the Redeemer.” (Spencer W. Kimball in *CR*, Apr. 1946, p. 46.)

(45-30) 2 Timothy 4:6–8. “Henceforth Is Laid up . . . a Crown of Righteousness”

“Paul’s calling and election had been made sure. He was sealed up unto eternal life. He had kept the commandments, been tried at all hazards, and the Lord had given him the promise: ‘Son, Thou shalt be exalted.’ And since no man is or can be exalted alone, this is one of the crowning reasons why we know Paul was married.” (McConkie, *DNTC*, 3:116.)

POINTS TO PONDER

YOU MUST OVERCOME THE OBSTACLES TO SPIRITUALITY

(45-31) Fear of Adverse Opinions of Others

“Not all acts of courage bring . . . spectacular rewards. But all of them do bring peace and contentment; just as cowardice, in the end, always brings regret and remorse. . . .

“I remember . . . when I was in Australia on a mission. I went up to visit the Jenolan Caves—very wonderful, spectacular caves. And as we walked through them, the guide said, ‘If some of you will get out and stand on that rock over there and sing a song, it will demonstrate the capacity of this cave.’

“Well, the Spirit said to me, ‘Go over there and sing ‘O, My Father.’ I hesitated, and the crowd walked on. I lost the opportunity. I never felt good about that.” (Marion G. Romney, *Ensign*, May 1975, p. 74.)

(45-32) Unwillingness to Endure Affliction

“There are those who have lost faith because of personal tragedies or troubles. Faced with problems akin to Job’s, they have in effect accepted the invitation to curse God and die rather than to love God and gain the strength to endure their trials. There is, of course, in the promises of God no warrant that we will avoid the very experiences which we came here to undergo and through which we can learn reliance on the Lord. . . .

“Some years ago I became acquainted with the story of a young family whose little son was tragically ill with cancer. Every night the father sat with his boy, holding him in his arms. The pain seemed less when daddy held him close. The father slept on a mattress on the floor beside the son so that he could reach him whenever the boy cried out. The parents bore their sorrow with courage. They prayed, they loved, they served. Faith gave them strength to meet the test.” (Marion D. Hanks in *CR*, Apr. 1972, p. 128.)

(45-33) Entanglements with Things of the World

“Many people build and furnish a home and buy the automobile first—and then find they ‘cannot afford’ to pay tithing. Whom do they worship? Certainly not the Lord of heaven and earth, for we serve whom we love and give first consideration to the object of our affection and desires. Young married couples who

postpone parenthood until their degrees are attained might be shocked if their expressed preference were labeled idolatry. Their rationalization gives them degrees at the expense of children. Is it a justifiable exchange? Whom do they love and worship—themselves or God?” (Kimball, *Miracle of Forgiveness*, p. 41.)

(45-34) Vain Babblings and Contentions

“A vicious tongue can ruin the reputation and even the future of the one attacked. Insidious attacks against one’s reputation, loathsome innuendoes, half-lies about an individual are as deadly as those insect parasites that kill the heart and life of a mighty oak. They are so stealthy and cowardly that one cannot guard against them. As someone has said, ‘It is easier to dodge an elephant than a microbe.’” (N. Eldon Tanner in *CR*, Apr. 1972, p. 57.)

(45-35) Lust and Indulgence

“When the unmarried yield to the lust which induces intimacies and indulgence, they have permitted the body to dominate and have placed the spirit in chains. . . .

“That the Church’s stand on morality may be understood, we declare firmly and unalterably it is not an outworn garment, faded, old-fashioned, and threadbare. God is the same yesterday, today and forever, and His covenants and doctrines are immutable; and when the sun grows cold and the stars no longer shine, the law of chastity will still be basic in God’s world and in the Lord’s Church. Old values are upheld by the Church not because they are old, but rather because through the ages they have proved right. It will always be the rule.” (Spencer W. Kimball, “Love Vs. Lust,” *Speeches of the Year*, 1965, pp. 9, 11.)

YOU CAN FOLLOW THE PATTERN OF CHRIST AND ACHIEVE SPIRITUALITY

Fear, suffering, worldliness, foolish speech, unbridled passion, idle speculation—each can destroy spirituality. But pursuing excellence requires more than just recognizing obstacles. You may realize you have a spiritual illness, but now you must find a cure. Positive values must replace negative influences. Confidence and endurance must replace fear and suffering; godliness must transform worldliness; self-control must conquer unrestraint. Paul understood this and provided you the key.

“I know whom I have believed,” Paul wrote in beginning his epistle to Timothy. (2 Timothy 1:12. Emphasis added.) His contrast between knowledge and belief is significant. The Savior taught that knowing God, rather than merely believing, constituted eternal life; and he listed such knowledge as the first of his spiritual gifts (John 17:3; D&C 46:13). How can you come to know God? On this, the teaching of the former and modern prophets is plain and provides you with the key to spiritual greatness.

A. A Scriptural Overview of How You Attain Spiritual Greatness

WE MUST KNOW THE FATHER AND THE SON TO ENJOY ETERNAL LIFE

READ

John 17:3

D&C 132:24

WE LEARN OF THE FATHER BY KNOWING CHRIST

READ

John 5:19, 30

John 8:19, 28, 29

John 14:6–9

WE KNOW CHRIST BY DOING HIS WORKS AND BY FOLLOWING HIS EXAMPLE

READ

1 John 2:3–6

D&C 93:1

SUCH KNOWLEDGE ALLOWS US TO ENDURE TO THE END

READ

2 Nephi 31:16

B. The Goal: To Know Christ in a Real, Personal, and Close Association

The first step in knowing Christ is to learn all that we can about him. President J. Reuben Clark, Jr., has offered the following advice:

“. . . I am quite a believer in studying the life of the Savior as an actual personality. That is not often done. Our students of the Bible and of the New Testament, seem to refrain from trying to build a biography of the Master. . . .

“. . . try to go along with the Savior, live with him, let him be an actual man, half divine, of course, but nevertheless moving as a man moved in those days.” (*Behold the Lamb of God*, p. 8.)

Once you have begun to understand Christ’s true attributes and personality, place these characteristics into your life. When confronted by a circumstance, ask yourself, *What would Jesus do?* “Many of my decisions have been motivated by [this question],” Elder Marion G. Romney has testified, “Doing what I have thought He would have done has always brought satisfaction and joy.” (“Jesus Christ, Man’s Great Exemplar,” *Speeches of the Year*, 1967, p. 2.)

C. Spiritual Exercise Brings the Power Necessary

So that you might have the strength and sensitivity to follow Christ’s pattern, design a personal program of spiritual exercise. Notice that Paul recommended a similar course. Spirituality will never be attained merely by avoiding the negative pitfalls to its development, however important that may be. The full strength of the Spirit will come only as you make positive spiritual activity an integral part of your daily life. Such a program should at least include the following:

1. A Daily Resolve to Follow Christ’s Example. Commit yourself at the beginning of each day to emulate the Savior’s life.

2 Timothy 1:8.

What did Paul mean when he warned Timothy—and you—not to be “ashamed” of a testimony of Christ?

2. An Organized Study Program. Devote at least twenty to thirty minutes daily to gospel study, especially a study of the scriptures.

2 Timothy 3:14–16.

Paul counsels that the scriptures can make you “wise unto salvation through faith.”

How can you include faith in your scriptural study?

3. Daily Prayer. No less than every morning and evening “enter into thy closet, and when thou hast shut thy door, pray to thy Father . . . in secret.” (Matthew 6:6.)

2 Timothy 1:3.

Paul’s counsel is by example. Why is it important that your prayers, like Paul’s, reveal a compassion toward others?

4. Daily Service. The Savior’s paradox remains the key to spiritual happiness: As you lose your life in service to others, you shall actually find it (Matthew 10:39).

2 Timothy 3:17 and Titus 3:8, 14.

Paul stresses the need for “good works” but urges that they be fruitful. In what circumstances could service be “unfruitful”? How can secrecy and selflessness enhance our works?

5. Fasting. On occasions of special importance and need, strengthen your “exercise” program with a meaningful fast.

D. Then Comes Confirmation by the Spirit

Finally and ultimately, knowledge of Christ will come through revelation (Matthew 16:16, 17). The whispering of the Spirit will give your soul the assurance that Jesus of Nazareth is indeed the Savior, and as you increasingly take upon yourself his example and become more spiritually attuned, such knowledge will deepen and grow more real. This is part of what the scriptures define as the “power of Godliness” (D&C 84:21), for such knowledge will give you spiritual power. Truly this conviction became the rock of Paul’s testimony and the reason that he successfully endured mortality’s trials and faced death with calm assurance.

"LET US GO ON UNTO PERFECTION"



Letter to the Hebrews—Believed Written by Paul, ca. A.D. 65 (Hebrews)		Melchizedek Accepted Tithes from Abraham	7:4–10
	Hebrews	Melchizedek Priesthood Administers the Gospel	7:11–14
Christ the Creator, the Heir, the Son	1:1–4	Christ’s Priesthood Is the Power of Endless Life	7:15–18
Angels Are Ministering Spirits	1:5–14	Oath and Covenant of the Priesthood	7:19–22
Jesus: Made a Little Lower than Elohim	2:1–9		
Christ Became Mortal to Save Man	2:10–18		
Christ Is the Great High Priest and Apostle	3:1–6		
The Unfaithful Shall Not Earn the Rest of the Righteous	3:7–19		
The Gospel Was Offered to Ancient Israel	4:1, 2		
How to Enter into the Rest of the Lord	4:3–11		
The Sure Testimony of the Still, Small Voice	4:12, 13		
Christ, the Compassionate High Priest	4:14–16; 5:1–3		
Christ Called to the Holy Priesthood	5:4–14		
“Let Us Go On unto Perfection”	6:1–3		
Sons of Perdition Crucify Christ Afresh	6:4–9		
God Swears That the Faithful Shall Be Saved	6:10–20		
Melchizedek Priesthood Brings Exaltation	7:1–3		

THEME

Perfection is obtained by complying with the requirements of the everlasting gospel as revealed by Jesus Christ.

INTRODUCTION

How often have you excused an act of personal disobedience with the words, “Oh well, nobody’s perfect.” Or how many times have you dismissed the good intent or actions of someone else with a sarcastic retort, “We can’t all be perfect, you know.”

Perfection is the goal of every true follower of Jesus Christ. We seek excellence in all we say and do. No one understood this better than the apostle Paul. Prior to his writing of the epistle to the Hebrews, Paul had suffered much for the kingdom of God (2 Corinthians 11:23–27). He understood, as few men do, the meaning of his own words in relation to Jesus, that the “captain of our salvation” was made “perfect through sufferings.” (Hebrews 2:10.)

Yes, in spite of great disappointments, constant setbacks, and untold suffering, Paul remained true to his convictions, true to his commitment of service to his fellowmen, and true to his missionary purpose as defined for him by the risen Lord (Acts 26:15–18). He accepted for himself and urged others to accept this personal challenge: “let us go on unto perfection.” (Hebrews 6:1.)

But what of yourself?

Do you strive daily for that perfection of which Jesus and Paul spoke?

Do you struggle to achieve your potential as a son or daughter of God?

Do you receive the tests and trials of life as things to be surmounted and overcome, or do you permit yourself to be overcome by them?

Do you seek to produce your best, as Paul did, in spite of the private trauma of your life?

Now read the chapters in Hebrews which are indicated below. As you do so, keep in mind our goal of “perfecting the saints,” of becoming “a perfect man,” of measuring up to “the stature of the fulness of Christ.” (Ephesians 4:12, 13.)

Before proceeding, read all the scriptural references in the reading block.

INTERPRETIVE COMMENTARY

(46-1) The Book of Hebrews Shows Christ’s Fulfillment of the Law of Moses

As the high priest of old entered the tabernacle and offered the blood of a lamb as a sacrifice for Israel’s sins, so Jesus, the greatest High Priest and the true Lamb of God, offered his own blood to atone for sin, entered the heavenly sanctuary, and thereby made possible the salvation of all men. Paul shows the symbolic significance of the law of Moses and its fulfillment in Christ. Paul indicates that through this great High Priest, Israel gains access to the presence of the Lord, and that the sacrifice of Christ is an ongoing relevant act for all who turn to him in faith and obedience.

(46-2) Place and Date of Writing

The place from which the book of Hebrews was written is unknown. A partial clue, however, is furnished by a single phrase, “They of Italy salute you.” (13:24.) Does this mean that the author was in

Italy and sending greetings from his Italian acquaintances? Or does it mean that he was in some other portion of the empire and sending greetings to Italy from Italian acquaintances? Both points of view have been entertained and it is not possible to give a final answer without further information.

Similar problems confront us in reference to an acceptable date. The epistle was certainly known as early as A.D. 95, for Clement, the bishop of Rome, cites it in his first letter and clearly accepts its authority. Moreover, those for whom the letter was intended have obviously had substantial time and experience in the church (Hebrews 5:12; 10:32); and it would also seem, from the frequent allusions to Mosaic ritual, that the temple in Jerusalem was still standing. If this was the case, we must place the letter’s date before A.D. 70, since that is the time when the temple was destroyed. Paul died about A.D. 68, and since we accept him as its author, it must date before that year. A date of about A.D. 65 would seem to fit the known facts.

(46-3) Authorship

Latter-day Saints are fortunate in that they do not need to thread their way through a maze of conjecture in order to form a conclusion. Elder Bruce R. McConkie explains why:

“... the Prophet Joseph Smith says this Epistle was written ‘by Paul . . . to the Hebrew brethren’ (*Teachings*, 59), and repeatedly in his sermons he attributes statements from it to Paul. Peter, himself a Hebrew, whose ministry and teachings were directed in large part to his own people, seems to be identifying its authorship when he writes, ‘Our beloved brother Paul . . . according to the wisdom given unto him hath written unto you [the Hebrews]; As also in all his [other] epistles, . . . some things hard to be understood.’ (2 Pet. 3:15–16.) In any event, Paul did write Hebrews, and to those who accept Joseph Smith as an inspired witness of truth, the matter is at rest.” (*DNTC*, 3:133.)

(46-4) Background Information

As shown in our studies thus far, tension was often sharp between gentile and Jewish Christians, the former insisting that Mosaic ritual was done away in Christ’s atoning sacrifice and the latter often insisting that it was not. As the former point of view began to prevail, an interesting question arose: If we accept the truth that the law of Moses is no longer binding on Christians, what is the true value of the Old Testament and how should it be interpreted? The question was

particularly pressing for Jewish Christians, since their personal upbringing included a reverent study of the ancient scriptures. (The only scriptures available to the Christians at this early date, whether Jew or gentile, were those known to us as the Old Testament. The New Testament was in the process of preparation, and nearly three centuries passed before it was accepted as a standard or rule of faith.) Paul's letter to the Hebrews appears to have been written, at least in part, to answer this question.

(46-5) Significant Contributions

Hebrews is our finest scriptural commentary (aside from some key Book of Mormon passages) on the Old Testament and on the manner in which the doctrine of Christ's atoning sacrifice was clearly signified in the Old Testament. As you study, note the repeated appeals by Paul to Old Testament authority to establish the New Testament role of Christ. For Paul, Christ is concealed in the Old Testament and revealed in the New Testament. For this reason, the book of Hebrews is an excellent scriptural guide to an understanding of Old Testament teachings and practices. Far from being obsolete, Paul seems to say, the Old Testament possesses numerous references to the mission and priesthood of the Son of God.

One of the great contributions of the book of Hebrews is that it shows the ever-present role of Jesus Christ in men's lives. While the scriptures are replete with references to Jesus' atoning sacrifice, to his resurrection from the dead, and to his ascension into heaven, they do not deal at length, as Hebrews does, with the ongoing work of the Redeemer now. This is what Hebrews is all about.

(46-6) Hebrews 1:13, 14. What Is the Difference Between an Angel and a Ministering Spirit?

From the minutes of a meeting in which Joseph Smith spoke, we have the following:

"He explained the difference between an angel and a ministering spirit; the one a resurrected or translated body, with its spirit ministering to embodied spirits—the other a disembodied spirit, visiting and ministering to disembodied spirits. Jesus Christ became a ministering spirit (while His body was lying in the sepulchre) to the spirits in prison, to fulfill an important part of His mission, without which He could not have perfected His work, or entered into His rest. After His resurrection He appeared as an angel to His disciples." (Smith, *Teachings*, p. 191.)

"These angels are under the direction of Michael or Adam, who acts under the direction of the Lord. From

[Hebrews 1:4] we learn that Paul perfectly understood the purposes of God in relation to His connection with man, and that glorious and perfect order which He established in Himself, whereby he sent forth power, revelations, and glory." (Smith, *Teachings*, p. 168.)

(46-7) Hebrews 2:69. Is the Savior Really Lower than the Angels?

"The marginal reading of this quotation from Psalm 8:4–6 recites that man is made, not a little lower than the angels, but a little lower than Elohim, which means that all God's offspring, Jesus included, as children in his family, are created subject to him, with the power to advance until all things are 'in subjection' to them. Of those who gain eternal life, it is written: 'Then shall they be above all, because all things are subject unto them. Then shall they be gods, because they have all power, and the angels are subject unto them.' (D. & C. 132:20.)

"The only sense in which either men or Jesus are lower than the angels is in that mortal restrictions limit them for the moment; and for that matter, angels themselves become mortals and then in the resurrection attain again their angelic status." (McConkie, *DNTC*, 3:143.)

(46-8) Hebrews 3:11. What Does It Mean to Enter into the "Rest" of the Lord?

The scriptures define the "rest" of the Lord as "the fulness of his glory." (D&C 84:24.) President Joseph F. Smith put it a little differently:

"The ancient prophets speak of 'entering into God's rest'; what does it mean? To my mind, it means entering into the knowledge and love of God, having faith in his purpose and in his plan, to such an extent that we know we are right, and that we are not hunting for something else, we are not disturbed by every wind of doctrine, or by the cunning and craftiness of men who lie in wait to deceive. We know of the doctrine that it is of God, and we do not ask any questions of anybody about it; they are welcome to their opinions, to their ideas and to their vagaries. The man who has reached that degree of faith in God that all doubt and fear have been cast from him, he has entered into 'God's rest.' . . . rest from doubt, from fear, from apprehension of danger, rest from the religious turmoil of the world. . . ." (Smith, *Gospel Doctrine*, p. 58.)

When we leave this life, if we enter into paradise, we go to "a state of rest, a state of peace, where [we] shall rest from all [our] troubles, and from all care, and sorrow." (Alma 40:12.)

(46-9) Hebrews 3:7–18. Why Did the Ancient Israelites Fail in Their Efforts to Enter the “Rest” of the Lord?

For a clear answer to this question, read the following scriptural passages: Exodus 19:5–25; D&C 84:23, 24.

(46-10) Hebrews 4:8. Why Does Paul Indicate That Jesus Did Not Give the Ancient Israelites “Rest”?

Jesus is the Greek form of the Hebrew name *Yeshua* and is transferred into the English as Joshua. Paul has reference here to the man Joshua of the Old Testament rather than to Jesus Christ. His point is that the Israelites did not find their “rest” under Moses nor Joshua, under whose direction they found and entered the promised land, or even under David, their greatest king.

(46-11) Hebrews 5:1–3. What Do We Know Concerning the Work of Ancient High Priests?

Sometime during the sojourn of the children of Israel in the desert near Sinai, God commanded Moses to take Aaron and his sons and consecrate them in the priest’s office (Exodus 28:1). An account of their consecration, which lasted seven days, is found in Leviticus, chapter 8. Later, other priests, members of the tribe of Levi, were likewise ordained to assist Aaron and his sons in their priestly duties (Numbers 18:1–6). These sons of Aaron presided over those priests of the Levitical, or lesser, order and are specifically called “high priests” in some passages (Leviticus 21:10; Numbers 35:25; Joshua 20:6; 2 Kings 12:10), though they were not high priests as we know them today; rather, they were presiding priests of the Aaronic order. (See John Taylor, *Items on Priesthood*, pp. 5, 6.)

The priests of God were set apart to perform certain ordinances and functions prescribed by the Lord. It was their special task to bear the ark of the covenant of the Lord (Deuteronomy 31:9; Joshua 3:3, 17) and to serve in the tabernacle (Numbers 3:6–9; 8:24). Chief among the duties of these priests was to offer the morning and evening sacrifices unto the Lord in behalf of the people (Exodus 29:38–44). They were also appointed to keep watch over the fire which burned on the sacred altar and to see that it burned continually day and night (Leviticus 6:12). It was their special responsibility to teach the children of Israel the commandments of the Lord (Leviticus 10:11, Deuteronomy 33:10). Thus Paul could say they were “ordained for men in things pertaining to God.”

(46-12) Hebrews 5:4. How Did Ancient Priests Obtain Their Authority?

Aaron and his sons, as we have seen, were called of God by one having authority in the ministry (Exodus 28:1). It is the same in our dispensation; men receive their authority from those who have it to bestow. “Let no man take this honor upon himself, except he be called of God, as was Aaron; and Aaron received his call by revelation.” (Smith, *Teachings*, p. 272.)

(46-13) Hebrews 5:5. How Did Christ Become a High Priest?

“The Priesthood is an everlasting principle, and existed with God from eternity, and will to eternity, without beginning of days or end of years.” (Smith, *Teachings*, p. 157.)

“If a man gets a fulness of the priesthood of God he has to get it in the same way that Jesus Christ obtained it, and that was by keeping all the commandments and obeying all the ordinances of the house of the Lord.” (Smith, *Teachings*, p. 308.)

(46-14) Hebrews 5:7, 8. Does the Phrase “Though He Were a Son” Apply to Melchizedek, to Christ, or to Both?

“These verses make clear reference to Christ and his mortal ministry and are in complete harmony with other scriptures which bear on the same matters, as also with the sermons of the early brethren of this dispensation who quote them as applying to our Lord.

“However, there is a footnote in the Inspired Version which says, ‘The 7th and 8th verses allude to Melchizedek, and not to Christ.’ Standing alone, and because it is only part of the picture, this footnote gives an erroneous impression. The fact is verses 7 and 8 apply to both Melchizedek and to Christ, because Melchizedek was a prototype of Christ and that prophet’s ministry typified and foreshadowed that of our Lord in the same sense that the ministry of Moses did. (Deut. 18:15–19; Acts 3:22–23; [Joseph Smith—History 1:40].) Thus, though the words of these verses, and particularly those in the 7th verse, had original application to Melchizedek, they apply with equal and perhaps even greater force to the life and ministry of him through whom all the promises made to Melchizedek were fulfilled.” (McConkie, *DNTC*, 3:157.)

(46-15) Hebrews 5:9. In What Way Was Jesus Made Perfect?

“Christ always was perfect in that he obeyed the whole law of the Father at all times and was everlastingly the Sinless One. See Heb. 4:14–16; 5:1–3. But on the other hand he was made perfect, through the sufferings and experiences of mortality, in the sense that he thereby died and was resurrected in glorious immortality. In that perfected state, possessing at long last a body of flesh and bones, he then had the same eternal perfection possessed by his Father. Hence his pronouncement, after the resurrection, that all power was given him in heaven and in earth. (Matt 28:18.)” (McConkie, *DNTC*, 3:158.)

(46-16) Hebrews 6:1. Can One Leave the Principles of Christ’s Doctrine and Attain Perfection?

“This is a contradiction. I don’t believe it. I will render it as it should be—‘Therefore not leaving the principles of the doctrine of Christ, let us go on unto perfection, not laying again the foundation of repentance from dead works, and of faith toward God, of the doctrine of baptisms, and of laying on of hands, and of resurrection of the dead, and of eternal judgment.’” (Smith, *Teachings*, p. 328.)

(46-17) Hebrews 6:4–6. What Must People Do in Order to “Crucify to Themselves the Son of God Afresh, and Put Him to an Open Shame”?

“All sins shall be forgiven, except the sin against the Holy Ghost; for Jesus will save all except the sons of perdition. What must a man do to commit the unpardonable sin? He must receive the Holy Ghost, have the heavens opened unto him, and know God, and then sin against Him. After a man has sinned against the Holy Ghost, there is no repentance for him.’ He has got to say that the sun does not shine while he sees it; he has got to deny Jesus Christ when the heavens have been opened unto him, and to deny the plan of salvation with his eyes open to the truth of it; and from that time he begins to be an enemy. This is the case with many apostates of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.

“When a man begins to be an enemy to this work, he hunts me, he seeks to kill me, and never ceases to thirst for my blood. He gets the spirit of the devil—the same spirit that they had who crucified the Lord of Life—the same spirit that sins against the Holy Ghost. You cannot save such persons; you cannot bring them to repentance; they make open war, like the devil, and awful is the consequence.” (Smith, *Teachings*, p. 358.)

(46-18) Hebrews 6:19, 20. “Whither the Forerunner Is for Us Entered”

“As the high priest in Israel passed through the veil into the holy of holies on the day of atonement, as part of the cleansing rites which freed Israel from sin (Lev. 16), so Jesus has entered into heaven to prepare the way for those who through obedience to his laws become clean and pure. (McConkie, *DNTC*, 3:165.)

(46-19) Hebrews 7:1. Who Was Melchizedek, King of Salem?

“Now Melchizedek was a man of faith, who wrought righteousness; and when a child he feared God, and stopped the mouths of lions, and quenched the violence of fire.

“And thus, having been approved of God, he was ordained an high priest after the order of the covenant which God made with Enoch.

“It being after the order of the Son of God; which order came, not by man, nor the will of man; neither by father nor mother; neither by beginning of days nor end of years; but of God;

“And it was delivered unto men by the calling of his own voice, according to his own will, unto as many as believed on his name.” (Genesis 14:26–29, Inspired Version. Note that in the King James Version, chapter 14 ends with verse 24.)

(46-20) Hebrews 7:3. Was Melchizedek “Without Father, Without Mother, Without Descent”?

“For this Melchizedek was ordained a priest after the order of the Son of God, which order was without father, without mother, without descent, having neither beginning of days, nor end of life. And all those who are ordained unto this priesthood are made like unto the Son of God, abiding a priest continually.” (Hebrews 7:3, Inspired Version.)

(46-21) Hebrews 7:3. What Is the Meaning of the Expression “Without Father, Without Mother, Without Descent” in Reference to the Melchizedek Priesthood?

“As compared to the Aaronic Priesthood, as administered in ancient Israel, the order of Melchizedek did not come ‘by descent from father and mother.’ (*Teachings*, p. 323.) That is, the right to this higher priesthood was not inherited in the same way as was the case with the Levites and sons of Aaron. Righteousness was an absolute requisite for the conferral of the higher priesthood.” (Bruce R. McConkie, *Mormon Doctrine*, 478.)

(46-22) Hebrews 7:9. How Could Levi Pay Tithes to Melchizedek?

Abraham met Melchizedek and paid tithes to him long before Isaac, his son, was born. Isaac's sons, Esau and Jacob, were born after the death of Abraham, and Levi was the third son of Jacob. How, then, was it possible that Levi "payed tithes in Abraham," a man whose death preceded Levi's birth by many years? The problem becomes even more puzzling when it is realized that Levites did not become the priestly tribe (to which the Israelites paid their tithes) until after Moses had delivered them from captivity, some four hundred years later!

Though it is difficult for us to fully understand its reality, this argument from Paul would have had a great appeal for a Jewish mind, for the Jews strongly emphasized the continuity and unity of their entire race. The phrase "as I may say" is equivalent to "so to speak," so Paul makes it clear that he is speaking metaphorically.

"The whole Jewish law, its ordinances and priesthood, are regarded as potentially in Abraham. When Abraham paid tithes, Levi paid tithes. When Abraham was blessed, Israel was blessed. It is a kind of reasoning which would appeal to Hebrews, who so strongly emphasized the solidarity of their race." (Vincent, *Word Studies*, 2:1128.)

(46-23) Hebrews 7:11–14. Why Did the Change from Mosaic to Gospel Law Require a Change in the Priesthood Also?

The mission and atonement of our Savior brought an end to the lesser law of Moses and instituted in its place the higher law of Jesus Christ (3 Nephi 15:8, 9). This change, in turn, required a change in the priesthood also, and that is what Paul was talking about. Neither the law of Moses nor the priesthood of Aaron which administered it was capable of bringing God's children unto perfection. The Aaronic Priesthood is a lesser authority, and it administers the preparatory gospel only. The Melchizedek Priesthood, on the other hand, is the higher priesthood, commissioned to minister the gospel ordinances in their fulness and capable of purifying our lives so that we can again enter into the presence of the Lord (3 Nephi 27:19, 20).

(46-24) Hebrews 7:18–22. "For Those Priests Were Made Without an Oath"

The Aaronic Priesthood, being of a lesser order and thereby incapable of bringing men to perfection, was

hereditary in nature, passing from father to son. Then, as now, the Aaronic Priesthood was received by men "without an oath" (Hebrews 7:20, 21; Smith, *Teachings*, pp. 319, 323); that is, no eternal promises were exchanged in connection with its reception. With the Melchizedek Priesthood it is different, as is clearly explained in D&C 84:33–44. The Melchizedek Priesthood is received only by an oath and covenant.

"Every person upon whom the Melchizedek Priesthood is conferred receives his office and calling in this higher priesthood with an *oath and a covenant*. The *Covenant* is to this effect: 1. Man on his part solemnly agrees to magnify his calling in the priesthood, to keep the commandments of God, to live by every word that proceedeth forth from the mouth of Deity, and to walk in paths of righteousness and virtue; and 2. God on his part agrees to give such persons an inheritance of exaltation and godhood in his everlasting presence. The *oath* is the solemn attestation of Deity, his sworn promise, that those who keep their part of the covenant shall come forth and inherit all things according to the promise." (McConkie, *Mormon Doctrine*, p. 480.)

POINTS TO PONDER

(46-25) Perfection Is an Achievable Goal When the Formula Revealed by Christ Is Complied With

"Progress toward eternal life is a matter of achieving perfection. Living all the commandments guarantees total forgiveness of sins and assures one of exaltation through that perfection which comes by complying with the formula the Lord gave us. In his Sermon on the Mount he made the command to all men: 'Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect.' (Matt. 5:48.) Being perfect means to triumph over sin. This is a mandate from the Lord. He is just and wise and kind. He would never require anything from his children which was not for their benefit and which was not attainable. Perfection therefore is an achievable goal." (Kimball, *Miracle of Forgiveness*, pp. 208–9.)

(46-26) The Greatest Hindrance to Perfection Is Procrastination

"There are even many members of the Church who are lax and careless and who continually procrastinate. They live the gospel casually but not devoutly. They have complied with some requirements but are not valiant. They do no major crime but merely fail to do the things required—things like paying tithing, living

the Word of Wisdom, having family prayers, fasting, attending meetings, serving. Perhaps they do not consider such omissions to be sins, yet these were the kinds of things of which the five foolish virgins of Jesus' parable were probably guilty. The ten virgins belonged to the kingdom and had every right to the blessings—except that five were not valiant and were not ready when the great day came. They were unprepared through not living all the commandments. They were bitterly disappointed at being shut out from the marriage—as likewise their modern counterparts will be. . . .

“Because men are prone to postpone action and ignore directions, the Lord has repeatedly given strict injunctions and issued solemn warnings. Again and again in different phraseology and throughout the centuries the Lord has reminded man so that he could never have excuse. And the burden of the prophetic warning has been that *the time to act is now, in this mortal life*. One cannot with impunity delay his compliance with God's commandments.” (Kimball, *Miracle of Forgiveness*, pp. 7–10.)

(46-27) The Time to Begin the Process of Becoming Perfect Is Now

“. . . when we go out of this life, leave this body, we will desire to do many things that we cannot do at all without the body. We will be seriously handicapped, and we will long for the body, we will pray for that early reunion with our bodies. We will know then what advantage it is to have a body.

“Then, every man and woman who is putting off until the next life the task of correcting and overcoming the weakness of the flesh are sentencing themselves to years of bondage, for no man or woman will come forth in the resurrection until they have completed their work, until they have overcome, until they have done as much as they can do. . . .

“The point I have in mind is that we are sentencing ourselves to long periods of bondage, separating our spirits from our bodies, or we are shortening that period, according to the way in which we overcome and master ourselves.” (Ballard, *Three Degrees of Glory*, pp. 14–15.)

(46-28) Deep, Abiding Testimony Is of Greatest Assistance in Becoming Perfect

“In matters of religion, when a man is motivated by great and powerful convictions of truth, then he disciplines himself, not because of demands made upon him by the Church but because of the knowledge within his heart that God lives; that he is a child of

God with an eternal and limitless potential; that there is joy in service and satisfaction in laboring in a great cause.” (Gordon B. Hinckley in *CR*, Apr. 1973, p. 73.)

PERFECTION RESTS ON FOLLOWING GOSPEL PRINCIPLES

Perfection is attained only on the principles laid down in the gospel of Christ. As the author of our salvation, Jesus has a perfect right to prescribe the conditions of salvation. This he has done in what we call the gospel of Jesus Christ. As propounded by Christ, the gospel has principles and ordinances which must be complied with in order to merit eternal blessings.

The Power for Attaining Perfection Is in Christ

The fullest kind of perfection is not attainable in mortality. President Joseph F. Smith explained thus:

“We do not look for absolute perfection in man. Mortal man is not capable of being absolutely perfect. Nevertheless, it is given to us to be as perfect in the sphere in which we are called to be and to act, as it is for the Father in heaven to be pure and righteous in the more exalted sphere in which he acts. We will find in the scriptures the words of the Savior himself to his disciples, in which he required that they should be perfect, even as their Father in heaven is perfect; that they should be righteous, even as he is righteous. I do not expect that we can be as perfect as Christ, that we can be as righteous as God. But I believe that we can strive for that perfection with the intelligence that we possess, and the knowledge that we have of the principles of life and salvation.” (*Gospel Doctrine*, p. 132. Emphasis added.)

Not only is Jesus our great exemplar, he is also the source of “all power . . . in heaven and in earth,” which power he received from his Father. (Matthew 28:18.) Those who wish to achieve perfection are in constant need of the assisting grace of Jesus Christ, not only for the forgiveness of past sins but also for the power to overcome present temptations.

Christ is your Savior, not only because he atoned for and forgives you of your sins, but also because he assists you with the spiritual strength needed to overcome evil, if you seek for it in deep humility. As you exercise personal self-discipline and call upon the Lord for strength, he answers. Knowing this, the prophet Moroni wrote the inspiring words found in Moroni 10:32, 33. Read them with the understanding that they are for you. They are your personal promise.

In Christ you really can become perfect. Again note the promise of the Lord to you as recorded in D&C 93:20.

What does the Lord mean when he states you will receive a fulness? Do you think he would give you a fulness of this power and glory if you are unworthy to receive it?

Do you think the Lord would excuse you if in mortality you did not climb as high on the ladder of perfection as it is possible for you to do? Ponder these words of Elder Joseph Fielding Smith:

“It is our duty to be better today than we were yesterday, and better tomorrow than we are today. Why? Because we are on that road, if we are keeping the commandments of the Lord, we are on that road to perfection, and that can only come through obedience and the desire in our hearts to overcome the world.” (Doctrines of Salvation, 2:18–19.)

Perfection Entails Consecrated Effort on a Specific Problem

In a very real and meaningful way, you can begin to become perfect right now. This means specific and concentrated efforts on a particular problem rather than scattered random attempts to overcome all problems in one immense effort. Consider the counsel from President Harold B. Lee: “The most important of all the commandments of God is that one that you’re having the most difficulty keeping today. If it’s one of dishonesty, if it’s one of unchastity, if it’s one of falsifying, not telling the truth, today is the day for

you to work on that until you’ve been able to conquer that weakness. Then you start on the next one that’s most difficult for you to keep.” (Church News, 5 May 1973, p. 3.)

President Lee’s comments suggest some specific things that you can do to overcome your weaknesses. First identify what your weaknesses are. Make a list with your greatest concern at the top and so on in descending rank. Remember, this list is very personal and should be kept secret and private. It is a matter strictly between you and your Savior, and you should never share it in class or in public.

Each morning review your list, particularly noting the problem you want to work on that day. Then pray to the Lord, entreating him for power and promising him you will do all you can. That night report to him on your success or failure. As you find yourself improving (and you will), pray for forgiveness and additional strength. Keep constantly in mind the joy and love your Heavenly Father is feeling toward you because of your efforts. Remember also that your weaknesses can become your strengths; indeed, as each is overcome, it can be a rung of power leading upward to God and your eternal home. Examine Ether 12:27. What is the purpose of weakness? What does the Lord intend to do with your weaknesses if you let him? Will you let him? If you do, you will find the power of heaven opened to you and you will receive greater joy and peace and a closer relationship with your Savior than most people ever know.

"BY THE BLOOD YE ARE SANCTIFIED"



Letter to the Hebrews—Believed Written by Paul, ca. A.D. 65 (Hebrews)	
	Hebrews
Salvation Comes Through Christ's Intercession	7:23–28
Christ Offered Himself a Sacrifice for Sin	8:1–5
A New Covenant with Israel	8:6–13
Mosaic Ordinances Prefigure Christ's Ministry	9:1–14
Christ, the Mediator of the New Covenant	9:15–28
"By the Blood Ye Are Sanctified"	10:1–18
Those Who Fall From Grace Are Damned	10:19–39

THEME

Through the shedding of the blood of Christ, redemptive power by which a person can be sanctified is extended to each individual.

INTRODUCTION

The Savior declared, "I am come that they might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly." (John 10:10.) To achieve this, the Lord revealed the life-giving power of the gospel by which mankind, suffering spiritual death because of the Fall

and personal sinfulness, can be born again and receive eternal life. One of the great themes and essential doctrines within the gospel is that of sanctification. Through this means man can not only be cleansed from sin but also be made pure and holy. This is one of the most sacred and beautiful teachings of the Church.

You may be assured that as you approach your study of sanctification prayerfully, positively, and with sufficient time to draw near to your Father in heaven, you can be edified by him. Coupling your intellect with the power of the Spirit, you will understand the necessary steps you must follow in preparing yourself for the great achievement of becoming sanctified through obedience to the gospel and through the blood of the Savior.

In Hebrews, Paul masterfully analyzes the contrasts between the temporal law of Moses and the principles and doctrines of the gospel of Christ. So skillful is he in this contrasting of spiritual and temporal principles that not only do we see that we can achieve sanctification, but also we are powerfully motivated to do whatever is necessary to make it a reality in our own lives.

Before proceeding, read all the scriptural references in the reading block.

INTERPRETIVE COMMENTARY

(47-1) Hebrews 8:3. What Do We Know Concerning the Ordinance of Sacrifice as Practiced by the Ancient High Priests?

Many have supposed that the ordinance of sacrificing animals was first introduced by Moses. Such is not the case. The principle of sacrifice was initially taught to Adam following his expulsion from the Garden of Eden. Adam was clearly instructed that in offering the “firstlings” of his flocks, he was prefiguring the atoning sacrifice of Christ. “This thing is a similitude of the sacrifice of the Only Begotten of the Father,” he was told. (Moses 5:7.) Elder McConkie writes as follows concerning the ordinance of sacrifice:

“The form of the ordinance was always so arranged as to point attention to our Lord’s sacrifice. The sacrificial offering made in connection with the Passover, the killing of the Paschal Lamb, for instance, was so arranged that a male lamb of the first year, one without spot or blemish, was chosen; in the offering the blood was spilled and care was taken to break no bones—all symbolical of the manner of Christ’s death. (Ex. 12.) Many sacrificial details were added to the law as it operated in the Mosaic dispensation, but the basic principles governing sacrifices are part of the gospel itself and preceded Moses and the lesser order which came through him.” (McConkie, *Mormon Doctrine*, p. 665.)

(47-2) Hebrews 8:7–13. What Is the Better Covenant of Which Paul Speaks?

The gospel was a “better covenant” because it offered the principles and ordinances of salvation in their fulness, while the law of Moses did not. The Israelites, in general, rejected the fulness of the gospel on both occasions when it was offered to them, first while wandering in the desert under Moses and later when Jesus came to earth in the meridian of time. Joseph Smith once said: “This covenant has never been established with the house of Israel, nor with the house of Judah, for it requires two parties to make a covenant, and those two parties must be agreed, or no covenant can be made.

“Christ, in the days of His flesh, proposed to make a covenant with them, but they rejected Him and His proposals, and in consequence thereof, they were broken off, and no covenant was made with them at that time. . . .

“Thus after this chosen family had rejected Christ and His proposals, the heralds of salvation said to them,

‘Lo we turn unto the Gentiles’; and the Gentiles received the covenant, and were grafted in from whence the chosen family were broken off: but the Gentiles have not continued in the goodness of God, but have departed from the faith that was once delivered to the Saints, and have broken the covenant in which their fathers were established [see Isaiah 24:5]; and have become high-minded, and have not feared; therefore, but few of them will be gathered with the chosen family.” (Smith, *Teachings*, pp. 14–15.)

(47-3) Hebrews 9:1–10. What Do We Know Concerning the Ancient Tabernacles and Its Services?

During Israel’s wanderings and prior to the building of a temple in Solomon’s day (about 970 B.C.), the priests of Israel performed the sacred ordinances in behalf of their people in a portable tent known as the tabernacle. This edifice, constructed in such a way that it could be quickly moved from place to place, was the first item set up in any new place of encampment.

The tabernacle was composed of two parts. There was an outer compartment into which the Levites and sons of Aaron might enter daily to perform the sacred ordinances prescribed by the Mosaic law. There was also an inner compartment separated by a veil and considered to be the most holy place, into which the high priest might enter but once a year to perform his sacred duties on the Day of Atonement. As explained by Paul, the outer division of the tabernacle contained the sacred candlestick, twelve loaves of shewbread, and an altar of incense; in the inner chamber known as the Holy of Holies was located the ark of the covenant, a chest somewhat equivalent to a good-sized modern trunk. In the ark were kept the golden censer, the golden pot containing manna, Aaron’s rod, and the tablets on which were inscribed the Ten Commandments.

The word *tabernacle* literally means “place of dwelling” and was so called in the belief that God literally lived within its sacred confines. When Israel camped, the tabernacle was set up in the precise center of the camp (symbolizing the idea that God was to be the center of his people’s lives) with the various tents of the different tribes surrounding it on all sides.

Each division of the tabernacle was regarded as a sacred sanctuary. While priests might enter the outer chamber every day as required by priestly duty, only the high priest (i.e., the presiding priest, who was to be of the tribe of Levi and a firstborn son of a direct descendent of Aaron) might enter the Holy of Holies,

and that but once a year on Yom Kippur, or the Day of Atonement. This is the most sacred of all days in the Jewish year and had for its purpose the offering up of a special sacrifice within the Holy of Holies for the sins of the people. The ritual involved a series of events, the first two of which were to prepare the high priest for his solemn duties. First he would make sacrifices for himself and his brother priests so as to make them symbolically worthy to perform their sacred functions. Then he would lay aside his priestly robes, don a simple white tunic in preparation for the sacrifice itself, and return to the outer court. Taking two pure and unblemished male goats, he would dedicate one to Jehovah and one to the evil one, Azazel, or the devil. The goat dedicated to Jehovah was then sacrificed in the outer court. Its blood was taken into the Holy of Holies and sprinkled on the mercy-seat and before the ark of the covenant. This symbolized that Israel's sins were atoned for by sacrifice.

Returning to the outer court, the high priest then laid his hands on the second goat and solemnly confessed upon it all Israel's sins. This done, the goat was taken outside the camp and either compelled to lose its way or else was thrown from a cliff and thus destroyed. In this manner was symbolized a transference of sins from the children of Israel to the goat. This is the source for the modern notion of a scapegoat, that is, one who is literally punished for the mistakes or sins of another.

(47-4) Hebrews 9:11–15, 23–28. The Role of Jesus Christ as High Priest Mediator of the New Testament

Jesus performed essentially the same function for us which ancient priests did for Israel: he atoned for our sins. There is a difference, however, between the two offerings: ancient priests offered up goats or lambs from Israel's flocks; Christ, the purest "Lamb of God" (John 1:29, 36), offered up *himself*. No man took Christ's life from him; the Savior gave it up voluntarily (John 10:18). Thus, Jesus was not only the high priest for us in the making of the offering; *he was also the very offering himself!* This is what Paul wishes us to see. Christ is the mediator of the New Testament as ancient priests were mediators of the Old Testament, or law of Moses. Jesus came "to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself." (Hebrews 9:26.) As the ancient high priest entered into the Holy of Holies on earth and sprinkled the goat's blood upon the mercy-seat, so Jesus Christ entered the sacred

sanctuary of heaven itself, there to intercede before the Father in behalf of those whose penitence makes them eligible for his act of mercy (Hebrews 9:11–15, 23–25).

(47-5) Hebrews 9:15–17. What Did Paul Mean by "For Where a Testament Is, There Must Also of Necessity Be the Death of the Testator"?

"... In legal usage, a *testator* is one who leaves a valid will or testament at his death. The will or testament is the written document wherein the testator provides for the disposition of his property. As used in the gospel sense, a *testament* is a covenant. Jesus is the Mediator of the new covenant or testament, that is of the gospel which came to replace the law of Moses. . . .

"... In other words, Christ had to die to bring salvation. The testament or covenant of salvation came in force because of the atonement worked out in connection with that death. *Christ is the Testator*. His gift, as would be true of any testator, cannot be inherited until his death. Christ died that salvation might come; without his death, he could not have willed either immortality or eternal life to men." (McConkie, *Mormon Doctrine*, pp. 784–85.)

(47-6) Hebrews 9:22. What Does Paul Mean by "Without Shedding of Blood Is No Remission"?

As noted above, remission of sins under the law of Moses required the shedding of an animal's blood. In setting forth the laws respecting sacrificial ordinances in ancient Israel, the Lord explained: "For the life of the flesh is in the blood: and I have given it to you upon the altar to make an atonement for your souls: for it is the blood that maketh an atonement for the soul." (Leviticus 17:11.) In other words, blood is symbolic of life, and it was the life of Christ that was required to remit sins. (See Mosiah 3:14, 15.)

(47-7) Hebrews 10:1–9. "The Law [of Moses] . . . Can Never . . . Make the Comers Thereunto Perfect"

Paul returns here to a former theme, namely that perfection cannot come either by the law of Moses or by the lesser priesthood which administers that law (compare Hebrews 7:11, 12). The law, says Paul, is but "a shadow of good things to come, and not the very image of the things" themselves. This is true, he argues, because Mosaic sacrifice for sin must be repeated daily, whereas Christ's atoning act was "once for all."

(47-8) Hebrews 10:19, 20. How Do We Enter into the Holiest by the Blood of Jesus?

The ancient tabernacle and the temples patterned thereafter had veils which separated one portion of the structure from another. To pass the first veil was to move from the outer court into an inner sanctuary known as the Holy Place. To pass the second veil was to enter the Holy of Holies, or the Most Holy Place.

Paul capitalizes upon the Hebrew understanding of these things to indicate symbolically the role of Jesus in making it possible for us to enter into heaven, our “holy of holies.” As in ancient times the high priest entered the earthly sanctuary through rites of purification, so we too are privileged to enter the heavenly sanctuary through the blood of Christ, which cleanses us from sin.

“Atonement for sin is no longer made by the high priest in Israel when he passes through the veil of the temple into the holy of holies. (Lev. 16.) See Heb. 6:19–20. Now there is a new way, a living way, for the

veil of the old temple was rent with the crucifixion. (Matt. 27:50–51.) Now Jesus has passed through the veil into heaven itself. While he lived, his mortal flesh stood between him and the eternal holy of holies, for ‘flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God’ (1 Cor. 15:50), but now he has, as it were, rent the veil of his flesh through death and entered into the fulness of his Father’s kingdom through resurrection.” (McConkie, *DNTC*, 3:190–91.)

(47-9) Hebrews 10:26–31. What Does It Mean to Do “Despite unto the Spirit of Grace”?

See Interpretive Commentary 46-17.

POINTS TO PONDER

THE SIGNIFICANCE OF BLOOD

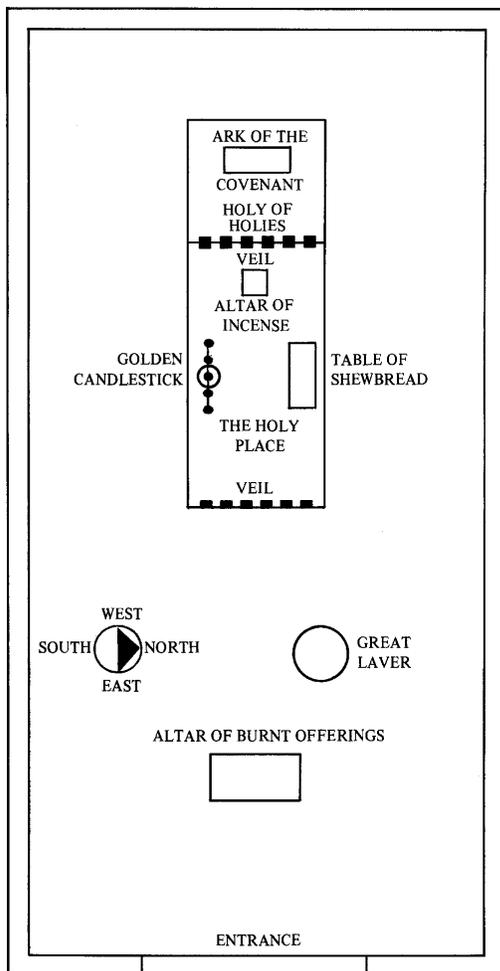
(47-10) Blood Is the Life of the Body

Blood is that physical substance that renews and energizes the body, carrying to it food and nourishment and eliminating waste materials. In the resurrection we will receive a perfected, physical body—sometimes referred to as a spiritual body (D&C 88:27). This does not mean that such a body has no tangible substance but, rather, that it “*is quickened by spirit and not by blood. . . . The immortal body is quickened by spirit, but the mortal body is quickened by blood.*” (Smith, *Doctrines of Salvation*, 1:76–77.) In the scriptures we are told that the life of the flesh is the blood (Genesis 9:4; Leviticus 17:10, 11, 14; 19:26; 1 Samuel 14:32, 33; Acts 15:20, 29). It was stated clearly to Moses: “Only be sure that thou eat not the blood: for the blood is the life; and thou mayest not eat the life with the flesh.” (Deuteronomy 12:23.) Leviticus chapter 17, verse 11 states: “For the life of the flesh is in the blood: and I have given it to you upon the altar to make an atonement for your souls: for it is the blood that maketh an atonement for the soul.”

There can be no mistake that the blood anciently offered upon the altar of sacrifice was a direct reminder of the sacrifice of the Savior. Furthermore, the ancient prophets understood that it was blood that made atonement for their sins possible.

(47-11) Redemption Comes by the Shed Blood of Christ

“That is, through faith in Christ, who was to come, and by prefiguring the shedding of his blood in their sacrifices and the rites incident thereto, those in ancient Israel were making atonement for their sins.



Plan of Ancient Tabernacle

Through their revealed system of rites and performances, they were being reminded that forgiveness and redemption comes through the shedding of the blood of Christ.” (McConkie, *DNTC*, 3:184–85.)

(47-12) Remission of Sins Through the Blood of Christ

“The Latter-day Saints believe in the efficacy of the blood of Christ. They believe that through obedience to the laws and ordinances of the gospel they obtain a remission of sins; but this could not be if Christ had not died for *them*. If you did believe in blood atonement, I might ask you *why* the blood of Christ was shed, and *in whose stead* was it shed? I might ask you to explain the words of Paul, ‘Without shedding of blood is no remission.’ Hebrews 9:22.” (Smith, *Doctrines of Salvation*, 1:133.)

When was Christ’s blood shed for you? Was it on the cross, or was there another time, another place, when he trembled because of pain and bled at every pore and prayed that the time of agony might pass? Did he know you then as an individual? And did he willingly suffer there for you, for your personal sins? Perhaps you would like to stop now for a moment and consider the testimony of the prophets Isaiah and Abinadi. Ponder the meaning of Mosiah 14:1, 10; 15:10, 11.

How would the Savior feel about someone for whom he suffered who refused, through pride and arrogance, to accept his sacrifice and partake of his redeeming power?

THE SHEDDING OF CHRIST’S BLOOD IN OUR BEHALF MAKES IT POSSIBLE FOR US TO BE SANCTIFIED

(47-13) “By the Blood Ye Are Sanctified”

Through faith in Christ and the efficacy of his atonement, there is a quality of spiritual life fostered within the soul of the believer. This spiritual enlivening is directly associated with the process of personal sanctification. The following statements further clarify the manner in which the sanctifying powers of the Atonement can refine the lives of men and women:

“The atonement of Christ is the rock foundation upon which all things rest which pertain to salvation and eternal life. Hence the Lord said to Adam: ‘By the blood ye are sanctified’ (Moses 6:60), although the

usual scriptural pronouncement is that men are ‘sanctified by the reception of the Holy Ghost.’ (3 Ne. 27:20.) The meaning is that although men are sanctified by the power of the Holy Ghost, such sanctifying process is effective and operative because of the shedding of the blood of Christ. Thus Moroni says that the faithful saints are ‘sanctified in Christ by the grace of God, through the shedding of the blood of Christ, which is in the covenant of the Father unto the remission’ of their sins, that they become holy and without spot. (Moro. 10:33.)” (McConkie, *DNTC*, 3:188.)

(47-14) Sanctification Defined

“To be *sanctified* is to become clean, pure, and spotless; to be free from the blood and sins of the world; to become a new creature of the Holy Ghost, one whose body has been renewed by the rebirth of the Spirit. *Sanctification* is a state of saintliness, a state attained only by conformity to the laws and ordinances of the gospel. The plan of salvation is the system and means provided whereby men may sanctify their souls and thereby become worthy of a celestial inheritance. . . .

“ . . . Those who attain this state of cleanliness and perfection are able, as occasion may require, to see God and view the things of his kingdom. (D. & C. 84:23; 88:68; Ether 4:7.) The Three Nephites ‘were sanctified in the flesh, that they were holy, and that the powers of the earth could not hold them.’ (3 Ne. 28:39.)” (McConkie, *Mormon Doctrine*, pp. 675–76.)

(47-15) How We Make Christ’s Shed Blood Effective for Us

“Men can only be saved and exalted in the kingdom of God in righteousness; therefore, we must repent of our sins and walk in the light as Christ is in the light, that his blood may cleanse us from all sins and that we may have fellowship with the Lord and receive of his glory and exaltation.” (Joseph Fielding Smith in *CR*, Oct. 1969, p. 109.)

What heart could but melt in love and gratitude for the Savior and the sacrifice of his blood with which we must become so personally involved. As the Spirit distills quietly upon the soul and we are drawn near the Master, the realization that we are completely dependent upon him dawns upon us. How could one such as he care for us so much that he would desire to provide an infinite atonement in our behalf? And yet he does.

Your key to becoming perfect in Christ is found through faith and obedience, which leads to being “born again.” Then comes the “mighty change in us, or in our hearts, that we have no more disposition to do evil, but to do good continually.” (Mosiah 5:2.) Then only one step remains: ultimately to bring about this final change that Christ suffered for you. This is described in Alma 13:11–13. This is your promise. It can happen to you if you will begin now to exercise your faith and obey him who has already prepared the way for your sanctification and eternal life.

received revelations, great miracles have been performed, Zion was established and translated, and saints throughout the ages have sealed their exaltation. It is the power by which mankind can overcome the world—its temptations, its persecutions, and its degenerative powers.

Paul knew the trying conditions under which the early saints were struggling. He also knew and had prophesied of the conditions under which we would struggle in the latter days (1 Timothy 4:1–4). Therefore, the key he gave the Hebrews in his letter is also your key. It is as relevant to you as to the ancient saints, and each of us must learn how to use it in order to escape from the wickedness of our day. As you read these last few chapters of Hebrews, ask yourself what the key is of which we speak, and search for ways in which you can use it in your own life. Keep in mind that Paul knew whereof he spoke, for he wrote from experience. He had used the key—many times—to unlock the treasures of eternity. So, too, can you if you will but utilize it in your life.

Before proceeding, read all the scriptural references in the reading block.

INTERPRETIVE COMMENTARY

(48-1) Hebrews 11:3. “Through Faith . . . the Worlds Were Framed”

“By this we understand that the principle of power which existed in the bosom of God, by which the worlds were framed, was faith; and that it is by reason of this principle of power existing in the Deity, that all created things exist; so that all things in heaven, on earth, or under the earth exist by reason of faith as it existed in Him.

“Had it not been for the principle of faith the worlds would never have been framed neither would man have been formed of the dust. It is the principle by which Jehovah works, and through which he exercises power over all temporal as well as eternal things. Take this principle or attribute—for it is an attribute—from the Deity, and he would cease to exist.” (*Lectures on Faith*, Lecture First, vss. 15, 16.)

(48-2) Hebrews 11:3. “Things Which Are Seen Were Not Made of Things Which Do Appear”

“A difficult and obscure passage? Not really. Paul is simply saying that created things were not made of or by ‘things’ which are seen. That is: All created things, this earth and all that is thereon—all things were and

are made, not by man’s power, not by some undirected forces of nature or of the universe. There was no happenstance in creation, no chance creation of life in primordial swamps, no development up from one species to another by evolutionary processes. The creation was planned, organized, and controlled. It came by God’s power—and faith! It came by a power that does not appear and is not seen and understood by the carnal mind or the scientific intellect. The creation is God’s doing. Things came into being by forces which do not appear to man and can in fact be known only by revelation. And as God created all things by faith, even so his created handiwork can be known and understood only by that same power, the power which is faith.” (McConkie, *DNTC*, 3:195.)

(48-3) Hebrews 11:4. “By Faith Abel Offered . . . a More Excellent Sacrifice than Cain”

Many have wondered why Cain’s offering was refused and Abel’s accepted (Genesis 4:3–5; Moses 5:19–21). What was the nature of Cain’s sin? Was it only that Cain received his command from Satan whereas Abel received and obeyed the Lord’s command (Moses 4:18)? Joseph Smith explains:

“By faith in this atonement or plan of redemption, Abel offered to God a sacrifice that was accepted, which was the firstlings of the flock. Cain offered of the fruit of the ground, and was not accepted, because he could not do it in faith, he could have no faith, or could not exercise faith contrary to the plan of heaven. It must be shedding the blood of the Only Begotten to atone for man; for this was the plan of redemption; and without the shedding of blood was no remission; and as the sacrifice was instituted for a type, by which man was to discern the great Sacrifice which God had prepared; to offer a sacrifice contrary to that, no faith could be exercised, because redemption was not purchased in that way, nor the power of atonement instituted after that order; consequently Cain could have no faith; and whatsoever is not of faith, is sin.” (Smith, *Teachings*, pp. 58–59.)

(48-4) Hebrews 11:4. “He [Abel] Being Dead Yet Speaketh”

“How doth he yet speak? Why he magnified the Priesthood which was conferred upon him, and died a righteous man, and therefore has become an angel of God by receiving his body from the dead, holding still the keys of his dispensation; and was sent down from heaven unto Paul to minister consoling words, and to commit unto him a knowledge of the mysteries of godliness.

“And if this was not the case, I would ask, how did Paul know so much about Abel, and why should he talk about his speaking after he was dead? Hence, that he spoke after he was dead must be by being sent down out of heaven to administer.” (Smith, *Teachings*, p. 169.)

(48-5) Hebrews 11:5. “By Faith Enoch Was Translated that He Should Not See Death

The only information we have in the Bible concerning Enoch, aside from this statement of Paul’s, is that given in Genesis 5:24: “And Enoch walked with God: and he was not; for God took him.” This one passage, together with Paul’s inspired comment, has given rise to endless speculation regarding Enoch’s destiny. What is the meaning of “and he was not; for God took him”? Took him where—to heaven? to paradise? Once again Joseph Smith, the great prophet of the last dispensation, has helped provide the answer: Enoch and his entire city was so righteous that they were taken from the earth to a place where they could “dwell in safety forever.” (Moses 7:18–21; see especially verse 20.) Speaking of Enoch and the doctrine of translation, Joseph once said: “Now this Enoch God reserved unto Himself, that he should not die at that time, and appointed unto him a ministry unto terrestrial bodies, of whom there has been but little revealed. . . .

“Many have supposed that the doctrine of translation was a doctrine whereby men were taken immediately into the presence of God, and into an eternal fulness, but this is a mistaken idea. Their place of habitation is that of the terrestrial order, and a place prepared for such characters He held in reserve to be ministering angels unto many planets, and who as yet have not entered into so great a fulness as those who are resurrected from the dead.” (Smith, *Teachings*, p. 170.)

(48-6) Hebrews 11:9, 14. What Does It Mean to Be Heirs with Abraham?

“In an initial and preliminary sense, they deal with lands and temporal seed. They and their children after them are to inherit the land of Canaan, and their posterity (figuratively) is to be as innumerable as the sands upon the sea shore and the stars of heaven. (Gen. 12:1–3; 17:1–22; 22:15–18; 24:60; 26:2–5; 28:1–15.)

“But in a fuller and more complete sense, the promises deal with celestial marriage, with the continuation of the family unit in eternity, with eternal increase, with having spirit children forever so that (literally) they will outnumber the particles of the earth and the near

infinite number of stars in all the galaxies of the sidereal heavens. And in this greater and more important sense, all of these same blessings become the inheritance of all saints who live the law of Abraham and enter into the same order of matrimony which blessed his life and that of Isaac and Jacob.” (McConkie, *DNTC*, 3:203–5.)

(48-7) Hebrews 11:10, 16. “A City . . . Whose Builder and Maker Is God”

The city referred to in this passage is the “city of Zion” or the city which Enoch and his people built. Translated from the earth because of the righteousness of its inhabitants, the city of Enoch became an example of that to which all men who studied and practiced righteousness might seek.

Abraham certainly did, as Paul informs us here. We are also told elsewhere that the people of Melchizedek, contemporaries of Abraham, “wrought righteousness, and obtained heaven, and sought for the city of Enoch which God had before taken, separating it from the earth, having reserved it unto the latter days, or the end of the world.” (Genesis 14:34, Inspired Version.)

Those of succeeding generations likewise continued to seek for this standard, but as the Lord informs us in latter-day scripture, they “found it not because of wickedness and abominations; And confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth; But obtained a promise that they should find it and see it in their flesh.” (D&C 45:12–14.)

The scriptures contain a promise that the city of Enoch shall someday return to earth. This promise is reserved for fulfillment during the coming millennium of peace. The Lord told Enoch that in the latter days of earth, He would prepare “an Holy City . . . and it shall be called Zion, a New Jerusalem. . . . Then shalt thou and all thy city meet them there, and we will receive them into our bosom, and they shall see us. . . .” (Moses 7:62, 63.) The city of Enoch shall return to earth.

(48-8) Hebrews 11:17–19. Why Was Abraham Commanded to Sacrifice Isaac?

“In all history there is scarcely a more soul-wrenching moment than that on Mount Moriah nearly 4000 years ago when faithful Abraham, at God’s command, raised his knife to slay Isaac, ‘his only begotten son.’ (Gen. 22:1–19.) Who can conceive of a more severe test of faith than the heaven-sent order to sacrifice the heir of promise, the heir whom God must then raise from the dead that his promises concerning Isaac might be fulfilled. (Gen. 21:12.) Is it any wonder that in all succeeding generations the seed of Abraham

have looked back with awe and reverence upon a scene which tested mortal man almost beyond mortal power to obey?

“Why did Deity devise such a test? Certainly it was for Abraham’s blessing and benefit. There can be no question that the harder the test, the higher the reward for passing it. And here Abraham laid his all on the altar, thus proving himself worthy of that exaltation which he has now received. (D. & C. 132:29.) And immediately following his conformity to the divine will, he received a heavenly manifestation of the glory and honor reserved for him and his seed. (Gen. 22:15–18.)” (McConkie, *DNTC*, 3:206–7.)

In addition to the personal test of Abraham’s faith, this commandment foreshadowed Christ’s coming atonement. Abraham’s sacrifice was in “similitude of God and his Only Begotten Son.” (Jacob 4:5.) Elder Melvin J. Ballard has given us this insight of Abraham and Isaac:

“They ascended the mountain, gathered the stones together, and placed the fagots upon them. Then Isaac was bound, hand and foot, kneeling upon the altar. I presume Abraham, like a true father, must have given his son his farewell kiss, his blessing, his love, and his soul must have been drawn out in that hour of agony toward his son who was to die by the hand of his own father. Every step proceeded until the cold steel was drawn, and the hand raised that was to strike the blow to let out the life’s blood. When the angel of the Lord said: ‘It is enough.’

“Our Father in heaven went through all that and more, for in His case the hand was not stayed.” (“The Sacramental Covenant,” *Improvement Era*, Oct. 1919, p. 1029.)

(48-9) Hebrews 11:35. What Does Paul Mean by His Reference to a “Better Resurrection”?

“Now it was evident that there was a better resurrection, or else God would not have revealed it unto Paul. Wherein then, can it be said a better resurrection? This distinction is made between the doctrine of the actual resurrection and translation: translation obtains deliverance from the tortures and sufferings of the body, but their existence will prolong as to the labors and toils of the ministry, before they can enter into so great a rest and glory.

“On the other hand, those who were tortured, not accepting deliverance, received an immediate rest from their labors. ‘And I heard a voice from heaven, saying, Blessed are the dead who die in the Lord, for from henceforth they do rest from their labors and their works do follow them.’ (See Revelation 14:13.)

“They rest from their labors for a long time, and yet their work is held in reserve for them, that they are permitted to do the same work, after they receive a resurrection for their bodies.” (Smith, *Teachings*, pp. 170–71.)

(48-10) Hebrews 11:40. Why Can’t the Dead Be Made Perfect Without Us?

“The greatest responsibility in this world that God has laid upon us is to seek after our dead. The Apostle says, ‘They without us cannot be made perfect’; (Hebrews 11:40) for it is necessary that the sealing power should be in our hands to seal our children and our dead for the fulness of the dispensation of times—a dispensation to meet the promises made by Jesus Christ before the foundation of the world for the salvation of man.

“Now, I will speak of them. I will meet Paul half way. I say unto you, Paul, you cannot be perfect without us. It is necessary that those who are going before and those who come after us should have salvation in common with us; and thus hath God made it obligatory upon man.” (Smith, *Teachings*, p. 356.)

(48-11) Hebrews 12:5–13. “For Whom the Lord Loveth He Chasteneth”

“No pain that we suffer, no trial that we experience is wasted. It ministers to our education, to the development of such qualities as patience, faith, fortitude and humility. All that we suffer and all that we endure, especially when we endure it patiently, builds up our characters, purifies our hearts, expands our souls, and makes us more tender and charitable, more worthy to be called the children of God . . . and it is through sorrow and suffering, toil and tribulation, that we gain the education that we come here to acquire and which will make us more like our Father and Mother in heaven. . . .” (Orson F. Whitney, as cited in Kimball, *Faith Precedes the Miracle*, p. 98.)

(48-12) Hebrews 12:18. “The Mount That Might Be Touched, and That Burned with Fire”

Paul compares the situation of the children of Israel in Moses’ day with the people of his own day. In Moses’ time the children of Israel were forbidden by divine law to touch Mount Sinai on penalty of death; it was not so in Paul’s day, nor is it in our own. Elder McConkie commented:

“No longer is there a restraining barrier to keep the people from seeing and communing with their God. The mountain is no longer Sinai but Zion. And all those who have cleansed and perfected their souls, shall be welcomed on the heavenly mountain, and in

the heavenly city, the new Jerusalem, the city of exalted beings. And there, in that heavenly realm, where the saints shall see and know, as Moses alone did in Israel, shall be found such might, display, splendor and omnipotence, that the doings of Jehovah on Sinai, incomprehensibly glorious as they were, shall be but a blurred image in comparison.” (McConkie, *DNTC*, 3:229.)

(48-13) Hebrews 12:23, 24. What Is the “General Assembly and Church of the Firstborn”?

“Members of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints who so devote themselves to righteousness that they receive the higher ordinances of exaltation become members of the *Church of the Firstborn*. . . .

“The Church of the Firstborn is made up of the sons of God, those who have been adopted into the family of the Lord, those who are destined to be joint-heirs with Christ in receiving all that the Father hath.” (McConkie, *Mormon Doctrine*, p. 139.)

The phrase “the Church of the Firstborn” has no reference to the apostate group of the same name.

(48-14) Hebrews 12:24. How Does “the Blood of Sprinkling” Speak “Better Things Than That of Abel”?

The blood of Jesus Christ was shed as an atonement for the sins of all men. Precisely what Paul had in mind by his allusion to Abel is not certain, but it must be remembered that Abel too had his blood shed, though not as an atonement for sin. Elder McConkie has written:

“Is Paul here alluding to the ancient heresy that the blood of Abel was shed for the remission of sins? Had this false doctrine lingered among some of the Hebrews of that day? As the first gospel martyr (Gen. 4:1–10; Moses 5:17–35), the shedding of Abel’s blood had gained great significance among the descendants of Adam. By the time of Abraham, however, the true understanding of Abel’s sacrifice and martyrdom had been so lost and perverted that Deity felt disposed to say to the Father of the Faithful: ‘My people have gone astray from my precepts, and have not kept mine ordinances, which I gave unto their fathers; And they have not observed mine anointing, and the burial, or baptism wherewith I commanded them; But have turned from the commandment, and taken unto themselves the washing of children, and the blood of sprinkling; And have said that the blood of the righteous Abel was shed for sins; and have not known wherein they are accountable before men.’ (*Inspired Version*, Gen. 17:4–7.)

“But whatever the then prevailing views of the Hebrews may have been, Paul is here teaching: ‘The blood of righteous Abel’ (Matt. 23–35), together ‘with the innocent blood of all the martyrs under the altar that John saw’ (D. & C. 135:7; Rev. 6:9–11) cries unto the Lord for vengeance against the wicked; the blood of Christ, on the other hand, was poured out as a propitiation for sins, and through it men are empowered to repent and be reconciled to God. Thus the voice of Abel’s blood is one of death and separation and sorrow; the voice of our Lord’s blood is one of life and reunion and eternal joy. Truly his blood speaketh better things than that of Abel!” (McConkie, *DNTC*, 3:231–32.)

(48-15) Hebrews 12:29. “Our God Is a Consuming Fire”

The Prophet Joseph Smith taught that “God Almighty Himself dwells in eternal fire; flesh and blood cannot go there, for all corruption is devoured by the fire. ‘Our God is a consuming fire.’ When our flesh is quickened by the Spirit, there will be no blood in this tabernacle. Some dwell in higher glory than others.” (Smith, *Teachings*, p. 367.)

The Savior’s second coming is said to be “like a refiner’s fire” (Malachi 3:3) in which “all the proud, yea and all that do wickedly shall be stubble” before its burning force (Malachi 4:1; D&C 29:9). The very “presence of the Lord shall be as the melting fire that burneth, and as the fire which causeth the waters to boil” (D&C 133:41), and all the wicked shall be consumed away and utterly destroyed by the brightness of his coming (D&C 5:19). In addition to having a destructive effect, the fire will cleanse every corruptible thing. Read D&C 101:23–25.

(48-16) Hebrews 13:9–14. “We Have an Altar”

The altar Paul refers to is the sacramental table spread by the atonement of Jesus Christ, which may be partaken of by all who covenant with Christ. “Those who serve the tabernacle” has reference to the Levitical Priesthood holders who performed the ordinances in the ancient tabernacle and temple.

POINTS TO PONDER

YOU MUST BE TRIED, EVEN AS ABRAHAM

As he entered my office, I could sense from the look on his face that he was disgruntled. When he sat down, however, he continued to brood in silence for a few moments, long enough for me to ask him the inevitable question, “What’s the matter?”

“Oh, it’s Abraham. No, it’s not Abraham. What I mean is, it’s God.”

“And what’s the matter with Him?”

“Well, it’s the way he treated Abraham.”

“What do you mean?”

“Didn’t Abraham come out of a background where people offered human sacrifices? And wasn’t he appalled by it?”

“Yes.”

“And doesn’t the Pearl of Great Price teach us that Abraham came very close to being a sacrificial victim himself and thus knew, personally, the horror of that experience?”

“Yes.”

“Then how could a loving God ask Abraham to ascend Mt. Moriah and there sacrifice his own son? It doesn’t make sense. Would God really try a man’s faith in that way?”

Would he? Would God try a man’s faith in that way? And if he did, would he not try the faith of others also? Would God try your faith? The answer is found in D&C 101:1–5. Study it carefully for what it has to say to you.

Suddenly the test of faith does not lie solely in the past with Abraham and other great prophets but also with you and with your immediate future. Why did Abraham respond as he did? Didn’t he know that human sacrifice was wrong? Read again Hebrews 11:17–19.

Obviously, God, who does nothing that is nonessential, had a purpose in trying the faith of his servant Abraham. Can you develop the kind of Abrahamic faith to help you meet the challenges of your own “Mt. Moriah”? Paul felt that you could. Thus, in the course of his treatment on faith, he has more to say about Abraham than any other prophet. It seems apparent that he wanted the saints, ancient and modern, to develop that kind of faith.

(48-17) The Word *Faith* Can Describe Different but Related Phenomena

The word *faith* in the scriptures is used to describe a number of different though intimately related phenomena. *Faith*, when used in one passage of scripture, may not mean exactly what it does when used in another passage. It is often necessary to decide from the context in which the passage appears just what the writer meant when he used the term *faith*.

(48-18) Developing Faith Is Active Belief, Which Is More than Just Belief

“The terms faith and belief are sometimes regarded as synonyms; nevertheless each of them has a specific meaning in our language, although in earlier usage there was little distinction between them, and therefore the words are used interchangeably in many scriptural passages. Belief, in one of its accepted senses, may consist in a merely intellectual assent, while faith implies such confidence and conviction as will impel to action. . . . Belief is in a sense passive, an agreement or acceptance only; faith is active and positive, embracing such reliance and confidence as will lead to works. Faith in Christ comprises belief in Him, combined with trust in Him. One cannot have faith without belief; yet he may believe and still lack faith. Faith is vivified, vitalized, living belief.” (Talmage, *Articles of Faith*, pp. 96–97.)

(48-19) Faith Is a Principle of Action and Assurance

“The author of the epistle to the Hebrews, in the eleventh chapter of that epistle and first verse, gives the following definition of the word faith:

“Now faith is the substance (assurance) of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen.”

“From this we learn that faith is the assurance which men have of the existence of things which they have not seen, and the principle of action in all intelligent beings.” (*Lectures on Faith*, Lecture First, vss. 7–9.)

(48-20) Fully Developed Faith Is Power

“. . . faith is not only the principle of action, but of power also, in all intelligent beings, whether in heaven or on earth. Thus says the author of the epistle to the Hebrews, xi. 3—

“Through faith we understand that the worlds were framed by the word of God; so that things which are seen were not made of things which do appear.”

“By this we understand that the principle of power which existed in the bosom of God, by which the worlds were framed, was faith; and that it is by reason of this principle of power existing in the Deity, that all created things exist; so that all things in heaven, on earth, or under the earth exist by reason of faith as it existed in Him.

“Faith, then, is the first great governing principle which has power, dominion, and authority over all things; by it they exist, by it they are upheld, by it they are changed, or by it they remain, agreeable to the will

of God. Without it there is no power, and with out power there could be no creation nor existence!” (Lectures on Faith, Lecture First, vss. 13–15, 24.)

Do you see how one grows in faith? At the beginning, faith may be no more than belief, but as an individual acts on that belief it is transformed into a positive reliance and confidence in Jesus Christ. Consider the following illustration: a teacher once asked his class this rather straight-forward question on a true-false examination: “The first principle of the gospel is faith. True or false?”

The answer is “false.” The first principle of the gospel is faith in the Lord Jesus Christ.

It is a critical and essential point. Why? To find out read Acts 4:12.

Do you see that only faith in Christ brings eternal life? Faith in any other thing or being will not. Why? Again the answer is found in the scriptures. Read Ether 12:4.

Did you notice as you read that he who believes in God (that is, exercises his faith) has produced within his soul a sure hope “for a better world, yea, even a place at the right hand of God”? This hope in turn becomes “an anchor to the souls of men.” As a result, their faith is strengthened and good works abound. Thus men learn to call on God with confidence and assurance. They have what Paul calls “the substance [assurance] of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen.” (Hebrews 11:1.)

But there is still one higher level of faith. Paul alludes to it in these words: “Through faith we understand the worlds were framed by the word of God. . . .” (Hebrews 11:3.) Joseph Smith spoke on this same theme as you just read. (See 48-20.)

What did he mean by that? This kind of faith is the ability to work through the Holy Ghost, to work for God under inspiration, literally to produce miracles by the power of God. This is what the Lord may have had in mind when he said that he had created worlds without number “by the word of my power.” (Moses 1:32.) Amplifying this, Joseph Smith explained: “God spake, chaos heard, and worlds came into order by reason of the faith there was in HIM.” (Lectures on Faith, Lecture First, vs. 22.)

You too can learn to have this kind of faith. Joseph Smith taught that man, as he adheres to the standards of the gospel, can gain power to work in the realm of the spirit. The Prophet wrote:

“Joshua spake, and the great lights which God had created stood still. Elijah commanded, and the heavens were stayed for the space of three years and six months, so that it did not rain: he again commanded and the heavens gave forth rain. All this was done by faith. And the Savior says, ‘If you have faith as a grain of mustard seed, say to this mountain, “Remove,” and it will remove; or say to that sycamine tree, “Be ye plucked up, and planted in the midst of the sea,” and it shall obey you.’ Faith, then, works by words; and with these its mightiest works have been, and will be performed.” (Lectures on Faith, Lecture Seventh, vs. 3.)

As you develop faith in Christ you will also develop your powers of spirituality, as others before you have done. That is what Paul was telling the Hebrew Saints, and it works! Every man of faith knows that it works.

We might diagram our present understanding of the principle of faith as follows:

*Power Principle in
God and Man*

*The ability to work
with and through the
Holy Spirit*

Assurance of Christ

*Testimony of Holy Ghost
added to faith*

Faith in Christ

*Commitment to keep his
commandments*

Active Belief

*Commitment and action in response to the
belief*

Belief

Simplest level at which all begin

(48-21) It Is Through Faith, Not by Knowledge, That Salvation Comes

“It is said that during an epidemic of cholera in a great city, a scientific man proved to his own satisfaction, by chemical and microscopical tests, that the water supply was infected, and that through it contagion was being spread. He proclaimed the fact throughout the city, and warned all against the use of unboiled water. Many of the people, although incapable of

comprehending his methods of investigation, far less of repeating such for themselves, had faith in his warning words, followed his instructions, and escaped the death to which their careless and unbelieving fellows succumbed. Their faith was a saving one. To the man himself, the truth by which so many lives had been spared was a matter of knowledge. He had actually perceived, under the microscope, proof of the existence of death-dealing germs in the water; he had demonstrated their virulence; he knew of what he spoke. Nevertheless, in a moment of forgetfulness he drank of the unsterilized water, and soon thereafter died, a victim to the plague. His knowledge did not save him, convincing though it was; yet others, whose reliance was only that of confidence or faith in the truth that he declared, escaped the threatening destruction. He had knowledge; but, was he wise? Knowledge is to wisdom what belief is to faith, one an abstract principle, the other a living application. Not possession merely, but the proper use of knowledge constitutes wisdom.” (Talmage, *Articles of Faith*, pp. 99–100.)

(48-22) By Faith We Work with and Through the Spirit to Accomplish God’s Will

A story is told about a certain district president who was a man of great faith. He was called to the hospital to administer to a baby girl who had been born without a fully developed diaphragm. The doctors felt that there was no way the child could live. When the president arrived with his companion, they placed their hands on the infant’s head and, under inspiration, promised the child not only that she would live but that she would become a mother in Israel. The mother who tells the story says that after the administration was complete, there was an almost instantaneous change in the child, as though some one had pulled a blanket down over her body. Her color changed from blue to pink. Within a few days the baby was released from the hospital with a fully developed diaphragm. That little girl is now a mother in Zion. (Based on a personal experience.)

YOUR FAITH IS THE SOURCE OF POWER TO GAIN ETERNAL LIFE AND EXALTATION

The story you just read about the district president is true.

Can you imagine the feelings of that mother toward the Lord and his servant who, under inspiration and acting in the power of God, spoke the words of faith whereby the child was healed? At another time, in

another way, and with sufficient faith, you too could reach out and save a life. It might not be in a physical way. Perhaps your words of faith will heal a broken heart or a rebellious spirit. But if you are prepared, you will find yourself speaking and healing and serving under inspiration and by the power of the living God. That is faith.

Once you have an understanding of what faith is and what it can do in the lives of those who possess it, you are ready to consider your own personal relation to it: “How can I develop faith in Christ in my life?” Some are overwhelmed by the prospects and hesitant to begin. “I can never exercise the kind of faith that Abraham did; or Noah; or Enoch.” Remember that each of us has to begin somewhere and sometime. Why not begin where you are now? In fact, where you are now is an excellent place to start if you are willing to begin the quest. The way is not complicated. The prophet Alma explained the necessary steps quite clearly. Turn to Alma 32:26–28, 33. Did you notice Alma said that even to desire to believe was exercising a particle of faith? But what should you desire to believe? For the answer turn to Alma 33:14. What is the seed that you should plant? Compare your answer with Alma’s in verse 23.

Can you see that one example of the seed is the testimony of the prophets, both ancient and modern, that Jesus is the Christ? But you may ask, How can I make their testimony grow within me until it becomes the kind of faith I would like to have? Alma has the answer. Read Alma 32:37. How do you nourish the seed with great care? Read verse 41 for the answer.

Did you note the four things that are your responsibility? Isn’t it interesting that Alma mentions that the seed is nourished by faith—that is, the simple kind of faith called active belief. Next he stresses diligence coupled with patience, and finally he speaks of the “looking forward,” which we call hope. If you want greater faith, your job is to do those things which will nourish it. Faith is a gift of God. (See Moroni 10:11.) It is God’s responsibility to give the increase. That is the reason patience and diligence are so important. As you strive with all diligence to serve at whatever level of faith you have, waiting patiently for the Lord, he will give the increase; then you will feel your faith grow and bring great joy as you serve your Lord and your God. The way for you to achieve the tremendous powers of faith is clear and uncomplicated. All you are waiting for is you.

SECTION 11

THE EARLY APOSTLES SEND THEIR WITNESS TO THE WORLD

LESSONS

49. “Pure Religion and undefiled” (James)
50. “For This Cause Was the Gospel Preached Also to Them That Are Dead” (1 Peter)
51. “Partakers of the Divine Nature” (2 Peter)
52. “Walk in the Light, As He Is in the Light” (1 John)
53. “For There Are Certain Men Crept In Unawares” (2 and 3 John; Jude)

THE FIERY TRIAL

“... ye shall be witnesses unto me both in Jerusalem, and in all Judea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth.” (Acts 1:8.)

For three decades following the ascension of the Lord, the infant church of Jesus Christ grew rapidly. Consistent with the prophecy by Jesus (Acts 1:8), the church expanded from its relative obscurity in remote Palestine to many parts of the empire.

In July, A.D. 64, a disastrous fire raged for nine days and destroyed the imperial capital of Rome. Contemporary public opinion said that Nero, seeking to cover his crimes and to appropriate a sizable area in the center of the city for a new palace, was himself the incendiary. To dispel this rumor, Nero cast the blame for the fire on the Christians. The teaching of the church that the eventual destruction of the world was to be by fire led credibility to the accusation. A general persecution against the saints followed. Tacitus, a Roman historian, chronicled the extent and severity of what became known as the first Roman persecution of the church.

“But all human efforts, all the largesses of the emperor, all the propitiations of the gods, failed to dispel the sinister belief that the conflagration had been ordered. Consequently, to scotch the rumor, Nero fastened the guilt and inflicted the most exquisite tortures upon a group hated for their abominations,

whom the populace called Christians. Christus, from whom the name had its origin, had been condemned to death in the reign of Tiberius by the procurator Pontius Pilate, and the pernicious superstition, thus suppressed for the moment, was breaking out again not only in Judea, the original source of this evil, but even in Rome, where all things horrible or shameful from all parts of the world collect[ed] and became popular. First, then, those who confessed membership were arrested; then, on their information, great numbers were convicted, not so much of guilt for the conflagration as of hatred of the human race. And mockery was added to their deaths: they were covered with the skins of wild beasts and torn to death by dogs, or they were nailed to crosses and, when daylight failed, were set on fire and burned to provide light at night. Nero had offered his gardens for the spectacle, and was providing circus games, mingling with the populace in the dress of a charioteer or driving a chariot. Hence, though they were deserving of the most extreme punishment, a feeling of pity arose because of the savagery of one man.” (Naphtali Lewis and Meyer Reinhold, *Roman Civilization*, 3:226–27.)

The burning of Rome could be likened to a “fiery trial” about to be inflicted upon the membership of the church. Thus did Peter, the president of the church, warn the saints in Asia of the impending persecution. How literal the prophecy was is seen by the fact that both Peter and Paul fell as martyrs to the faith during these years of persecution under Nero, probably in A.D. 68.

A second fiery persecution followed during the reign of the Emperor Domitian, A.D. 81–96. During this period John the Beloved was banished to the isle of Patmos. It was alleged that thousands of saints were killed or tortured during this period.

The third of the persecutions commenced under the Emperor Trajan, who reigned from A.D. 98 to 117. By

this time Christianity had been declared an illegal society in the empire; and unless the saints renounced Christ, they were executed. Trajan, determined to see the law upheld, directed that Christians not be sought out, but if they were discovered and did not renounce the faith, they were to be executed. Interestingly, the Greek word for “witness” is *martyrs*, and for “testimony” it is *martyrion*. Before the first century was concluded, bearing faithful witness of Jesus Christ led to torture, persecution, and death so often that the very word *witness* took on the connotation of dying for one’s belief. Our English word *martyr* is a direct derivative from the Greek. To deny Christ and deify Caesar, or to die was the choice given many of the early saints of the church.

BIOGRAPHIES

PETER

Following the Savior’s ascension, Peter assumed the heavy responsibilities of leading the infant church. Thus, Peter directed the apostles in their efforts to choose a successor to Judas Iscariot (Acts 1:15–26). On the day of Pentecost, it was Peter who became the spokesman for the apostles and saints (Acts 2:14). Peter received the revelation which authorized missionary efforts among the gentiles (Acts 10:1–11:18), and he it was who declared the policy regarding circumcision (Acts 15:1–29; Galatians 2:1–10). As with many of the ancient saints, Peter suffered much from persecution, first in Jerusalem (Acts 5:29–32, 40; chapter 12) and later in Rome. From ancient tradition it is learned that the apostle was arrested while he was in Rome and crucified near the end of the reign of Nero. It is said that at his own request Peter was crucified upside down because he considered himself unworthy to be crucified in the same manner as was the Savior (John 21:18, 19). (See Frederic W. Farrar, *The Life and Work of St. Paul*, p. 448.)

Peter became a spiritual rock of a man. He healed the lame and the sick through the power of the priesthood (Acts 3; 5:15, 16). Though at one point in his life he

denied knowing the Lord, yet he later received the transforming power of the Holy Ghost. His faith in the Lord Jesus Christ became so powerful that when he was threatened, beaten, and maligned by his Sanhedrin persecutors, he boldly testified, “We ought to obey God rather than men.” (Acts 5:29.) Peter was “a man who had grown perfect through his experiences and sufferings—a man with vision, a man of revelations, a man fully trusted by his Lord Jesus Christ.” (Spencer W. Kimball, “Peter, My Brother,” *Speeches of the Year*, 1971, p. 1. The complete text of “Peter, My Brother,” is included in Appendix D at the end of this manual.)

JAMES

The weight of evidence indicates that the author of the letter of James is not the James who was the brother of John and a member of the presidency of the church with Peter and John. The author of the book of James was probably the brother of the Lord (Galatians 1:19) and evidently was not fully converted to the Savior until after the resurrection (John 7:5; 1 Corinthians 15:7). After his conversion he began to take a prominent position in church leadership (Acts 15:4–34; 21:18, 19; Galatians 1:18, 19; 2:1–10). Because of this it is likely that he was made an apostle, perhaps even filling the quorum vacancy left when James, the son of Zebedee, was martyred (Acts 12:1, 2). It is an interesting note on James’ humility that in his letter he does not call himself the *brother* of the Lord, but, rather, the *servant* of the Lord (James 1:1). (For further information on the author of the epistle of James see reading 49–3.)

Judas (same as *Jude* in later Greek and *Judah* in Hebrew) was the brother of James and the author of the book of Jude. (See Jude 1.) If this is the same man, he would be a brother (technically a half-brother) of the Savior (Matthew 13:55). Little else is known about his life.

Note: Though John has written three of the epistles in this section, his biographical information is included in section 12.

Roman Emperors of the First Century		
Augustus	(27 B.C.–A.D. 14)	
Tiberius	(A.D. 1–A.D. 37)	On the throne at the time of Jesus
Caligula	(A.D. 37–A.D. 41)	
Claudius	(A.D. 41–A.D. 54)	
Nero	(A.D. 54–A.D. 68)	The first Roman persecution: Peter and Paul martyred
Galba	(A.D. 68–A.D. 69)	
Otho	(A.D. 69)	
Vitellius	(A.D. 69)	
Vespasian	(A.D. 69–A.D. 79)	
Titus	(A.D. 79–A.D. 81)	
Domitian	(A.D. 81–A.D. 96)	The second Roman persecution; John banished to the isle of Patmos
Nerva	(A.D. 96–A.D. 98)	
Trajan	(A.D. 98–A.D. 117)	The third imperial persecution; Christianity an illegal religion

"PURE RELIGION AND UNDEFILED"



The Letter of James to Christians Living Across the Graeco-Roman World Written by James, the Brother of the Lord, from Jerusalem, ca. A.D. 50–51 (James)	
	James
Trials Are a Privilege—Ask God for Wisdom	1:1–7
God Tempts No One to Do Wrong	1:8–18
“Be Ye Doers of the Word”	1:19–27
We Commit Sin If We Show Favoritism	2:1–9
The Entire Law Must Be Kept	2:10–13
“Faith Without Works Is Dead”	2:14–26
Controlled Language Aids Perfection	3:1–12
Envy and Strife Are of Evil	3:13–18
The Source of War and Strife	4:1–3
Identifying the Enemies of God	4:4–6
Becoming a Friend of God	4:7–12
What Is Sin?	4:13–17
A Warning for the Wealthy	5:1–6
Await the Lord’s Coming with Patience	5:7–11
Elders Anoint and Heal the Sick	5:12–20

THEME

The true religion of Christ is expressed in the service of love through which perfection is obtained.

INTRODUCTION

If the author of the epistle of James was the half brother of Jesus as the evidence seems to indicate, then perhaps he knew the Master as intimately as anyone. But later he knew the Savior as more than a brother. With a witness born of the Spirit, he knew him as Lord and God. James’ writing cannot help but reflect those lessons learned in childhood as he grew with Jesus, always being led and enlightened by his eldest brother’s example. It is of little wonder, then, that James focuses on the essence of pure religion as a very practical, down-to-earth activity. Religion, he teaches, is what we do because of testimony and love. So he focuses on the little things of which the stairway to perfection and exaltation are built. He understood well the principle taught by a modern apostle:

“There is no one great thing that we can do to obtain eternal life, and . . . the great lesson to be learned . . . is to apply in the little acts and duties of life the glorious principles of the Gospel. . . . Life after all, is made up of little things. . . . the true Christian life is made up of little Christ-like acts performed this hour,

this minute, in the home, in the quorum, in the organization, in the town, wherever our life and acts may be cast." (David O. McKay in *CR*, Oct. 1914, pp. 87–88.)

Before proceeding, read all the scriptural references in the reading block.

As you read this beautiful and practical epistle note those elements which express how a modern disciple of Christ should act.

INTERPRETIVE COMMENTARY

(49-1) Theme

The letter of James does not have a theme in the usual sense, as do the letters to the Romans or Ephesians or Galatians. It does not take one central idea and then develop and expound it in some systematic way. But this letter does have an overall purpose that could be thought of as a theme. Throughout the epistle James seems to be showing that once we accept the gospel and have faith, it is expected that we will demonstrate the reality of that faith in our day-to-day living patterns. The book is characterized by a series of staccato mini-sermons showing that the saints are not only to know the word of God but are to live it as well.

(49-2) Place and Date of Writing

In the General Epistles (so-called because they had no specific location to which they were sent), of which James is one, the determination of date and place of writing is difficult. James, for example, gives no clue whatsoever as to the place from which he is writing. Many have assumed that it must have been Jerusalem, since that is where he resided, but it can only be supposition.

As to the date, we know from the historian Josephus that after many years of prominent church leadership in Jerusalem, James was taken before the Sanhedrin, sentenced to death, and executed by stoning in A.D. 62. (See Josephus, *The Life and Works of Flavius Josephus*, Antiquities of the Jews 20. 9. 1.) That would, of course, mean that the letter was written before then. Though it cannot be stated with certainty, the tone of the letter (for example, no mention of the Jewish-gentile controversy) might suggest that it was written early in the church's history, perhaps around A.D. 50 or 51. This fact, if true, would make it one of the earliest of the New Testament letters.

(49-3) Authorship

There is no question about the fact that this letter was written by someone named James. The problem lies in determining which James is referred to. Some assume that the author of the letter is the brother of John and the son of Zebedee, whom the Lord called to the apostleship early in his ministry (Matthew 10:12). He, together with Peter and John, formed the first presidency of the early church. This James, however, was the first apostolic martyr of the early church. He was "killed with the sword" (probably beheaded) by Herod in a wave of persecution against the church (Acts 12:1, 2). Most scholars fix the date of his execution at A.D. 44, five or six years before the great Jerusalem Council. With these facts considered, some scholars believe that the epistle of James was written by James, the Lord's brother.

(49-4) Background Information

As was stated above, the epistle of James is a general letter. It was not sent to a specific branch or a group of branches of the church but seems to have been intended for all saints. This feeling of generality is heightened by the lack of personal references, personal greetings, or mention of any items of news that are so typical in the letters of Paul. The introduction is very brief, and there is no formal closing. But while this would seem to be a disadvantage on the surface, actually this lack of concrete application to either time or place gives the epistle a universality that has made it one of enduring value down through the centuries.

James addressed the letter to the "twelve tribes which are scattered abroad." (James 1:1.) Many scholars, lacking a concept of spiritual Israel as contrasted with blood-descent Israel, assume that James wrote to Jewish Christians only. Elder McConkie, however, suggests that James wrote specifically to saints who would become part of Israel even far in the future.

"James—religious by nature; schooled in the strict Judaism of the day; converted after our Lord's resurrection; and said to have died a martyr's death—took upon himself the awesome responsibility to write an epistle to the saints in the dispensation of the fullness of times.

"Paul wrote to the saints of his own day, and if his doctrine and counsel blesses us of later years, so much the better. But James addressed himself to those of the twelve scattered tribes of Israel who belonged to the Church; that is, to a people yet to be gathered, yet to receive the gospel, yet to come into the fold of Christ; and if his words had import to the small cluster of

saints of Judah and Benjamin who joined the Church in the meridian of time, so much the better.” (McConkie, *DNTC*, 3:243.)

(49-5) James 1:2. Are We to Be Joyful When We Have Many Temptations?

Joseph Smith made the following important change in this verse: “My brethren, count it all joy when ye fall into many afflictions.” (James 1:2, Inspired Version.)

(49-6) James 1:5, 6. “If Any of You Lack Wisdom”

“. . . this single verse of scripture has had a greater impact and a more far reaching effect upon mankind than any other single sentence ever recorded by any prophet in any age. It might well be said that the crowning act of the ministry of James was not his martyrdom for the testimony of Jesus, but his recitation, as guided by the Holy Ghost, of these simple words which led to the opening of the heavens in modern times.

“And it might well be added that every investigator of revealed truth stands, at some time in the course of his search, in the place where Joseph Smith stood. He must turn to the Almighty and gain wisdom from God by revelation if he is to gain a place on that strait and narrow path which leads to eternal life.” (McConkie, *DNTC*, 3:246–47.)

(49-7) James 1:10. Why Should the Rich Rejoice in Being Made Low?

“Let wealthy saints who are stripped of their goods because of their allegiance to the gospel also rejoice, for worldly riches are fleeting and not to be compared with the riches of eternity. Or, let them rejoice when, through trials, they become lowly in spirit and no longer trust in those things which wither and die in the day’s heat.” (McConkie, *DNTC*, 3:248.)

(49-8) James 1:14. The Way Satan Works

As James describes man being influenced by his own lusts, he chooses two words that are vivid and descriptive of how Satan works upon men. The first word, translated as *drawn out*, was used in hunting and was the word which described what the hunter did when he lured wild game out of the safety of the thick brush into an area set with snares. And the word *entice* came from fishing and meant “to bait, or to catch with bait.” How apt is the description, for the lusts of the flesh are designed to lure us out from the true safety of protective righteousness to become the victim of the evil hunter or fisherman.

(49-9) James 1:21. What Is a “Superfluity of Naughtiness”?

Naughtiness has come to connote petty or mischievous acts, such as the pranks of children; but this is a very inadequate translation of the word James used. *Kakias* not only meant evil in the general sense but, specifically, hatred or bitterness toward another. Thus *malice* probably comes closest to the truest meaning. The Greek word translated *superfluity* is used in many other places in the New Testament. Typically it is translated as *abundance*. This gives the true sense of James’ phrase, “an abundance of malice.”

(49-10) James 1:27. What Is Pure Religion?

“This may be interpreted as meaning that a person who is religious is thoughtful to the unfortunate, and has an inner spirit that prompts to deeds of kindness and to the leading of a blameless life; who is just, truthful; who does not, as Paul says, think more highly of himself than he ought to think; who is affectionate, patient in tribulation, diligent, cheerful, fervent in spirit, hospitable, merciful, and who abhors evil and cleaves to that which is good. The possession of such a spirit and feeling is a true sign that a person is naturally religious.

“The Church’s outward ordinances and requirements are but necessary—yet they are necessary—aids to the inner spiritual life. The Church itself, the organization, meetings, ordinances, requirements, are only helps, but very necessary helps, to the practice of true religion—schoolmasters to direct us in the way of eternal light and truth.” (Smith, *Gospel Doctrine*, p. 121.)

(49-11) James 2:25. Who Was Rahab?

Both James and Paul cite the harlot Rahab as an Old Testament example of true faith (Hebrews 11:31). She was an inhabitant of Jericho at the time the armies of Israel, under Joshua’s leadership, approached the Promised Land (Joshua 2:1–24). Joshua sent two men into Jericho to spy out the strength of the city. Rahab took them in, even hiding them when the king sought for them. Then she helped them to escape safely from the city. For that, she and her family were spared when the rest of Jericho was destroyed, and she dwelt in Israel for the remainder of her life. (See Joshua 6:22–25.) A Rahab is mentioned in the genealogy of the Savior. (See Matthew 1:5.) Since no other woman of that name is mentioned in the scriptures, most scholars assume it is the same woman.

(49-12) James 3:5. “How Great a Matter a Little Fire Kindleth”

The literal meaning of the word *matter* in this verse is “wood.” It is used as we would speak of a forest or a wooded area. The meaning of the passage is, “Behold, how great a forest fire a tiny spark can start.”

(49-13) James 3:8. The Importance of Taming the Tongue

“I think now of self-control. Many of the cases which I review started with uncontrolled appetites and tempers, leading often to cruelty, mental and physical. When in a temper the tongue may be venomous. The Apostle James said, ‘. . . it is an unruly evil, full of deadly poison.’ (James 3:8.) That is only potential, but it is often true. The tongue, with which we say our prayers and pledge our troth is sometimes used to wound those we love best. ‘Boys flying kites haul in their white winged birds; we can’t do that when we’re flying words.’

“A middle-aged couple on the farm had a violent quarrel at breakfast time. Later in the day they started for town in the buggy, with a fine team of horses to sell their vegetables and eggs. As the horses trotted along, Mary said, ‘John, why can’t we travel together like these horses do? They don’t quarrel and fight.’ John said, ‘Mary, we could if there was only one tongue between us.’

“Oh, the unkind things we say to those we love.

““We have kind words for the stranger
And smiles for the sometime guest,
While oft to our own
The bitter tone,
Though we love our own the best!””

(Hugh B. Brown in *CR*, Oct. 1954, p. 16.)

(49-14) James 4:4. What Is a “Friend of the World”?

“The use of the word ‘world’ in this sense is defined in the scriptures when speaking of the ‘end of the world’ as the destruction of the wickedness that is in the world. (See [Joseph Smith—Matthew 1:4].)

“The world to which the apostles James and John and the Master make reference is that moral and spiritual system which is hostile to God and which seeks to delude us into thinking that we and mankind generally do not need God. It is a society which in every age has operated and is operating on wrong principles, from selfish desires, from improper motives, unworthy

standards, and false values. Those who do not accept God’s revelation through his prophets have devised numerous philosophies from their limited human reasoning and seemingly think that they can find happiness and the satisfaction of their souls by ignoring God’s plan of salvation.” (Harold B. Lee in *CR*, Oct. 1968, p. 59.)

(49-15) James 4:7. How Do We Resist the Devil So That He Will Flee from Us?

“James gave a formula for conquering: ‘Submit yourselves therefore to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you. (Jas. 4:7.) In abandoning evil, transforming lives, changing personalities, molding characters or remolding them, we need the help of the Lord, and we may be assured of it if we do our part. The man who leans heavily upon his Lord becomes the master of self and can accomplish anything he sets out to do, whether it be to secure the brass plates, build a ship, overcome a habit, or conquer a deep-seated transgression.

“He who has greater strength than Lucifer, he who is our fortress and our strength, can sustain us in times of great temptation. While the Lord will never forcibly take anyone out of sin or out of the arms of the tempters, he exerts his Spirit to induce the sinner to do it with divine assistance. And the man who yields to the sweet influence and pleadings of the Spirit and does all in his power to stay in a repentant attitude is guaranteed protection, power, freedom and joy.” (Kimball, *Miracle of Forgiveness*, p. 176.)

(49-16) James 4:17. “To Him That Knoweth to Do Good, and Doeth It Not”

“Sin is the transgression of divine law, as made known through the conscience or by revelation. A man sins when he violates his conscience, going contrary to light and knowledge—not the light and knowledge that has come to his neighbor, but that which has come to himself. He sins when he does the opposite of what he knows to be right. Up to that point he only blunders. One may suffer painful consequences for only blundering, but he cannot commit sin unless he knows better than to do the thing in which the sin consists. One must have a conscience before he can violate it.” (Whitney, *Saturday Night Thoughts*, p. 239.)

(49-17) James 5:4. “The Lord of Sabaoth”

Often that phrase is read carelessly as the “Lord of the Sabbath.” This is incorrect, for the two words are

actually unrelated in meaning. *Sabaoth* is the Greek transliteration of the Hebrew word *tsabaoth*, which means “host” or “multitude.” The title is the same as that used numerous times in the Old Testament, namely, the Lord of Hosts, meaning “the Lord of the multitudes who dwell in heaven and on earth.” It is interesting to note that the Savior so characterized himself in this dispensation also. (See D&C 87:7; 88:2; 95:7; 98:2.)

(49-18) James 5:16. Are We to Confess Our Sins to One Another?

“The confession of his major sins to a proper Church authority is one of those requirements made by the Lord. These sins include adultery, fornication, other sexual transgressions, and other sins of comparable seriousness. This procedure of confession assures proper controls and protection for the Church and its people and sets the feet of the transgressor on the path of true repentance.

“Many offenders in their shame and pride have satisfied their consciences, temporarily at least, with a few silent prayers to the Lord and rationalized that this was sufficient confession of their sins. ‘But I have confessed my sin to my Heavenly Father,’ they will insist, ‘and that is all that is necessary.’ This is not true where a major sin is involved. Then two sets of forgiveness are required to bring peace to the transgressor—one from the proper authorities of the Lord’s Church, and one from the Lord himself.

“When one has wronged another in deep transgression or in injuries of lesser magnitude, he, the aggressor, who gave the offense, regardless of the attitude of the other party, should immediately make amends by confessing to the injured one and doing all in his power to clear up the matter and again establish good feelings between the two parties.” (Kimball, *Miracle of Forgiveness*, pp. 179, 186.)

(49-19) James 5:17. Elias or Elijah?

The name and title Elias is often confusing, since it can refer to an office, a function, or a person. (See McConkie, *Mormon Doctrine*, pp. 219–22.) It is further confused by the fact that the common Greek spelling for the name of the famous Old Testament prophet Elijah is also Elias. In this verse, James is obviously referring to Elijah, who had the power to stop the rains for 3½ years as a warning to Israel (1 Kings 17; 18).

(49-20) James 5:19, 20. The Saving Power of Missionary Work

“Every person who is beginning the long journey of emancipating himself from the thralldom of sin and evil will find comfort in the thought expressed by James. We could expand it somewhat and remind the transgressor that every testimony he bears, every prayer he offers, every sermon he preaches, every scripture he reads, every help he gives to stimulate and raise others—all these strengthen him and raise him to higher levels.

“The proper motivation for missionary work of any kind, as for all Church service, is of course love for fellowmen, but always such work has its by-product effect on one’s own life. Thus as we become instruments in God’s hands in changing the lives of others our own lives cannot help being lifted. One can hardly help another to the top of the hill without climbing there himself.” (Kimball, *Miracle of Forgiveness*, p. 205.)

POINTS TO PONDER

JAMES IDENTIFIED MANY PRACTICAL ASPECTS OF GOSPEL LIVING

The young elders quorum president sat perplexed for a few moments, and then he began to describe to the bishop why he was concerned about Brother Miller: for the last three months he hadn’t completed his home teaching, and when he was asked to help on a welfare assignment he refused. The president explained that the problem was not apostasy, and that was why the matter was so perplexing. Brother Miller had told him he didn’t do the things he was asked to do because they took time from his studies. He said he had purchased some Church books and wanted to spend his time learning the gospel. Nothing could be more important than that. The young man looked at the bishop. “I’m not sure what to tell him, and I’m afraid his attitude is getting worse. Brother Miller told me he isn’t going to come to priesthood meeting any more because he knows more about the gospel than any of the members there.”

Does Brother Miller really know the gospel? If you were the bishop, what counsel would you give to the elders quorum president? Are there some things that you could point out in the epistle of James which might be helpful to Brother Miller? Consider each of the following readings as it might apply to this story.

(49-21) If You Lack Wisdom, Ask God in Faith (James 1:5–7)

It is significant that the Prophet Joseph followed the advice of James and received the great foundation of his testimony from God himself. He laid the book down and went to the source. You should have similar experiences in life in that you should go to God to receive the ultimate testimony and answers. It is well to accept the testimony of others—parents, teachers, friends, and even prophets—but it is your privilege to know for yourself. Then your witness will be based on the solid rock of personal revelation, and this is the great strength of the Church.

“. . . perhaps the most important reason of all for the growth of the Church is the individual testimonies of the divinity of this work, as would be multiplied in the hearts of the individual members of the Church. . . . in the hearts of faithful members of the Church is the conviction that this is indeed the church and kingdom of God on the earth.” (Harold B. Lee in *CR*, Apr. 1973, p. 9.)

(49-22) “A Double Minded Man Is Unstable in All His Ways” (James 1:8)

There are many in the Church who have not yet made a full commitment to the Lord and his church. They seek to be in the world and of the world and also in the Church. Such a course is unwise. “Choose you this day” are the words of Joshua. (Joshua 24:15.) Jesus said, “Ye cannot serve God and mammon.” (Matthew 6:24.) There comes a time when we must count the cost of discipleship; the cost is full dedication and consecration, and there is no other way. If, with the major decisions of life, we constantly waver between alternatives and make and unmake decisions only according to the expediency of the moment, our lives will be rocked with compromise and we will be unstable in all our ways.

(49-23) Individual Lust Is the Source of Temptation (James 1:13–15)

In these modern times many evade responsibility for their own actions and blame heredity, society, or the devil for their problems. As significant as these factors are, James identifies the root cause of sin as individual lust or unhealthy, intense desire for that which is unlawful. Nothing is a temptation unless there is a desire for it. It is not that our desires are necessarily evil in and of themselves, but it is our responsibility to bridle our own passions lest they devolve to lusts which will invariably lead to sin (Alma 38:12). Thus we exercise our agency and must accept the responsibility if our decisions lead to sin.

(49-24) Show Not Partiality in Unrighteousness (James 2:4)

From time immemorial men have shown partiality in unrighteousness. The only aristocracy that counts with the Lord is that of righteousness. He who does His will is favored of God (1 Nephi 17:35). Men often have much less lofty reasons for their partiality. If you show partiality for any of the following reasons, you need to examine your life (read the scriptures for elucidation):

- Color of skin (2 Nephi 26:33)
- Opportunities for learning (see 3 Nephi 6:12)
- Expensiveness of clothes (see James 2:2–5)
- Economic standing (Alma 32:5)
- National heritage—origin (Matthew 3:8–10; 2 Nephi 26:33)
- Religious exclusiveness (Alma 31:12–18)

These are only a few of the unworthy things men show partiality for. Can you think of others?

(49-25) The Sin of Levity (James 4:9)

The Saints have been informed to “let the solemnities of eternity rest upon your minds.” (D&C 43:34.) The Prophet Joseph stated that levity is inconsistent to those called of God (Joseph Smith—History 1:28). This should not be interpreted to mean that there is no place for amusement or laughter, for Brigham Young said that “the people must have amusement as well as religion,” and that “every pure enjoyment was from heaven and was for the Saints.” (Clarissa Young Spencer, *Brigham Young at Home*, pp. 148–49.) But uncontrolled loud laughter or excessive frivolity are offensive to God (D&C 88:69).

(49-26) Be Doers of the Word, Not Hearers Only (James 1:22)

Some of the Savior’s *most severe* denunciations were aimed at hypocrites—those who profess but do not. As members of the Lord’s true church our professions are lofty. We are “called to be saints.” (Romans 1:7.) We should be the light of the world—a city set on a hill so that men will see our good works and glorify God (Matthew 5:14, 16). Sometimes the opposite is the case: we are recognized by what we don’t do rather than by what we do. The revelations indicate that the Saints will become such a positive force for good that those in the world will be constrained to acknowledge the power of God in us (D&C 105:32). This can come only as we *do* as we hear. “Not every one that saith unto me Lord, Lord shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven.” (Matthew 7:21.)

What would you say is Brother Miller's problem? How do you think God would feel toward an individual who spent all his time studying the gospel and no time loving his fellowman? You may wish to consider what the Savior taught in 2 Nephi 31:14 concerning those who know much but do not apply it in lifting others. Do you see that study is important provided the objective is to apply the information in your own life and also use it in your service of others?

Consider Lucifer. He knows the scriptures and is probably an excellent theologian in that sense. But he is still the devil because of what he does. Therefore, it is in what you do that you become either devilish or Christlike. As you choose to do what the Savior did you become like him, and that means ultimately you will become perfect. Therefore, following the teachings of James is the practical road to perfection.

THE TEACHINGS OF JAMES MAY BE PARALLELED WITH THE SERMON ON THE MOUNT AS A PATTERN FOR PERFECTION

Elder Bruce R. McConkie has written that James set forth “the practical operation of the doctrines taught by his Elder Brother [Jesus Christ].” (*DNTC*, 3:243.) Celestial living is practical for the reborn Saint because the gospel of Christ is “the power of God unto salvation.” (Romans 1:16.) The disciple is, indeed, through the grace of the Savior and his own will, “thoroughly furnished unto all good works” that the “man of God may be perfect.” (2 Timothy 3:17.)

“The Lord said, ‘Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect.’ (Matt. 5:48.) This terse sentence epitomizes all that Jesus taught about the mission and life and destiny of man. It seems on its face a hard saying, and many have felt that it sets a task beyond all possibility of

accomplishing, and there is no use trying; that it projects an ideal so utterly unrealistic as to make it of little value. There might be some validity to this objection, if life is to be thought of only in terms of mortal probation. To get full value of the admonition we need a broader understanding of the work of life.

“President Brigham Young let some light in on that in one of his sermons. After quoting the saying, he remarked: ‘If the . . . passage I have quoted is not worded to our understanding, we can alter the phraseology of the sentence, and say: “Be ye perfect as ye can,” for that is all we can do.

“‘When we are doing as well as we know how in the sphere and station which we occupy here, we are justified in the justice, righteousness, mercy, and judgment that go before the Lord of heaven and earth. We are as justified as the angels who go before the throne of God. The sin that will cleave to all the posterity of Adam and Eve is that they have not done as well as they know how.’ (*JD*, 21:129.)

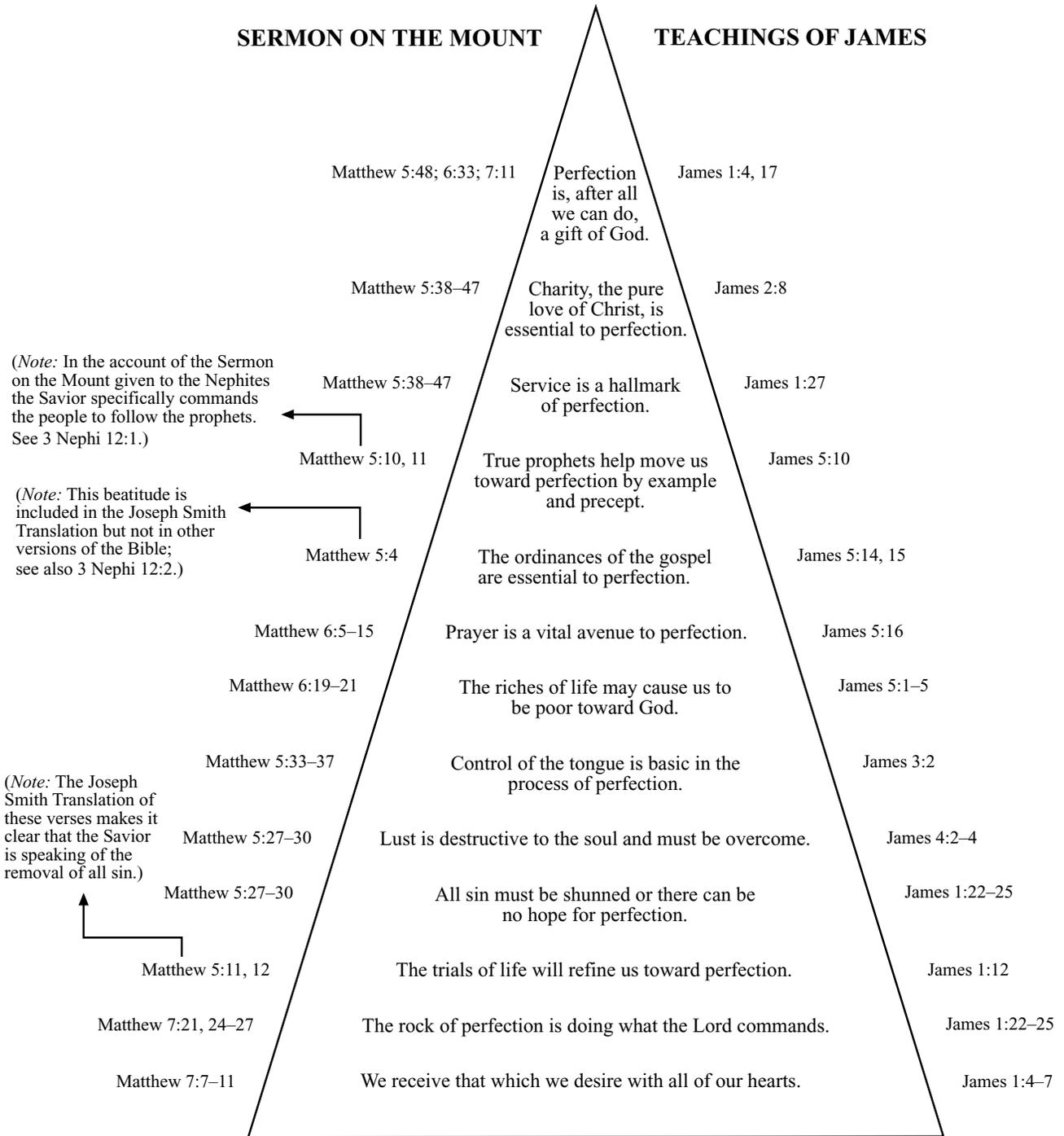
“That puts the admonition to be perfect on a practical working basis. It is within the range of the possibility of attainment. . . .

“This interpretation introduces the principle that it is not intended that we shall accomplish everything in this life, but that we are expected to be progressive beings, growing toward our final destiny. But that principle in no way excuses us from doing the best we can or from acquiring all the knowledge that we have capacity and opportunity to assimilate as we go along.” (Albert E. Bowen in *CR*, Apr. 1951, pp. 122–23.)

In his exposition of “pure religion and undefiled” James establishes a pattern for perfection remarkably similar to that given by Jesus in the Sermon on the Mount; in fact, it is so similar that one wonders if he may have been present when the Savior gave it.

Examine this chart and evaluate your own progress toward perfection through application of the gospel of Jesus Christ.

PATTERN FOR PERFECTION



And so, indeed, the gospel of Christ is “pure religion and undefiled.”
It has as its goal the perfection of all who will follow in its way.

“FOR THIS CAUSE WAS THE
GOSPEL PREACHED ALSO TO
THEM THAT ARE DEAD”



The First Letter of Peter to Saints in Five Provinces Apparently Written from Rome, ca. A.D. 62–63 (1 Peter)	
	1 Peter
Salvation Comes by Faith in Christ	1:1–16
Christ Was Foreordained to Be the Redeemer	1:17–21
Converts Experience a New Birth in Christ	1:22–25; 2:1–3
Christ, the Cornerstone for a Holy Nation	2:4–10
The Obligation of Christians Towards Gentiles	2:11, 12
Saints to Accept Civil Authority	2:13–25
Husbands and Wives Should Honor Each Other	3:1–7
“Be Followers of That Which Is Good”	3:8–17
Christ Preached the Gospel to Spirits in Prison	3:18–22; 4:1–6
“Speak as an Oracle of God”	4:7–11

Saints to Be Tried in All Things	4:12–19
Elders to Feed the Flock of God	5:1–4
God Refuses the Proud and Favors the Humble	5:5–14

THEME

Latter-day Saints have a responsibility to their dead.

INTRODUCTION

Peter's first epistle was written at a time just prior to Nero's persecutions of the early Christians.

It was near this time of tremendous persecution that Peter reminded the saints that they were a “chosen generation” and “a royal priesthood.” With this reminder, Peter included, among other instructions, some of the clearest and most revealing statements in the Bible about salvation for the dead.

Today we are charged with becoming saviors on Mount Zion. What does that expression mean, and how can Peter's teachings be relevant in your life?

Before proceeding, read all the scriptural references in the reading block.

INTERPRETIVE COMMENTARY

(50-1) Theme of Peter's First Letter

How the saints ought to react to suffering and persecution is the theme of the letter. The president of the church was forewarning the members that there was yet to be a "fiery trial" wherein they would be classed with murderers, thieves, and evil doers. The letter constituted a warning and a preparation for ominous days ahead.

(50-2) Place and Date of Writing of First Peter

This letter was probably written at Rome, inasmuch as "Babylon" (5:13) is a scriptural designation for the wickedest city in the empire (Revelation 18:10, 21).

The date of writing was sometime before the Neronian persecutions in A.D. 62 or 63.

(50-3) Background Information for First Peter

As noted in chapter 1, the Roman government displayed a general tolerance toward all religions, Christianity not excepted. As long as the church posed no threat to Rome, the state ignored the church.

The priesthood leadership of the church, however, was under divine commission to preach the gospel "unto all the world" (Mark 16:15). This meant, of course, a peaceful penetration of the gospel message into and throughout the Roman Empire. It was not a message that could or would long remain ignored by the Roman government, for the gospel messengers were making bold assertions that Jesus of Nazareth, who was rejected by his own nation and crucified under Roman edict, was now risen from the dead. A message that proclaimed a risen Christ, a coming judgment, and an eventual return of Christ to establish his universal kingdom on earth was not a message to be favorably regarded by power-obsessed earthly monarchs.

Under the emperor Nero, misunderstanding, hatred, and accusations toward the saints in Rome and throughout the empire were actively fostered. The change from tolerance to hostility toward the church provoked apprehension among the saints throughout Asia. What should be their attitude, in turn, toward the state? How ought they to regard this unjust persecution? They looked to the prophet for answers.

(50-4) 1 Peter 1:2. Who Are the "Elect According to the Foreknowledge of God"?

"To bring to pass the salvation of the greatest possible number of his spirit children the Lord, in general,

sends the most righteous and worthy spirits to earth through the lineage of Abraham and Jacob. This course is a manifestation of his grace or in other words his love, mercy, and condescension toward his children.

"This election to a chosen lineage is based on pre-existent worthiness and is thus made 'according to the foreknowledge of God.' (1 Pet. 1:2.) Those so grouped together during their mortal probation have more abundant opportunities to make and keep the covenants of salvation, a right which they earned by pre-existent devotion to the cause of righteousness. As part of this election, Abraham and others of the noble and great spirits were chosen before they were born for the particular missions assigned them in this life. (Abra. 3:22-24; Rom. 9.) . . .

"Actually, if the full blessings of salvation are to follow, the doctrine of election must operate *twice*. First, righteous spirits are elected or chosen to come to mortality as heirs of special blessings. Then, they must be called and elected again in this life, an occurrence which takes place when they join the true Church. (D. & C. 53:1.) Finally, in order to reap eternal salvation, they must press forward in obedient devotion to the truth until they make their 'calling and election sure' (2 Pet. 1), that is, are 'sealed up unto eternal life.' (D. & C. 131:5.)" (McConkie, *Mormon Doctrine*, pp. 216-17.)

(50-5) 1 Peter 1:9. What Is Salvation?

"Salvation is nothing more nor less than to triumph over all our enemies and put them under our feet. And when we have power to put all enemies under our feet in this world, and a knowledge to triumph over all evil spirits in the world to come, then we are saved, as in the case of Jesus, who was to reign until He had put all enemies under His feet, and the last enemy was death." (Smith, *Teachings*, p. 297.)

(50-6) 1 Peter 2:9. What Is the Meaning of the Phrase "a Peculiar People"?

Each of the titles used here by Peter is a title formerly used to refer to the covenant people, the house of Israel. He therefore seeks to call to their minds that by virtue of their embracing the gospel they are now the new Israel. They are the chosen nation (see Isaiah 43:20), a royal "kingdom of priests" and a "holy nation" (Exodus 19:6) and a peculiar people. The word *peculiar* as used in the King James Version comes from the Latin *peculium*, meaning "private property." Though today it has come to mean "strange or unusual," it really carries the same idea—a

characteristic or quality belonging to something. The marginal reading is “purchased” and means that the saints are God’s own, private people, a people for God’s own possession. This title too is suggested in the Old Testament when Isaiah says, “This people have I formed for myself.” (Isaiah 43:21.)

President Joseph Fielding Smith added this: “And we will be peculiar because we will not be like other people who do not live up to these standards.” (*CR*, Apr. 1971, p. 47.)

(50-7) 1 Peter 2:9. What Is a Royal Priesthood?

“Whenever the Lord has a people on earth he offers to make them a nation of kings and priests—not a congregation of lay members with a priest or a minister at the head—but a whole Church in which every man is his own minister, in which every man stands as a king in his own right, reigning over his own family-kingdom. The priesthood which makes a man a king and a priest is thus a royal priesthood.” (McConkie, *DNTC*, 3:294.)

Christ is the king of all those kings who he calls his own—those who are made royal by virtue of holding and honoring his priesthood.

(50-8) 1 Peter 2:18–26. Patience in Suffering—Peter’s Profound and Beautiful Analogy

In this section, Peter addresses specifically those who are in servitude. The Greek word means “household servant,” which in the Roman Empire were almost always slaves. Peter encourages them to remember the suffering of their Savior during his period of trial and execution as they seek to endure patiently their own trials and sufferings. The whole passage carries a vividness and peculiarity of language that suggests Peter was remembering in all of its clarity the night he was an eyewitness to the Savior’s hour of trial. He uses the word *buffeted* (vs. 20), which means literally “to be struck with fists” and is the term used by both Matthew (Matthew 26:67) and Mark (Mark 14:65) to describe the treatment of the Master. He hints at the contemptuous scorn of the high priest and Christ’s silent acceptance of it (vs. 23). Peter mentions the stripes, using the word which means “bruise” or the “bloody welt which results from lashing with a whip,” exactly the result of a Roman scourging.

Also remarkable in this passage are the parallels between it and Isaiah 53.

<i>1 Peter 2</i>	<i>Isaiah 53</i>
vs. 21 “... Christ also suffered for us. . . .”	vs. 4 “Surely he hath borne our griefs, and carried our sorrows. . . .”
vs. 22 “Who did no sin, neither was guile found in his mouth:”	vs. 9 “... he had done no violence [sin], neither was any deceit in his mouth.”
vs. 23 “Who, when he was reviled, reviled not again. . . .”	vs. 7 “He was oppressed, and he was afflicted, yet he opened not his mouth. . . .”
vs. 24 “Who his own self bare our sins. . . .”	vs. 12 “... and he bare the sin of many. . . .”
vs. 24 “... by whose stripes ye were healed.”	vs. 5 “... and with his stripes we are healed.”
vs. 25 “For ye were as sheep going astray. . . .”	vs. 6 “All we like sheep have gone astray. . . .”

(50-9) 1 Peter 3:15. “Be Ready Always to Give an Answer”

Members of the church should be prepared at all times to give their testimony “with meekness and fear” to every person who asks them. (1 Peter 3:15, Inspired Version.)

(50-10) 1 Peter 3:18–20. What Was the Fate of the People Who Ignored Noah’s Warning?

“They were drowned in their sins. Their marriages were for time. They reveled in worldliness. They were possibly like many in the world today who place no curb upon their eating, drinking and licentiousness. Their ignoring the laws of God and the warning of the prophets continued until the very day when Noah and his family entered the ark. Then it was too late. Too late! What finality in that phrase! Following their eternal history, we find Peter telling of them more than two millennia later: (Read 1 Peter 3:18–20.)

“And last, they had a chance in the spirit world to hear the voice of missionaries and prophets again. But so late! What sad words! Nearly a further two millennia passed into history and we hear of them again in modern revelation. Of the vision given to Joseph Smith and Sidney Rigdon in 1832, the Prophet writes:

““ And again, we saw the terrestrial world, and behold and lo, these are they who are of the terrestrial. . . .”

“ . . . They who are the spirits of men kept in prison, whom the Son visited, and preached the gospel unto them, that they might be judged according to men in the flesh;

“Who received not the testimony of Jesus in the flesh, but afterwards received it.” (D&C 76:71, 73–74.)

“Too late! The terrestrial for them! It could have been the celestial, and it could have been exaltation! But they procrastinated the day of their preparation. The same lamentable cry of ‘Too late!’ will apply to many of today’s Church members who did not heed the warning but who proceeded—sometimes carelessly, sometimes defiantly—to bind themselves through mortality to those who could not or would not prepare for the blessings which were in reserve for them.” (Kimball, *Miracle of Forgiveness*, pp. 248–49.)

(50-11) 1 Peter 4:1. How Do You “Arm Yourselves . . . with the Same Mind”?

“Gain the mind of Christ (1 Cor. 2:16), thereby thinking what he thought, saying what he said, and doing what he did—which course of life will stand as a defense against the evils of the world.” (McConkie, *DNTC*, 3:315.)

(50-12) 1 Peter 4:6. Is Salvation for the Dead Intended for All Who Did Not Accept the Gospel in Mortality?

“Salvation for the dead is limited expressly to those who do not have opportunity in this life to accept the gospel but who would have taken the opportunity had it come to them.

“All who have died *without a knowledge of this gospel*,’ the Lord said to the Prophet, ‘who would have received it if they had been permitted to tarry, shall be heirs of the celestial kingdom of God; also all that shall die henceforth *without a knowledge of it, who would have received it with all their hearts*, shall be heirs of that kingdom, for I, the Lord, will judge all men according to their works, according to the desire of their hearts.’ (*Teachings*, p. 107.)” (McConkie, *Mormon Doctrine*, p. 686. Italics added.)

(50-13) 1 Peter 4:8. “Charity Shall Cover the Multitude of Sins”

The Prophet revised this verse to read: “And above all things have fervent charity among yourselves; for charity preventeth a multitude of sins.” (Inspired Version.)

It is clear that only repentance truly covers or takes away sin because of Christ’s atoning sacrifice.

(50-14) 1 Peter 4:11. What Is Meant by the Injunction to “Speak as the Oracles of God”?

The Inspired Version renders this as “speak as an oracle of God.” Elder McConkie said:

“‘Speak by inspiration, not of yourself, but simply as a medium through whom the mind and will of the Lord is revealed.’ This is an absolute requisite of a true minister. They must preach by the power of the Spirit. . . . Unless they do so they cannot minister life and salvation to the children of men. Hence the divine counsel that the Lord’s servants are to treasure up in their minds continually the words of life; to rely upon the Holy Spirit; and then, without taking thought beforehand, to speak forth what the Lord wants them to say, at the very moment of their preaching. (D. & C. 84:85.)” (McConkie, *DNTC*, 3:317.)

(50-15) 1 Peter 4:12. What Was the “Fiery Trial”?

The “fiery trial” probably refers to the Neronian persecutions against the church. Every saint, however, faces his own “fiery trial” as a part of his experience in the second estate.

“ . . . the greatest trials of life are reserved for the saints. They are the ones whom the world hates (Matt. 10:22), and they must overcome the world, if they are to gain the Lord’s approval. They face all that the world faces in the way of mortal difficulties—sickness, disease, calamities, famine, pain, sorrow, death—and in addition their faith in Christ and his work is tested to see if they will serve the Lord at all hazards.” (McConkie, *DNTC*, 3:318.)

(50-16) 1 Peter 4:17. Judgments to Begin at the House of God

Notice the close relationship between Peter’s comment and a revelation given for Thomas B. Marsh, president of the Quorum of the Twelve, in 1837. (See D&C 112:24–26.)

POINTS TO PONDER

JESUS CHRIST BEGAN THE GLORIOUS WORK FOR THE DEAD DURING HIS VISIT TO THE SPIRIT WORLD

(50-17) Jesus Made Available to the Dead the Blessings of the Gospel

“Why did he [Jesus] preach to these disobedient spirits? Surely not to increase their torments, to taunt them for not accepting of his truth in the days of the prophets! . . .

“. . . He took the glorious message of the gospel and proclaimed it to the dead with the promise that they, if they would obey it, should partake of its blessings.” (Smith, *Doctrines of Salvation*, 2:159–60.)

One of the most important teachings of the gospel is that of work for the dead.

Consider the following questions: You may wish to look up the scriptures to check your answers.

What special promise concerning the dead did Jesus make during his mortal ministry?

John 5:24, 25.

How and when was this promise fulfilled?

1 Peter 3:18–20; 4:6.

What did Jesus do during his visit to the spirit world?

*Joseph F. Smith, *Vision of the Redemption of the Dead*, verses 1–19 (*Pearl of Great Price*).*

Did Jesus visit the wicked spirits?

Ibid., verses 20–32.

What exactly is being taught in the spirit world?

Ibid., verses 33–37.

What happens to the dead who repent?

Ibid., verses 57–60.

IT TAKES LOVE TO DO WORK FOR THE DEAD

I joined the Church at age sixteen. Because I was young, I thought that genealogy work was not for me. Anyway, I was a new convert, and there were so many other things to learn and do. It was two years after my conversion that I finally saw the light. I was in our young adult Sunday School class when our instructor, Brother Parsons, asked: “How many of you love your family?” It was such an obvious answer that every hand went up. He continued by asking, “Now, how many of you have a book of remembrance with at least four generations of genealogical work completed?—that is, family group sheets and pedigree charts? Only about three of the thirty young adults raised their hands. Needless to say, I was one of those who didn’t respond in the

affirmative. “But what do group sheets have to do with loving your family?” I asked. I guess Brother Parsons was waiting for that question, because I shall never forget his answer. He said, “Bob, your ancestors who died without a knowledge of the gospel are probably being taught the truth right now in the spirit world. Many of them are probably just as anxious to be baptized and receive the blessings of the Church as you were two years ago. But without you they will have to wait. How would you have felt two years ago if your parents had not given their permission for you to be baptized? What would you have said if they had told you not to bother them about joining the Church, that maybe someday they’d get around to giving you permission? You are in that same position as far as your ancestors are concerned. They are waiting for you. When I asked the class how many of them love their families and then asked about the pedigree charts, I was serious. Genealogical research and temple work are works of love. Those who really love their families will do all they can to save them. Those who do for their dead what the dead cannot do for themselves are called saviors on Mount Zion.”

I left that class with an empty feeling. I was sad that I had not caught the vision of this great program before. I went home and got out a dusty pedigree chart. Where would I begin? I went to my mother and began asking questions. We talked for two hours! I learned things about my family that I had never known before. I soon found my love and concern for my ancestors growing to depths I had never before experienced.

Now I know that what President Joseph Fielding Smith said about genealogical and temple work is true:

*“. . . younger people must not get the idea that this is only an old person’s work. It is for all the Latter-day Saints, and young people can attend to these matters and get the spirit of this work just as much as those who are advanced in years.” (Smith, *Doctrines of Salvation*, 2:130–31.)*

As you think of your specific responsibilities and opportunities in relation to your dead ancestors, what should you do to make the blessings of the gospel available to them? What do you need to do to become a savior on Mount Zion?

“PARTAKERS OF THE DIVINE NATURE”



The Second Letter of Peter Apparently Written from Rome Prior to A.D. 68 (2 Peter)	
	2 Peter
“Make Your Calling and Election Sure”	1:1–19
Prophecy Comes by the Holy Ghost	1:20, 21
False Teachers Are Damned	2:1–9
The Fallen State of Lustful Saints	2:10–22
Latter-day Scoffers Shall Deny the Second Coming	3:1–10
Holy and Saintly Lives Are Prepared for the Lord	3:11–18

THEME

The purpose of the gospel is to assist man in overcoming sin so that he might become a partaker of the divine nature of Jesus Christ.

INTRODUCTION

With an eloquence unique to Peter, his second epistle combines a straightforward simplicity with a rich outpouring of the Spirit to produce words which, according to one of our Church leaders, “rank in

grandeur and insight with those in the Vision of the degrees of glory and the sermons of the Lord himself.” (McConkie, DNTC, 3:325.)

It concerned Peter that Paul had written “some things hard to be understood,” enabling the unlearned and unstable to “wrest” his meaning to their own destruction (2 Peter 3:16). Thus we may understand the simplicity and directness of this epistle of Peter’s, which not only gave understanding but avoided all possibility of misunderstanding. Furthermore, he wrote with the awareness that his own death was imminent; at such a time, one would not expect the man Peter to trifle with words (2 Peter 1:14).

Elder McConkie says of chapter one, “Nowhere else in ancient writ do we find the door so frankly opened to a knowledge of the course men must pursue to have their calling and election made sure.” (DNTC, 3:323.) It is clear from what Peter teaches that knowing about God and knowing God are not the same, and that a true knowledge of God requires that we become like him. Thus, the saints are challenged to become “partakers of the divine nature.” (2 Peter 1:4.)

Before proceeding, read all the scriptural references in the reading block.

INTERPRETIVE COMMENTARY

(51-1) What Is the Theme of Second Peter?

The dominant theme in this letter is how one comes to a knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ. As shown by the outline, it may be divided into three main sections. The first tells how one comes to a knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ by becoming “a partaker of his divine nature” and having his “calling and election made sure.” In the second section this true knowledge of Christ is contrasted to false knowledge—heresies perpetrated by apostates. The third section calls attention to the hope that the true knowledge of the Lord brings: the promise of his glorious return to the earth.

(51-2) Place and Date of Writing

We cannot say with certainty the place from which Peter wrote the letter, though some suppose it was Rome. Because the threat of persecution seems past (there is no mention in this letter of persecution or suffering), it is assumed that the letter falls between the Nero persecutions and the alleged date of Peter’s death, perhaps about A.D. 68.

(51-3) Authorship

Though some scholars have challenged the genuineness of this letter, the weight of evidence favors Peter as the author. Joseph Smith noted in a discussion on First Peter, “Peter penned the most sublime language of any of the apostles.” (*Teachings*, p. 301.) The Prophet Joseph frequently quoted Peter.

(51-4) Background Information

Peter, president of the church in his day, addressed this letter to the saints who had “obtained like precious faith with us.” (1:1.) New problems seem to have arisen in the church. Where before the threat to the church was persecution from without, the danger now seems to be apostasy from within. “There shall be false teachers among you,” wrote the chief apostle, “who privily shall bring in damnable heresies, even denying the Lord. . . .” (2:1.) The great danger to the church was that many in the future would follow after these teachers out of ignorance and uncertainty. The letter twice reminds the saints of the things they had been taught (1:12–15; 3:1, 2): first, that if they go on to make their calling and election sure, they will not fall (1:10, 11); and second, that the second coming of the Lord was certain and sure, even though scoffers, as

prophesied, would deny the fact because of what seemed to them an unreasonable delay. Peter wrote the letter, therefore, to warn of an impending apostasy within the church and to exhort the saints to continue to grow in knowledge of the Lord Jesus Christ. This counsel if followed would lead them to make their callings and elections sure.

(51-5) 2 Peter 1:1–19. What Are the Three Grand Keys to Obtaining the True Knowledge of God?

“There are three grand secrets lying in this chapter, . . . which no man can dig out, unless by the light of revelation, and which unlocks the whole chapter. . . .

“1st key: Knowledge is the power of salvation. 2nd key: Make your calling and election sure. 3rd key: It is one thing to be on the mount and hear the excellent voice, etc., and another to hear the voice declare to you, You have a part and lot in that kingdom.” (Smith, *Teachings*, pp. 304, 306.)

Concerning the three grand keys to the knowledge of God, we learn three concepts:

1. The knowledge of Christ which brings salvation is obtained a little at a time.

“It is not wisdom that we should have all knowledge at once presented before us; but that we should have a little at a time; then we can comprehend it. . . .

“. . . *The principle of knowledge is the principle of salvation.* This principle can be comprehended by the faithful and diligent; and every one that does not obtain knowledge sufficient to be saved will be condemned. *The principle of salvation is given us through the knowledge of Jesus Christ.*” (Smith, *Teachings*, p. 297. Italics added.)

2. As one acquires knowledge of Christ’s divine attributes and incorporates them into his own life, he makes his calling and election sure.

“None can comprehend the knowledge of God, of Christ, and of the gospel unless he himself possesses the attributes of godliness, for the knowledge of spiritual things comes only by revelation, and until a person gains godly attributes he cannot receive the Spirit from whom revelation comes.” (McConkie, *DNTC*, 3:354.) (The process of having one’s calling and election made sure is discussed in the interpretive commentary for 2 Peter 1:10.)

3. The more sure word of prophecy—the Lord’s promise that a person will be exalted and come to

know God fully (John 17:3)—comes as a result of making one’s calling and election sure.

“Now for the secret and grand key. Though they might hear the voice of God and know that Jesus was the Son of God, this would be no evidence that their election and calling was made sure, that they had part with Christ, and were joint-heirs with him. They then would want that more sure word of prophecy, that they were sealed in the heavens and had the promise of eternal life in the kingdom of God. Then, having this promise sealed unto them, it was an anchor to the soul, sure and steadfast. Though the thunders might roll and lightnings flash, and earthquakes bellow, and war gather thick around, yet this hope and knowledge would support the soul in every hour of trial, trouble and tribulation. Then knowledge through our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ is the grand key that unlocks the glories and mysteries of the kingdom of heaven.” (Smith, *Teachings*, p. 298.)

(51-6) 2 Peter 1:4–8. What Does It Mean to Be “Partakers of the Divine Nature”?

Peter himself said it is escaping “the corruption that is in the world through lust.” (vs. 4.)

President David O. McKay, commenting on verse 4, said it means “to rise above the temporal, the sensual, and partake of the divine Spirit of God.” (*CR*, Oct. 1961, p. 90.)

(51-7) 2 Peter 1:10. What Is Meant by Having One’s Calling and Election Made Sure?

“To have one’s calling and election made sure is to be sealed up unto eternal life; it is to have the unconditional guarantee of exaltation in the highest heaven of the celestial world; it is to receive the assurance of godhood; it is, in effect, to have the day of judgment advanced, so that an inheritance of all the glory and honor of the Father’s kingdom is assured prior to the day when the faithful actually enter into the divine presence to sit with Christ in his throne, even as he is ‘set down’ with his ‘Father in his throne.’ (Rev. 3:21.)” (McConkie, *DNTC*, 3:330–31.)

(51-8) 2 Peter 1:10. Must an Individual Be Married for Eternity to Have His Calling and Election Made Sure?

“... making one’s calling and election sure comes after and grows out of celestial marriage. Eternal life does not and cannot exist for a man or a woman alone, because in its very nature it consists of the

continuation of the family unit in eternity.” (McConkie, *DNTC*, 3:343.)

(51-9) 2 Peter 1:21. How Does One Correctly Interpret Scripture?

“If prophets speak by the power of the Holy Ghost, then the Holy Ghost is required to interpret correctly the teachings of holy men. Therefore, those who do not possess the Spirit of God cannot comprehend the things of God.” (Delbert L. Stapley in *CR*, Oct. 1966, p. 113.)

(51-10) 2 Peter 2:1. Are There Heresies in the True Church of Christ?

“Heresies abound in the sectarian world. False doctrines are manifest on every hand. . . .

“But what of the true Church? Are there heresies within even that divine institution? Paul says such was the case among the Corinthians, and it is apparent that the same thing prevails in the modern kingdom of God on earth. Speaking of our day, Nephi said that ‘because of pride, and wickedness, and abominations, and whoredoms,’ all men have ‘gone astray save it be a few, who are the humble followers of Christ.’ Then pointing to these true saints, he added: ‘Nevertheless, they are led, that in many instances they do err because they are taught by the precepts of men.’ (2 Ne. 28:14.) That is, heresies are found in the Church today, even as in the meridian of time.” (McConkie, *DNTC*, 2:362–63.)

(51-11) 2 Peter 2:13. What Was the Meaning of the Word *Riot*?

Actually there is no word in English that carries the exact meaning of the Greek word *truphay*. The actual meaning is “to live delicately, live luxuriously, be given to a soft and luxurious life.” (See Thayer, *Lexicon of the New Testament*, p. 631.) The picture is not one of wild rebellion and disorder, but of soft, self-indulgent pampering of the desires of the flesh.

(51-12) 2 Peter 2:20–22. Can Immorality and Rebellion Lead to the Unpardonable Sin?

“It is important for all men that they do not even approach the tragic point of the unpardonable sin. Numerous people have lost the Spirit through immorality and through rebellion brought about by the sophistry and philosophy of men, and sometimes through fancied offenses. Bitterness has a way of poisoning the mind and killing the spirit. One should

take no chances of permitting such situations to become sore and gangrenous, for who can tell when one might slip across the line? To do so rather than enduring to the end is perhaps to be in the category Peter described.” (Kimball, *Miracle of Forgiveness*, pp. 121–22.)

(51-13) 2 Peter 3:3. “There Shall Come in the Last Days Scoffers”

“In ‘this second epistle,’ the Chief Apostle both assumes and announces the literal nature of the Second Coming of the Son of Man, with this added proclamation: In the last days, in so-called Christendom (for the doctrine is not so much as an issue in other circles) the fact of our Lord’s literal return shall be challenged; false ministers shall mock at such an antiquated view; and the scientists shall scoff at the idea of the burning of the earth as a prelude to a Millennial era when none but the righteous shall dwell on the new earth thus cleansed from its wicked inhabitants. All history, all experience, and all reason, they shall say, negate these old-fashioned doctrines about the Lord living again among men. Surely the scriptures must mean that he shall come as a power or influence to dwell in the hearts of men whenever they gain oneness with him, shall be their cry. “But Peter, whose views came not from reason but by revelation, replies: Which is easier, to believe in a creation (which fact is self-evident) or a Second Coming? To believe in the destruction of the world by water in Noah’s day (of which fact there is ample evidence) or the burning of the vineyard in that day when ‘as it was in the days of Noe, so shall it be also in the days of the Son of man’? (Luke 17:26.)” (McConkie, *DNTC*, 3:364–65.)

(51-14) 2 Peter 3:10–13. What Is Meant by the Expression “Look for New Heavens and a New Earth”?

“Let us not misunderstand this expression. The new heaven and new earth will be the same heaven and the same earth on which we now sojourn, for this earth is to receive the resurrection after this day of mortality and be the abode of the righteous in eternity. Without the revelations of the Lord given to men, this truth would not be made known. Neither would we have knowledge of the final glory to which this earth will be assigned. Even now, where men are without the divine guidance and revelation, this truth would not be known.” (Smith, *Seek Ye Earnestly* . . . , p. 262.)

POINTS TO PONDER

IN EVERY AGE THERE HAVE BEEN THOSE WHO HAVE SOUGHT TO LEAD PEOPLE ASTRAY

A few years ago, one of our Latter-day Saint chaplains was interviewing a young serviceman imprisoned in a military stockade. In response to the question why he had gone A.W.O.L., the serviceman expressed his dislike for the military and his desire to be free. The chaplain was empathetic, for there was much about the military that he too disliked. He also shared the imprisoned soldier’s desire for personal freedom. After having identified those common feelings, the chaplain asked the soldier which of the two of them enjoyed the greater freedom. The answer, of course, was obvious. When their interview ended, the chaplain could get up and walk out of the stockade, but the soldier would be returned to confinement. The chaplain observed that he had found considerable personal freedom by his compliance to military regulations, suggesting that the better he did his job the less supervision he received and the greater freedom he found.

We live at a time when the pursuit of personal freedom is a prevailing concern. Great movements are sweeping the world to “liberate” us from the mores of the past and bring about what their adherents choose to call “equality.” One is left to wonder how many of these movements, like the actions of that A.W.O.L. soldier, are, in fact, leading to greater bondage; and one cannot help but be impressed with the striking similarities between those who Peter warned the saints against anciently and many movements that are sweeping the world today. Consider his description of the false teachers who, if they had not already done so, Peter knew would soon come among the saints:

2 Peter, chapter 2:

- verse 1 They will deny Christ.*
- verse 2 They will make truth appear as evil.*
- verse 3 They will exploit people with cunning arguments.*
- verse 10 They will be “self-willed,” that is, obstinate in doing whatever they want, without regard for others.*

- verse 12 *They will have little knowledge of the things of righteousness which they defy.*
- verse 13 *They will sin openly, publicly, willfully.*
- verse 14 *They will be motivated by lust and greed.*
- verse 14 *They will prey upon those who are unstable and unseasoned.*
- verse 18 *They will present their cause with polished rhetoric and oratory.*
- verse 19 *They will promise to liberate those who sympathize with and follow after them.*

As you read Peter's epistle and mentally translate it to a modern setting, you are left wondering whether Peter was writing to the people of his own day or to those of ours. There are many today who, like the A.W.O.L. soldier, in their flight to find freedom find themselves in a bondage far worse than that which they sought to escape. Well might they ponder the observation of Elder James E. Talmage when he said, "Obedience to law is the habit of the free man; the transgressor fears the law, for he brings upon himself deprivation and restraint, not because of the law, which would have protected him in his freedom, but because of his antagonism to the law." (Articles of Faith, p. 53.)

It is of interest how consistently false prophets come posing as the champions of the common people to "liberate" them from the influence of righteousness. (See Numbers 16:3 and Alma 30:14, 23 for examples.)

(51-15) There Are False Teachings Today as in Peter's Day

"Apparently there were in the early church those who taught for doctrines the sophistries of men. There are those today who seem to take pride in disagreeing with the orthodox teachings of the Church and who present their own opinions which are at variance with the revealed truth. Some may be partially innocent in the matter; others are feeding their own egotism; and some seem to be deliberate. Men may think as they please, but they have no right to impose upon others their unorthodox views. Such persons should realize that their own souls are in jeopardy." (Spencer W. Kimball in *CR*, Apr. 1948, p. 109.)

(51-16) Our Test Today Is the Philosophies of the World Versus the Living Prophets

"During the early days of the Church we passed through a period of slander and misrepresentation, and

we came through. It drove us together because of enemies from the outside. And we survived it. We passed through a period of mobbing and driving, when lives were taken and blood was shed, and somehow the place of the martyr gave us strength. We passed through poverty, and we gained strength from the test of it. Then we passed through an age of what we might call apostasy, or betrayal from the inside—one of the severest tests through which we have passed. We are now going through another test—a period of what we might call sophistication. This is a time when there are many clever people who are not willing to listen to the humble prophets of the Lord. And we have suffered from that. It is rather a severe test." (Harold B. Lee, *Instructor*, June 1965, p. 217.)

How, you may ask, can I fortify myself against the philosophies of false teachings?

Read 2 Peter 2:1, 20–22. What does Peter mean by the "knowledge of the Lord"? Once one learns about the Lord, is that sufficient? Read Matthew 7:22, 23.

Can you see from this that as you come to have a personal relationship with the Lord through study, prayer, and obedience, you will have power to overcome the false philosophies of the adversary?

(51-17) We Ought to Live So That We May Know the Will of the Father Respecting All Our Circumstances

"The one thing now that I desire to impress upon the minds of my brethren bearing the Holy Priesthood is that we should live so near to the Lord, be so humble in our spirits, so tractable and pliable, under the influence of the Holy Spirit, that we will be able to know the mind and will of the Father concerning us as individuals and as officers in the Church of Christ under all circumstances." (Smith, *Gospel Doctrine*, pp. 58–59.)

(51-18) Righteousness Comes by Revelation

"Ever remember, dear brethren, that if you would be righteous like your heavenly Father, His righteousness comes by REVELATION, through your faith. Be content with nothing short of the revealed will of your heavenly Father; for being built upon this foundation, the floods of error and temptation that must come upon all them that dwell upon the earth, will not be able to overthrow you." (Brigham Young, Heber C. Kimball and Willard Richards, as cited in James R. Clark, comp., *Messages of the First Presidency of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints*, 2:124.)

(51-19) We Should So Live That The Revelations of Jesus Can Be with Us Constantly

“Latter-day Saints should so live that they will know the voice of the True Shepherd, and not be deceived by pretenders. . . . The Latter-day Saint who does not live so as to have the revelations of Jesus constantly with him, stands in great danger of being deceived and falling away.” (Harold B. Lee in *CR*, Oct. 1967, p. 103.)

TO PARTAKE OF THE DIVINE NATURE OF GOD IS TO PARTAKE OF THE POWER OF GOD THROUGH THE HOLY SPIRIT

What is the divine nature? It is the nature of God. It is the nature, perfection, personality, glory, power, and holiness not only of the Father but also of the Son, Jesus Christ, for he has partaken of the “fulness” and has become like the Father in every respect. We are promised that, since Christ has obtained this fulness, we, through obedience to him, may ultimately do so also. (See D&C 93:16, 17, 19, 20.)

Members of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints are expected to become like the Lord Jesus Christ; they are expected to gain the divine nature possessed by the Father and the Son. Of course, we are only called to achieve this great destiny. The calling—the election, the promise, the opportunity—has been extended to us by the Lord, but no one is going to force us to fulfil it and make certain; it is very much a matter of free agency. But already we have done something to suggest our seriousness in accepting the calling and election which has been offered to us. For instance, you have elected to join the Saints and meet with them, to pray, to read the scriptures, to study this lesson. Your calling to be a partaker of the divine nature—to become like God—has not come about in a vacuum; the election is not only God’s, but yours as well. Indeed, in earlier lessons (for example, lesson 3) it has been suggested that we sought this opportunity even before we entered mortality. (See 2 Peter 1:3; 2 Thessalonians 2:13, 14; and 3 Nephi 27:27.)

Peter specifies faith, virtue, knowledge, temperance, patience, godliness, brotherly kindness, and charity (2 Peter 1:5–7). These are not demonstrated in perfection by fallen mankind here below, but by the Father and Son who are above. Yet, we are to obtain these qualities too, somehow, and become perfect therein (Matthew 5:48).

Can you see from this chapter that as you learn about God and then strive to become like him, you can actually draw down the powers of heaven to help you act more like Jesus Christ here and now? Carefully study the following quote by President Brigham Young:

“When through the Gospel, the Spirit in man has so subdued the flesh that he can live without wilful transgression, the Spirit of God unites with his spirit, they become congenial companions, and the mind and will of the Creator is thus transmitted to the creature.” (JD, 9:288.)

Isn’t that what is meant by the term “partaking of the divine nature?”

Now, what can you do to more fully partake of the divine nature of Jesus Christ?

Peter suggests some qualities that will help you in this effort (2 Peter 1:5–7). Consider your efforts to acquire the “divine nature” in the following areas:

- 1. Faith* *I am actively putting into practice the teachings of the prophets of the Church, such as home teaching, family home evening, etc.*
- 2. Virtue* *I am striving continually to control any undesirable thoughts that would have produced unrighteous action.*
- 3. Knowledge* *During this past week, I have read out of the standard works.*
- 4. Temperance* *I am moderate in the intake of food, and in all I do.*
- 5. Patience* *When provoked in a family situation, I am able to forebear against retaliating by words or actions.*
- 6. Godliness* *I am sincerely striving to become like God in my speech and actions.*
- 7. Brotherly kindness* *I treat my roommates and my family members as I desire to be treated.*
- 8. Charity* *Love of Jesus Christ prevails in the way I speak and treat others.*

I am not doing so now.

I am trying. *Use one of these three ratings to indicate your present progress.*

I am doing fine.

Now, how is it that we can ever hope to obtain the divine nature? Certainly, the experience of all mortals would suggest that our own independent self-discipline and ingenuity would not be sufficient for the task.

Peter says that, if we are willing to give “all diligence” (2 Peter 1:5) to the task of acquiring or developing these qualities, things that pertain to “life and godliness” will come to us by “divine power.” (2 Peter 1:3.) If we were expected to acquire the divine nature without nourishment and power from a divine source, Peter would not have asked us to be “partakers.” It is reasonable that we should partake of divine power in order to reach divine heights.

We have the calling before us, with specific characteristics of the divine nature laid out. It is a lifelong matter of faith and diligence. But it is also a matter of divine assistance, involving that personal relationship with Christ which we explored earlier in this lesson. Paul said, “I can do all things through

Christ which strengtheneth me.” (Philippians 4:13.) Remember that these promises that Peter called “exceeding great and precious promises” are yours also, and that the divine nature of the Father and the Son are well within your reach. The process is just as real and operable as you are willing for it to be in your life.

Such was the testimony of President David O. McKay when he said this:

“[Peter] wrote on one occasion: ‘. . . that we might be partakers of the divine nature.’ . . . He realized what it means to be in touch with the spiritual, to rise above the temporal, the sensual, and partake of the divine Spirit of God.

“. . . that is the purpose of making us more capable of responding to the Spirit and subduing the sensual. . . .

“That is why we like to have every young man and every young woman utilize his or her time intelligently, usefully, to bring the soul in harmony with the spirit, that we all might be partakers of God’s Spirit, partakers of his divine nature. . . . (CR, Oct. 1961, p. 90.)

“Happy is the man who has experienced that relationship to his Maker, wherein we are ‘partakers of the divine nature.’ That is a reality, and I so testify to you here in this sacred hour.” (David O. McKay in CR, Apr. 1957, p. 130. Emphasis added.)

“WALK IN THE LIGHT, AS HE IS IN THE LIGHT”



1 John—a Letter to the Christian Communities, ca. A.D. 96	
	1 John
Walk in the Light of Christ	1:1–7
We Must Break from Our Sins	1:8–10; 2:1, 2
The Saints May Know God and Christ	2:3–6
Abide in the Light Through the Law of Love	2:7–14
“Love Not the World”	2:15–17
Anti-Christ to Come in Latter Days	2:18–26
The Holy Ghost Leads Saints to Truth	2:27–29
The Sons of God Shall Be Like Christ	3:1–3
Saints Must Not Continue in Sin	3:4–9
Love the Brethren and Gain Eternal Life	3:10–18
Gaining Answers to Prayers	3:19–24
“Try the Spirits”	4:1–6
“God Is Love”	4:7–21
“Who Is Born of God?”	5:1–4
Many Witnesses Testify of Eternal Life in Christ	5:5–21

THEME

Those who walk in the light receive the love of Christ and enjoy fellowship with the Father and the Son and with the children of God.

INTRODUCTION

Suppose you had lived in the days of Jesus and had actually spent time in his presence. Suppose that you had heard him teach, had seen the miracles he had performed, and had felt by the Spirit the power of the testimony he bore of himself—that he came into the world to do the will of the Father, which included giving his life. Further, suppose you were a witness to his resurrection and had been privileged and worthy enough to see and feel the wounds made during his sacrifice, in part, for your sins. How would you feel toward the Savior? How would you feel about a teaching spreading among some of your fellow Christians that Jesus didn’t really suffer for anyone’s sins but merely seemed to do so? Further, that he really wasn’t a partaker of mortality but only appeared to be, and that the physical body the Lord displayed after the resurrection was an illusion? This was the problem faced by the apostle John. It appears that some Christians had adopted an early form of Gnosticism and were teaching that Jesus could not have truly come in the flesh, for God is holy and could have nothing to do with contaminating

matter. To explain the Savior's presence on earth, the Gnostics set forth two arguments: either Christ was only apparently human or else the spirit which inhabited Jesus' mortal body descended into the man Jesus at the time of his commitment to God in baptism and departed just prior to his suffering on the cross. Thus Christ did not really suffer for our sins; it was only the man Jesus who was crucified. The first of these philosophies was known as Docetism, so called from the Greek word dokeo, "to seem or appear," and the latter was known as Cerinthianism, named for Cerinthus, its primary proponent in the first century.

John wrote, among other reasons, to dispel such notions. Note his insistence that he had personally seen and "handled" the "Word of life" (1 John 1:1, 2), a strike at Docetism. Notice also his vehement statement that whoever "denieth that Jesus is the Christ" is a liar (1 John 2:22), a slap at Cerinthianism. Finally, notice his declaration that "every spirit that confesseth not that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh" is not of God but is anti-Christ (1 John 4:2, 3).

As you turn your attention to the book of 1 John, consider the power of John's testimony as an eyewitness of Jesus Christ's appearance in the flesh. Consider also the meaning in your life as John teaches that you can come to know the true God and Christ and, more, have a fellowship with them. As you read, look for his instructions on how you can develop this fellowship and how you can know that another person has true fellowship with those members of the Godhead.

Before proceeding, read all the scriptural references in the reading block.

INTERPRETIVE COMMENTARY

(52-1) What Is the Theme of 1 John?

"Written by the Disciple whom Jesus loved, and who in turn had such great love for his Lord and his fellowmen that he gained permission to remain on earth and seek to save souls until the Second Coming—this Epistle has as its essential theme:

"That God is love;

"That love is the foundation upon which all personal righteousness rests;

"That all the purposes and plans of Deity are based on his infinite and eternal love; and

"That if men will personify that love in their lives, they will become like the Lord himself and have eternal life with him.

"The doctrines expounded include how to gain fellowship with God; how to know God and Christ; how to become the sons of God; how to abide in the light and love the brethren; how to dwell in God and have him dwell in us; how to be born again and gain eternal life." (McConkie, *DNTC*, 3:371.)

(52-2) Where and When Was It Written?

As with the other general epistles, so with 1 John: the letter provides us with little or no evidence on which to fix a place of writing. If the tradition regarding John's long residence in Ephesus is correct, the letter could have been written from there. Although John spent the major portion of his life in the Holy Land, Christians as well as Jews were unwelcome there following the destruction of Jerusalem and its temple in A.D. 70.

The letter seems to belong to a period in which the so-called Gnostic philosophy was on the rise. It also bears a close relationship to the fourth Gospel, which is dated about A.D. 90 or 95.

The book of 1 John was probably written sometime around A.D. 96 and almost certainly between A.D. 70 and 100.

(52-3) 1 John 1:1. "We Have Seen with Our Eyes . . . and Our Hands Have Handled, of the Word of Life"

To Jesus' apostles, John being one, was given the sacred privilege following the Savior's resurrection of seeing the resurrected Lord in the flesh. "Behold my hands and my feet," the Savior said, "that it is I myself." But that is not all. They were also privileged to feel his wounds: "Handle me, and see; for a spirit hath not flesh and bones, as ye see me have." (Luke 24:39). John wishes it clearly understood that it is he, a personal witness of the resurrected Christ, who is writing this letter.

(52-4) 1 John 1:3. "Our Fellowship Is with the Father, and with His Son Jesus Christ"

"To have fellowship with the Lord in this life is to enjoy the companionship of his Holy Spirit, which makes us one with him; and to have fellowship with him in eternity is to be like him, having that eternal

life of which he is the possessor and originator.”
(McConkie, *DNTC*, 3:374.)

(52-5) 1 John 2:1. “We Have an Advocate with the Father”

An advocate is one who pleads on behalf of another. Jesus Christ is our advocate with the Father. God is a god of justice, and his law requires that every sin be paid for. If it were not for the Atonement, all men would stand condemned because of the law, because all men sin. But Jesus Christ suffered the punishment and thereby paid the price for the sins of all mankind. Therefore, he can plead on our behalf before the Father. (See D&C 45:3–5.)

(52-6) 1 John 2:2. “He Is the Propitiation for Our Sins” and “Also for the Sins of the Whole World”

God’s divine justice cannot simply wave sins away; payment must be made. Propitiation means just that. Because Jesus was totally righteous and had no sins for which to answer personally, he can propitiate, or pay, for our sins through atonement. This righteous act satisfies the demands of justice and makes mercy, or forgiveness, possible (Alma 42:12–25).

But Christ’s atonement is universal. It is extended to all who will accept it by faith in Christ and repentance from sin. The Savior suffered “the pain of all men,” the suffering due for the accumulated sins of the “whole world.” Only those who will truly repent, however, are made its beneficiaries. (Read D&C 18:10–12.) The rest must live without full benefits of the Atonement. (Read Alma 11:40, 42.)

(52-7) 1 John 2:3. “Hereby We Do Know That We Know Him, If We Keep His Commandments”

It was this same John who quotes our Savior as saying, “And this is life eternal, that they might know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom thou hast sent.” (John 17:3.) Now he tells us how it is possible to know God.

“It is by obedience to the laws and ordinances of the gospel! and in no other way! . . .

“Since the very fact of knowing God, in the ultimate and full sense, consists of thinking what he thinks, saying what he says, doing what he does, and of being like him, thus having exaltation or godhood—it follows that saved souls must advance and progress until they acquire his character, perfections, and attributes, until they gain his eternal power, until they themselves become gods.” (McConkie, *DNTC*, 3:377.)

(52-8) 1 John 2:6. “Walk Even As He Walked”

“Merely saying, accepting, believing are not enough. They are incomplete until that which they imply is translated into the dynamic action of daily living. This, then, is the finest source of personal testimony. One knows because he has experienced. He does not have to say, ‘Brother Jones says it is true, and I believe him.’ He can say, ‘I have lived this principle in my own life, and I know through personal experience that it works. I have felt its influence, tested its practical usefulness, and know that it is good. I can testify of my own knowledge that it is a true principle.’”
(Howard W. Hunter in *CR*, Apr. 1967, p. 116.)

(52-9) John 2:18, 19. What Is an Anti-Christ?

The prefix *anti* means exactly the same in Greek as it does in English, namely, that which is against something else. An anti-Christ is one who stands in opposition to Christ, or seeks to amend, change, add to, or undermine his doctrine. The devil is the best example, for he “opposeth and exalteth himself above all that is called God, or that is worshipped. . . .” (2 Thessalonians 2:4.) John speaks not of the devil, however, but of those men in his day who followed the devil in opposition to Jesus Christ. These apostates, though they had once been in the church, “went out from us, but they were not of us; for had they been of us, they would no doubt have continued with us.” Examples of anti-Christes would be men like Sherem (Jacob 7:1–23), Nehor (Alma 1:2–16), and Korihor (Alma 30:6–60).

(52-10) 1 John 2:20, 27. What Is the “Unction,” or “Anointing,” of Which John Speaks?

“This unction, this holy anointing, is the gift of the Holy Ghost, which gives them access to the infinite wisdom of the Father and the Son so that they may know all things as fast as they are able to bear them.” (McConkie, *DNTC*, 3:383.)

(52-11) 1 John 3:9. What Does John Mean by “Whosoever Is Born of God Doth Not Commit Sin”?

In the Inspired Version, Joseph Smith translates the passage as follows:

“Whosoever is born of God doth not continue in sin; for the Spirit of God remaineth in him; and he cannot continue in sin, because he is born of God, having received that holy spirit of promise.”

Elder Bruce R. McConkie explains:

“All men sin, before and after baptism, but those saints who strive to keep the commandments, and are continually repenting and returning to the Lord, no longer continue in that course of sinful rebellion against God and his laws which was their lot before they were baptized for the remission of sins. Church members who do so continue in sin are members in name only; they do not receive the companionship of the Holy Ghost, through whose revelations alone can the Lord be ‘known’” (*DNTC*, 3:386)

(52-12) 1 John 3:21. “Beloved, If Our Heart Condemn Us Not, Then Have We Confidence Toward God”

“An actual knowledge to any person, that the course of life which he pursues is according to the will of God, is essentially necessary to enable him to have that confidence in God without which no person can obtain eternal life. It was this that enabled the ancient saints to endure all their afflictions and persecutions, and to take joyfully the spoiling of their goods, knowing (not believing merely) that they had a more enduring substance.” [Hebrews 10:34.] (*Lectures on Faith*, Lecture Sixth, vs. 2.)

(52-13) 1 John 4:8. What Does John Mean by “God Is Love”?

“‘Our God is a consuming fire.’ (Heb. 12:29.) ‘God is light.’ (1 John 1:5.) Similarly, God is also faith, hope, charity, righteousness, truth, virtue, temperance, patience, humility, and so forth. That is, God is the embodiment and personification of every good grace and godly attribute—all of which dwell in his person in perfection and in fulness.” (McConkie, *DNTC*, 3:398.)

(52-14) 1 John 4:12. “No Man Hath Seen God at Any Time”

“No man hath seen God at any time, except them who believe. If we love one another, God dwelleth in us, and his love is perfected in us.” (Inspired Version.)

(52-15) 1 John 5:8. “There Are Three That Bear Witness in Earth, the Spirit, and the Water, and the Blood”

“... just as there can be no mortal birth without:

“Water (the viable fetus being immersed in such in its mother’s womb); and

“Blood (the life of the mortal body is in the blood, without which there is immediate death; and there can

be no mortal birth as such without the loss of blood by the mother); and

“Spirit (the offspring of God which comes from pre-existence to dwell in the tabernacle of clay formed from the dust of the earth in the womb of the mother);

“So there can be no spiritual birth into the kingdom of heaven without:

“Water (baptism by immersion under the hands of a legal administrator); and

“Spirit (the cleansing power of the Holy Spirit which burns sin and iniquity out of the human soul as though by fire, thus making the soul fit to dwell with holy and pure beings in God’s kingdom); and

“Blood (the shed blood of Him who poured out his soul unto death so that all of the terms and conditions of the plan of salvation would have force and validity and so that mortal man might be ransomed from the temporal and spiritual death brought into the world by the fall of Adam). . . .

“Also: The symbolism here used helps center our attention in the atoning sacrifice of the Son. The same elements were then present:

“Spirit (in that our Lord voluntarily gave up the Ghost, permitting his spirit to leave the body);

“Blood (in that he there completed the act, commenced in Gethsemane, of shedding his own blood for the sins of men); and

“Water (in that when ‘one of the soldiers with a spear pierced his side, . . . forthwith came there out blood and water. And he that saw it [John himself] bare record, and his record is true: and he knoweth that he saith true, that ye might believe.’) (John 19:34–35.)” (McConkie, *DNTC*, 3:403–5.)

POINTS TO PONDER

THE SAINTS ENJOY A UNIQUE KIND OF FRIENDSHIP

Membership in the Church exists, in part, to further one’s spiritual condition. Fellowship is the principle means by which this is to be accomplished. Through fellowship, men and women with common goals and aspirations are given an opportunity to uplift and strengthen one another. This kind of fellowship far transcends that found in social groups or political parties. John knew that this fellowship is the distinguishing mark of the true Church, for it is not found anywhere else.

What, you may ask, is the unique fellowship that the Saints can enjoy but which cannot be enjoyed outside the Church? To find the answer to this question, read carefully 1 John 1:3–7. John declares that in the church of Christ two types of fellowship are necessary. What are they? Which of these must precede the other?

Do you see that to John, fellowship with God and Christ must precede that of one person to another? Why is this order a necessity for true fellowship?

The message of John’s letter is that we must become partakers of the fellowship of God and his children if we are to obtain eternal life. This can be done only as we love and serve both God and each other. Only in this way can there be true fellowship. How much sense does it make for a person to say, “I love God” but then display hatred towards one of his children? Conversely, how much sense is there in the statements of those who say they love their fellow men but disavow the existence of God?

(52-16) When We Love God and Our Fellow Men, We Cannot Be Deceived by Those Who Profess Love for Humanity but Work Against Man’s True Welfare

“The world largely ignores the first and great commandment—to love God—but talks a lot about loving their brother. They worship at the altar of man. Would Nephi have slain Laban if he had put the love of neighbor above the love of God? Would Abraham have taken Isaac up for a sacrifice if he had put the second commandment first?

“The attitude of the world is reflected in a phrase of falsehood that reads, ‘Presume not God to scan, the proper study of mankind is man.’ But only those who know and love God can best love and serve his children, for only God fully understands his children and knows what is best for their welfare. Therefore, one needs to be in tune with God to best help his children. That’s why the Church, under the inspiration of the Lord, encourages its members to first look to themselves, then their family, then the Church and if need be to other voluntary agencies to help solve the problems of poverty, unemployment, hunger, sickness,

and distress. Those who are not moved by that same inspiration turn instead to government. Such man-made course of action does little good compared to the Lord’s approach and often results in doing great harm to our Father’s children, even though the intentions may seem to have been noble.

“Therefore, if you desire to help your fellowmen the most, then you must put the first commandment first.

“When we fail to put the love of God first, we are easily deceived by crafty men who profess a great love of humanity, while advocating programs that are not of the Lord.” (Ezra Taft Benson in *CR*, Oct. 1967, p. 35.)

TRUE FELLOWSHIP WITH GOD AND MAN IS ENJOYED ONLY BY THOSE WHO WALK IN THE LIGHT OF CHRIST

Let us turn our attention to another phase of John’s writing: the suggestion of how we can enjoy true fellowship with God and with our fellowmen. His instructions are clear and simple. Read the following verses and consider the requirements: 1 John 1:8, 9; 2:9, 15, 24; 3:23; 4:7, 20, 21; 5:2. Do these teachings seem difficult? Well, the road to perfection is not easy, but it is John’s testimony that you can make it. Read again these promises and assurances from John: 2:1–3, 5, 24, 25; 3:24; 4:12, 13; 5:18–20. This time, however, consider how these teachings apply to you and to your ability to gain fellowship with Christ.

Do you understand the promise John is making to you? Can you see that as you determine to keep the commandments, you will receive power and love from God, and that he will readily cleanse you from all sin as you love and serve his children? Further, do you see that God’s power and love will be perfected in you until you become perfect and enjoy full fellowship in Christ and partake of his Spirit and blessings? God is offering you the power of eternity, and all he is asking in return is that you love and obey him and willingly serve his children. Can you make the offering of love so that you might be filled with his glory?

“FOR THERE ARE CERTAIN MEN CREPT IN UNAWARES”



2 John: To a Branch of the Church 3 John: To Gaius, a Christian Convert (2 and 3 John), ca. A.D. 96		The Letter of Jude, a Brother of the Lord, to Jewish Christians from Jerusalem, ca. A.D. 70–90 (Jude)	
	2 John		Jude
Saints Are Commanded to Teach the Law of Love	1:1–6	“Contend for the Faith”	1:1–5
Do Not Aid the Enemies of Christ	1:7–13	Certain Angels Kept Not Their First Estate	1:6
	3 John	The Disputation of Michael the Archangel	1:7–13
Gaius Praised for His Labors	1:1–8	Enoch Prophesied of Christ’s Second Coming	1:14–16
Beware of the Example of Diotrephes	1:9–11	“Keep Yourselves in the Love of God”	1:17–25
Demetrius Commended	1:12–14		

THEME

Latter-day Saints must be aware of false ideas and unrighteous behavior so that they might actively “contend for the faith.”

INTRODUCTION

As the shadows of apostasy increasingly overtook the church, its leaders earnestly sought to meet the challenge. Thus John and Jude warned the former-day saints of “ungodly” and false men who had “crept in unawares.” (Jude 1:4, 15.) Their perverse

doctrines and conduct were polluting the church and leading the unsuspecting astray. John and Jude forthrightly identified these errors and counseled the faithful how they might resist them.

Similarly, in our own time church leaders have cautioned the Latter-day saints of the false men teaching incorrect doctrine. The modern prophets have spoken as unequivocally as their predecessors, and not surprisingly they have described problems remarkably parallel to those of the early church. Satan’s tools and man’s nature have not changed.

“There are some as wolves among us. By that, I mean some who profess membership in this church

who are not sparing the flock. And among our own membership, men are arising speaking perverse things. Now perverse means diverting from the right or correct, and being obstinate in the wrong, willfully, in order to draw the weak and unwary members of the Church after them.” (Harold B. Lee in *CR*, Oct. 1972, p. 125.)

Who are these people? What are their false ideas and ungodly practices? How can you fortify yourself against their deceptions? If you suspect someone of “speaking perverse things,” what is your obligation both to them and to the Church?

The letters of John and Jude help to answer these pressing and important questions. Now read 2 John, 3 John, and Jude. Remember that their warning and counsel have an application for our own time.

Before proceeding, read all the scriptural references in the reading block.

INTERPRETIVE COMMENTARY

SECOND AND THIRD JOHN

(53-1) Place and Date of Writing

All the evidence, and it is very scanty, suggests a date and place identical to that for First John somewhere near the turn of the first century at an unknown place in the Roman Empire. Indications in the letters suggest that Gnosticism is still the apostle’s dominant concern. While we cannot be certain as to the exact order in which the three letters of John were written, there is no solid evidence for accepting them in any other sequence than that in which they presently appear in the New Testament.

(53-2) Background Information

The background of Second and Third John is much like that for John’s first letter. Second and Third John, however, are more intimate, for they are addressed to “the elect lady and her children” (2 John 1) and to “the well-beloved Gaius, whom I love in the truth.” (3 John 1.) Who is this elect lady? Is she a person of John’s close acquaintance, such as a wife or sister? Are the children his own flesh and blood offspring? Or are these designations to be interpreted spiritually? Is the “elect lady” an individual branch of the church whose members are her “children”? Is she an individual in whose home (2 John 10) the faithful saints, her “children,” gather for weekly worship? Is Gaius a presiding elder of a local branch? Who are Diotrophes and Demetrius?

Unfortunately these questions cannot be answered conclusively from the evidence that is available. What is apparent, however, is that Second and Third John seem to have been written to warn the faithful saints against the Gnostic philosophy of the day, to beware of those “many deceivers . . . who confess not that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh.” (2 John 7.) John urges those confronted by this and other heresies to “follow not that which is evil, but that which is good.” (3 John 11.)

(53-3) Significant Contributions

Elder Bruce R. McConkie, who believes that these two epistles may have been personal letters written to members of John’s own immediate family, summarizes the contributions of the two writings as follows:

“Why these two brief, personal epistles?

“Their doctrinal content and historical recitations are, of course, minimal. But they do add a unique contribution to the revealed word which well pays for their preservation. . . .

“Brief, less significant than some portions of Holy Writ, these two lesser epistles of the Beloved John are yet of eternal worth, and the saints rejoice in the added perspective they give to the Bible as a whole.” (McConkie, *DNTC*, 3:409.)

(53-4) 2 John 1. Was John an Elder in the Priesthood?

The word *elder* is a title applied to all holders of the Melchizedek Priesthood, whether they be ordained to the specific office of elder or not (D&C 20:38). The priesthood is greater than any of its ordained offices. Peter, an apostle and president of the high priesthood, referred to himself as an elder (1 Peter 1:5). John and Peter were elders in the same sense that any holder of the Melchizedek Priesthood, regardless of his ordained position, is an elder.

(53-5) 2 John 1. What or Who Is an “Elect Lady”?

If we assume that the “elect lady” to whom John wrote was an actual person rather than a figurative designation for a branch of the church, as some maintain, what does the term mean? Elder McConkie has written:

“An elect lady is a female member of the Church who has already received, or who through obedience is qualified to receive, the fulness of gospel blessings. This includes temple endowments, celestial marriage, and the fulness of the sealing power. She is one who

has been elected or chosen by faithfulness as a daughter of God in this life, an heir of God, a member of his household. Her position is comparable to that of the elders who magnify their callings in the priesthood and thereby receive all that the Father hath. (D. & C. 84:38.)” (McConkie, *Mormon Doctrine*, p. 217.)

(53-6) 2 John 7. “For Many Deceivers Are Entered into the World”

From the beginning of this earth’s history, Satan and his emissaries have engaged in works of deception. For this reason, prophets of God have constantly warned the followers of Christ to beware of those who seek to beguile the unwary away from the truths revealed by God.

John’s day, as formerly shown, was no exception, for there were “many deceivers” in his day. John specifically warned of those “who confess not that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh.” These were the Docetists, Gnostic heretics who insisted that Christ was a phantom and ministered in appearance only. Matter is evil, and Christ could not have been a material being, for that would make him evil by association. Christ did not suffer for men’s sins in the Garden of Gethsemane and on the cross; he only seemed to suffer. (*Dokein* in the Greek means “to seem or appear,” hence Docetism.)

Such a teaching, if accepted, would have undermined the entire structure of the gospel of Christ. If Jesus had not suffered for our sins through the shedding of his blood, our sins would have remained unremitted. If Jesus had not conquered death by resurrecting his physical body, we and all before us would have remained dead forever and ever. All of our expectations for eternal life would have been shattered. There would have been no “good news,” or gospel of Jesus Christ, to place confidence in. Small wonder that John warned his readers to beware of the “many deceivers” abroad in the world who “confess not that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh.” Latter-day Saints know he has, and that knowledge opens the doors to a more purposeful life.

(53-7) 2 John 10, 11. What Is So Serious About Bidding a Bearer of False Doctrine “Godspeed”?

“Godspeed” was a common form of greeting and of farewell in the 1600s when the King James Version was produced. It was, at that time, a good translation of the Greek. John was actually telling his readers to refrain from wishing prosperity and success to those whose lives and teachings were not in harmony with gospel truth. John is not suggesting that common

courtesy cannot be extended to those who teach contrary doctrines. But in his time, the phrase he used also meant to welcome one into the home, to accept him as a guest. It was this kind of hospitality that enabled the itinerant preachers to exist and carry on their work. Thus, extending greeting was akin to supporting the work of these teachers. John is saying that saints should support only those who come teaching the gospel doctrine that Christ actually came in the flesh, suffered for mankind, brought about the Resurrection, and will judge each of us in the final day.

(53-8) 3 John 5–8. For What Is Gaius Commended by John in These Verses?

Even as John urged his readers not to provide lodging for teachers of false doctrine, so he commends Gaius for his kindness to the true ministers of God’s word. It was a custom in the early church that members of the branch would take Christian missionaries into their homes and provide for their needs. Such an act, as formerly noted, implied acceptance of the missionaries and their message. Even if the inns of that day had not had the evil reputation that they did, it is unlikely that very many of the brethren would have been wealthy enough to stay in them. Gaius is praised for his unselfish devotion to the cause of Christ in providing accommodations for God’s traveling servants.

JUDE

(53-9) Theme

Jude’s announced purpose in his letter was to urge his readers to “earnestly contend for the faith which was once delivered unto the saints.” (Vs. 3.) The problem is one of apostasy, for he tells us “there are certain men” crept into the church unnoticed, “ungodly men, turning the grace of our God into lasciviousness, and denying the Lord God, and our Lord Jesus Christ.” (Vs. 4.)

(53-10) Authorship

Although the question of authorship has been much debated, no solid evidence has been produced to show that anyone other than Jude, brother of Jesus and James, wrote the letter.

Peter was president of the church of Jesus Christ in his day. We have no indication that Jude held any office of importance in the early church, but the epistle seems to suggest that he eventually attained to a position wherein a letter from him would carry some weight.

(53-11) Background Information

Next to Second and Third John, Jude is the shortest letter in the New Testament. Like the other general epistles, little is known concerning the group or groups to which the epistle was directed. Jude merely addresses his writing “to them that are sanctified by God the Father, and preserved in Jesus Christ, and called.” (Vs. 1.)

Jude’s words are sharp and incisive against the particular form of apostasy with which he was concerned. In graphic style, he cites three scriptural precedents to show how God has dealt in times past with disbelievers: the destruction of those who came out of Egypt and were not permitted to enter the Promised Land, the angels “who kept not their first estate,” and the inhabitants of Sodom and Gomorrah. These Jude likens to apostates of his own day, and he predicts that the same fateful calamity which befell those in other eras will come to modern apostates as well. They err, he contends, in the same way that Cain, Balaam, and Korah of old erred—they trust in themselves rather than God. The only solution for those who would avoid such calamities is to call to mind the source of their blessings and to continue in prayer and good works. (See vss. 20, 21.) Having preserved themselves from apostasy, faithful members should be active in helping to avoid a similar fate (vss. 22, 23).

(53-12) Significant Contributions

“In the whole Bible, it is Jude only who preserves for us the concept that pre-existence was our first estate and that certain angels failed to pass its tests.

“It is to him that we turn for our meager knowledge of the disputation between Michael and Lucifer about the body of Moses.

“He alone records Enoch’s glorious prophecy about the Second Coming of the Son of Man.

“And he is the only inspired writer to express the counsel that the saints should hate even the garments spotted with the flesh.” (McConkie, *DNTC*, 3:415.)

(53-13) Jude 4. What of Jude’s Description of False Teachers in His Day?

Jude describes the false teachers in the church as having “crept in unawares.” The Greek here is very vivid, being derived from a compound word which means “to slip in through a side door.” Rarely do apostate members openly challenge the principles of

the gospel. Rather, they employ subtle, deceitful, and secret methods to lure the unwary away from the truth. Jude uses the image of someone slipping surreptitiously through the side door to mingle quietly with the congregation until there is an opportunity to cloak false teachings beneath his membership in the church.

The second term Jude uses, translated as *lasciviousness* by the King James translators, is also a very powerful one in Greek. It does not imply simply a condition of mental or spiritual immorality but highly visible and improper sexual behavior—unbridled lust and passion, as it were. Jude is probably referring to a group of members who are attempting to clothe their adultery with religious sanction.

(53-14) Jude 6. “The Angels Which Kept Not Their First Estate”

Both Abraham and Jude speak of the premortal world as our “first estate” (Abraham 3:26). Those spirits who were faithful in that initial stage of eternal progression qualified for the privilege of coming into mortality, our second estate, while those who rebelled against God and followed Lucifer are they of whom Jude speaks, “angels which kept not their first estate.” The Prophet Joseph Smith explains their condition:

“The spirits in the eternal world are like the spirits in this world. When those have come into this world and received tabernacles, then died and again have risen and received glorified bodies, they will have an ascendancy over the spirits who have received no bodies, or kept not their first estate, like the devil. The punishment of the devil was that he should not have a habitation like men.” (Smith, *Teachings*, pp. 305–6.)

(53-15) Jude 6. What Are the “Everlasting Chains Under Darkness” of Which Jude Speaks?

Outer darkness is the habitation of those “angels which kept not their first estate” but rebelled against God and joined forces with Lucifer. Here they will be joined by sons of perdition: those who, in this life, having known the ways of righteousness unto perfection, consciously chose a course that leads to hell (D&C 76:32, 33, 44). Since there is no progression, no spiritual growth, no advancement in light and truth in this state, those who inherit this condition are grasped with “everlasting chains” of darkness from which there is no return. Hell will end for all others.

(53-16) Jude 7. What Do We Know About the Cities of Sodom and Gomorrah?

Sodom and Gomorrah were twin cities that existed somewhere near the Dead Sea, probably at its southern end. They were destroyed because of their great wickedness, principally homosexuality, from which we derive the term *sodomy*. Both cities and their inhabitants were destroyed by fire from heaven (Genesis 19:24, 25). Their fate, as well as the practices known to have existed there, suggest that perhaps Jude's reference to "lasciviousness" by "certain men crept in unawares" is intended to connote the practice of homosexuality. This evil practice has been condemned by the prophets of God in all ages. (See Kimball, *Miracle of Forgiveness*, chapter 6.)

(53-17) Jude 9. Who Is "Michael the Archangel"?

Michael the archangel is the great patriarch Adam (D&C 107:54).

(53-18) Jude 9. What Do We Know Concerning the Dispute Which Michael the Archangel Had with the Devil About the Body of Moses?

"Commentators assume, and it surely must have been so, that Jude had before him and was quoting from a then current apocryphal book, 'The Assumption of Moses,' which has been preserved to us in fragmentary form only. This non-canonical work presents the doctrine that Moses was translated and taken up into heaven without tasting death. It appears to deal 'with certain revelations made by Moses,' and 'with his disappearance in a cloud, so that his death was hid from human sight . . . Michael was commissioned to bury Moses. Satan opposed the burial on the ground (a) that he was the lord of matter and that accordingly the body should be rightfully handed over to him; (b) that Moses was a murderer, having slain the Egyptian. Michael having rebutted Satan's accusations proceeded to charge Satan with having instigated the serpent to tempt Eve. Finally, all opposition having been overcome, the assumption took place in the presence of Joshua and Caleb.'" (McConkie, *DNTC*, 3:421.)

It should be noted that, as Elder McConkie points out, "The Assumption of Moses" is an apocryphal book. *Apocryphal* means of dubious authenticity or validity. In other words, such books were not included in the Bible because they were not felt to be correct in every particular, even though they may have contained some things of value. (See, for example, what the Lord said about other apocryphal works in D&C 91.)

(53-19) Jude 11. "The Way of Cain . . . the Error of Balaam . . . and . . . the Gainsaying of Core"

Each of these men made a grievous mistake in the eyes of the Lord. Cain murdered his brother Abel in order to gain his brother's flocks (Moses 5:32, 33); Balaam used his God-given gift of prophecy to enhance himself with riches and the honors of men (Numbers 22:5; 25); and Core (or Korah, as it is spelled in the Old Testament) rebelled against Moses, the Lord's prophet, because of his exclusion from priesthood office (Numbers 16:1-3, 31-35). In each instance these men were cursed of the Lord for their evil: Cain was made a "fugitive and a vagabond . . . in the earth" (Moses 5:37); Balaam was slain by the sword (Numbers 31:8); and Korah and those who sided with him were swallowed up alive in the earth (Numbers 16:31-35). Jude wishes it understood that the evil men of his day, having "gone in the way" of Cain, Balaam, and Core, shall also meet a similar fate.

(53-20) Jude 14. What Do We Know Concerning Enoch's Prophecy of the Second Coming of Christ?

See Moses 7:62-66.

(53-21) Jude 20. What Does It Mean to Pray "in the Holy Ghost"?

"Praying by the power of the Holy Ghost, so that all requested petitions are granted, because 'it shall be given you what you shall ask.' (D. & C. 50:29-30; 101:27.)" (McConkie, *DNTC*, 3:427.)

(53-22) Jude 23. "Pulling Them Out of the Fire"

"In the day of judgment, every corruptible thing will be consumed (D. & C. 101:24), and the wicked shall be burned with unquenchable fire. (Mal. 4:1.) If the erring saints are to be saved, they must be pulled, as it were, from the coming fire, even as God said of Israel: 'Ye were as a firebrand plucked out of the burning.' (Amos 4:11.)" (McConkie, *DNTC*, 3:427-28.)

(53-23) Jude 23. "The Garment Spotted by the Flesh"

"To stay the spread of disease in ancient Israel, clothing spotted by contagious diseases was destroyed by burning. (Lev. 13:47-49; 15:4-17.) And so with sin in the Church, the saints are to avoid the remotest contact with it; the very garments, as it were, of the sinners are to be burned with fire, meaning that anything which has had contact with the pollutions of the wicked must be shunned. And so also with those yet in the world who are invited to join the kingdom.

To them the call is: Repent, ‘Save yourselves from this untoward generation, and come forth out of the fire, hating even the garments spotted with the flesh.’ (D. & C. 36:6.)” (McConkie, *DNTC*, 3:428.)

POINTS TO PONDER

ONE OF THE GREATEST CHALLENGES FOR LATTER-DAY SAINTS IS TO BE AWARE OF FALSE IDEAS AND UNRIGHTEOUS BEHAVIOR

From time to time internal dissension has undermined the strength of the Savior’s church. Men like Diotrefes have arisen—church members who have openly repudiated their presiding brethren (3 John 1–10). In previous times they resorted to primitive and violent means. Today, in our own more settled time, the lack of unity and concord is still evident in the Church:

“The Church is little, if at all, injured by persecution and calumnies from ignorant, misinformed, or malicious enemies. A greater hindrance to its progress comes from faultfinders, shirkers, commandment-breakers, and apostate cliques within its own ecclesiastical and quorum groups.” (David O. McKay in *CR*, Oct. 1967, p. 9.)

The letters of John and Jude list the evil doctrines and practices which then, as now, caused dissension within the church. Can any of these—or their modern counterparts—be found in your life?

Study carefully the following comparisons. Ponder the significance of the modern application to your life.

The Denial of God the Father and of the Mission of His Son

2 John 7 They “confess not that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh.”

Jude 4 They deny “the only Lord God, and our Lord Jesus Christ.”

“There is creeping into our midst, and I warn you brethren about it, and I urge you to meet it, a great host of sectarian doctrines that have no place amongst us. The gospel in its simplicity, is to be found in the revelations, the teachings of the Prophet and the early leaders of the Church. We shall make no mistake if we follow them. We shall make mistakes . . . if we try to harmonize our simple beliefs with the philosophy and the speculations of sectarian

doctrines. When you can hear in our Sunday Schools in some of our most prominent wards, that we do not need to worry much about or think much about the first vision, we do not need to think very much about the atoning sacrifice of Christ—that is a mystery; . . . we would better be careful.

“We must not ‘liberalize,’ and I put that term in quotes, our teachings; we must accept them as God gave them to us and there must be amongst us unity in faith. . . .” (J. Reuben Clark, Jr., in *CR*, Oct. 1944, pp. 117–18.)

Do you know of the reality of the Father and Son and accept Christ’s redeeming sacrifice?

Do you have a personal assurance that Jesus has returned in these latter days to establish and lead his church?

The Aspiration for Leadership, Honor, and Gain

3 John 9 They “loveth to have . . . preeminence.”

Jude 11 They “have gone in the way of Cain, and ran after the error of Balaam for reward.”

Jude 16 They flatter “men’s persons . . . because of advantage.”

“It would be gratifying to my mind to see the Saints in Kirtland flourish, but think the time is not yet come; and I assure you it never will until a different order of things be established and a different spirit manifested. . . .

“It is in consequence of aspiring men that Kirtland has been forsaken. How frequently has your humble servant been envied in his office by such characters, who endeavored to raise themselves to power at his expense, and seeing it impossible to do so, resorted to foul slander and abuse, and other means to effect his overthrow. Such characters have ever been the first to cry out against the Presidency, and publish their faults and foibles to the four winds of heaven.” (Smith, *HC*, 4:166.)

When friction arises between you and a church member, is a prideful desire for “preeminence” a factor? Are you more quick to see that trait in others than in yourself?

Do you regard Church service as an opportunity to serve others, or do you view it as a means of advancing yourself?

Do you resent callings in the Church that seem unimportant and wish you could serve in presiding positions?

Are the compliments you pay to others genuine? Or do you employ them to make people think well of you?

Disobedience to Priesthood Authority

3 John 10 They reject the brethren, “prating against [them] with malicious words.”

Jude 19 They “separate themselves” from their brethren.

“Brigham Young was a great defender of the Prophet Joseph Smith. There were Judases in the ranks in that day, just as there were in the Savior’s day, and just as we have today, some who are members of the Church who are undercutting us, who are betraying their trusts. We are shocked when we see the places from which some of these things come.

“Brigham Young was invited by some of these men who were trying to depose the Prophet Joseph from his position as President of the Church; but they made a mistake by inviting President Brigham Young into their circle. And after he had listened to what their motives were, he said something to this effect: ‘I want to say something to you men. You cannot destroy the appointment of a prophet of God, but you can cut the thread that binds you to the prophet of God, and sink yourselves to hell.’ . . .

“Remember that, brethren. You cannot destroy the appointments of the prophets of God. . . .” (Harold B. Lee in CR, Oct. 1972, p. 129.)

“I want to bear you my testimony that the experiences I have had has taught me that those who criticize the leaders of this Church are showing signs of a spiritual sickness which, unless curbed, will bring about eventually spiritual death. I want to bear my testimony as well that those who in public seek by their criticism, to belittle our leaders or bring them into disrepute, will bring upon themselves more hurt than upon those whom they seek thus to malign. . . .” (Harold B. Lee in CR, Oct. 1947, p. 67.)

Do you “invite” the brethren into your life by studying their conference addresses?

Do you give as much credence to the statements of the living prophet as to those of the past?

In order to justify a personal belief, do you attempt to pit the statements of one general authority against another?

Sexual Transgression

Jude 4 They turn “the grace of our God into lasciviousness.”

Jude 7 They give “themselves over to fornication” and go “after strange flesh.”

Jude 8 They are “filthy dreamers” who “defile the flesh.”

Jude 10 They are “as brute beasts” and “corrupt themselves.”

Jude 16 They walk “after their own lusts.”

“. . . In the area of one of Satan’s most destructive evils, we strongly warn all our people from childhood to old age to beware of the chains of bondage, suffering, and remorse which come from improper use of the body.

“The human body is the sacred home of the spirit child of God, and unwarranted tampering with or defilement of this sacred tabernacle can bring only remorse and regret. We urge: stay clean, uncontaminated, undefiled. . . .

“We urge, with Peter, ‘. . . Abstain from fleshly lusts, which war against the soul.’ (1 Pet. 2:11.) No indecent exposure or pornography or other aberrations to defile the mind and spirit. No fondling of bodies, one’s own or that of others, and no sex between persons except in proper marriage relationships. This is positively prohibited by our Creator in all places, at all times, and we reaffirm it. Even in marriage there can be some excesses and distortions. No amount of rationalization to the contrary can satisfy a disappointed Father in heaven. . . .” (Spencer W. Kimball in CR, Apr. 1974, pp. 8–9.)

Consider in your life the test given to John Wesley by his loving mother: “Would you judge of the lawfulness or unlawfulness of pleasure? Take this rule: Now note, whatever weakens your reason, impairs the tenderness of your conscience, obscures your sense of God, takes off your relish for spiritual things, whatever increases the authority of the body over the mind, that thing is sin to you, however innocent it may seem in itself.” (Quoted by Ezra Taft Benson in CR, Oct. 1964, p. 59.)

Do you understand that sexual transgression—whether masturbation, homosexuality, fornication, adultery, or the use of pornographic materials—can lessen spiritual strength and lead to apostasy?

Disobedience to Civil Authority

Jude 8 They “despise dominion, and speak evil of dignities.”

“Now there is another danger that confronts us. There seem to be those among us who are as wolves among the flock, trying to lead some who are weak and unwary among Church members, according to reports that have reached us, who are taking the law into their own hands by refusing to pay their income tax because they have some political disagreement with constituted authorities.

“Others have tried to marshal civilians, without police authority, and to arm themselves to battle against possible dangers, little realizing that in so doing they themselves become the ones who, by obstructing the constituted authority, would become subject to arrest and imprisonment.

“We have even heard of someone claiming Church membership in protest against pornographic pictures being displayed in theaters, having planted bombs, and therefore becoming subject to punishment by the law and subsequently standing judgment before the disciplinary bodies of the church.” (Lee in CR, Oct. 1972, p. 127.)

Do you obey even those laws which you find to be inconvenient or consider to be unreasonable? What proper recourse do you have to unjust legislation?

Are you as charitable to civil authorities as you are to close associates?

Do you show respect for the rules, manners, and traditions which make orderly and civilized society possible?

Faultfinding

Jude 16 They are “murmurers” and “complainers.”

“I will give you one of the Keys of the mysteries of the Kingdom. It is an eternal principle, that has existed with God from all eternity: That man who rises up to condemn others, finding fault with the Church, saying that they are out of the way, while he himself is righteous, then know assuredly, that that man is in the high road to apostasy; and if he does not repent, will apostatize, as God lives.” (Smith, Teachings, pp. 156–57.)

It has been asserted that the measure of mental health is the disposition to find good everywhere. During the past week, what portion of your thoughts have been devoted to finding good everywhere?

Note the things which have most easily disturbed you during the past several days and apply this axiom: The faults which we find disturbing in others are often those which we possess in abundance. Why is this so?

YOU CAN APPROPRIATELY AND EARNESTLY CONTEND FOR THE FAITH

(53-24) We Can Avoid Individual Apostasy by Maintaining an Unshakable Testimony of Jesus Christ

The characteristics of apostasy clearly have changed but little in 2,000 years. Today, as in the early church, those who have failed to control ambition, appetite, and speech have become subject to the tempter’s snare. Characteristically, they have neglected to build and nourish an unshakable testimony in Christ and his church. Consequently, their works have become like unto clouds without water (Jude 12). They have turned away from God’s learning and instead “read by the lamp of their own conceit.” (Smith, *Gospel Doctrine*, p. 373.)

Jude advised the saints of his day to “earnestly contend for the faith.” (Jude 3.) How can this counsel be applied to you and your testimony of the restored gospel? Return to the Points to Ponder section under the heading “One of the greatest challenges for Latter-Day Saints is to be aware of false ideas and unrighteous behavior”; then choose one specific teaching that you could begin to apply more conscientiously to your life. For example, if you find that you are not inviting the Brethren into your life, study some of the messages of the General Authorities in the latest conference issue of the Ensign. If you find that frictions arise easily between you and other people (roommates, family, church associates), make a sincere effort to subdue your pride and seek to understand and look for the good in others. As you actively strive to apply a principle of the gospel to your life, you will find yourself “contending for the faith.”

SECTION 12

JOHN'S WITNESS OF THE CHURCH TRIUMPHANT

LESSONS

54. "The Revelation of Jesus Christ . . . unto His Servant John" (Revelation 1–3)
55. "The Kingdoms of This World Are Become the Kingdoms of Our Lord" (Revelation 4–18)
56. "Behold, I Come Quickly; and My Reward Is with Me" (Revelation 19–22)

THE PROPHETIC EYE

A Note on Symbolism

The book of Revelation is unique. It is quite different from any of the other New Testament books. To many, it is a baffling and confusing book, containing symbolism and imagery foreign to anything with which they are familiar. To many, its name seems to be a contradiction, for in Greek *Apocalypsis* means "an uncovering" or "an unveiling" of something, and the typical reader finds the content of this book veiled and obscure rather than the opposite.

From earliest times, those who have studied and pondered the book of Revelation have taken different stances on how its mysteries should be unraveled, how its symbolism should be interpreted. Does the book describe events future or past? Is the symbolism literal or allegorical? Did John actually see history as yet unmade, or was he simply using vivid and powerful language to convey spiritual truths? These and other questions have been debated and pondered for centuries.

Though there have been many different approaches and theories as to how the book should be viewed, the suggested methods of interpretation can be divided into two general categories—the prophetic and the nonprophetic.

The Nonprophetic View

Many scholars and interpreters of Revelation have denied that John had any prophetic intent as he wrote this book, and they reject the idea that the contents have reference to future events. One group, often called the "preterists" (from the Latin *Praeter*, which

means "past"), believe that the book of Revelation relates only to what is now past, i.e., the events of John's own day. They believe that the whole of John's writings are to be interpreted in the light of events as they were then; the imagery and symbolism refer only to the clash between the church and the Roman Empire. There are no future predictions, they feel, and those who try to find them will badly misinterpret the book's meaning.

Though differing greatly from the preterists, another group of interpreters also class Revelation as nonprophetic. These are sometimes called the "idealists" or the allegorists because they maintain that the only correct meaning of the book is a spiritual one. They reject attempts to interpret the book literally, and they deny that John's symbols were meant to have any direct correspondence with actual events or situations. Everything is to be taken as a graphic portrayal of spiritual truths. The beasts and the great whore are merely representations of the evil in men that must be conquered by Christian principles. The great judgment is not some actual accounting for one's works before God; rather, it takes place whenever an important moral issue is decided. The New Jerusalem is only the figurative description of a society that eliminates war, hatred, and evil from its midst and begins to live in love, harmony, and peace.

The Prophetic View

Those holding to the prophetic view agree that John was prophesying of future events, but they differ as to exactly how the book of Revelation is to be correlated with history. One group, generally called the "historicists," maintains that Revelation outlines the whole scope of the history of Christ's church, from the day of Pentecost to the day of judgment. The symbols are to be seen as future predictions of all the great events of history (i.e., they were future to John, but most have now been fulfilled). Historicists thus attempt to match up what is known from the past with what is found in the Apocalypse. One example of the historicist interpretation is the identification of the locusts who emerge from the bottomless pit to become a vast conquering army (Revelation 11) with the

Mohammedan invasions of the Middle Ages. The historicists say that while some of John's predictions are yet to be fulfilled, most are now past.

Another theory holds that while the first three chapters of Revelation (the letters to the seven churches) were applicable to John's time, the rest of the book deals with the events of the very last days. All the remaining chapters are prophetic and refer to the terrible and magnificent events that are to take place just before the coming of Christ the second time. Those who interpret the book in this manner call these days "the great tribulation" and variously see that period as lasting from three and one-half to seven years. They say that the tribulation shall be followed immediately by the triumphal return of the Savior and the ushering in of the Millennium. So this group sees the great majority of the book as not only being future to John, but actually still future to us as well (though they see the gap closing very rapidly, for the most part). While they recognize the symbolic imagery of John, they see the fulfillment of these predictions as being very literal. For obvious reasons, this group is often called "futurists."

A View Based on Latter-Day Revelation

Not too surprisingly, a Latter-Day Saint interpretation does not fit any of the four, and indeed, it would not even be accurate to say that it is a blending of any of them. An LDS interpretation is unique, though it clearly falls under a prophetic view of the book. This is to be expected, since we have an advantage over the rest of the Christian scholarship because of latter-day revelation. As Elder McConkie points out:

"As a matter of fact, we are in a much better position to understand those portions of revelation which we are expected to understand than we generally realize. Thanks be to the interpretive material found in sections 29, 77, 88, and others of the revelations in the Doctrine and Covenants; plus the revisions given in the Inspired Version of the Bible; plus the sermons of the Prophet; plus some clarifying explanations in the Book of Mormon and other latter-day scripture; plus our over-all knowledge of the plan of salvation—thanks be to all of these things (to say nothing of a little conservative sense, wisdom and inspiration in their application), the fact is that we have a marvelously comprehensive and correct understanding of this otherwise hidden book." (Bruce R. McConkie, *Doctrinal New Testament Commentary*, 3:431.)

This revealed information provides an important key to the interpretation of the Apocalypse. In some ways, Revelation is like a house locked and shuttered. One

can peer through the windows and glimpse things inside, but only in shadowy darkness and with limited perspective. But with the key of modern revelation, one can open the door and enter. That does not mean that once inside he will recognize everything he sees, but at least he is within the house where he can explore and examine with much greater perception and freedom.

That analogy is especially true of Doctrine and Covenants 77. As he was working on the Inspired Version of the Bible, Joseph Smith asked several questions about the book of Revelation and received answers to them. One of these questions concerned the book sealed with seven seals which John saw in the hand of God (Revelation 5:1). From that answer comes the information which gives the Latter-day Saints their unique interpretation of the book. Joseph Smith was told that the book represented the whole of the world's temporal history, and that each of the seven seals represented a one-thousand-year period of that history (D&C 77:6, 7). In other words, the opening of the first seal represents the events of the first one thousand years, and so on.

However, its major purpose is not history but prophecy. Therefore, each of the first four thousand-year periods are only highlighted briefly (two verses each). The fifth—the very period in which John and his readers were living—is expanded slightly. The sixth thousand years is the first that receives any detailed treatment (twenty-three verses), but even then it is not the focus of concentration. Only when we come to the opening of the seventh seal does the detail become profuse and lengthy. Much of the rest of the book concentrates on the happenings of the seventh seal.

In summary, then, an LDS interpretation is that the Revelation presents the great plan of the Father and the Son being worked out in all of history, but especially concentrating on that era of time when evil, in all of its power and wickedness, shall be put down once and for all.

It is not hard to realize how much comfort such a revelation would have brought to those early saints who faced direct and terrible persecutions from their own great evil power (Rome). The church was facing literal destruction in their time; the beginnings of the great apostasy had already started to snuff out the gospel's light. Under such circumstances it would only be natural to wonder if God was still working with his people, or if Satan were not triumphant. But Revelation shows that while he may have some time

of power, Satan will never be victorious. The time is coming when he will be put down once and for all, finally and forever.

Such knowledge was undoubtedly of great worth to those early saints. And it is of great value also to those of today's generation; to those who once again see the forces of evil gathering great power; to those who see a political power and philosophy more directly opposed to God than emperor worship and controlling the lives of more people than Rome did in all her glory; to those who see the wickedness of man expanding at a rapid pace. How valuable for this generation is the overview of the divine plan and the comforting assurances that God is still over all and will triumph in the final great battle between righteousness and evil.

Why the Lord Uses Symbolism to Teach His Children

Even the most cursory reading of the scriptures makes it clear that the Lord frequently uses symbolic language and imagery to teach his children the truths of the gospel. Wheat and tares, mustard seeds, candlesticks, olive trees, trumpets, wine presses, the eye, the ear, the heart, baptism, the sacrament—the list of things having symbolic significance is almost endless.

A little reflection helps us to understand why the Lord uses such symbols to teach eternal truths. First, and possibly most important, a symbolic or figurative image can convey truth and reality with greater impact to the mind than can abstract concepts or words. Consider, for example, the idea of the wheat and the tares. Jesus could have told his disciples that the kingdom would have both bad and good people in it. But tares were a poisonous weed that in its earliest stages of growth was almost indistinguishable from wheat. Only when both plants came to full head and bore their fruit (another common symbol in scriptures) could they be easily identified and separated. When one remembers that, the parable of the wheat and the tares takes on profound and deep significance. We can see the principle of the wheat and the tares clearly in the church history of our own dispensation and also that of the early apostles.

A second reason that symbols are such effective teaching devices is that they have the capability of conveying different levels of spiritual truth to different levels of spiritual maturity. The ordinance of baptism is one of the best examples. In it is contained the very obvious symbolism of cleansing, the washing away of sin. But as one ponders its meaning further, deeper

spiritual significance becomes evident. The concept of the death and burial of the old sinful man is suggested. The baptismal font becomes the grave for the natural man. But even that does not exhaust its spiritual depths. The font is also symbolic of the womb, where the new spiritual man is reborn in a manner profoundly similar to the original physical birth. (See Moses 6:59.) So baptism is more than just a simple and beautiful ordinance; in its symbolism are found some of the most elemental and important truths of the gospel.

Certainly there are other reasons for the use of symbols in the gospel: their simplicity and beauty, for example, or the universal appeal that symbols have. They also stimulate the individual to search and ponder their meanings. Let us now turn to an examination of the book of Revelation, without question one of the most symbolic and figurative books in all of scripture.

The Symbolism of the Book of Revelation

Some of the most oft-recurring and difficult questions asked about the Apocalypse concern its symbolism. How many of the images and figures seen by John are symbolic? Should they be taken literally or metaphorically? If some are symbolic and some literal, how can one tell the difference? Why are some of the images—for example, a beast with seven heads and ten horns (Revelation 13:1)—so strange and unusual?

While these questions cannot be answered with complete surety, there are some important things to keep in mind as you begin a study of this book:

1. It is almost certain that John did not intend to write things that were obscure or incomprehensible to his readers. He wrote in their language; he was part of the same cultural background and heritage as they, and they were probably familiar with special terms or phrases that he used to express himself. Part of our difficulty in understanding this book is caused by the fact that we are far removed from their time, their situation, and their language. But when John wrote, he fully expected that his readers would clearly understand what he wrote to them.

2. By revelation, Nephi was told that when John's writings were first set down, they were "plain and pure, and most precious and easy to the understanding of all men." (1 Nephi 14:23.) We can probably assume that the book of Revelation also suffered with the rest of the Bible records when it went "through the hands of the great and abominable church," and had "many plain and precious things taken away from the

book.” (1 Nephi 13:28.) This would, of course, complicate the problem of achieving a proper interpretation. The Inspired Version may have restored some of these things, but there may be other important losses.

3. Much of John’s imagery is symbolic. In fact, if taken literally, they present a bizarre or grotesque picture. A good example of this is John’s description of the beasts around the throne of God. They are described as having six wings, and “they were full of eyes.” (Revelation 4:8.) Joseph Smith was told that the wings were symbolic of their ability to move and act, and their eyes were representative of light and knowledge (D&C 77:4). In an ancient world, to which vehicles and trains, jetliners and rockets were unknown, what could be more symbolic of mobility and speed than the flight of birds? And it is through the eye that we perceive light and also receive the greatest percentage of what we know. The eye is an appropriate symbol for light and knowledge. Revelation is deeply symbolic. To try to interpret everything literally would result in some gross misconceptions.

4. However, though the book is highly symbolic, the symbols represent real and actual things, persons, or events. In other words, while the book is symbolic, it is not symbolic in the sense that the idealists claim; that is, it does not have meaning only in abstract, indefinite concepts. For example, the sea of glass is a symbolic concept, but it represents something definite and concrete—the earth in its celestial state (D&C 77:1). The book sealed with seven seals is symbolic, but it has a literal and specific referent—the seven periods of the earth’s temporal history (D&C 77:6). Some of the symbols are clear, and through modern revelation we know what they mean. Many are not, and we must wait for more revelation before we can say with surety what they represent. But the important

thing to remember is that while the book of Revelation is filled with symbolism, each symbol has specific meaning and correspondence with some real thing.

5. The meaning of the book and its symbols can be correctly interpreted only through the gift of inspiration. Uninspired reason, regardless of how brilliant, cannot unlock its mysteries. It is called the book of Revelation, and revelation is essential for its understanding. This, perhaps, is why Joseph Smith could say, “The book of Revelation is one of the plainest books God ever caused to be written.” (*Teachings*, p. 290.) Latter-day revelation can be immensely helpful in unlocking the mysteries of Revelation, and the most important of those latter-day revelations will be those received through the Spirit as the student studies this book with humble, earnest prayer.

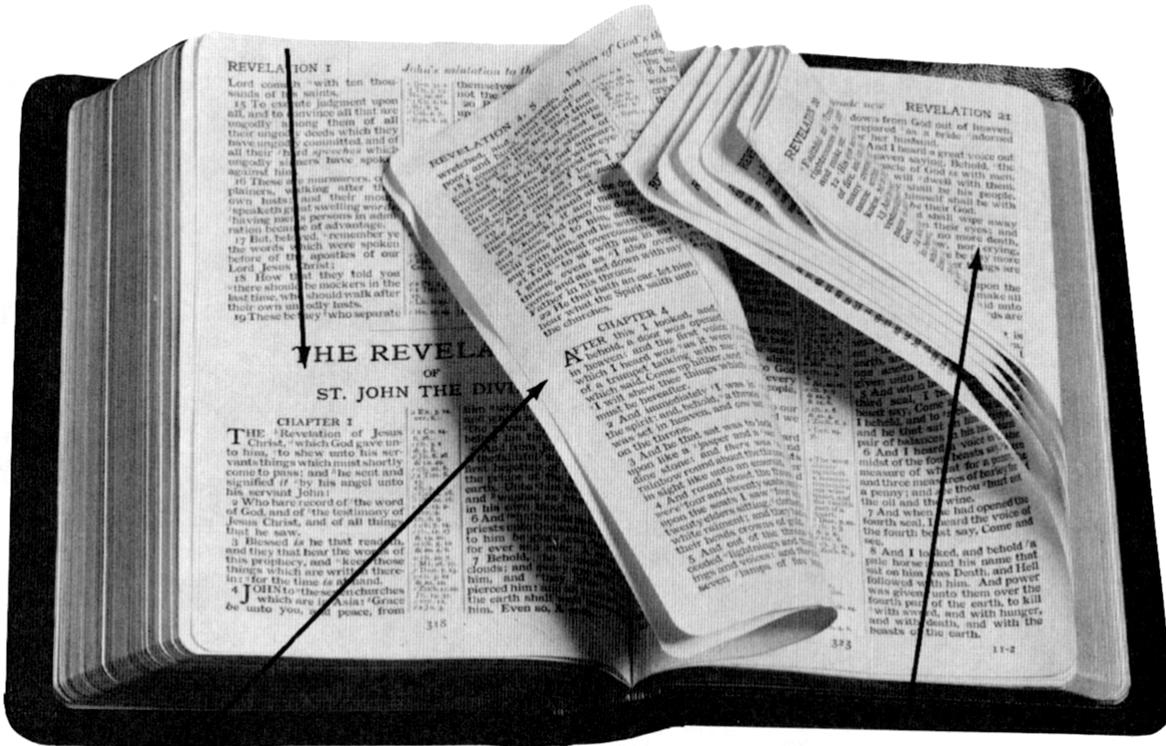
BIOGRAPHY

John, brother of James and son of Zebedee, was one of the original twelve called by Jesus. He came to be known as John the Beloved because of the special fondness Jesus felt for him (John 13:23). He was in the presidency of the early church with Peter and James and stood fearlessly at Peter’s side during the early persecutions which followed the Savior’s death (Acts 3, 4). He is the author of the Gospel of John, the three epistles of John, and the book of Revelation. He was given the special privilege of being allowed to live on the earth as a translated being until the Savior’s second coming. (See John 21:21–23; D&C 7.) Little more is recorded of his life except for the brief mention in Revelation of his being on the isle of Patmos (Revelation 1:9), to which he was probably banished during the wave of Christian persecution under the emperor Domitian. In 1831 the Prophet Joseph Smith indicated that John was then laboring among the lost ten tribes. (See *HC*, 1:176.)

Introduction to the Revelation

- A. John bears witness of the truthfulness of the revelation. (1:1–8)
- B. Christ gives special instructions to John. (1:9–20)
- C. Saints are admonished and counseled by the Savior. (2:1–29; 3:1–22)

The Structure of the Book of Revelation



The Revelation

- A. Vision of heaven (4:1–11)
John sees the Father and Son in the celestial kingdom.
- B. Vision of the triumphant destiny of God's kingdom.
 - 1. The book with seven seals (chaps. 5–11)
 - 2. The kingdom of God versus the kingdom of Satan (chaps. 12–14)
 - 3. The destruction of Satan's kingdom (chaps. 15–18)
 - 4. Final scenes of the world's history (chaps. 19–20)
- C. Vision of heaven
John sees the new heavens and new earth—the world in its celestialized state. (21:1 through 22:5)

Conclusion of the Revelation

- A. Angel bears witness of the truthfulness of the revelation (22:6–7)
- B. Special instructions from Christ given to John (22:8–15)
- C. Saints are given final admonishment and counsel by the Savior (22:16–21)

“THE REVELATION OF JESUS CHRIST . . . UNTO HIS SERVANT JOHN”



The Book of Revelation (the Revelation of John) to Seven Branches of the Church in Asia Written by the Apostle John, Exiled on the Island of Patmos, ca. A.D. 95

	Revelation
God Makes Men Kings and Priests	1:1–6
Christ the Almighty Shall Come Again	1:7, 8
John’s Vision of the Risen Lord	1:9–20
Ephesus: Overcome, Gain Eternal Life	2:1–7
Smyrna: Overcome, Avoid the Second Death	2:8–11
Pergamum: Overcome, Inherit Celestial Kingdom	2:12–17
Thyatira: Overcome, Rule Many Kingdoms	2:18–29
Sardis: Overcome, Remain in the Book of Life	3:1–6
Philadelphia: Overcome and Gain Godhood	3:7–13
Laodicea: Overcome and Sit on God’s Throne	3:14–22

THEME

John’s letters to the seven churches have great meaning in our day.

INTRODUCTION

A short distance off the coast of present-day Turkey, in the sparkling blue waters of the Aegean Sea, lies a tiny, rocky island called Patmos. In Roman times, its barren isolation made it ideal as a site for the banishment of political prisoners, ambitious enemies, or others considered undesirable by the imperial state. To it in the last years of the first century A.D. came the exiled apostle John, known also as the Beloved. And to that rocky island prison on a Sunday some nineteen hundred years ago came the glorified, exalted Christ.

Heralded by the trumpet blast of the godly voice and standing in the midst of seven golden candlesticks symbolic of the seven branches of the church in Asia was the Savior. Some fifty or sixty years before, he had hung in agony on the cross and had been laid in the dark recesses of a borrowed tomb. Now he stood in blinding, blazing glory before John. “I am he that liveth, and was dead,” he declared, “and, behold, I am alive for evermore.” (Revelation 1:18.)

John fell to the earth as though dead, but the glorious figure touched him, commanding him to fear not, commanding him to write those things which he was about to deceive from his Master. One by one the divine dictations were pronounced. Ephesus, Smyrna, Sardis, Laodicea—one after another the recipients of the heavenly letters were designated.

Surely the saints of those times, those to whom the letters were to go, must have been similar to the saints of modern times. They laughed and loved, worried and worshipped, wept and warned. Their men presided and directed, their women sustained and supported, their youth testified and hoped, and certainly their children squirmed and fidgeted through services as they do today.

And yet there was a great difference. Our saints know peace acceptance. We live in an age when the Church is earning great respect in the world. When we ask ourselves, “Am I faithful enough to die for the Savior?” it is, for the most part, a theoretical possibility. To those of John’s time it was reality. They knew the wrath of a government intent on enforcing the policy of emperor worship. They knew the clutch of fear at the approaching sound of Roman legionnaires. By the time of Patmos, according to the traditions that have come down to us, Peter had been crucified, Paul beheaded, Bartholomew skinned alive, Thomas and Matthew run through with spears. John was the only surviving apostle; all the others had died violently because of their faith. By the time of Patmos, the history of the church included the lining of Nero’s colonnade with crucified Christians and the savagery of the mobs screaming for blood in the Coliseum and the Circus Maximus.

How often must the minds of those early saints have been torn from the pleasant thoughts of home, family, friends, and peace and thrust upon the awful possibilities that faced them? How many times must they have been forced to turn the searching eye inward to examine personal commitment and testimony? And some, in the face of such vicious and persistent persecution, must have asked themselves, “Does he really live?”

Christ’s visit to Patmos was not just a personal reaffirmation of his reality to the apostle John. It was a revelation of himself to the saints of God in one of the blackest moments of the church’s history. We who enjoy the comfort and peace of the twentieth century cannot fully fathom the comfort and courage that must have come from Patmos. We think of the book of Revelation as a mysterious, baffling work. To them it

must have been glorious, for not only did it split the darkness of those terrible times with the brightness of Christ’s person, but it revealed a Savior still living, still loving, still triumphing over the power of the satanic forces. As John said in his opening words, it was “the revelation of Jesus Christ.”

Before proceeding read all the scriptural references in the reading block.

INTERPRETIVE COMMENTARY

(54-1) What Is the Theme of Revelation?

The theme of the work is very simple and is stated by John in the first verse: it is a revelation of Jesus Christ. The book of Revelation presents a picture of Christ’s dealings with men throughout the ages of earth’s history. In particular, for modern man it mirrors the second coming of Jesus, the judgment of mankind, the destruction of the wicked, the Millennium, and the ultimate celestialization of the world.

(54-2) To Whom Was It Written?

The immediate recipients of the writing known as Revelation were seven churches in Asia designated by the Lord himself (1:4, 11). The reason why these particular churches were singled out is not made clear. It was not because there were no other branches of the church in Asia, for we know from the New Testament that there were saints in Troas (Acts 20:6–12), Colossae (Colossians 1:12), and Hierapolis (Colossians 4:13). Nor could it be that these seven were the more important cities in Asia, for while Ephesus, Smyrna, and Pergamos were cities of some size and note, Thyatira and Philadelphia were small and quite insignificant.

If John spent the last years of the first century as a resident of Ephesus, as many have supposed, he would have been familiar with the seven churches. Moreover, his ecclesiastical position as an apostle would have given him the authority to address these churches in the manner in which he did. Sir William Ramsay, a renowned scholar of New Testament geography, once noted that all seven of the cities to whom John addressed the revelation lay on a great circular road that anciently ran through Asia. If one were to start at Ephesus and travel to the others in the order in which they were named, he would travel along this circular route.

While we know that there were other branches of the church in Asia, it may be that by the time of John’s

revelation on Patmos, the apostasy had eliminated all but these seven as faithful branches. Writing just before his death (A.D. 68), Paul told Timothy that “all they which are in Asia [are] turned away from me” (2 Timothy 1:15). Even the seven branches (A.D. 95), it would seem, had things of which they needed to repent. Ephesus, in particular, is told by the Lord, “I will come unto thee quickly, and will remove thy candlestick out of his place, except thou repent. (Revelation 2:5.)

Another important item of background is that the early saints were not the only intended recipients of John’s writing. We know from latter-day revelation that an important part of the Lord’s purpose in directing John to write what he saw was to give the saints of the last dispensation an understanding of the events of the last days, the period of time in which much that John saw would be fulfilled. The prophet Nephi, also privileged to behold the things that John saw, was told that the honor of recording the vision was reserved for John (1 Nephi 14:19–25). Nephi was also informed that the things which John would see and record would be brought forth in their purity in the Lord’s due time (1 Nephi 14:26; see also Ether 4:15, 16). In other words, the book of Revelation is not solely for the saints of the seven churches in Asia, but also for the saints of the dispensation of the fulness of times as well.

(54-3) What Is Significant About the Book of Revelation?

Nowhere in all of the existing standard works do we receive such a detailed and comprehensive picture of the whole scope of the Lord’s plan as we do in the book of Revelation. The book contains an inspired overview of the history of the world, concentrating on that period of time when the Lord shall usher in the great era of millennial peace.

(54-4) Revelation 1:1. “Things Which Must Shortly Come to Pass”

“This is one of the great keys which opens the door to an understanding of the book of Revelation. What is recorded therein is to transpire in the future, mainly in a day subsequent to New Testament times. The revelations promised are to come to the saints of latter-days, not to those in the meridian of time. All the promised events shall transpire ‘shortly’; they are soon to be in the perspective of Him with whom one day is ‘as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day.’ (2 Pet. 3:8.)

“Joseph Smith said: ‘The things which John saw had no allusion to the scenes of the days of Adam, Enoch,

Abraham or Jesus, only so far as is plainly represented by John, and clearly set forth by him. John saw that only which was lying in futurity and which was shortly to come to pass.’ (*Teachings*, p. 289.) Also: ‘John had the curtains of heaven withdrawn, and by vision looked through the dark vista of future ages, and contemplated events that should transpire throughout every subsequent period of time, until the final winding up scene.’ (*Teachings*, p. 247.)” (McConkie, *DNTC*, 3:435.)

(54-5) Revelation 1:6. What Does It Mean to Be “Kings and Priests”?

“Those holding the fullness of the Melchizedek Priesthood are kings and priests of the Most High God, holding the keys of power and blessings. In fact, that priesthood is a perfect law of theocracy, and stands as God to give laws to the people, administering endless lives to the sons and daughters of Adam.” (Smith, *HC*, 5:555.)

(54-6) Revelation 1:12. What Is the Symbolism of the Seven Candlesticks?

“Candlesticks carry light; they do not create it. Their function is to make it available, not to bring it into being. So by using seven candlesticks to portray the seven churches to whom John is now to give counsel, the Lord is showing that his congregations on earth are to carry his light to the world. Christ is the Light of the world. (John 8:12.) ‘Hold up your light that it may shine unto the world. Behold I am the light which ye shall hold up—that which ye have seen me do.’ (3 Ne. 18:24; Matt. 5:14–16.)” (McConkie, *DNTC*, 3:442.)

(54-7) Revelation 1:13–16. A Word About the Symbolic Language of John

Sometimes the reader of Revelation is startled by some of the imagery and symbolism used by John. They seem almost bizarre at times in their unusual nature. This is due, however, to a basic difference in cultural background and the use of language. Most members of the Church today are products of Western (Occidental) civilization. The occidental peoples tend to use language like a contractor uses building materials: he builds structures which are concrete in detail and form. But the oriental world, of which the Holy Land was a part, is more artistic in its use of language. Words are but colors with which the artist paints verbal pictures. Thus, the Oriental is usually more concerned with effect than with form and detail. Westerners say the sun is rising, while an Arab may say that it leaps from its bed of sleeping.

John, of course, being Jewish, was a product of Oriental, not Occidental, culture. So his depiction of the Savior as having a sharp, two-edged sword protruding from his mouth is perfectly acceptable, even though the Western mind trying to picture that image concretely may find it somewhat jarring to the sensitivities. To the Eastern mind the symbolism is most appropriate, for such a person is more concerned with the effect of the symbol than with its detail. Pushing the images and symbols of John's writings for literal interpretation will lead to baffling and sometimes grotesque pictures. But if one remembers the Oriental's love of imagery, such things as beasts with seven heads and ten horns, armies compared to locusts, and prophets with fire coming from their mouths (11:5; 19:15) will become beautiful and profound symbols of eternal truth.

(54-8) Revelation 1:18. Why Should Christ Have the Key of Hell?

Obviously Christ has power over death, for his resurrection unlocks the doors of death for all men. But wherein does he also have the key of hell? Hell is that portion of the spirit world where the wicked suffer torment until they have satisfied the strict demands of God's justice. It is Christ alone who releases them from their awful state when their torments are over. This accords perfectly with the teachings of Peter about Christ's visit to the spirits in prison between the Savior's death and resurrection. (See 1 Peter 3:18–20; 4:6; see also *Hymns*, 218.)

(54-9) Revelation 1:20. Who or What Were the Seven Angels of the Seven Churches?

Joseph Smith changed the word *angels* to *servants* in the Inspired Version, both in this verse and in the opening verse of each of the seven letters to the churches in Asia. Elder McConkie states that the seven stars are "the presiding officers of the seven congregations who, as with all his ministers, are in the hands of the Lord. They do not speak or act of themselves; they represent their Master, whose words they speak, whose acts they perform, and in fact whose they are." (*DNTC*, 3:444.)

(54-10) Revelation 2:1. "Unto . . . the Church in Ephesus Write"

Though not the capital of the Roman province of Asia, Ephesus was nevertheless one of the major cities of the Empire. It was fourth largest in population and the largest city in all of Asia Minor. Its strategic location made it not only an important harbor but also the junction for important highways and trade routes. It

was famous throughout the world for its magnificent temple of Diana (Artemis, in Greek), one of the seven wonders of the ancient world. The temple was the center of the riot in Ephesus involving the apostle Paul. His preaching threatened to destroy the business of the local artisans who made silver models of the temple to sell to tourists and worshipers (Acts 19:23 ff). At the time of Paul, the port was filling with silt from the river Cayster, and, while still a major city, Ephesus was in a state of gradual decline. After the fall of Jerusalem in A.D. 70, the city became the center of the Christian church for many years until the center gradually shifted to Rome.

(54-11) Revelation 2:8. "Unto . . . the Church in Smyrna Write"

Called by many ancient writers, "The Jewel of Asia," Smyrna disputed with Ephesus over the right to be called the first city of Asia. Situated on an excellent harbor that is still one of the major ports of Turkey (present-day Izmir), Smyrna was an important trade center. Destroyed by earthquake in 627 B.C., it was completely rebuilt by Lysimachus, one of the successors of Alexander the Great, about 290 B.C. Thus it was one of the few "planned" cities of the ancient world. As early as 195 B.C., Smyrna built a temple to the goddess of Rome and thereafter was one of the first and foremost cities to heartily embrace the Imperial Cult (emperor worship). In light of the special encouragement given to the angel (*servant* in the Inspired Version) of the church at Smyrna, it is interesting to note that Polycarp, the bishop of Smyrna, was martyred in the city when he refused to deny Christ. He was burned at the stake and smitten with a sword as the flames were encircling him.

(54-12) Revelation 2:12. "And to . . . the Church in Pergamos Write"

Also called Pergamum, this city was the provincial capital of Asia. Although eager to claim for itself the status of being the most important city in the province, it was clearly eclipsed by both Ephesus and Smyrna. Pergamos became a major center for emperor worship and was most famous for its library which housed over 200,000 scrolls. It was also the major center for the worship of the serpent god Aesculapius, whose temple stood in the city. The city was a place of much wickedness.

(54-13) Revelation 2:14. What Was the Doctrine of Balaam?

"To divine for hire; to give counsel contrary to the divine will; to pervert the right way of the Lord—all

with a view to gaining wealth and the honors of men. In effect, to preach for money, or to gain personal power and influence. In the very nature of things such a course is a perversion of the right way of the Lord. See 2 Pet. 2:10–22.” (McConkie, *DNTC*, 3:450.)

(54-14) Revelation 2:18. “And unto . . . the Church in Thyatira Write”

In spite of the fact that Thyatira was the smallest of the seven cities, the church there received the longest letter. The city was best known as a center for many craft guilds, including its dyeing of wool. (It will be remembered that Lydia, “a seller of purple” and a convert of Paul’s, was from Thyatira [Acts 16:17].) The city lay directly on the road from Smyrna and was a garrison city. The military spirit was stressed highly, and its chief deity, Tyrimnos, a sun-god, was typically portrayed in attitudes of military prowess.

(54-15) Revelation 2:23. What Does It Mean to Search “the Reins and Hearts”?

The word *reins* literally means kidneys. To the Hebrews, the word signified strength and vigor. The phrase is an idiom, meaning that the Lord knows all things about the inner man, his strengths and weaknesses, his character and emotions. And he shall then be able to “give unto every one of you according to your works.”

(54-16) Revelation 3:1. “And unto . . . the Church in Sardis Write”

Sardis was located at the crossroads of five major land routes and was an important inland trade center. It was renowned for its great wealth, as well as for its inner softness and corruption. Perhaps the Lord referred to this condition when he said, “I know thy works, that thou hast a name [a reputation] that thou livest, and art [spiritually] dead.” (Revelation 3:1.)

(54-17) Revelation 3:1. The Spiritually Dead

“There are many people in this Church today who think they live, but they are dead to the spiritual things. And I believe even many who are making pretenses of being active are also spiritually dead. Their service is much of the letter and less of the spirit.” (Spencer W. Kimball in *CR*, Apr. 1951, pp. 104–5.)

(54-18) Revelation 3:7. “And to . . . the Church in Philadelphia Write”

Located twenty-eight miles southeast of Sardis, Philadelphia was called “the Gateway to the East”

because of its location. It was in the midst of an active volcanic region and had several hot springs in the area. Bacchus, the god of wine, was the primary deity worshipped there, since Philadelphia lay in a rich area of vineyards. It was probably second only to Thyatira in smallness and unimportance.

(54-19) Revelation 3:7. What Is the Key of David?

“From the day of Adam the term *key* has been used by inspired writers as a symbol of power and authority. Keys are the right of presidency, and the one holding them holds the reigns of government within the field and sphere of his appointment. In ancient Israel, David was a man of blood and battle whose word was law and whose very name was also a symbol of power and authority. Accordingly, when Isaiah sought to convey a realization of the supreme, directive control and power resident in our Lord, the Son of David, he spoke these words in the Lord’s name: ‘and *the key of the house of David* will I lay upon his shoulder; so he shall open, and none shall shut; and he shall shut, and none shall open.’ (Isa. 22:22.) . . . Thus, the *key of David* is the absolute power resident in Christ whereby his will is expressed in all things both temporal and spiritual.” (McConkie, *Mormon Doctrine*, p. 409.)

(54-20) Revelation 3:12. “And I Will Write upon Him the Name of My God”

“God’s name is God. To have his name written on a person is to identify that person as a god. How can it be said more plainly? Those who gain eternal life become gods! Their inheritance is both a fulness of the glory of the Father and ‘a continuation of the seed forever and ever. Then shall they be gods, because they have no end; therefore shall they be from everlasting to everlasting, because they continue; then shall they be above all, because all things are subject unto them. Then shall they be gods, because they have all power, and the angels are subject unto them.’ (D. & C. 132:19–20.)” (McConkie, *DNTC*, 3:458.)

(54-21) Revelation 3:14. “And unto . . . the Church of the Laodiceans Write”

Located at the junction of two important valleys and three major roads, Laodicea was one of the richest commercial centers in the ancient world. It was especially noted for its banking, its manufacture of a unique black wool, and for a medical school that was famous for an eye salve made from Phrygian stone (Revelation 3:18). Hot springs at Hierapolis, a short distance to the north, sent steaming waters into the streams that flowed southward. Those waters were still

lukewarm when they reached Laodicea (3:15, 16). Ironically enough, this city was often called “the City of Compromise,” the very problem that seemed to affect the Laodicean members of the church.

(54-22) Revelation 3:14. Why Does Christ Title Himself as the “Amen”?

The English word *amen* is derived from the Hebrew verb meaning to “prop or make firm.” Anciently, it was a verbal acclamation of the truthfulness of a prayer, concept, or vow. When used at the beginning of a discourse, it signified truthfulness and surety. When used after a prayer or statement of doctrine, it signified that the speaker and listener accepted what had been said as binding and valid for him. That is how it is commonly used today.

Through Christ all acts, doctrines, and ordinances are given the stamp of truth and validity; thus the Savior is characterized as the Great Amen. The title takes on additional meaning when it is remembered that the saints at Laodicea were troubled with lukewarmness, lack of commitment—the very opposite of the affirmation “Amen.”

POINTS TO PONDER

THE LETTERS TO THE SEVEN CHURCHES CONTAIN INSTRUCTIONS AND COUNSEL OF GREAT WORTH TO SAINTS OF THE LATTER DAYS

Each of the seven letters written by John was a personal revelation on conditions in the last days.

To help you better understand how you personally can benefit from the letters to the seven churches, sit in now on a group discussion of these very chapters.

Brother Jacobson

Now that you have had a chance to study carefully each of the seven letters, let’s see what you have learned. Rick, your group was to examine the praise Christ gave to each group. Would you report on that?

Rick

Well, it was kind of surprising to us. Even though each letter seems so individual and personal, when we started listing the things Jesus praised we found many of them to be similar. In fact, we combined them into four major items: (1) Good works, (2) faithfulness in the face of opposition, (3) rejection of false teachings, and (4) keeping their garments clean, which we called worthiness.

Sally

That’s strange, for we found the same thing as we examined the things which Christ condemned in the seven churches. We classified them into five categories.

Brother Jacobson

And what were they?

Sally

First, imperfect works; second, insufficient love for Christ; third, toleration of teachers who pretended to be of God but were really of Satan; fourth, lack of commitment or faithfulness; and fifth, defilement of their garments.

Brother Jacobson

Good. Before we hear from Bob’s committee let’s talk about these things you’ve learned. Did you find any indications that what the Lord said to those early saints was meant for saints of our day too?

George

Well, obviously these points have great value for us too.

Brother Jacobson

Do you mean the things which he condemned, George?

George

Yes, and the things that he praised, too. They would provide an excellent standard for evaluating our own spiritual standing with the Master.

Mary

Not only that, and I agree with George, but we know these instructions were meant for more than just those people, because again and again, he says, “He that hath ears to hear let him hear what the Spirit is saying.” I think almost every letter had that admonition after it.

Brother Jacobson

That’s right, Mary. Every letter does. But do we really need the same praise and criticisms today? Do we in the Church today have Balaams and Jezebels, for example?

Karl

I suppose we have them in the Church, too—people who teach false doctrines or who are trying to deceive others—but when Sally said that about

teachers pretending to be of God, I had another thought. I thought of the doctrines and teachings of the world which are made to appear morally right but are really satanic.

Brother Jacobson

Can you think of an example, Karl?

Karl

Yes. I've often thought how clever Satan is about birth control. The population explosion people have made it look as if those who limit their children are the ones who are doing the good and moral thing, and those who have more children are evil, selfish, and terrible.

Brother Jacobson

That's an excellent example. Are there any others?

Jennifer

Well, this isn't exactly the same thing as Karl was talking about, but I know Mormons today who sound like the Laodiceans. I'm the Junior Sunday School coordinator in our branch, and while most of our teachers are good, we have some that are pretty lukewarm, too.

Sally

And I can think of times when I've been an Ephesian, too.

Brother Jacobson

In what way do you mean that?

Sally

Like the saints at Ephesus, I do lots of good things but more out of habit or obligation than love. During high school I felt so close to the Savior and loved him so much. Now I'm struggling to regain those feelings.

Brother Jacobson

I think many of us could identify with that particular weakness. So we see that the Lord has really provided us with a very effective measuring stick of our own relationship with him. Now, does he tell us in these letters what to do about it?

Bob

Yes, he says to repent.

Brother Jacobson

Okay, but of what?

Bob

Well, I don't know. I guess those things that he had condemned in each church.

Brother Jacobson

Exactly! And what is the other half of the formula?

Kathy

Several times he tells them to hold fast to that which they had.

Brother Jacobson

Right! What a simple rule for drawing close to Christ. Repent of those things which are not acceptable to him, and continue doing those things that please him. Okay, Bob, let's hear now what things are promised to those who obey this simple formula.

Bob

We didn't classify them the way the other committees did. We listed them all.

Brother Jacobson

That's fine. I'll write them on the board as you read them?

Bob

In each case these are the rewards promised to those who overcome, which we felt includes enduring to the end. So he that overcomes will (1) eat of the fruit of the tree of life; (2) be protected from the second death; (3) eat of the hidden manna; (4) receive a white stone with a new name on it; (5) be given power over the nations and rule them with a rod of iron; (6) receive the morning star; (7) be clothed in white raiment; (8) have his name left in the Book of Life; (9) have his name confessed by Jesus to the Father; (10) have the names of God, New Jerusalem, and Christ written on him; and (11) sit down with Jesus and the Father on the throne of heaven.

Brother Jacobson

Good, Bob. Now, class, as you look at all of those, what do they have in common?

Ruth

I'm not even sure what some of them mean. What is the hidden manna, for example?

Rick

Yes, and the morning star? What does that mean?

Brother Jacobson

Obviously there is much symbolism here. So we must look to other sources for help. Later, for example, Christ calls himself the “bright and morning star.” That’s in Revelation 22:16.

Sally

So if the faithful are given the morning star, then they receive Christ?

Brother Jacobson

Yes. And related to that is the hidden manna. Let me read you something from the great “Bread of Life” sermon in John’s gospel. After speaking of the manna that fed the Israelites in the wilderness, Jesus said, “I am the living bread which came down from heaven: if any man eat of this bread, he shall live forever.” (John 6:51.) So Christ is the morning star and the hidden manna. We get two other important clues from the vision of Lehi. We’ve already talked about the fruit of the tree of life being symbolic of the love of God. Do you remember what the rod of iron symbolized?

George

The word of God.

Brother Jacobson

Right. What is the application here, then?

George

That those who overcome shall rule in the celestial kingdom through the word of God.

Brother Jacobson

Yes. Ruling with a rod of iron sounds harsh, but not when you understand its true meaning. Now one more, and then we’ll ask our original question. Do you remember from your reading of the interpretive commentary what Elder McConkie taught about what

it means to have God’s name written on an individual? (See item 54-19.)

Kathy

He said it was a title. If you have God written on you, it means you are a God.

Brother Jacobson

Exactly! And so as you look at all eleven promises, what do you see that each has in common with the others?

Rick

Well, they are promises to the faithful, to those who endure to the end.

Brother Jacobson

Yes, but there’s more. What level of promises are they? Or to put it another way, if a person receives each of these blessings, at what level will he be?

Sally

The celestial level. These are all celestial promises.

Brother Jacobson

Very good! Right here in these seven ancient letters we have one of the great gospel summaries. Nowhere else except in the 76th section of the Doctrine and Covenants can you find such a complete description of the promises awaiting those who go to the celestial kingdom. In these brief chapters, the Lord lays out a summary that is as beautifully applicable to you and me today as it was to the saints in Asia. He gives the rule: Hold fast to the good things you are doing; repent of the bad. Then he lists, briefly but comprehensively, examples of both the good and the bad. Then he describes the conditions awaiting those who are obedient to that rule. Now you can see why Jesus said, “He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches.” (Revelation 3:6.)

“THE KINGDOMS OF THIS WORLD ARE
BECOME THE KINGDOMS OF OUR LORD”



The Book of Revelation (the Revelation of John) to Seven Branches of the Church Written by the Apostle John, Exiled on the Island of Patmos, ca. A.D. 95			
	Revelation		
All Created Things Worship the Lord	4:1–11	Seventh Seal: Fire and Desolation	8:1–13
The Book of Seven Seals	5:1–14	War and Plagues	9:1–21
First Seal: Enoch Ministered	6:1, 2	John to Help Restore All Things	10:1–11
Second Seal: War Raged	6:3, 4	Jerusalem: Two Prophets to Be Slain	11:1–14
Third Seal: Famine Stalked the Earth	6:5, 6	Christ Shall Reign over All the Earth	11:15–19
Fourth Seal: Death, Hell, War, Famine	6:7, 8	Satan Makes War in Heaven and Earth	12:1–17
Fifth Seal: Christian Martyrs Slain	6:9–11	Satan Governs Earthly Kingdoms	13:1–10
Sixth Seal: Signs of the Times	6:12–17	Church of Devil Works Miracles	13:11–18
Gospel Restored	7:1	“The Lamb Shall Stand upon Mount Zion”	14:1–5
Elias to Seal 144,000	7:2–8	Gospel Restored by Angelic Ministers	14:6, 7
The Righteous Saints Exalted from All Nations	7:9–17	Eternal Torment Awaits the Wicked	14:8–11
		Righteous Saints Who Die Shall Rest	14:12, 13
		Son of Man Harvests the Earth	14:14–20
		Exalted Saints Praise God Forever	15:1–4
		God Pours Out Plagues upon the Wicked	15:5–8; 16:1–12

Nations Assemble for Armageddon	16:13–16
Christ Comes, Islands Flee, Mountains Cease to Exist	16:17–21
The Great and Abominable Church	17:1–18
“Babylon the Great Is Fallen”	18:1–24

THEME

The righteous saints will be a part of the kingdom of Christ when Babylon the great will fall.

INTRODUCTION

Revelation is given privately to those who have prepared themselves through obedience and sacrifice. John was a revelator; he knew for himself that he was. Joseph Smith described John’s revelations in this way:

“ . . . when John had the curtains of heaven withdrawn, and by vision looked through the dark vista of future ages, and contemplated events that should transpire throughout every subsequent period of time, until the final winding up scene—while he gazed upon the glories of the eternal world, saw an innumerable company of angels and heard the voice of God—it was in the Spirit, on the Lord’s day, unnoticed and unobserved by the world.” (Teachings, p. 247.)

On a Sunday nearly two thousand years ago, John the Beloved received a marvelous vision of the future. By command of the Savior, the apostle was commanded to write in some measure the thrill of heavenly revelations. Through him you shall be privileged to experience some of the impact of such a vision.

John seems to want his readers to experience as fully as possible what he experienced that day on Patmos. Notice the phrases that saturate his account. “I heard,” “I saw,” “I was in the spirit,” “I beheld,” “I wept,” “I stood,” “I fell at his feet.” John wants you to see what he saw, hear what he heard, feel what he felt. He pours out his experience with a wealth of detail, sharing the dazzling splendor of heaven, the jubilant shouts of Alleluia, the terror of the judgments, the triumphs of the kingdom.

Can you do what John asks? Can you take the proffered hand and walk through the marvelous vistas with him as your guide? Can you, as you read, let him speak to your heart? John looked far into the future as he saw those events in vision, but to you the

events are the present: they are now. And if you can feel to some degree what John felt, see in the present what John saw in revelation, hear what John heard, then you can face calmly the now that is and the now that shall shortly come to pass.

Before proceeding, read all the scriptural references in the reading block.

INTERPRETIVE COMMENTARY

(55-1) Revelation 4:4. Who Were the Twenty-four Elders Surrounding the Throne of God?

Read D&C 77:5.

(55-2) Revelation 4:6. What Is the Meaning of the Sea of Glass?

Read D&C 77:1 and 130:6–9.

(55-3) Revelation 4:8. What Is the Meaning of the Wings and Eyes of the Beasts?

Read D&C 77:4.

(55-4) Revelation 5:1. What Is the Meaning of the Book Sealed with Seven Seals?

“The book which John saw’ represented the real history of the world—what the eye of God has seen, what the recording angel has written; and the seven thousand years, corresponding to the seven seals of the Apocalyptic volume, are as seven great days during which Mother Earth will fulfill her mortal mission, laboring six days and resting upon the seventh, her period of sanctification. These seven days do not include the period of our planet’s creation and preparation as a dwelling place for man. They are limited to Earth’s ‘temporal existence,’ that is, to Time, considered as distinct from Eternity. . . .

“ . . . According to received chronology—admittedly imperfect, yet approximately correct—four thousand years, or four of the seven great days given to this planet as the period of its ‘temporal existence,’ had passed before Christ was crucified; while nearly two thousand years have gone by since. Consequently, Earth’s long week is now drawing to a close, and we stand at the present moment in the Saturday Evening of Time, at or near the end of the sixth day of human history. Is it not a time of thought, a season for solemn meditation? Morning will break upon the Millennium, the thousand years of peace, the Sabbath of the World!” (Whitney, *Saturday Night Thoughts*, p. 12.)

(55-5) Revelation 5:13. How Literally Should We Interpret the Phrase “Every Creature”?

“John saw curious looking beasts in heaven; he saw every creature that was in heaven,—all the beasts, fowls and fish in heaven,—actually there, giving glory to God. How do you prove it? (See Rev. 5:13.) ‘And every creature which is in heaven, and on the earth, and under the earth, and such as are in the sea, and all that are in them, heard I saying, Blessing, and honor, and glory, and power, be unto Him that sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb for ever and ever.’

“I suppose John saw beings there of a thousand forms, that had been saved from ten thousand earths like this,—strange beasts of which we have no conception: all might be seen in heaven. The grand secret was to show John what there was in heaven. John learned that God glorified Himself by saving all that His hands had made, whether beasts, fowls, fishes or men; and He will glorify Himself with them.

“Says one, ‘I cannot believe in the salvation of beasts.’ Any man who would tell you that this could not be, would tell you that the revelations are not true. John heard the words of the beasts giving glory to God, and understood them. God who made the beasts could understand every language spoken by them. The four beasts were four of the most noble animals that had filled the measure of their creation, and had been saved from other worlds, because they were perfect; they were like angels in their sphere. We are not told where they came from, and I do not know; but they were seen and heard by John praising and glorifying God.” (Smith, *Teachings*, pp. 291–92. Compare D&C 77:2, 3.)

(55-6) Revelation 6:2. What Is the Interpretation of the Opening of the First Seal?

“Such of these events as John saw pertained to someone on a white horse (the emblem of victory); who had a bow (weapons of war); wore a crown (the garland or wreath of a conqueror); and who went forth conquering and to conquer (that is, was victorious in war). . . .

“. . . it is clear that the most transcendent happenings involved Enoch and his ministry. And it is interesting to note that what John saw was not the establishment of Zion and its removal to heavenly spheres, but the unparalleled wars in which Enoch, as a general over the armies of the saints, ‘went forth conquering and to conquer.’ Of these wars our revelations recite: [Read Moses 7:13–17.]

“Truly, never was there a ministry such as Enoch’s, and never a conqueror and general who was his equal! How appropriate that he should ride the white horse of victory in John’s apocalyptic vision!” (McConkie, *DNTC*, 3:476–78.)

(55-7) Revelation 6:3, 4. What Is the Interpretation of the Opening of the Second Seal?

“Who rode the red horse, the red horse of war and bloodshed and a sword, during the second seal? Perhaps it was the devil himself, for surely that was the great day of his power, a day of such gross wickedness that every living soul (save eight only) was found worthy of death by drowning, which wickedness caused the Lord God of Heaven to bring in the floods upon them.

“Or if it was not Lucifer, perhaps it was a man of blood, or a person representing many murdering warriors, of whom we have no record. Suffice it to say that the era from 3000 B.C., to 2000 B.C., was one of war and destruction, these being the favorite weapons of Satan for creating those social conditions in which men lose their souls.

“Of the wickedness and abominations of Noah’s day, the revealed word says: [Read Moses 8:22, 28, 29.]” (McConkie, *DNTC*, 3:478.)

(55-8) Revelation 6:4, 5. What Is the Interpretation of the Opening of the Third Seal?

“As famine follows the sword, so the pangs of hunger gnawed in the bellies of the Lord’s people during the third seal. From 2000 B.C. to 1000 B.C., as never in any other age of the earth’s history, the black horse of hunger influenced the whole history of God’s dealings with his people.

“In the beginning years of this seal, the famine in Ur of the Chaldees was so severe that Abraham’s brother, Haran, starved to death, while the father of the faithful was commanded by God to take his family to Canaan. (Abra. 1:29–30; 2:15.) Of his struggle to gain sufficient food to keep alive, Abraham said: [Read Abraham 2:17, 21.]

“This search for sustenance was yet burdening the Lord’s people in the days of Jacob, who sent his sons to Egypt to buy corn from the granaries of Joseph his son. In that day ‘the famine was over all the face of the earth,’ and it was only through divine intervention that Jacob and the beginning members of the house of Israel were saved from the fate of Haran. (Gen. 41:53–57; 42; 43; and 44.) And in the days of their sojourn in

the wilderness, the millions of Jacob's seed who had followed Moses out of Egyptian bondage, lest they perish for want of bread, were fed for forty years with manna from heaven. [Ex. 16.] . . .

“. . . Truly the third seal was a millennium in which hunger among men affected the whole course of God's dealings with his people.” (McConkie, *DNTC*, 3:479–80.)

(55-9) Revelation 6:6. “A Measure of Wheat for a Penny”

This strange accounting of the price of wheat and barley seems baffling to us today, but knowledge of the monetary units and customs of John's time helps us to better understand what the voice declared. John's readers would have clearly understood it. A measure (Greek *choenix*) was approximately the same volume as our own quart and was the usual amount of a day's allowance or ration. The penny (*denarius*) was a small silver coin of Roman mintage. Although it is hard to determine the equivalent value in today's inflated economy, it is known that a denarius was the typical wage for a day's work in those times. Thus, to spend one day's wages to buy only enough food for one person for one day clearly points out that these were famine prices. Three measures of barley could be purchased for a penny, but barley was a much inferior grain for human consumption and was generally used only in times of great hunger.

The fact that the rider had balances in his hand suggests that the scarcity of food was such that it had to be doled out with exactness. Elder McConkie has suggested that the phrase “hurt not the oil and the wine” meant that enough food should be preserved so that man would not utterly perish in the famine conditions of that time. (See McConkie *DNTC*, 3:480.)

(55-10) Revelation 6:7, 8. What Is the Interpretation of the Opening of the Fourth Seal?

“During the fourth seal, from 1000 B.C. to the coming of our Lord, death rode roughshod through the nations of men, and hell was at his heels. Thus, the slain among the ungodly in this age of bloodshed—whether by sword or by famine or by pestilence or by wild beasts—were, at their death, cast down to hell. This is the millennium of those great kingdoms and nations whose wars and treacheries tormented and overran, again and again, the people whom Jehovah had chosen to bear his name. This is also the general era in which the Lord's own people warred among themselves and sent countless numbers of their own brethren to untimely graves.” (McConkie, *DNTC*, 3:481.)

(55-11) Revelation 6:9–11. What Is the Interpretation of the Opening of the Fifth Seal?

“Where the Lord's people are concerned, the events of the fifth seal, that period from our Lord's birth down to 1000 A.D., which are of unspeakable worth are:

“1. The birth into mortality of God's only Son; his ministry among men and the atoning sacrifice which he wrought by the shedding of his own blood.

“2. The spread and perfection of the Church which was set up by Him whose Church it is, and the unbelievable fanaticism among unbelievers that made acceptance of martyrdom almost synonymous with acceptance of the gospel.

“3. And then, of course, the complete falling away from true and perfect Christianity, which sad eventuality ushered in the long night of apostate darkness on all the face of the earth.

“Our Lord's work and ministry are everywhere taught in holy writ; the facts relative to the post-meridian apostasy and the perversion of the saving truths and powers are also abundantly taught in other sacred writings. And so what is more natural than to find the Lord revealing here, that portion of the sealed book which deals with the doctrine of martyrdom. Among the ancient saints martyrdom was an ever present possibility, one which completely occupied their thoughts and feelings. They knew that by forsaking all to follow Christ, they might, if fate so decreed, be called to lay down their lives for Him who had laid down his life for them. In an almost death-inviting sense, the meridian of time was the dispensation of martyrdom.” (McConkie, *DNTC*, 3:482–83.)

(55-12) Revelation 6:12–17. What Is the Interpretation of the Opening of the Sixth Seal?

“We are now living during the final years of the sixth seal, that thousand year period which began in 1000 A.D. and will continue through the Saturday night of time and until just before the Sabbatical era when Christ shall reign personally on earth, when all of the blessings of the Great Millennium shall be poured out upon this planet. This, accordingly, is the era when the signs of the times shall be shown forth, and they are in fact everywhere to be seen.” (McConkie, *DNTC*, 3:485–86.)

For other references concerning the signs of the times which shall affect the earth during the sixth seal, see D&C 88:87–91; 29:14–21; Isaiah 13:9–11; Isaiah 24:20; Matthew 24:29, 30.

(55-13) Revelation 7:1–3. The Four Angels of the Sixth Seal

“Can you tell me where the people are who will be shielded and protected from these calamities and judgments which are even now at our doors? I’ll tell you. The Priesthood of God who honor their priesthood, and who are worthy of their blessings are the only ones who shall have this safety and protection. No other people have a right to be shielded from these judgments. They are at our very doors; not even this people will escape them entirely. They will come down like the judgments of Sodom and Gomorrah. And none but the priesthood will be safe from their fury. God has held the angels of destruction for many years, lest they should reap down the wheat with the tares. But I want to tell you now, that those angels have left the portals of heaven, and they stand over the earth waiting to pour out the judgments. And from this very day they shall be poured out. Calamities and troubles are increasing in the earth, and there is a meaning to these things. Remember this, and reflect upon these matters. If you do your duty, and I do my duty, we’ll have the protection, and shall pass through the afflictions in peace and in safety. Read the scriptures and the revelations. They will tell you about these things.” (Wilford Woodruff in *The Young Woman’s Journal*, 5:512–13.)

(55-14) Revelation 7:2. Who Is Elias, and How Is He Related to the Angel from the East?

Read D&C 77:9.

“As previously stated, the restoration of the Gospel did not come through just one messenger, but there are several who came and bestowed their keys of authority and power. The name Elias is a title. This we have been taught by the Prophet Joseph Smith. (*Teachings*, p. 335.) Is it not possible, therefore, since so many ancient prophets had a hand in the restoration, that in speaking of the Elias who was to come and restore all things, do we not have a composite picture of several Eliases, rather than one single individual? The angel with the seal directs the four angels holding the destiny of the world in their hands, not to hurt the earth until the servants of the Lord have been sealed. This could not be accomplished until the Gospel was restored and proclaimed to the nations of the earth.” (Smith, *Church History and Modern Revelation*, 1:301–2.)

(55-15) Revelation 7:3. What Is the Interpretation of the Sealing of the Lord’s Servants?

It was a common practice in John’s day for devotees of the various heathen gods to mark their foreheads with the name or symbol of their god. Thus followers of Zeus would mark their foreheads with the thunderbolt; those of Poseidon, the trident, and so on. John’s imagery would have had a powerful impact on the readers of his day. Being sealed or marked in the forehead would be a vivid metaphor of devotion and servitude to God—whether that god was the true God or the evil beast worshipped as a god. (See Revelation 13.)

As to the actual meaning of the sealing itself, Joseph Smith said: “Four destroying angels holding power over the four quarters of the earth until the servants of God are sealed in their foreheads, which signifies sealing the blessing upon their heads, meaning the everlasting covenant, thereby making their calling and election sure. When a seal is put upon the father and mother, it secures their posterity, so that they cannot be lost, but will be saved by virtue of the covenant of their father and mother.” (Smith, *Teachings*, p. 321.)

(55-16) Revelation 7:4–8. Who Are the One Hundred Forty-Four Thousand of Whom John Speaks?

Read D&C 77:11.

(55-17) Revelation 7:4–8. The Washing of Our Robes in the Blood of the Lamb

The symbolic meaning here is that one accepts the atonement of Christ and keeps his commandments, thus cleansing himself through divine power from the sins of the world (Alma 13:11, 12).

(55-18) Revelation 8:10. Who Fell from Heaven?

A star is sometimes used in the scriptures as a symbol of a great and important person. One star that fell from heaven is Satan, or Lucifer, as he was known in the premortal existence. (Read Isaiah 14:12; D&C 76:25–27.)

(55-19) Revelation 8:10. What Is the Significance of Wormwood As It Relates to the Star That Fell from Heaven?

The wormwood associated with the star that fell from heaven is a symbol of the bitterness and awfulness

which comes to all who follow the devil. Wormwood was a plant with an extremely bitter taste. To use it for food or drink was to eat that which brought about death. In the case of Satan, all who follow his evil ways perish in spiritual death.

(55-20) Revelation 9:4–10. A Time of Great Warfare

“During this particular period of the war and desolation the evil forces will be directed against all men, save those sealed up unto eternal life, for those in Zion shall be preserved. The plagues and torments of this era shall so afflict men that they shall desire to die rather than to suffer more.

“In prophetic imagery John here seeks to describe a war fought with weapons and under circumstances entirely foreign to any experience of his own or of the people of that day. Joel, subject to the same limitations of descriptive ability, attempted to portray the same scenes in these words: [Read Joel 2:1–11.]

“It is not improbable that these ancient prophets were seeing such things as men wearing or protected by strong armor; as troops of cavalry and companies of tanks and flame throwers; as airplanes and airborne missiles which explode, fire shells and drop bombs; and even other weapons yet to be devised in an age when warfare is the desire and love of wicked men.” (McConkie, *DNTC*, 3:502–3.)

(55-21) Revelation 9:11. Who Is Abaddon, or Apollyon?

John tells us that this is the angel of the bottomless pit. He gives his name in Hebrew and Greek. Both the Hebrew and the Greek words come from the roots meaning “to destroy” or “destruction.” Thus the name signifies “the Destroyer,” an appropriate title for Satan. There is yet another word which is related to these two names and which serves as one of the devil’s names. It is Perdition (see Moses 5:24), and it means “utter loss” or “destruction.”

(55-22) Revelation 10:10, 11. What Was the Little Book John Ate?

“A great mission was given unto John because of his desire, and he is even now laboring as ‘a flaming fire and a ministering angel, for those who are heirs of salvation.’ In the tenth chapter of Revelation we read that John was given a little book by the angel and commanded to eat it up, which he did, and he said ‘it was in my mouth sweet as honey; and as soon as I had eaten it, my belly was bitter.’ And the angel said by

way of interpretation of this act: ‘Thou must prophesy again before many peoples, and nations, and tongues, and kings.’ When this mission was given, John was an old man far beyond the allotted years of three score and ten. In answer to a question as to the meaning of this vision of the book, the Prophet Joseph Smith said: It was a mission and an ordinance for John to gather the tribes of Israel. (D. & C. 77:14.) At a conference of the Church, held June, 1831, Joseph Smith said ‘that John the Revelator was then among the ten tribes of Israel who had been led away by Shalmaneser, king of Assyria, to prepare them for their return from their long dispersion.’ (*Documentary History of the Church*, Vol. 1:176; *Essentials in Church History*, p. 126.)” (Smith, *Church History and Modern Revelation*, 1:48.)

(55-23) Revelation 11:3–13. The Two Witnesses Who Prophesy at Jerusalem

Read D&C 77:15.

“Suffice it to say, the Jews gather home, and rebuild Jerusalem. The nations gather against them in battle. Their armies encompass the city, and have more or less power over it for three years and a half. A couple of Jewish prophets, by their mighty miracles, keep them from utterly over-coming the Jews; until at length they are slain, and the city is left in a great measure to the mercy of their enemies for three days and a half. The two prophets then rise from the dead and ascend up into heaven.

The Messiah comes, convulses the earth, overthrows the army of the Gentiles, delivers the Jews, cleanses Jerusalem, cuts off all wickedness from the earth, raises the Saints from the dead, brings them with him, and commences his reign of a thousand years; during which time his Spirit will be poured out upon flesh; men and beasts, birds and serpents, will be perfectly harmless, and peace and the knowledge and glory of God shall cover the earth as the waters cover the sea; and the kingdom and the greatness of the kingdom under the whole heaven, shall be given to the saints of the Most High.” (Pratt, *A Voice of Warning and Instruction to All People*, pp. 49–50.)

(55-24) Revelation 12:1, 7. Important Insights from the Inspired Version

Joseph Smith made many significant changes in the book of Revelation as he worked on the Inspired Version. Of the many chapters in which changes were made, chapter twelve was the most revised. Every verse, with the exception of verse 12, received some

change. Two verses were changed in such a manner that the meaning of the entire chapter was significantly altered. Those verses are 1 and 7:

“And there appeared a great sign in heaven, in the likeness of things on the earth; a woman clothed with the sun, and the moon under her feet, and upon her head a crown of twelve stars.”

“And the dragon prevailed not against Michael, neither the child, nor the woman which was the church of God, who had been delivered of her pains, and brought forth the kingdom of our God and his Christ.”

(55-25) Revelation 12:1, 4, 15. Who Are the Woman and the Manchild Mentioned by John?

“A woman (‘the church of God’!) gives birth to a man child (‘the kingdom of our God and his Christ’ which shall hold sway during the Millennial Era, the kingdom John has just seen in vision!). See Rev. 11:14–19. Such is the Prophet’s inspired interpretation. Among Biblical scholars of the world, the man child is presumed to be Christ, a speculative conclusion which, though seemingly persuasive, is refuted by the obvious fact that the Church did not bring forth Christ; he the Creator of the Church. Among Latter-day Saint scriptural exegetes, it is not uncommon to say that the man child is the priesthood, a seemingly persuasive speculation, which again however must be rejected by the same line of reasoning. The Church did not bring forth the priesthood, but the priesthood is the power that brought the Church into being.” (McConkie, *DNTC*, 3:511.)

Though at first it may seem confusing to speak of the Church and the kingdom as separate entities, the one giving birth to the other, this in fact is the condition to exist in the Millennium. The Church is a spiritual organization governed by priesthood and revelation. Only those who have covenanted with Christ in the waters of baptism hold membership therein. The kingdom of God is a product of the Church. It is a political organization in which all men who live in the millennial era will belong.

“After Christ comes, all the peoples of the earth will be subject to him, but there will be multitudes of people on the face of the earth who will not be members of the Church; yet all will have to be obedient to the laws of the kingdom of God, for it will have dominion upon the whole face of the earth. These people will be subject to the political government, even though they are not members of the ecclesiastical kingdom which is the Church.

“This government which embraces all the peoples of the earth, both in and out of the Church, is also sometimes spoken of as the kingdom of God, *because the people are subject to the kingdom of God which Christ will set up; but they have their agency and thousands will not be members of the Church until they are converted; yet at the same time they will be subject to the theocratic rule.*” (Smith, *Doctrines of Salvation*, 1:229.)

(55-26) Revelation 12:4. Who Are the Stars of Heaven That Were Cast to the Earth?

These are the Father’s spirit children who rejected the plan of salvation and followed Lucifer in the premortal life.

(55-27) Revelation 12:7–9. “And There Was War in Heaven”

Lucifer and his followers waged a war in heaven against our Father in heaven and his faithful children. “The contention in heaven was—Jesus said there would be certain souls that would not be saved; and the devil said he could save them all, and laid his plans before the grand council, who gave their vote in favor of Jesus Christ. So the devil rose up in rebellion against God, and was cast down, with all who put up their heads for him.” (Smith, *Teachings*, p. 357.)

Read D&C 29:36, 37; Moses 4:1–3; Abraham 3:24, 28.

(55-28) Revelation 12:14. What Is the Meaning of the Woman Going into the Wilderness?

The woman is symbolic of the church of Jesus Christ, and we learn in verse 13 that the dragon (Satan) persecuted the woman. The woman fleeing into the wilderness is the symbolic driving of the church into the wilderness of apostasy.

Read D&C 86:3.

(55-29) Revelation 14:6, 7. “And I Saw Another Angel . . . Having the Everlasting Gospel”

“Now, as to the actual work of restoration—what angel performed this mighty deed, this work which involves the salvation of all men on earth in these latter-days? Who restored the everlasting gospel? Was it one angel or many?

“It is traditional (and true!) to reply: ‘Moroni, son of Mormon, the now resurrected Nephite prophet, who holds the keys of “the stick of Ephraim” (D. & C. 27:5), the one through whose ministry the Book of Mormon was again brought to light.’ The reasoning

that the Book of Mormon contains ‘the fulness of the everlasting gospel’ (D. & C. 135:3); that therein is God’s message of salvation for all of the earth’s inhabitants; and that this gospel message is now being taken by the Lord’s witnesses to one nation, and kindred, and tongue, and people after another. . . .

“ . . . But other angels were yet to come—Moses, Elias, Elijah, Gabriel, Raphael, and ‘divers angels. . . . all declaring their dispensation, their rights, their keys, their honors, their majesty and glory, and the power of their priesthood; giving line upon line, precept upon precept; here a little, and there a little.’ (D. & C. 128:21.)

“Thus the angel Moroni brought the message, that is, the word; but other angels brought the keys and priesthood, the power. And in the final analysis the fulness of the everlasting gospel consists of all of the truths and powers needed to enable men to gain a fulness of salvation in the celestial heaven.” (McConkie, *DNTC*, 3:528–30.)

(55-30) Revelation 16:1–21. The Seven Last Plagues

“God in his mercy shall pour out destructive plagues upon the wicked and ungodly in the last days. These diseases and calamities shall sweep great hosts of men from the face of the earth, preparatory to that final Millennial cleansing which shall prepare our planet as an abode for the righteous.” (McConkie, *DNTC*, 3:359.)

(55-31) Revelation 16:16. “A Place Called in the Hebrew Tongue Armageddon”

Lying about sixty miles north of Jerusalem is the site of Megiddo, a great mound or hill commanding the northern entrance to the broad plain called the valley of Esdraelon. The mountain or hill of Megiddo (*Har Meggido* in Hebrew, of which *Armageddon* is the Greek transliteration) guarded the strategic pass that cuts through the mountain range separating the coastal plains from the inland plains and hill country of Galilee. Because of this fortress or Mount of Megiddo, the valley and surrounding areas have also come to be known as Armageddon.

One of the most important highways of the ancient world—the main link between Egypt and Asia—ran through this valley and near the fortress of Megiddo. Because of that strategic location, Megiddo and the valley of Esdraelon have seen some of history’s bloodiest battles. Egyptian pharaohs, Roman legions, British troops, and Israeli tanks all have struggled in

the valley of Megiddo. Prior to the second coming of Christ, all nations of the earth shall be gathered together to battle against Jerusalem. This tremendous war, one of the final great events prior to the Savior’s second coming, has been foreseen and described in detail by many of the Lord’s ancient prophets. (See, for example, Ezekiel 38, 39; Joel 2, 3; Isaiah 34; Jeremiah 25; Daniel 11, 12; Zechariah 12–14.)

Jerusalem will be under siege and great suffering will be the lot of her inhabitants. Evidently, Armageddon, which is north of Jerusalem, will be the site of the great decisive battle of this war. “During this siege, when the nations are gathered and the Lord comes, there will be great destruction. The armies will become so confused they will fight among themselves. There will be great slaughter. Then the Lord comes to the Jews. He shows Himself. He calls upon them to come and examine His hands and His feet, and they say, ‘What are these wounds?’ And He answers them, ‘These are the wounds with which I was wounded in the house of my friends. I am Jesus Christ.’

“Then they will accept Him as their Redeemer, which they have never been willing to do.” (Smith, *Signs of the Times*, p. 171.)

(55-32) Revelation 16:20. “And Every Island Flew Away”

“When that day comes great changes shall take place upon the earth. We believe this is a day of restoration, and that the earth is to be renewed. (Tenth Article of Faith; Lesson 40.) In this renewal we are informed that the Lord ‘shall command the great deep, and it shall be driven back into the north country, and the islands shall become one land; and the land of Jerusalem and the land of Zion shall be turned back into their own place, and the earth shall be like as it was in the days before it was divided.’ (Gen. 10:25.) The notion prevails quite generally that the dividing of the earth in the days of Peleg was a division politically among the people, but from this word of the Lord we gain the idea that the earth itself was divided and that when Christ comes it will again be brought back to the same conditions physically as prevailed before this division took place. The sea is to be driven back into the north. The land is to be brought back as it was originally and the lands of Zion ‘America’ and Jerusalem (Palestine and all the land pertaining unto it) will be restored to their own place as they were in the beginning. The Savior will stand in the midst of his people, and shall reign over all flesh. We have discovered in our study that the wicked, or all things that are corruptible

(Section 101:23–35), will be consumed and therefore will not be permitted to be on the earth when this time comes.” (Smith, *Church History and Modern Revelation*, 1:264.)

(55-33) Revelation 17:1. The Imagery of the Great Whore of the Earth

One of the most indisputable things about the Apocalypse is the vividness of the symbolism and imagery used by John. The kingdom of Satan, in all its opulent and wicked splendor, is depicted as a harlot, lavishly dressed and riding on a beast. The obvious representation is that of impurity, evil, wickedness. But the symbolism goes much deeper than that. The figure of a harlot as a metaphor for Satan’s dominions is appropriate, for Satan prostitutes all that is noble and good.

The ideal relationship between man and God has often been symbolized in scripture as a marriage. In the Old Testament, Jehovah is the husband and Israel the bride. In the New Testament Christ is the bridegroom and the church is the bride (Matthew 25:1–13; Revelation 19:7–9). Whenever his people prove unfaithful to their covenants, they can be likened to a faithless woman who has sold herself to immorality and sin.

(55-34) Revelation 17:1–6. The Church of the Devil

“The titles church of the devil and great and abominable church are used to identify all churches or organizations of whatever name or nature—whether political, philosophical, educational, economic, social, fraternal, civic, or religious—which are designed to take men on a course that leads away from God and his laws and thus from salvation in the kingdom of God.” (McConkie, *Mormon Doctrine*, pp. 137–38.)

(55-35) Revelation 17:14. “And the Lamb Shall Overcome”

After painting the picture of the harlot and the beast in all of their power and wickedness, John testifies that they shall be conquered by the superior power of the Lamb of God. Latter-day revelation confirms this. Just before the organization of the Church in this dispensation, the Lord said that because of his obedience to the Father’s will he had subdued all things, including “retaining all power, even to the destroying of Satan and his works at the end of the world.” (D&C 19:3.)

POINTS TO PONDER

As you have read, John described in graphic words the efforts Satan would make in the latter day to thwart the kingdom of God. How would you respond to someone who said this: “The world isn’t so bad today. In fact, with all of the new social and scientific advancements, we’re living in a virtual Garden of Eden”?

(55-36) There Is Greater Wickedness in the World Now Than at Any Time Since the Flood

“There is more sin and evil in the world now than there has been at any time since the day of Noah, when the Lord felt disposed to destroy the world by a flood so that He could send His spirit children to earth in a better and more righteous environment. . . .

“. . . There is some degree of worldliness in all of us, and we overcome the world by degrees.” (Joseph Fielding Smith, Ricks College Baccalaureate Services, 7 May 1971, as cited in *Church News*, 15 May 1971, p. 3.)

(55-37) The Prophets Have Recommended the Only Cure for an Ailing World, but the Cure Has Been Rejected

“Our world is in turmoil. It is aging toward senility. It is very ill. Long ago it was born with brilliant prospects. It was baptized by water, and its sins were washed away. It was never baptized by fire, for that is still to come. It has had shorter periods of good health, but longer ones of ailing. Most of the time there have been pains and aches in some parts of its anatomy, but now that it is growing old, complications have set in, and all the ailments seem to be everywhere.

“The world has been ‘cliniced,’ and the complex diseases have been catalogued. The physicians have had summit consultations, and temporary salve has been rubbed on afflicted parts, but it has only postponed the fatal day and never cured it. It seems that while remedies have been applied, staph infection has set in, and the patient’s suffering intensified. His mind is wandering. It cannot remember its previous illnesses nor the cure which was applied. The political physicians through the ages have rejected suggested remedies as unprofessional since they came from lowly prophets. Man being what he is with tendencies such as he has, results can be prognosticated with some degree of accuracy.” (Spencer W. Kimball in *CR*, Oct. 1961, p. 30.)

(55-38) Satan Has Control of Most of the World

“Satan has control now. No matter where you look, he is in control, even in our own land. He is guiding the governments as far as the Lord will permit him. That is why there is so much strife, turmoil, and confusion all over the earth. *One master mind is governing the nations.* It is not the president of the United States; it is not Hitler; it is not Mussolini; it is not the king or government of England or any other land; it is Satan himself.” (Smith, *Doctrines of Salvation*, 3:315.)

What, then, is the hope of today’s generation, those who live in the Saturday night of time? What did John see? Review Revelation 17:14. What will be the fate of Satan and his followers? Who will be with Christ?

THE MOST SIGNIFICANT THING WE CAN DO IS TO OVERCOME THE WORLD BY KEEPING THE COMMANDMENTS AND COVENANTS OF GOD

What can the Saints do to be a part of that kingdom that will be here when Satan and his hosts are defeated? (See Revelation 18:1–4.) What does it mean to “come out of her, my people”? (See D&C 133:14.) How will the righteous Saints be protected in the period of time when Babylon the great will fall? (See 1 Nephi 14:14, 15.)

(55-39) Our Part in the World Should Be to Build the Kingdom and Keep the Commandments

“If we are living the religion which the Lord has revealed and which we have received, we do not belong to the world. We should have no part in all its foolishness. We should not partake of its sins and its errors—errors of philosophy and errors of doctrine, errors in regard to government, or whatever those errors may be—we have no part in it.

“The only part we have is the keeping of the commandments of God. That is all, being true to every covenant and every obligation that we have entered into and taken upon ourselves. . . .

“If I sometimes, and once in a while I do, go to a football game or a baseball game or some other place of amusement, invariably I will be surrounded by men

and women who are puffing on cigarets or cigars or dirty pipes. It gets very annoying, and I get a little disturbed. I will turn to Sister Smith, and I will say something to her, and she will say, ‘Well, now, you know what you have taught me. You are in *their* world. This is their world.’ And that sort of brings me back to my senses. Yes, we are in their world, but we do not have to be of it.

“So, as this is their world we are living in, they prosper, but, my good brethren and sisters, their world is coming to its end. It will not be many years. I can say that. . . .

“The day will come when we will not have *this* world. It will be changed. We will get a better world. We will get one that is righteous, because when Christ comes, he will cleanse the earth.” (Joseph Fielding Smith in *CR*, Apr. 1952, p. 28.)

(55-40) The World Is Kept from Destruction by the Righteous Saints

“Our world is now much the same as it was in the days of the Nephite prophet who said: ‘. . . if it were not for the prayers of the righteous . . . ye would even now be visited with utter destruction.’ (Al. 10:22.) Of course, there are many many upright and faithful who live all the commandments and whose lives and prayers keep the world from destruction.

We are living in the last days, and they are precarious and frightening. The shadows are deepening, and the night creeps in to envelop us.” (Spencer W. Kimball in *CR*, Apr. 1971, p. 7.)

WHAT CAN THIS MEAN TO YOU?

Are you living in such a way that the Lord can bless you with his power? Are you one of the righteous who is helping to keep the world from destruction? What promise and challenge has the Lord given you? Read D&C 103:5–10.

*“Our challenge today . . . is to be a light unto the world. . . . If the three million members of the church would live the gospel principles all errors of the world would evaporate. The world would come to us, and we would change the frustration of the world to the peace of the gospel.” (Spencer W. Kimball, *Church News*, 26 Feb. 1972, p. 13.)*

"BEHOLD, I COME QUICKLY; AND MY REWARD IS WITH ME"



The Book of Revelation (the Revelation of John) to Seven Branches of the Church Written by the Apostle John, Exiled on the Island of Patmos, ca. A.D. 95	
	Revelation
The Marriage Supper of the Lamb	19:1–9a
The Testimony of Jesus—the Spirit of Prophecy	19:9b–10
Christ: King of Kings, Lord of Lords	19:11–16
Last War—the Supper of the Great God	19:17–21
Satan Bound During Millennium	20:1–3
Saints Lived, and Reign with Christ	20:4–6
Devil and Armies Cast Out Eternally	20:7–10
Dead Judged According to Works	20:11–15
Earth Receives Its Paradisiacal Glory	21:1–6
Men May Become Sons of God	21:6, 7
The Second Death	21:8
Earth Attains Its Celestial Glory	21:9–27

Saints Will Reign as Gods	22:1–5
Christ Comes to Bless the Worthy Saints	22:6–16
“Come unto Christ”	22:17–21

THEME

The message of John’s vision is one of hope and glory for all who are faithful to the Savior.

INTRODUCTION

In these concluding chapters of the great revelation of John you witness the saints saying Alleluia in praise of the Lord. It is significant that these final chapters are a crescendo of adoration, for the gospel of Christ from first to last is the glad tidings of good things, the good news of Christ and his glorious atonement. The culmination of the gospel is full celestialization, and it was John’s privilege to testify of the glorification of the earth and those, the righteous saints, who will finally inherit it. As is always the case, words are poor vehicles to convey the fulness, but how grateful we should be that John

was commanded to “seal not the sayings of the prophecy of this book.” (Revelation 22:10.) John fulfilled his foreordination (1 Nephi 14:18–27) and recorded the magnificent destiny of this righteous earth and its faithful inhabitants. If you read with comprehension and a lively hope, you, like John, must exclaim in anxious expectation, “Even so, come, Lord Jesus.” (Revelation 22:20.)

“My hopes in reference to the future life are supremely grand and glorious, and I try to keep these prospects bright continually; and that is the privilege and the duty of every Latter-day Saint. I suppose I am talking now to some Latter-day Saints that have been sorely tried and they have thought sometimes, perhaps like the Savior felt, that he had no friends, that his friends had all gone; and everything was going wrong, and everything was disagreeable, and his circumstances were continuing to get worse and worse, and those that he depended upon for assistance failed perhaps to render the assistance expected, and all that sort of thing.

Likewise everything sometimes becomes dark to us and we almost forget the relationship that we stand in to the Lord and begin to feel as though it was not what we expected.” (Lorenzo Snow in CR, Oct. 1900, p. 4.)

Before proceeding, read all the scriptural references in the reading block.

INTERPRETIVE COMMENTARY

(56-1) Revelation 19:7–9. Who Are to Be Invited to the Marriage Supper of the Lamb?

“In this dispensation the Bridegroom, who is the Lamb of God, shall come to claim his bride, which is the Church composed of the faithful saints who have watched for his return. As he taught in the parable of the marriage of the king’s son, the great marriage supper of the Lamb shall then be celebrated.” (Mormon Doctrine, 2nd ed., p. 469.) The elders of Israel are now issuing the invitations to the marriage supper of the Lord; those who believe and obey the gospel thereby accept the invitation and shall sit in due course with the King’s Son at the marriage feast.” (McConkie, DNTC, 5:563–64.)

(56-2) Revelation 19:10. “The Testimony of Jesus Is the Spirit of Prophecy”

“If any person should ask me if I were a prophet, I should not deny it, as that would give me the lie; for, according to John, the testimony of Jesus is the spirit

of prophecy; therefore, if I profess to be a witness or teacher, and have not the spirit of prophecy, which is the testimony of Jesus, I must be a false witness; but if I be a true teacher and witness, I must possess the spirit of prophecy, and that constitutes a prophet; and any man who says he is a teacher or a preacher of righteousness, and denies the spirit of prophecy, is a liar, and the truth is not in him; and by this key false teachers and imposters may be detected.” (Smith, HC, 5:215–16.)

(56-3) Revelation 19:11–16. Why Did John See Jesus Riding on a White Horse?

Interestingly enough, just before his crucifixion, Christ made his triumphal entry into Jerusalem on a donkey (Matthew 21). Traditionally, riding into a city on a donkey signified that the rider came in peace. Who could imagine a conqueror riding to battle on a donkey? John’s vision of Christ’s second coming showed the Lord as riding on a white horse (Revelation 19:11–16). That does not mean that Christ will actually come riding on a horse, but seems to symbolize that his second coming will be that of the conqueror of all evil, as King of kings and Lord of lords.

(56-4) Revelation 19:13. “A Vesture Dipped in Blood”

It is a common misconception that Christ shall be clothed in white at his coming. Here and also in the Doctrine and Covenants it is clear that he shall be dressed in red apparel, symbolic of his taking upon himself the sins of the world and of coming in his judgment. (Read D&C 133:46, 48, 50, 51.)

(56-5) Revelation 19:21. “Slain with the Word” of God

The Inspired Version changes the word *sword* in this verse to *word*. This suggests that the wicked are condemned by the word of God (Hebrews 4:12, D&C 14:2). Men should learn to live by every word that proceeds from the mouth of God, for his word is truth (D&C 84:44, 45).

(56-6) Revelation 20:2, 3. How Is Satan Bound?

“Many other scriptures refer to the thousand years of wonderful, glorious conditions on the earth, because Lucifer, Satan, the devil, will be bound.

“The scriptures say he will be ‘bound with a chain’ and ‘put into a bottomless pit.’ To me, these are symbolical terms. I cannot quite conceive of steel chains or pits that could hold Satan. The only power I

know of that will bind Satan, or render him powerless, is righteous living.

“The war that started in heaven has not ended yet and shall not end until everyone has proved the extent of his ability to resist Satan. Even Jesus Christ had to bind Satan when he was tempted in the wilderness. Satan had no power over him, because Jesus resisted his temptations. Then the record says, ‘. . . he departed from him for a season.’ (Luke 4:13.)” (Eldred G. Smith in *CR*, Apr. 1970, p. 142; see also 1 Nephi 22:26.)

(56-7) Revelation 20:4. Who Is Meant in the Phrase “Judgment Was Given unto Them”?

“Under Christ, selected agents and representatives shall sit in judgment upon specified peoples and nations. Scriptural intimations indicate that there will be a great judicial hierarchy, each judge acting in his own sphere of appointment in conformity with the eternal principles of judgment which are in Christ. . . .

“Our Lord promised his 12 apostolic ministers in Jerusalem that when he came in glory, they also should ‘sit upon twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel.’ (Matt. 19:28; Luke 22:30.) [Read D&C 29:12; 1 Nephi 12:9, 10; 3 Nephi 27:27; Mormon 3:19.]

“Nor is this principle of placing eternal judgment in the hands of the Lord’s agents, who have undergone the testing of mortality along with those who are to be judged, limited to the Jewish and Nephite Twelves. Paul said that the saints should judge both the world and angels (1 Cor. 6:2–3); and the faithful elders have this promise relative to those who reject their testimony, ‘Know this, that *in the day of judgment you shall be judges of that house, and condemn them; And it shall be more tolerable for the heathen in the day of judgment, than for that house.*’ (D. & C. 75:21–22; Matt. 10:14–15.) Daniel has left us the assurance that when the Ancient of Days sits in that great council at Adam-ondi-Ahman that then judgment will be given to the saints of the Most High. (Dan. 7:22.)” (McConkie, *Mormon Doctrine*, pp. 398–99.)

(56-8) Revelation 20:4–6. Are There Varying Times for the Resurrection?

Read D&C 88:96–102.

(56-9) Revelation 20:7–10. The Battle of Gog and Magog

John tells us clearly that after the Millennium Satan shall be loosed again, and one last great battle shall be

fought between the forces of good and evil. Michael the archangel (who is Adam) shall gather the armies of God together to do battle with Satan and his armies, and Satan and his hosts shall be defeated and cast into their own place for the rest of eternity (D&C 88:110–16).

John calls the hosts who follow Satan, Gog and Magog. These terms cause some confusion, for they are also used to refer to the leader of the final battle before the Millennium begins, which is commonly called the battle of Armageddon. The terms themselves come from Ezekiel 38, 39, where the battle of Armageddon is described in some detail. Most scholars believe that Ezekiel chose these names as symbols of great military prowess and wickedness.

Joseph Fielding Smith clarifies the difference between the battle of Armageddon and the battle of Gog and Magog: “*Before the coming of Christ, the great war, sometimes called Armageddon, will take place as spoken of by Ezekiel, chapters 38 and 39. Another war of Gog and Magog will be after the millennium.*” (*Doctrines of Salvation*, 3:45.)

(56-10) Revelation 20:12. What Books Are to Be Used in the Judgment?

“We are informed that the books will be opened. One of these books will be the record of our lives as it is kept in heaven. Other books which will be opened are records which have been kept on earth. From the very organization of the Church the Lord has given instruction that records should be kept of the members of the Church.” (Smith, *The Way to Perfection*, p. 342.)

(56-11) Revelation 20:14. What Is the Lake of Fire?

“A man is his own tormentor and his own condemner. Hence the saying, They shall go into the lake that burns with fire and brimstone. The torment of disappointment in the mind of man is as exquisite as a lake burning with fire and brimstone. I say, so is the torment of man.” (Smith, *HC*, 6:314.)

(56-12) Revelation 21:1. “And I Saw a New Heaven and a New Earth”

“We discover from the word of the Lord that the earth, like mankind upon it, is passing through various stages of development, or change. It was created and pronounced good. It partook of the decree of mortality coming through the fall. It is now passing through the telestial condition, in which telestial beings predominate and rule. It will then pass into the ‘renewed,’ or restored state, for a thousand years as a

terrestrial earth and the abode of terrestrial inhabitants. Then comes the end. The earth like all creatures living on it must die. Then it will, like all creatures, receive its resurrection and be celestialized because it obeys its law.” (Smith, *Church History and Modern Revelation*, 1:295.)

(56-13) Revelation 21:2, 3. The New Jerusalem

“To envision what is meant by this title, we must know these five facts:

“1. Ancient Jerusalem, the city of much of our Lord’s personal ministry among men, shall be rebuilt in the last days and become one of the two great world capitals, a millennial city from which the word of the Lord shall go forth.

“2. A New Jerusalem, a new Zion, a city of God shall be built on the American continent.

“3. Enoch’s city, the original Zion, ‘the City of Holiness, . . . was taken up into heaven.’ (Moses 7:13–21.)

“4. Enoch’s city, with its translated inhabitants now in their resurrected state, shall return, as a New Jerusalem, to join with the city of the same name which has been built upon the American continent.

“5. When this earth becomes a celestial sphere ‘that great city, the holy Jerusalem,’ shall again descend ‘out of heaven from God,’ as this earth becomes the abode of celestial beings forever. (Rev. 21:10–27.)” (McConkie, *DNTC*, 3:580–81.)

Read Moses 7:62–64.

“And now, I ask, how righteousness and truth are going to sweep the earth as with a flood? I will answer. Men and angels are to be co-workers in bringing to pass this great work, and Zion is to be prepared, even a new Jerusalem, for the elect that are to be gathered from the four quarters of the earth, and to be established an holy city, for the tabernacle of the Lord shall be with them. . . .

“I discover by this quotation, that John upon the isle of Patmos, saw the same things concerning the last days, which Enoch saw.” (Smith, *Teachings*, p. 84.)

(56-14) Revelation 21:8. What Is the Second Death?

“After the separation of the body and spirit, which is the natural death, the wicked and ungodly die a second death, a spiritual death, meaning they are cast out of the presence of the Lord and are dead as pertaining to the things of righteousness, which are the things of the Spirit. [Read D&C 63:17, 18.]

“But when those here designated have suffered for their own sins, after they have paid the utmost farthing in hell, after they have suffered ‘the wrath of Almighty God, until the fulness of times,’ they shall come forth in the second resurrection and receive their inheritance in the telestial kingdom. (D. & C. 76:103–106.) That is, the allotted period of their spiritual death shall cease; death and hell shall deliver up the dead which are in them; and all men, except the sons of perdition, shall receive their part in the kingdoms which are prepared. Thus these vessels of wrath are ‘the only ones on whom the second death shall have any power after the resurrection. (D. & C. 76:37.)” (McConkie, *DNTC*, 3:583–84.)

(56-15) Revelation 21:17. How Long Is a Cubit?

Cubit comes from the Latin *cubitas*, “the elbow,” and originally signified the length from the tip of the middle finger to the elbow. Though the cubit varied somewhat down through the ages, it was approximately a foot and a half. One hundred forty-four cubits would be about 216 feet. The significance of the number may be symbolical, however. Twelve is associated throughout with the holy city, and 144 is twelve squared.

(56-16) Revelation 22:1. The River and Tree of Life

Read 1 Nephi, chapters 8 and 11.

(56-17) Revelation 22:7. “I Come Quickly”

“Not soon, but in a quick manner; that is, with speed and suddenness after all of the promised conditions precedent have occurred. ‘I am Jesus Christ, who cometh quickly, in an hour you think not.’ (D. & C. 51:10.)” (McConkie, *DNTC*, 3:590.)

(56-18) Revelation 22:9. “For I Am Thy Fellowservant”

“We are told by the Prophet Joseph Smith, that ‘there are no angels who minister to this earth but those who do belong or have belonged to it.’ Hence, when messengers are sent to minister to the inhabitants of this earth, they are not strangers, but from the ranks of our kindred, friends, and fellow-beings and fellow-servants.” (Smith, *Gospel Doctrine*, pp. 435–36.)

(56-19) Revelation 22:18, 19. Do Modern Revelations “Add unto These Things”?

“Of course, a careful reading of this text shows very clearly that John the Revelator was speaking only of the book of Revelation and not of any collection of other sacred writings. Moses used a similar expression in speaking to ancient Israel when he said: ‘Ye shall

not add unto the word which I command you, neither shall ye diminish ought from it, . . .’ This is found in the fourth chapter of the book of Deuteronomy (verse 2). In the 12th chapter of the same book Moses said this: ‘What things soever I command you, observe to do it: thou shalt not add thereto, nor diminish from it.’ (Verse 32.)

“Can anyone suppose that in these words Moses laid down a prohibition against all subsequent revelations and against all books which might be called scripture in years to come? Did he have the power to silence all future prophets and forbid them to speak or write as God intended that they should? Of course not, or we would be without most of the Old Testament and would have none of the New Testament at all.

“It was the same with John the Revelator. In warning against additions to the book of Revelation he spoke of that book only, insisting that no one attempt to change or corrupt what he had said. The Bible was not compiled when John wrote the book of Revelation, so he could not possibly have referred to it.

“Furthermore, scholars tell us that the Gospel of John was written after the book of Revelation, and if this be true it becomes another indication that John had no thought of precluding other writings but only of protecting this particular book of Revelation from change or corruption.” (Mark E. Petersen in *CR*, Oct. 1964, p. 121.)

POINTS TO PONDER

JOHN HAD A LIVELY HOPE OF ETERNAL LIFE, AND SO MUST ALL OF US

(56-20) Saints Should Be Optimists

“Yet, of all people, we as Latter-day Saints should be the most optimistic and the least pessimistic. For while we know that ‘peace shall be taken from the earth, and the devil shall have power over his own dominion,’ we are also assured that ‘the Lord shall have power over his saints, and shall reign in their midst.’ (D&C 1:35–36.)” (Ezra Taft Benson in *CR*, Oct. 1974, p. 90.)

(56-21) Our Hope Is Anchored in Christ

The prophets of God, and especially the “seers” who have seen as God sees from the beginning to the end (Ether 4:7), are substantial optimists because their hope is sure. They are given a “knowledge of things as they are, . . . were, and . . . are to come.” (D&C 93:24.) As a matter of fact, our Articles of Faith state that “we hope all things.” (Thirteenth Article of Faith.)

Of course, that hope is anchored in Christ, his gospel and our obedience thereto.

No one can read these concluding chapters of Revelation without sensing the great joy and hope that was felt by John as he wrote. And yet consider the circumstances that were then current. John himself was in exile. Most, if not all, of his fellow apostles had suffered martyrs’ deaths, and the church was on the eve of one of the greatest apostasies of all history. And yet this magnificent message of hope goes to the beleaguered seven churches and to all of us. One can only imagine the comfort the revelation must have given to those struggling saints standing at the eve of their dispensation. What effect does it have on you who live in the greatest of all dispensations: the dispensation of the fulness of times? Though your time is certainly more hopeful, you see in the reality of your life what John saw in vision: the culmination of the struggle between the dragon, even that old serpent the devil (Revelation 20:2), and the Christ, on whose side you fought before the foundation of the world. You surely can take renewed hope from the Beloved John, who, having seen our day and beyond, was so ultimately hopeful and even sure of the righteous triumph of our God and of His Christ.

Let us now consider together the following question: Why is hope such an essential part of the gospel? (See Romans 8:24.) List three or four reasons:

For further insights read 1 Peter 3:15. Could you give reasons “for the hope that is in you”?

Read Alma 32:21 and Hebrews 11:1. (Note: The Inspired Version of Hebrews 11:1 substitutes the word assurance for substance.) How essential is hope to the development of faith?

(56-22) Hope—the Great Incentive to Repentance

“Hope is indeed the great incentive to repentance, for without it no one would make the difficult, extended effort required—especially when the sin is a major one. Scriptures breathe hope into the soul of the convinced sinner.

“ . . . he said unto him that the Lord surely should come to redeem his people, but that he should not come to redeem them in their sins, but to redeem them from their sins.

“And he hath power given unto him from the Father to redeem them from their sins because of repentance, . . .’ (Hel. 5:10–11.)” (Spencer W. Kimball, *Church News*, 2 Jan. 1971, p. 14.)

Without hope, where would the sinner be? (See Moroni 10:22.) Read Hebrews 11:13.

How long must hope be maintained? Read Colossians 1:5 and Job 38:4–7.

How long has hope been a part of the gospel and of your life?

(56-23) Hope unto Salvation

“As used in the revelations, *hope* is the desire of faithful people to gain eternal salvation in the kingdom of God hereafter. It is not a flimsy, ethereal desire, one without assurance that the desired consummation will be received, but a desire coupled with full expectation of receiving the coveted reward.” (McConkie, *Mormon Doctrine*, p. 365.)

SOME FACTORS ROB US OF THE HOPE THAT SAVES

Of the wicked, the Lord says, “their hopes [are] cut off.” (D&C 121:14.) There can be no confidence in the presence of the Lord unless there is obedience.

“. . . When ye do not what I say, ye have no promise.” (D&C 82:10; see also 121:45.) In Revelation 21:8 John lists some of the factors that rob us of any lively hope unto eternal life. Read this verse and consider the following:

Fear Not!

Fear. It is written of the unrighteous that rather than seek the Lord when he comes, they will call on the rocks to fall on them to hide them from his wrath. (Revelation 6:16.) Conversely, the true love of God casts out all fear (1 John 4:18). Constantly the injunction to the saints is fear not! (See Matthew 28:5; Luke 2:10; Revelation 1:17.) To all of us, the gospel proclaims that “God hath not given us the spirit of fear; but of power, and of love, and of a sound mind.” (2 Timothy 1:7.)

The Impotency of Unbelief

The Savior himself “did not many mighty works” in Nazareth because of the unbelief of the people. (Matthew 13:58) Those who come to God must believe that he is and that he is a rewarder of those who diligently seek him (Hebrews 11:6). Of course, in the fullest sense belief is not merely intellectual assent but vivified, active and living belief which leads to action; and the works produced are the fruits of enlightened hope. King Benjamin aptly taught his people: “Believe in God; believe that he is, and that he created all things . . . believe that he has all

wisdom, and all power. . . . Believe that ye must repent . . . and now, if you believe . . . see that ye do. . . .” (Mosiah 4:9, 10.) On the other hand, the “double minded man is unstable in all his ways” and as a result can bring no hope to fruition. (James 1:8.)

Sin Destroys Hope

The Lord has made it very plain that those who involve themselves in the grosser sins of this fallen world and then fail to repent cannot have a hope of a first resurrection. Rather, they are “thrust down to hell” (D&C 76:84), where they suffer and pay the uttermost farthing (Matthew 5:26). Ultimately, as John relates, they suffer the second death (Revelation 21:8), for where God and Christ dwell they cannot come (D&C 76:112).

Lest we feel that we need not concern ourselves with the sins listed above, it would be well to remember that the Lord has said that he has seen abominations in the church that bears his name (D&C 50:4). He has told us that we must not kill nor do anything like unto it. Moreover, sexual sin is a serious problem in the Church today and is the greatest cause for disfellowshipment and excommunication. The occult and other manifestations of sorcery run rampant in the world in which we live; and idolatry, or the worship of “things” other than the Lord, is prominent. Men walk in their own ways, after the image of [their] own God, whose image is in the likeness of the world.” (D&C 1:16.) Finally, the basic integrity of many has been so much compromised that they live a lie.

Without repentance there is no hope for the wicked.

AND WHAT IS IT THAT WE SHOULD HOPE FOR?

In these last chapters of Revelation John identifies five of the great hopes we must have if we are ever to have that faith unto eternal life that will anchor our souls (Ether 12:4).

1. The hope to keep from receiving the mark of the beast (Revelation 20:4).

As is stated in Alma 3:18–19, one marks, or curses, himself by disobedience to God. Are you keeping yourself more fully . . . “unspotted from the world” (James 1:27) by separating from it in all that is evil?

Hopefully, you are now more able than ever to discern the influences of Satan. There can be no lively hope in disobedience. Sin brings only despair (Moroni 10:22).

2. The hope to be called to “the marriage supper of the Lamb.” (Revelation 19:9.)

In part, at least, the symbolism of the marriage supper refers to the coming of Christ to the earth at the outset of the great millennial day. (See Matthew 11:1–14.) To be invited to this transcendent event is to be worthy to remain with Christ on the earth. As the Savior and John indicate, there can be no lively hope for an invitation unless we keep our “garments” clean of the sins of the world (Revelation 16:15), “for the fine linen is the righteousness of saints” (Revelation 19:8).

3. The hope to overcome all things (Revelation 21:7).

The hope for perfection is real in the life of a Saint who has been born again. Though not accomplished in a day, you can be on your way to fulfilling this commandment. Such a course is essential to hope for eternal life.

*“We do not look for absolute perfection in man. Mortal man is not capable of being absolutely perfect. Nevertheless, it is given to us to be as perfect in the sphere in which we are called to be and to act, as it is for the Father in heaven to be pure and righteous in the more exalted sphere in which he acts. . . . we can strive for that perfection with the intelligence that we possess, and the knowledge that we have of the principles of life and salvation. The duty of the Latter-day Saints, and the paramount duty of those who are leaders . . . in the Church, is to inculcate in the hearts of the young people these principles of righteousness, of purity of life, of honor, of uprightness and of humility withal, that we may be humble before God and acknowledge his hand in all things.” (Joseph F. Smith, *Gospel Doctrine*, p. 132.)*

4. The hope to be resurrected in the morning of the first resurrection (Revelation 20:6).

To come forth in the morning of the first resurrection is to receive, among other things, a celestialized

*body. Of course, there can be no exaltation without entering in at the gate of baptism (John 3:3–5). Further, exaltation comes through the holy endowment (McConkie, *Mormon Doctrine*, p. 227), and the crowning ordinance of celestial marriage brings you to the fulness (D&C 131:4). All of these blessings can be hoped for only as you live by all the covenants, walking always in obedience.*

5. The hope for the coming of Christ (Revelation 22:20).

Certainly all of earth’s history finally revolves around two pivotal points: the first coming of Christ in the meridian of time and his coming in glory at the beginning of the Millennium. All the saints in all the ages have yearned for the time when the earth would rest, for the time when He whose right it is would reign. This anticipation is called by many “the Messianic hope.” That hope has been and will be realized. You who have placed your trust in the Lord will not be disappointed; your hope will not be blasted. Whether it be in time or eternity, in life or death, each of you will see the day; and may it be that, as John, you will await it with a perfect brightness of hope. “Even so, come, Lord Jesus.” (Revelation 22:20.)

(56-24) SUMMARY

You have come to the end of this manual. May it be that your study has strengthened and blessed your life. Hopefully, you will return again and again to the words of life as found in all scripture, ancient and modern, for as the Prophet Joseph Smith said:

“This is good doctrine. It tastes good. I can taste the principle of eternal life, and so can you. . . . I know that when I tell you these words of eternal life . . . you taste them, and I know that you believe them. You say honey is sweet, and so do I. I can also taste the spirit of eternal life. I know it is good . . . and rejoice more and more.” (*Teachings*, p. 355.)

APPENDIX SECTION

APPENDIX A

PROPHECIES OF THE SAVIOR

Old Testament Prophecies (Adapted from J. Reuben Clark, Jr., *Our Lord of the Gospels* [Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Co., 1968], pp. 521–26.)

- Lineage, Divine Birth, and Youth
- Mortal Ministry
- Atonement and Death
- Resurrection, Triumph, and Divinity

Further Selected Prophecies

OLD TESTAMENT PROPHECIES OF THE SAVIOR

Lineage, Divine Birth, and Youth

Genesis 49:9, 10	<i>Of the tribe of Judah</i>
Psalms 2:7	<i>The Father acknowledges him to be his Son</i>
Isaiah 7:14 9:1, 6, 7 11:1, 10 53:2 60:6	<i>Born of a virgin Place of birth; Messiah to come as a son; lineage of David Lineage; of the house of David To grow up as a tender plant The Magi (See Matthew 2:11.)</i>
Jeremiah 23:5, 6 31:15 33:15	<i>Of the house of David Massacre of the innocents (See Matthew 2:18.) Lineage</i>
Daniel 3:25 7:13	<i>Reference to the Son of God Reference to the Son of God</i>
Hosea 11:1	<i>Taken for refuge into Egypt (See Matthew 2:15.)</i>
Micah 5:2, 3	<i>Relation to God; of the tribe of Judah; born in Bethlehem</i>

Mortal Ministry

Deuteronomy 18:15–19	<i>Advent; prophet</i>
Psalms 8:2 35:11 41:9 45:1–17 56:1–6 69:8 69:9 71:10, 11 72:1–20 78:2 110:1–4 118:22, 23 118:26	<i>Triumphant entry (See Matthew 21:16.) Condemned on the evidence of false witnesses His betrayal by a friend and disciple Characteristics of his life and work Constant presence of enemies Brethren do not believe on him; rejected of men The desecration of the temple, and his cleansing of it; his bearing undeserving of reproach (See John 2:17.) Plots formed against him Characteristics of his life and work Method of teaching, parables Characteristics of his life and work Rejected of men Acclamations at his triumphal entry to Jerusalem</i>
Proverbs 8:32–36	<i>His teachings</i>
Isaiah 6:9, 10 8:14 9:1 11:1–3 28:16 40:3 40:9–11 42:1–5 49:7 50:4–9 52:13–15 53:1–3 61:1, 2	<i>His teachings rejected (See Matthew 13:14.) Rejected of men; to the Jews a stumbling stone The place of his ministry, Galilee Characteristics of his life and work The cornerstone A special herald to go before him Time of advent Characteristics of his life and work Persecution Characteristics of his life and work Characteristics of his life and work Characteristics of his life and work His teaching, its character and subject matter</i>
Jeremiah 7:11	<i>The desecration of the temple and his cleansing of it</i>
Zechariah 9:9 11:12, 13	<i>His triumphal entry into Jerusalem His betrayal</i>

Atonement and Death

Exodus 12:1–14 12:46	<i>The Lamb of God</i> <i>His bones not broken</i>
Leviticus 16:7–22	<i>Sin offering in behalf of the people</i>
Numbers 21:6–9	<i>Brass serpent lifted upon a pole to save the people</i>
Job 19:25	<i>Reference to Redeemer</i>
Psalms 22:1–19 31:4, 5 34:20 35:11 41:9 69:9 69:21 109:21–26 118:22, 23	<i>His sufferings and crucifixion</i> <i>His commendation of his spirit to his Father</i> <i>No bone broken</i> <i>Condemned through false witnesses</i> <i>His betrayal by a friend and disciple</i> <i>His bearing the reproaches of others</i> <i>Sufferings on the cross; thirst; vinegar given him to drink</i> <i>Mocked, his sufferings</i> <i>Rejected of men</i>
Isaiah 8:14, 15 49:7 49:8 52:3 53:4–12 59:16 59:20 63:3	<i>Rejected of men; to the Jews a stumbling stone</i> <i>The Redeemer rejected</i> <i>Mediator</i> <i>Redeemed not by money</i> <i>His sufferings, atonement, and death</i> <i>An intercessor provided</i> <i>Redeemer referred to</i> <i>The blood of others upon him</i>
Daniel 9:24–26	<i>Cut off; vicarious sacrifice</i>
Hosea 13:4, 14	<i>Savior, Redeemer, and Ransomer</i>
Zechariah 11:12, 13 12:10 13:6, 7	<i>His betrayal by a friend and disciple, for thirty pieces of silver</i> <i>Pierced</i> <i>Betrayed; pierced</i>

Resurrection, Triumph, and Divinity

Genesis 1:1	<i>Called the Word of God (See Psalms 33:6 and John 1:1–14.)</i>
2 Samuel 7:12	<i>King of Israel</i>
Job 19:25	<i>To stand upon the earth</i>
Psalms 2:6–8 8:4–6 16:10 16:11 17:15 45:17 56:13 68:18 72:17 89:27 110:1–3 110:4–7 118:17–19	<i>His exaltation The Son of Man; supremacy The Holy One not to see corruption Ascension Resurrection His name eternal Resurrection His ascension and triumph His name eternal Firstborn; King of Jews His exaltation Our great High Priest; his supremacy Resurrection and triumph</i>
Proverbs 8:22–31	<i>Foreordination and divinity</i>
Isaiah 9:6, 7 11:2–5 45:23 53:10 61:1–3	<i>The mighty God, etc.; his kingdom His supremacy Ultimate universal acceptance of him Made immortal His kindness and power to bless</i>
Daniel 7:13, 14	<i>Son of man to have everlasting dominion</i>
Hosea 13:14	<i>To destroy death</i>
Jonah 1:17	<i>Raised on the third day (See Matthew 16:4.)</i>
Malachi 4:1, 2	<i>His second advent foretold</i>

**FURTHER SELECTED
PROPHECIES OF THE SAVIOR**

Book of Mormon		Pearl of Great Price
1 Nephi	Mosiah	Moses
1:21	3:5–11	1:6
10:5–11	13:33–35	1:32, 33
11:12–34	15:5–13	2:1
13:40–42	Alma	5:6–8
14:18–27	7:9–13	6:53, 54, 59, 62
19:16	13:2, 16	7:45–47, 54–57
2 Nephi	39:15	
6:13	40:2, 3	
9:5–8	Helaman	
10:3	8:13–24	
25:12–14, 16–27	13:6, 7	
26:1–3, 12, 13	14:2–9, 20–28	
Jacob	Ether	
1:5–7	3:6–16	

APPENDIX B

THE MIRACLES OF JESUS

MIRACLE	WHERE RECORDED
<i>The first miracle, water converted into wine.</i>	John 2:1–11
<i>Healing nobleman's son.</i>	John 4:46–54
<i>Jesus passes unseen through the crowd.</i>	Luke 4:28–30
<i>The draught of fishes</i>	Luke 5:1–11
<i>An unclean spirit cast out.</i>	Mark 1:21–28 Luke 4:31–37
<i>Peter's wife's mother healed.</i>	Matt. 8:14, 15 Mark 1:29–31 Luke 4:38, 39
<i>A multitude healed.</i>	Matt. 8:16, 17 Mark 1:32–34 Luke 4:40, 41
<i>The leper healed.</i>	Matt. 8:1–4 Mark 1: 40–45 Luke 5:17–26
<i>A man with an infirmity of thirty-eight years' standing healed.</i>	John 5:1–16
<i>Man with withered hand healed.</i>	Matt. 12:9–13 Mark 3:1–5 Luke 6:6–10
<i>Centurion's servant healed of palsy.</i>	Matt. 8:5–13 Luke 7:2–10
<i>The son of a widow of Nain raised.</i>	Luke 7:7–17
<i>Blind and dumb demoniac healed.</i>	Matt. 12:22, 23
<i>The storm stilled.</i>	Matt. 8:23–27 Mark 4:35–41 Luke 8:22–25
<i>The two Gadarene demoniacs healed.</i>	Matt. 8:28–34 Mark 5:1–20 Luke 8:26–39
<i>The swine rush down into the sea and perish.</i>	Matt. 8:32–34 Mark 5:13–20 Luke 8:33–39
<i>The daughter of Jairus raised.</i>	Matt. 9:18–26 Mark 5:22–43 Luke 8:41–56
<i>The woman with the issue of blood healed.</i>	Matt. 9:20–22 Mark 5:25–34 Luke 8:43–48

MIRACLE	WHERE RECORDED
<i>Two blind men healed.</i>	Matt. 9:27–31
<i>The dumb demoniac healed.</i>	Matt. 9:32–34
<i>The five thousand fed.</i>	Matt. 14:14–21 Mark 6:33–34 Luke 9:11–17 John 6:1–14
<i>Jesus walks on the sea.</i>	Matt. 14:24–33 Mark 6:47–52 John 6:16–21
<i>Peter saved.</i>	Matt. 14:28–33
<i>The wind ceases, and the ship is immediately at the land.</i>	Matt. 14:24–33 Mark 6:47–52 John 6:16–21
<i>People healed by touch of his garment.</i>	Matt. 14:34–36 Mark 6:53–56
<i>Daughter of the Greek woman healed.</i>	Matt. 15:22–28 Mark 7:25–30
<i>Deaf man with impediment in speech healed.</i>	Mark 7:32–37
<i>The four thousand fed.</i>	Matt. 15:29–38 Mark 8:1–9
<i>A blind man healed.</i>	Mark 8:22–26
<i>A demoniac boy healed after failure of disciples.</i>	Matt. 17:14–21 Mark 9:14–29 Luke 9:37–43
<i>The tribute money in the fish.</i>	Matt. 17:24–27
<i>Jesus passes through crowd unseen</i>	John 8:59
<i>Jesus casts out a dumb devil.</i>	Luke 11:14–26
<i>Jesus heals a man born blind.</i>	John 9:1–7
<i>The woman long ill healed on Sabbath.</i>	Luke 13:11–17
<i>The man with dropsy healed on Sabbath.</i>	Luke 14:1–6
<i>The raising of Lazarus from the dead.</i>	John 11:17–46
<i>The ten lepers healed.</i>	Luke 17:11–19
<i>Sight restored to Bartimaeus and another blind beggar.</i>	Matt. 20:29–34 Mark 10:46–52 Luke 18:35–43
<i>Barren fig tree cursed.</i>	Matt. 21:18–21 Mark 11:12–21
<i>They who were sent to take Jesus fall to the ground.</i>	John 18:3–6
<i>The ear of Malchus, the high priest's servant, healed.</i>	Luke 22:50–51
<i>The great haul of fishes.</i>	John 21:6–14

(Adapted from J. Reuben Clark, Jr., *Our Lord of the Gospels* [Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Co., 1968], pp. 535–37.)

APPENDIX C

THE PARABLES OF JESUS

PARABLE	WHERE RECORDED
<i>Temple, if destroyed, to be raised in three days.</i>	John 2:19–22
<i>Candle under bushel.</i>	Matt. 5:14–16
<i>House on rock, and on sand.</i>	Matt. 7:24–27
<i>Children of the bridechamber.</i>	Matt. 9:14, 15 Mark 2:18–20 Luke 5:33–35
<i>Piece of new cloth in an old garment.</i>	Matt. 9:16 Mark 2:21 Luke 5:36
<i>New wine in old bottles.</i>	Matt. 9:17 Mark 2:22 Luke 5:37, 38
<i>New wine as against old wine.</i>	Luke 5:39
<i>The beam and the mote.</i>	Luke 6:37–42
<i>The two debtors.</i>	Luke 7:36–50
<i>The sower.</i>	Matt. 13:3–23 Mark 4:3–25 Luke 8:5–18
<i>The seed growing by itself.</i>	Mark 4:26–29
<i>The tares.</i>	Matt. 13:24–30
<i>The mustard seed and the leaven.</i>	Matt. 13:31–35 Mark 4:30–34
<i>Parable of the tares explained.</i>	Matt. 13:36–43
<i>Treasure hid in a field.</i>	Matt. 13:44
<i>Pearl of great price.</i>	Matt. 13:45, 46
<i>The dragnet [Gospel Net].</i>	Matt. 13:47, 48
<i>The lost sheep, and the ninety and nine.</i>	Matt. 18:12–14
<i>The harsh servant and the debt.</i>	Matt. 18:23–35
<i>The good Samaritan.</i>	Luke 10:25–37
<i>The friend at midnight.</i>	Luke 11:5–13
<i>The unclean spirit.</i>	Luke 11:24–26
<i>The foolish rich man.</i>	Luke 12:13–21
<i>The watchful servants.</i>	Luke 12:35–40
<i>The faithful and wise steward.</i>	Luke 12:41–48
<i>The unfruitful fig tree.</i>	Luke 13:6–9

PARABLE	WHERE RECORDED
<i>The good shepherd.</i>	John 10:1–18
<i>The mustard seed and the leaven.</i>	Luke 13:18–21
<i>The shut door.</i>	Luke 13:23–30
<i>The wedding feast.</i>	Luke 14:7–11
<i>The great supper.</i>	Luke 14:16–24
<i>The building of the tower.</i>	Luke 14:25–30
<i>The king going to make war.</i>	Luke 14:31–33
<i>The lost sheep.</i>	Luke 15:3–7
<i>The ten pieces of silver.</i>	Luke 15:8–10
<i>The return of the prodigal son.</i>	Luke 15:11–32
<i>The unjust steward.</i>	Luke 16:1–13
<i>The rich man and Lazarus.</i>	Luke 16:19–31
<i>Servant and master supping.</i>	Luke 17:7–10
<i>The importunate widow.</i>	Luke 18:1–8
<i>The Pharisee and the publican.</i>	Luke 18:9–14
<i>The labourers in the vineyard.</i>	Matt. 20:1–16
<i>The ten pounds.</i>	Luke 19:11–27
<i>The two sons.</i>	Matt. 21:28–32
<i>The wicked husbandman.</i>	Matt. 21:33–46 Mark 12:1–12 Luke 20:9–18
<i>The king's son.</i>	Matt. 22:1–14
<i>The fig tree leaves.</i>	Matt. 24:32, 33 Mark 13:28, 29 Luke 21:29–33
<i>The man taking a long journey.</i>	Mark 13:34–37
<i>The faithful and the evil servant.</i>	Matt. 24:42–51
<i>The ten virgins.</i>	Matt. 25:1–13
<i>The talents.</i>	Matt. 25:14–30
<i>The sheep and the goats.</i>	Matt. 25:31–46

(Adapted from Clark, *Our Lord of the Gospels*, pp. 538–40.)

APPENDIX D

PETER, MY BROTHER

By Elder Spencer W. Kimball

Today I wish to talk about my brother, my colleague, my fellow apostle—Simon Barjona or Cephas or Peter the Rock.

Some time ago a newspaper in a distant town carried an Easter Sunday religion editorial by a minister who stated that the presiding authority of the early-day church fell because of self-confidence, indecision, evil companions, failure to pray, lack of humility, and fear of man. He then concluded:

Let us as people, especially those who are Christians and claim to abide by the Word of God, not make the same mistakes and fall as Peter fell. (Rev. Dorsey E. Dent, “A Message for This Week.”)

As I read this, I had some strange emotions. I was shocked, then I was chilled, then my blood changed its temperature and began to boil. I felt I was attacked viciously, for Peter was my brother, my colleague, my example, my prophet, and God’s anointed. I whispered to myself, “That is not true. He is maligning my brother.”

A Man with Vision

Then I opened my New Testament. I could find no such character as this modern minister described. Instead, I found a man who had grown perfect through his experiences and suffering—a man with vision, a man of revelations, a man fully trusted by his Lord Jesus Christ.

I remember his sad, triple denial of his acquaintance with the Lord in those terrifying, frustrating moments. I recall his tearful repentance. Many times he was rebuked by the Master, but he learned by experience and never seemed to make the same error twice. I see a lowly fisherman, untaught and untrained, climb gradually under the tutelage of the best Teacher to the high pinnacle of great faith, bold leadership, unwavering testimony, unparalleled courage, and almost limitless understanding. I see the lay disciple become the chief apostle to preside over the Lord’s church and kingdom. I hear him breathing heavily as he laboriously climbs the steep Mount of Transfiguration. Here he sees and hears unspeakable things and has the transcendent experience of being in the presence of his God, Elohim; Jehovah, his Redeemer; and other heavenly beings.

His eyes had seen, his ears had heard, and his heart had understood and accepted the wondrous happenings of the days from the baptism of the Master in the waters of Jordan to the ascension of his Redeemer from the Mount of Olives.

I see this great church president assume leadership of the church. I see the sick and infirm arise and leap to health and normalcy. I hear his powerful sermons. I see him walk steadily, unflinchingly to martyrdom and drink of its bitter cup.

But this sectarian minister belittled him, unmercifully undercut him, and downgraded him.

Much of the criticism of Simon Peter is centered in his denial of his acquaintance with the Master. This has been labeled “cowardice.” Are we sure of his motive in that recorded denial? He had already given up his occupation and placed all worldly goods on the altar for the cause. If we admit that he was cowardly and denied the Lord through timidity, we can still find a great lesson. Has anyone more completely overcome mortal selfishness and weakness? Has anyone repented more sincerely? Peter has been accused of being harsh, indiscreet, impetuous, and fearful. If all these were true, then we still ask, Has any man every more completely triumphed over his weaknesses?

The First Apostle

Good men were among the Lord’s followers, yet Cephas was chosen the number one. The Lord knew well the guilelessness of Nathaniel, the tender love of John, the erudition of Nicodemus, and the faithfulness and devotion of James and the other brethren. Christ knew men’s inner thoughts and saw their manifestations of faith. In short, he knew men; yet he chose from all of them this great character who possessed the virtues, powers, and leadership needed to give stability to the church and to lead men to accept the gospel and follow truth.

When Christ chose this fisherman for his first and chief apostle, he was taking no chances. He picked a diamond in the rough—a diamond that would need to be cut, trimmed, and polished by correction, chastisement, and trials—but nevertheless a diamond of real quality. The Savior knew this apostle could be trusted to receive the keys of the kingdom, the sealing and the loosing power. Like other humans, Peter might make some errors in his developing process, but he would be solid, trustworthy, and dependable as a

leader of the kingdom of God. Even with so perfect a teacher it was difficult to learn the vast gospel plan in three years.

Peter inquired of Jesus:

Behold, we have forsaken all, and followed thee; what shall we have therefore?

And Jesus said unto them, verify I say unto you, that ye which have followed me, in the regeneration when the Son of man shall sit in the throne of his glory, ye also shall sit upon twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel. (Matthew 19:27–28.)

Is it conceivable that the omniscient Lord would give all these powers and keys to one who was a failure or unworthy?

If Peter was cowardly, how brave he became in so short a time. If he was weak and vacillating, how strong and positive he became in weeks and months. If he was unkind, how tender and sympathetic he became almost immediately. Responsibility as a refiner and a purger usually takes time.

If Peter was frightened in the court when he denied his association with the Lord, how brave he was hours earlier when he drew his sword against an overpowering enemy, the night mob. Later defying the people and state and church officials, he boldly charged, “Him [the Christ] . . . ye have taken, and by wicked hands have crucified and slain.” (Acts 2:23.) To the astounded populace at the healing of the cripple at the Gate Beautiful, he exclaimed, “Ye men of Israel . . . the God of our fathers, hath glorified his Son Jesus; whom ye delivered up, and denied him in the presence of Pilate. . . . ye denied the Holy One. . . . And killed the Prince of life, whom God hath raised from the dead; whereof we are witnesses.” (Acts 3:12–15.)

Does this portray cowardice? Quite a bold assertion for a timid one. Remember that Peter never denied the divinity of Christ. He only denied his association or acquaintance with the Christ, which is quite a different matter.

Could it have been confusion and frustration that caused Peter’s denial? Could there still have been some lack of understanding concerning the total unfolding of the plan? Being a leader, Peter was a special target of the adversary. As the Lord said:

Simon, Simon, behold, Satan hath desired to have you, that he may sift you as wheat:

But I have prayed for thee that thy faith fail not. (Luke 22:31–32.)

Peter was under fire; all the hosts of hell were against him. The die had been cast for the Savior’s crucifixion. If Satan could destroy Simon now, what a victory he would score. Here was the greatest of all living men. Lucifer wanted to confuse him, frustrate him, limit his prestige, and totally destroy him. However, this was not to be, for he was chosen for and ordained to a high purpose in heaven, as was Abraham.

Peter followed the Savior to his trial and sat in the outer court. What else could he do? He knew that many times the Savior himself had escaped from the crowd by slipping out of their clutches. Would he again do so?

Though the Lord taught of the coming crucifixion and resurrection, neither Simon nor anyone else fully comprehended his meaning. Was this so strange? Never before had there been such a person or such an occurrence upon the earth. Millions today cannot understand the resurrection, even though it has been preached for nineteen hundred years as a reality with many infallible proofs. Could these men, then, be criticized for not fully understanding this frustrating situation?

Is it possible that there might have been some other reason for Peter’s triple denial? Could he have felt that circumstances justified expediency? When he bore a strong testimony in Caesarea Philippi, he had been told that “they should tell no man that he was Jesus the Christ.” (Matthew 16:20.)

When the three apostles came down from the Mount of Transfiguration, they were again charged implicitly, “Tell the vision to no man, until the Son of man be risen again from the dead.” (Matthew 17:9.) Could Peter have felt this was not the time to tell of Christ? He had been with his Lord in Nazareth when the Savior was taken by his own people to the brow of the hill, “whereon their city was built, that they might cast him down headlong. But he passing through the midst of them went his way.” (Luke 4:29–30.) Surely Peter did not think of this escape as cowardice but as wise expediency. Christ’s time was not come.

The Approaching Crucifixion

When the Lord had spent some energy in attempting to explain the coming crisis—“how that he must go unto Jerusalem and suffer many things of the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed, and be raised again the third day”—Peter attempted to dissuade the Savior from thinking of such calamity. (See Matthew 16:21.) He was promptly chastised for

suggesting escape from the tragedy. Perhaps he should have understood that it was the Lord's will that the dire happenings occur.

What this meant—that the hour was now come—Peter may not have fully realized, but he was prohibited from resisting the coming crucifixion by the Redeemer himself. Was he frustrated? Perhaps for the moment, but how many of us in a hostile camp, totally helpless to save, would champion the Lord under such circumstances, especially when previous efforts had been repulsed? Had not Peter single-handedly already raised his sword against a “great multitude with swords and staves”? (Matthew 26:47.) Had he not attempted to defend the Lord from all the mob's manhandling and kidnapping, and was he not stopped by his Lord?

The Savior had walked calmly from Gethsemane's garden, seemingly resigned to the inevitable sacrifice of himself. Simon had courageously manifested his willingness to alone fight the great mob to protect his Master. At the risk of death he had struck the contemptible Malthus and sliced off his ear. But this act of bravery and personal disregard was stopped by the Lord, who said to his loyal apostle:

Put up again thy sword into his place; for all they that take the sword shall perish with the sword.

Thinkest thou that I cannot now pray to my Father, and he shall presently give me more than twelve legions of angels? (Matthew 26:52–53.)

What more could Peter do? How else could he show his loyalty and courage? Could it be that in these last hours Peter realized that he should stop protecting his Lord, that the crucifixion was inevitable, and that regardless of all his acts, the Lord was moving toward his destiny? I do not know. I only know that this apostle was brave and fearless.

Events followed each other in rapid succession. At Gethsemane Peter was futilely trying to defend his Lord one hour; in the next he was following the mob. Apparently the Savior was voluntarily suffering men to heap monumental indignities upon him. What should Peter do?

He boldly and meaningfully postulated to the Savior, “Though all men shall be offended because of thee, yet will I never be offended.” (Matthew 26:33.) To which the Lord replied, “This night, before the cock crow, thou shalt deny me thrice.” (Matthew 26:34.)

This was a critical moment. Peter's act of protection with his sword-slashing had been after this prediction was made. He had tried. He had seen one apostle

betray his Master with a kiss, and his Master had not repulsed him. Peter had been reminded that angels could be summoned if protection was needed; he had been commanded to put away his sword. Even now he did not desert his Master but followed sorrowfully behind the jeering crowd. He would remain to the end. He likely heard every accusation, saw every indignity heaped upon his Lord, felt all the injustice of the mock trial, and noted the perfidy of false witnesses perjuring their souls. He saw them foully expectorate in the face of the Holy One; he saw them buffet, strike, slap, and taunt him. He observed the Lord making no resistance, calling for no protective legions of angels, asking for no mercy. What was Peter to think now?

His Denial

A smart aleck damsel accused Peter, “Thou also wast with Jesus of Galilee.” (Matthew 26:69.) What would his further defense of the Lord accomplish in this situation? Would it displease Jesus? Would it only destroy Peter himself without beneficial effect? Would Christ want him to fight now, when he had denied him that privilege earlier that evening?

Then another maid announced to the bystanders and villains, “This fellow was also with Jesus of Nazareth.” (Matthew 26:71.) Peter replied, “I do not know the man.” (Matthew 26:72.) And others, recognizing his Galilean accent, declared, “Surely thou also art one of them; for thy speech bewrayeth thee.” (Matthew 26:73.)

What was he to do? Could he do more? What would have been the result had he admitted his connection? Would he have lived to preside over the church? Peter had seen the Savior escape from crowds many times and hide from assassins. Is it conceivable that Peter also saw advisable advantage to the cause in his denial? Had Peter come to fully realize the hidden meaning in the oft-repeated phrase “Mine hour is not yet come” (John 2:4), and did he now understand that “now is the Son of man glorified” (John 13:31)?

I do not pretend to know what Peter's mental reactions were nor what compelled him to say what he did that terrible night. But in light of his proven bravery, courage, great devotion, and limitless love for the Master, could we not give him the benefit of the doubt and at least forgive him as his Savior seems to have done so fully. Almost immediately Christ elevated him to the highest position in his church and endowed him with the complete keys of that kingdom.

Simon Barjona did not have long to consider the matter or change his decisions, for he now heard the

cock crow twice and was reminded of Christ's prediction. He was humbled to the dust. Hearing the bird's announcement of the dawn reminded him not only that he had denied the Lord but also that all the Lord had said would be fulfilled, even to the crucifixion. He went out and wept bitterly. Were his tears for personal repentance only, or were they mingled with sorrowful tears in realization of the fate of his Lord and Master and his own great loss?

Only hours passed until he was among the first at the tomb as the head of the group of believers. Only weeks passed until he was assembling the saints and organizing them into a compact, strong, and unified community. It was not long before he was languishing in prison, being beaten, abused, and "sifted as wheat" as Christ had predicted. (See Luke 22:31.)

Of Humble Origin

Simon Peter, son of Jonas, began his matchless career under most humble circumstances. A common operator of boats, a fisher of fish, and a man once rated as "ignorant and unlearned," he climbed the ladder of knowledge until he knew, as perhaps no other living person, his Father, Elohim; the Son, Jehovah; and Christ's program and relationship with men. He was spiritual and devout. He came without persuasion, probably walking every step of the length of the major Jordan to hear the powerful sermons of the fearless John the Baptist. Little did he know the great things in store for him. Here he heard the voice of the prophet and may have been baptized by him.

Peter's brother, Andrew, declared, "We have found the Messiah, which is, bring interpreted, the Christ." (John 1:41.) They had undoubtedly heard John the Baptist declare, "Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world." (John 1:29.) But to hear the voice of the living Father, God, now acknowledge Jesus as his Begotten Son must have stirred this humble fisherman to his foundations.

Simon Peter was ill prepared at this time to assume great responsibility, but the Master knew his potential. On the day of his call began the intensive training that was to bring this humble man and his associates to great leadership, immortality, and eternal life.

Simon Peter's education, both secular and spiritual, had been limited, but now he followed the Master Teacher. He heard the Sermon on the Mount; he stood with the Redeemer in the boat and heard the masterful sermons to the congregated people. He sat in the synagogues, listening to the convincing and powerful statements of the Creator. The Scriptures were

unfolded as they traveled the dusty or rocky paths of Galilee. Surely, his innumerable questions were answered by the Lord as they ate together, slept together, and walked together. The hours were precious as rare jewels. He heard the parables given to the people and learned the rich lessons therein.

Peter heard the constant flow of divinity in the ceaseless unfolding of the way of life. He grasped many lessons readily but had difficulty in understanding the experiences that had never before occurred on earth. He perceived the darkening shadow and the lowering clouds but could not fully comprehend their meaning. No personage in his experience had ever given his life in this manner. No soul on earth had ever been resurrected. It took time for these awesome truths to penetrate his mind. It was hard for him to think of spiritual leadership only. Peter expected Christ to take the sword and redeem Israel. But when Gethsemane was passed, when Golgotha was a hard nightmare, when the Lord had risen and ascended, and when the Comforter had come, the great compelling truth burst forth and was impressed upon his mind. The miscellaneous tiles were now set into a beautiful pattern. The mosaic was a glorious reality; and Peter, James and John and their associates went forth to convert a hard, resisting world.

Peter was full of faith. He never faltered. From the day he forsook his nets and boats, his feet never turned away. Even in his moment of denial, he was as near to his Lord as he could be. Let him who would be critical of this apostle put himself in the same place—among the bitterest enemies, persecutors, and assassins—with a growing knowledge of the futility of defending his Lord, whose hour had come. He who had forgiven his crucifiers also forgave Peter who had denied him.

Peter was a man of faith. He healed the sick by their merely passing through his shadow. Prison walls could not hold him. Because of him, the dead came back to life. He walked upon the water. Though this was not a total triumph, has any other human soul succeeded? Let him who would scoff at Peter's momentary wavering try such a feat himself.

Simon Peter was humble. He recognized James and John, who were with him on the Holy Mount and who shared with him the sorrows of Gethsemane. Perhaps his first official act, as presiding authority, was to call a conference at which the saints were to have voice in filling the vacancy in the Quorum of the Twelve. A new witness was chosen.

When the lame walked under the administration of Peter and John and when the awestricken multitude

gaped and wondered, Peter gave credit to the God of Israel, saying, “Why look ye so earnestly on us, as though by our power or holiness we had made this man to walk?” (Acts 3:12.) When Dorcas Tabitha lay dead, there was no display nor ostentation. He simply “put them all forth, and kneeled down, and prayed,” and presented the living Tabitha back to her friends. (See Acts 9:40–41.)

He accepted threats, beatings, and calumny. He defied those who condemned his Lord, saying, “We ought to obey God rather than men.” (Acts 5:29.) He charged them with the slaughter of the Redeemer, then stood before them without flinching. He chastised the sorcerer Simon, saying, “Thy money perish with thee.” (Acts 8:20.) He stood before his brethren and announced a major policy change in the church whereby gentiles might be accepted.

Simon Peter was spiritual and prophetic. He received the revelations concerning the church. Angels accompanied him in and released him from the prison, and a great vision opened the door to millions of honest souls.

His testimony was as the rock, his faith unwavering. The Savior, abandoned by others, asked Peter, “Will ye also go away?” (John 6:67.) Peter replied, “Lord, to whom shall we go? Thou hast the words of eternal life.” (John 6:68.) Shortly before the crucifixion, the Lord asked, “But whom say ye that I am?” (Matthew 16:15.) The answer revealed from God expressed the power and character of Peter: “Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God.” (Matthew 16:16.) The Savior replied, “Flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee, but my Father which is in heaven.” (Matthew 16:17.) Heavenly messengers he had seen; martyrs he had accompanied; with the Son of God he had lived. The Comforter had come, and never was there faltering or questioning in his mind again.

Peter’s Teachings

The teachings of Simon Peter are to all people, even to the latest generation. He bore testimony constantly of the divinity of the Christ. As he had been forgiven of his weaknesses, he now urged all men to forgive. He urged the chaste and virtuous life. He taught honesty and urged that members live in peace with the gentiles. This apostle taught his people to honor kings, governments, and laws; to endure grief, suffering, and buffeting patiently; and to consider revilement and suffering for the Lord’s sake a blessing. Perhaps he had seen much marital unhappiness; for he commanded wives to be subject to and convert their unbelieving husbands through their own goodness and

meekness. He commanded the husbands to honor their wives as partners, to love them, to be compassionate to them, and to treasure them. He urged parents to be kind to children and the posterity to honor and obey the parents. He urged employers to be honorable and just with their workers and employees to give service willingly. He urged the clean and constructive life and forbade company with rioters, wine-bibbers, revelers, banqueters; idolaters, and lustful ones. He urged service in the church, the sober life, a vigilant faith, and works leading toward perfection.

The great leader frequently repeated his testimony as an eyewitness and an ear witness to spectacular and eventful happenings. Foreshadowing the apostasy, he testified that false teachers with damnable heresies would come after his departing to deny the Lord and to make merchandise of the souls of men. (See 2 Peter 2:1–3.) He placed the divine stamp of approval on the writings of the Old Testament and unfolded the history of the world, which covered the flood, the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah, and other important events. Again and again, he preached the law of chastity and cleanliness and denounced the evils of sporting, feasting, adultery, incontinence, and covetousness.

As he neared martyrdom, drinking a bitter cup somewhat like his Master and Teacher, he made sure that the world would know his witness and sureness. Sitting figuratively on the brink of his grave, he made a solemn declaration which has been read by countless millions. To the members of the church, he prayed that they might have a “knowledge of God, and of Jesus our Lord.” (2 Peter 1:2.) He gloried in the “exceeding great and precious promises: that by these ye might be partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust.” (2 Peter 1:4.)

Peter continued:

Wherefore the rather, brethren, give diligence to make your calling and election sure. . . .

Yea, I think it meet, as long as I am in this tabernacle, to stir you up by putting you in remembrance;

Knowing that shortly I must put off this my tabernacle, even as our Lord Jesus Christ hath shewed me.

Moreover I will endeavor that ye may be able after my decease to have these things always in remembrance.

For we have not followed cunningly devised fables, when we made known unto you the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, but were eyewitnesses of his majesty.

For he received from God the Father honour and glory, when there came such a voice to him from the excellent glory, This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased.

And this voice which came from heaven we heard, when we were with him in the holy mount. (2 Peter 1:10, 13–18.)

When his work was done, his testimony borne, his witness delivered, his numbered days run out, Satan who had long desired him was now permitted to take him in martyrdom. His testimony came from his dying lips.

But Simon Peter was not dead. Important changes came to him—the dissolution of his body, but also the resurrection of his soul. With his loyal associates, James and John, Simon Peter returned to the earth, bridging the gap of darkened centuries. Together they

appeared on the banks of the Susquehanna River in Pennsylvania, where Peter delivered to the young prophets the keys of the kingdom, which the apostles possessed from the Lord Jesus Christ.

The apostle lives. The weak things of the world confounded the wise. Millions have read his testimony. His powerful witness has stirred multitudes. Through the countless ages of eternity, he will live and extend his influence over the children of this earth. With his brethren, the Twelve, he will judge the nations.

My young brothers and sisters, I hope that you can love and accept the great prophet, Peter, as I feel in my heart to do. In the name of Jesus Christ. Amen. (*Speeches of the Year* [Provo, Utah: Brigham Young University Press, 1971], pp. 1–8.)

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