

The Latter Day Saints' **Beacon**

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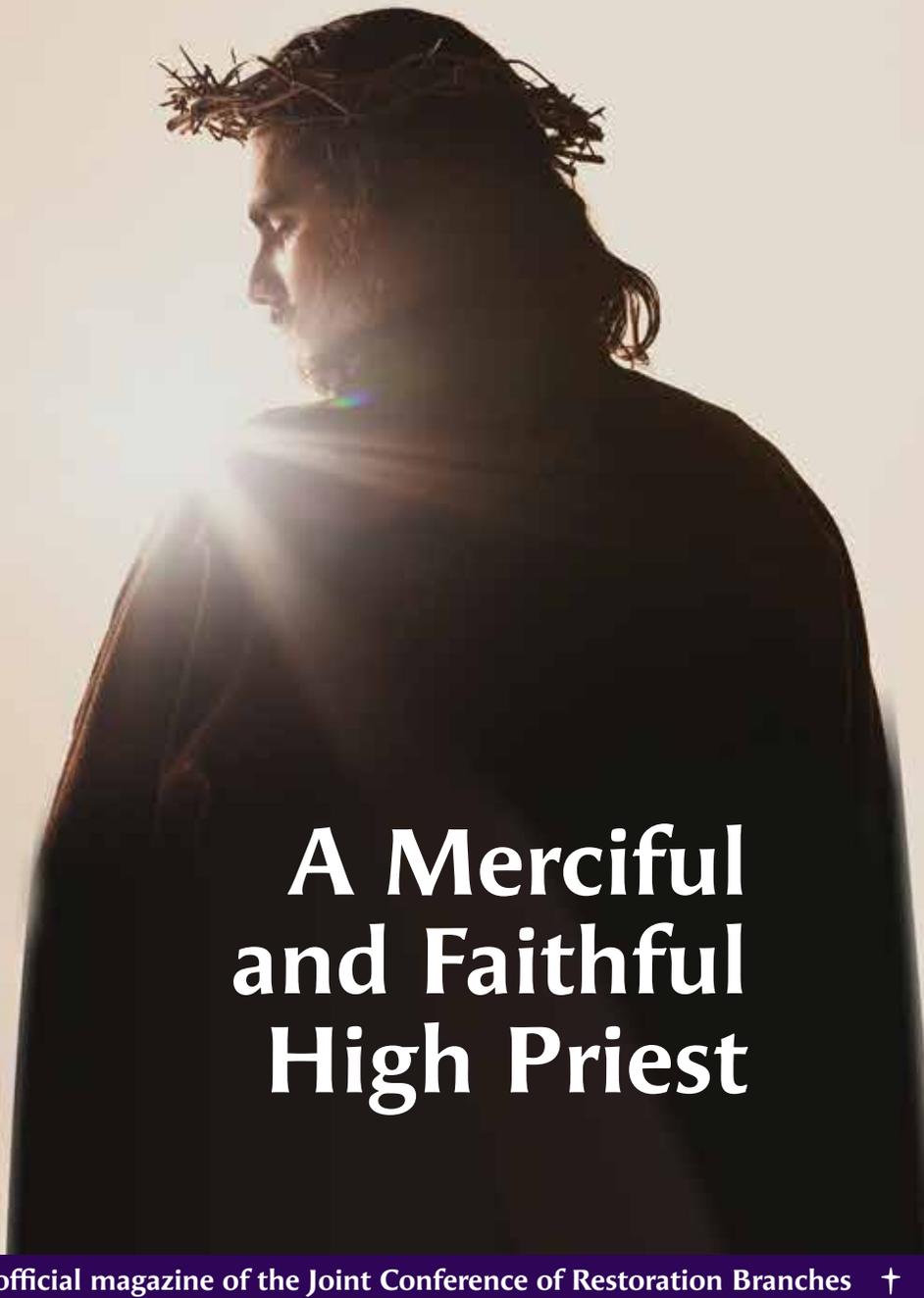
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Mission Statement:

This magazine is dedicated to proclaiming the gospel of Jesus Christ and bearing witness to the everlasting promises of God. Our intention is to inspire the Saints to walk faithfully in the name of our Savior, bearing fruit worthy of the Kingdom of God.

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Editor's Letter**The Word Made Flesh**

by Gary R. Whiting

My wife and I recently took a long vacation together. We met a few new friends, rested and had fun. Yet, regardless of how nice the vacation was, it was good to get home.

For us, home is where our dogs are, our family is and our own bed is there. As much as we enjoyed and needed a good vacation, coming home and being home is wonderful.

Most people live as though this earth is our home. The New Testament, however, refers to Christians as aliens, pilgrims and strangers on this earth because we have a home prepared for us in the kingdom of God.

These all died in faith, not having received the promises, but having seen them afar off, and were persuaded of them, and embraced them, and confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth (Hebrews 11:13).

Christians are pilgrims on the way through this life to another one which is superior in every respect to the one we have now. Even among the Saints, it does not appear that most people live in a manner that suggests they are anticipating or preparing for the life to come. It is very easy to get caught up in the business of life and forget that this is a temporary existence.

We know that we have a real home in the kingdom of God because of Jesus. Jesus showed us the

Father's love and gave evidence by his presence among us that our real home is not in this corrupted mortal life. We have a home which is not made with hands, but in the heavens with the one who spoke and the world came into being.

Too often, however, we fail to appreciate what it meant for Jesus Christ to come into the world and lay his life down for us. Jesus said that he came to give us life and a life that is more abundant (John 10:10). Without the atonement and resurrection of Jesus Christ, we were doomed to eternal damnation. Jesus forged a way for us to return to full fellowship with the Father.

The mission of Jesus began before the world was created, but the actual event of his entrance into the world was initiated with words of the angel Gabriel to a young virgin in Nazareth. In the most humble manner imaginable, Jesus took upon him flesh and blood to seek and to save we who were lost.

Jesus left his home of glory to bring us home. It was certainly no vacation for him. The condescension of Christ to live among us and make an atonement for us, required an infinite sacrifice. This process is called the incarnation. This is what John meant when he wrote:

And the same word was made flesh, and dwelt among us, and

The Beacon Committee Needs Proofreaders

Would you like to help the Beacon Committee produce this magazine? If you have a good knowledge of grammar and an hour or two to spare now and then, send an email to Beacon@conferenceofbranches.org and volunteer. If you don't have an email address, call the Conference office at 816-252-1457.

Editor's Letter

we beheld his glory, the glory as of the Only Begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth (John 1:14).

Jesus completed his work on the cross and with his resurrection opened the door to home for us. Although he has now returned home, he continues to work on our behalf interceding and advocating for us before the throne of mercy and justice. He will not rest until the day comes that he can present us to his Father, robed in the light and glory of the Celestial kingdom.

Celestial glory is not a new and improved version of the life we live today. It is vastly different in glory, joy, magnitude and experience than anything we know in this life. Through Jesus, the way is open for us to enjoy the beauty of celestial glory. Yes, he opened the door for telestial and terrestrial glory, but why should we in the church even talk about these options? Jesus came to reunite us with the Father in the Celestial kingdom.

Until we see our situation the way that the Father and the Son see our situation, we will never fully appreciate what Jesus has done for us. People who undervalue the atonement of Christ will never understand the demands of a celestial faith. The worship, discipline and obedience and love of God in a celestial faith will seem over the top and excessive. For those who begin to grasp the fact that this life is a preparatory existence and that real living is only possible in the life to come, the demands of celestial living, while arduous, are willingly entered into.

In this issue we are highlighting the incarnation of Christ. The feature articles address various aspects of what it means for Jesus to have come and lived among us. Our sincere prayer is that these articles will draw you nearer to our God and Father by faith in our Savior and Redeemer, Jesus Christ. †

We appreciate the response many of you have made to our request for paid subscriptions to the Beacon. We hope that many more of you will respond to our request and will provide at least a \$15 donation to help keep the Beacon in print and ministering with the gospel of Jesus Christ.

A Scripture to Remember

One March morning I got up to read my scriptures before school. For a while I had been hopping around from book to book in the New Testament, but on this particular day I felt like starting in Joshua. While I was reading, I came across this scripture,

By Isabel Jordison



Have not I commanded thee? Be strong and of a good courage; be not afraid, neither be thou dismayed for the Lord thy God is with thee withersoever thou goest (Joshua 1:9).

For a moment, I stopped to think about it. As comforting as it sounded and as much as I have felt God with me while I'm alone, I dismissed it pretty quickly. I have a tendency to exclude myself from the important and happy things the scriptures say because I don't always feel worthy enough for them to apply to me.

I placed a bookmark so I could read chapter two the next day (although I never did read the rest of the book). The next morning I did the same thing I had done the day before. I got up, said my prayers and opened the Bible. Looking down, I started to read chapter two, but I had not even finished the first sentence in that chapter when something on the right hand page caught my eye.

Right there in Joshua 1:9 I saw yellow highlighter underlining the scripture verse. For a minute my mind raced back to the previous day.

Had I done that? "No, surely not," I thought. I don't even remember getting out the highlighters. In fact, I distinctly remembered thinking, "I don't need to highlight that!"

I suddenly realized what had happened. God is always with me. I know it's true. I'm so thankful for the way he has shown me that he is. †

Truly Christ's Church

By Bonnie Noland

I grew up in New Jersey, the daughter of a Jewish father and a Catholic mother. There were times our family had interesting discussions around the kitchen table about the history of the Catholic Church. I was taught that the Catholic Church was the true church. However, as a Catholic, I had a problem with the doctrine of praying to Mary and to the saints. I believed that prayer was only to God and no one else.

One day as I sat on my bed, I thought, "Where would the true church be? How will I ever find it because I would have to search all the doctrines of all the churches?" At 17, this was an overwhelming thought to me. As I was thinking, a picture formed in my mind of a cathedral in the middle of the United States, with railroad lines going to it from all around the country. This was my idea of the "true Church."

A few years after that event, I met Jim Noland. He spoke about his church quite often. I knew nothing of the Reorganized Church as I was growing up—I had never even heard of it. Jim and I had interesting discussions about the Church, but I thought it was some "little storefront church" somewhere in the Midwest.

One day Jim said, "I will never leave my church." When we talked about marriage, he said, "Any children we would have must be raised in my church."

I thought, "Okay, if he's so strong, I have no objections. He believes in Christ, so it's fine with me."

When I went home and told my father, he said, "You know, Latter Day Saints are Mormons, and they believe in polygamy." That was a surprise to me!

I asked Jim about this and he said, "No, we are not Mormons and we do not believe in polygamy." I was glad to hear that, because I loved Jim and trusted him.

After we were married in March, 1962, and because Jim was in the Army, we had to move to his next assignment at Killeen Base in Killeen, Texas. It was about 35 miles to church in Waco, and we traveled the 70-miles round trip every Sunday. I was baptized there a few months later.

After we moved to Independence, I had a confirming experience as I sat in the pew during a prayer meeting at Walnut Park RLDS Church. As I

thought of the questions I had when I was 17, I felt as if God was telling me, "This is the true Church!"

Several years later, my husband and I and our two children were at a young adult retreat at Camp Doniphan. A prayer and testimony service was going on and in front were the priesthood members, including Patriarch Lew Richards.

We saw Brother Richards take a notepad out of his pocket and attempt to write on it. He was having some difficulty with the pen, so he put the pad back into his pocket. A few minutes later, he stood up and gave a message in tongues. During this message, he used hand motions and turned toward one side of the room and then the other as he was speaking. When he finished, he sat down.

Immediately, Brother Delmer Sloan stood up to give the interpretation, using the same gestures and speaking to us in the same manner but in English. The message was that we were to keep God's commandments and teach them to our children. He said that God was not pleased with our lack of diligence in this and that many of us in the room would live on earth to see the coming of the Savior and would see Zion in its fullness. I shall never forget this event. I have always hoped that we would be among those so blessed.

After the service, Jim and I asked Brother Richards about the event. He said he knew God had a message for him to deliver in tongues. He became concerned because Brother Sloan had a bad heart condition and he did not want the message to come as a shock to Brother Sloan. He tried to write a note to let him know that the gift was coming, but his pen would not write. To his surprise, Brother Sloan was the one who stood up to give the interpretation!

I am so thankful to be part of Christ's true Church. I believe these are the last days. I look forward to the coming of Christ soon and believe God is faithful and that Zion will be! †

**As I thought of the questions
I had when I was 17, I felt as if
God was telling me,
"This is the true Church!"**

Made in the Likeness of Man

By Gary R. Whiting



He was not just any man. Jesus did not choose to become a man in Israel just because it was a nice touch. Why did he then come as a Jew? The answer lies in the prophetic word of God.

Jesus Christ is introduced to us by the Apostle John as the Word of God made flesh (John 1:14) in order to dwell among us. This theme is touched upon by many scripture writers and is a key point in understanding the condescension of Christ.

Jesus thus fulfilled the Father's promise to save his children. By his blood spilled at Calvary and his resurrection, Jesus became the eternal sacrifice for our sins and the means of eternal life. The culmination of the incarnation of Christ was the provision to save all who have faith in him.

Consider this passage from Hebrews,

But we see Jesus, who was made a little lower than the angels for the suffering of death, crowned with glory and honor; that he by the grace of God should taste death for every man (Hebrews 2:9).

To rightly see Jesus, we must see him as the condescending Savior. He is the Son of God who gave himself for us. Jesus said, when faced with the prospect of saving his mortal life or proceeding on the path to Calvary, that he had come in the flesh in order to die for us.

For it became him, for whom are all things, and by whom are all things, in bringing many sons unto glory, to make the captain of their salvation perfect through sufferings. For both he that sanctifieth and they who are sanctified are all of one; for which cause he is not ashamed to call them brethren, Saying, I will declare thy name unto my brethren, in the midst of the church will I sing praise unto thee. And again, I will put my trust in him. And again, Behold I and the children which God hath given me (Hebrews 2:10-13).

What does it mean when the scripture says that "it became him?" The idea of becoming describes something that is appropriate and right. As the one appointed to be Redeemer and Savior of mankind, how could he have done it in any other way? For his sacrifice to be effective, he could only have taken the human form.

The writer of Hebrews continues,

Forasmuch then as the children are partakers of flesh and blood, he also himself likewise took part of the same; that through death he might destroy him that had the power of death, that is, the devil; And deliver them, who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage. For verily, he took not on him the likeness of angels; but he took on him the seed of Abraham (Hebrews 2:14-16).

Through the fall, Satan gained a claim over humanity. He did not displace God from his throne, nor did he assume control over all of creation. The adversary only gained power over men and women because they had chosen him to be their father by rejecting God who created them. Jesus came to break the chains of death that

kept mankind in bondage to Satan and to destroy the separation between God and man.

Jesus could have appeared to mankind in any form he wanted to use. To accomplish the work of intercession and redemption, however, Jesus could only have come in the human form. In Christ, a human came into the world and lived a perfect life. His perfection came despite suffering afflictions, spiritual and physical, and enduring temptations of every kind (Alma 5:20).

Coming in his glory, or even as an angel, would not have allowed him to complete his mission, which was to destroy the works of the devil and to free humanity from the bondage of sin. He came to set men, women and children free to exercise their agency to choose God as Father and to follow the commandments of God.

This is the idea of the kinsman redeemer. We see this picture played out in the role of Boaz who showed mercy to Ruth and did his duty, as her kin (family member) to rescue her and support her. From that marriage came David, the king of Israel, and eventually Jesus Christ (see the lineages listed in Matthew and Luke).

Wherefore in all things it behooved him to be made like unto his brethren, that he might be a merciful and faithful high priest in things pertaining to God, to make reconciliation for the sins of the people. For in that he himself hath suffered being tempted, he is able to succor them that are tempted (Hebrews 2:17-18).

The word “behooved” is the key word. It means that it was vital, important, appropriate, necessary and becoming for Jesus to be made like one of us. It is the same idea as noted in verse 10 of the same chapter.

Read it again in the English Standard Version:

Therefore he had to be made like his brothers in every respect, so that he might become a merciful and faithful high priest in the service of God, to make propitiation for the sins of the people. For because he himself has suffered when tempted, he is able to help those who are being tempted (Hebrews 2:17-18).

This is the sacrifice of humiliation of which Paul writes in Philippians 2:1-11. The theme is found in all of scripture. For example, note the testimony of Alma in this regard.

For behold, the kingdom of heaven is at hand, and the Son of God cometh upon the face of the earth. And behold, he shall be born of Mary at Jerusalem, which is the land of our forefathers, she being a virgin, a precious and chosen vessel, who shall be

overshadowed, and conceive by the power of the Holy Ghost, and bring forth a son, yea, even the Son of God; And he shall go forth, suffering pains, and afflictions, and temptations of every kind; And this that the word might be fulfilled which saith, He will take upon him the pains and the sicknesses of his people; and he will take upon him death, that he may loose the bands of death which bind his people: And he will take upon him their infirmities, that his bowels may be filled with mercy, according to the flesh, that he may know according to the flesh how to succor his people according to their infirmities. Now the Spirit knoweth all things; nevertheless the Son of God suffereth according to the flesh, that he might take upon him the sins of his people, that he might blot out their transgressions, according to the power of his deliverance; and now behold, this is the testimony which is in me (Alma 5:18-23).

Many Christians remember the birth of Jesus Christ each December (and others in January). The life he took upon himself and the way he lived it were crucial aspects of what took place on the cross and in the now empty tomb. Only a fully human man could fulfill the role of Savior and Redeemer.

It is difficult to understand the fullness of Jesus when we divide him into holidays and Sunday morning meetings. Christ in our likeness has meaning for every day that we live. We dishonor the sacrifice of Jesus by thinking and acting like we own the time we have here or that Jesus somehow does not or cannot understand what our daily lives are like.

He honored the Father and kept all of the commandments regarding work, family, neighbors, worship, stewardship and everything else. He knew friendship and betrayal. While some loved him dearly, other people ignored him and some sought his death. Through his condescension, death and resurrection, Jesus gave us what we could not have in any other way.

He was not just any man. Jesus did not choose to become a man in Israel just because it was a nice touch. Why did he then come as a Jew? The answer lies in the prophetic word of God.

He became the faithful second Adam (see 2 Corinthians 15), who completed the will of God. He was the faithful son of Abraham, fulfilling the Abrahamic requirements of God’s covenant. He was the son of Jacob who completed the Mosaic covenant. He was the King of Judah of whom David, and his sons, were types and shadows.

And all of this so “that God might be a perfect, just God, and a merciful God also” (Alma 19:97). Truly in him, man and God are reconciled. †

To Know According to the Flesh How to Succor Us

By Alan Smith

Alma's eloquent prophecy about what Jesus Christ would do when he came to earth adds additional perspectives to the depth of his love for us and helps us remember what it meant for the son of God to take on mortality.

For behold, the kingdom of heaven is at hand, and the Son of God cometh upon the face of the earth. And behold, he shall be born of Mary at Jerusalem, which is the land of our forefathers, she being a virgin, a precious and chosen vessel, who shall be overshadowed, and conceive by the power of the Holy Ghost, and bring forth a son, yea, even the Son of God; And he shall go forth, suffering pains, and afflictions, and temptations of every kind; And this that the word might be fulfilled which saith, He will take upon him the pains and the sicknesses of his people; and he will take upon him death, that he may loose the bands of death which bind his people: And he will take upon him their infirmities, that his bowels may be filled with mercy, according to the flesh, that he may know according to the flesh how to succor his people according to their infirmities (Alma 5:18-22).

Alma expressed the importance of Christ taking on human form. He said it was so that his bowels could be filled with mercy—so that he “would know according to the flesh how to succor his people according to their infirmities.” The dictionary defines succor as “giving assistance and support to another in times of hardship and distress.” Or in the case of Jesus, he came to earth to live with us to fully understand, with compassion, how to help us come back to the Father. Wow!

Sometimes we think of the divine nature of Christ—God come to earth—and minimize his humanity. Alma tells us that part of the reason he came in the flesh was to understand fully what it was like to be one of his creations here on earth. He came to show us how to live and to understand us as well, so he could share the joy and sorrow that are part of life on earth. He made his sacrifice and we cannot say “You just don’t understand what I’m going through.” He

can reply, “I do understand your plight. I understand your suffering. I understand your joy.”

Jesus had experiences that ran the gamut of the emotions we feel. The scriptures share these with us, but sometimes we may overlook them.

Temptations

Scripture reveals Jesus suffered temptations. We know of the time he met Satan face to face—the son of light facing the son of darkness. This was the ultimate in withstanding temptation. Jesus had been led by the Spirit into the wilderness, to be with God. He had fasted for 40 days and 40 nights, communing with God and preparing for his ministry.

After that long without food, he was hungry. He understood what it meant to be really hungry. Satan started with what he perceived might be a weakness and suggested that Jesus command the stones to be bread. “Use your divinity to overcome your human-ness,” Satan was saying. Give up on this quest to understand the human condition.

But Jesus answered and said, It is written, Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God (Matthew 4:4).

“I have learned to know that there are more important things than the hunger,” Jesus was saying. “I’m here to show what is really important, and physical hungers are not paramount.”

Satan takes him to the top of the temple. “Prove your power by throwing yourself off the temple and being saved by angels,” Satan tempts. Jesus recognized that Satan was trying to pervert why he came. Jesus came to save us, not to save himself. He was not going to use a miracle just for show. His miracles were designed to bring ministry to others in their need—to succor them. He would provide an example to those who would come behind of how power of God is to be used. “Jesus said unto him, It is written again, Thou shalt not tempt the Lord thy God” (Matthew 4:7).

Finally Satan tempted Jesus with power by inviting

him to join the third of the hosts of heaven that were tossed out of heaven with Lucifer for believing Lucifer's lie. Just as people can be tempted to seek power in our lives, Jesus was tempted with it. "Then said Jesus unto him, Get thee hence, Satan; for it is written, Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and him only shalt thou serve." (Matthew 4:10)

Jesus showed us that he was able to deal with temptations for the basic needs of life like hunger, the use of miracles for show and who we decide to serve in life in our human condition. When we turn to him in situations of temptation, he can say "I understand your temptation but I can help you withstand it."

When the Lord ministered to people, he also taught them how to deal with temptation—by helping them know that the word of God had answers that would help them in times of temptation. And he gave other commandments that would help deal with temptation, for example:

And it came to pass that when Jesus turned again unto the multitude, and said unto them, Behold, verily, verily, I say unto you, Ye must watch and pray always, lest ye enter into temptation; For Satan desireth to have you, that he may sift you as wheat (3 Nephi 8:50-51).

He also told them that meeting together often was a way to help with this process. Support from brothers and sisters can make us stronger and help bring us back when we stumbled.

Pain and suffering

The kinds of pain and suffering that Christ went through for us are summed up by King Benjamin,

And lo, he shall suffer temptations, and pain of body, hunger, thirst, and fatigue, even more than man can suffer, except it be unto death; For behold, blood cometh from every pore, so great shall be his anguish for the wickedness and the abominations of his people (Mosiah 1:100-101).

We know he suffered the pain of separation from God in the garden, where blood came from every pore. We know Jesus suffered pain of body—the stripes he took that

we might be healed. His experience with fatigue caused him to stumble under the burden of the cross timber. Thirst caused him to cry out on the cross for something to drink. Finally, the nails through his hands and feet created excruciating agony even as he suffocated from the rigors of the cross.

If Jesus had just wanted just to die and rise again, he could have chosen a quicker death and the authorities might have been willing to do it. He suffered at the appointed time and in a way preventing anyone from saying Jesus cannot not understand their pain. He is able to succor us in our pain and infirmities because he has first-hand experience.

Fatigue and Thirst

The scriptures say specifically that Jesus knew what it was like to be weary. Only one reference says this, but I am sure this was the case more than once. Jesus meeting the woman at the well is the prime example.

Now Jesus being weary with his journey, it being about the sixth hour, sat down on the well; And there came a woman of Samaria to draw water; Jesus said unto her, Give me to drink (John 4:8-9).

It was noon in Samaria and Jesus was alone at a well. He had come a long way and needed a rest. At times when we are weary, we can understand that Jesus experienced fatigue and exhaustion.

Weary of the Crowd

Jesus recognized that sometimes we need time alone for prayer and rejuvenation away from our usual activity or ministry, just as he so often did when he became weary of the crowds.

And straightway Jesus constrained his disciples to get into a ship, and to go before him unto the other side, while he sent the multitudes away. And when he had sent the multitudes away, he went up into a mountain, apart, to pray. And when the evening was come, he was there alone (Matthew 14:19-20).

Or as John records it:

When Jesus therefore perceived that they would come and take him by force,

He made his sacrifice and we cannot say "You just don't understand what I'm going through." He can reply, "I do understand your plight. I understand your suffering. I understand your joy."

to make him a king, he departed again into a mountain himself alone. And when even was come, his disciples went down unto the sea (John 6:15-16).

After this time of preparation, he walked on the water and stilled the storm to teach the disciples that, by the power of our Heavenly Father, they too could do mighty things, even in their humanness.

Righteous Indignation

Jesus was moved to action to clean out the temple when he saw how it was being desecrated. There are times when our righteous indignation needs to be dealt with. People were being forced to purchase animals for sacrifice from temple-authorized agents to have animals deemed pure enough for sacrifice.

And they came to Jerusalem. And Jesus went into the temple, and began to cast out them that sold and bought in the temple, and overthrew the tables of the money-changers, and the seats of them who sold doves; And would not suffer that any man should carry a vessel through the temple. And he taught, saying unto them, Is it not written, My house shall be called of all nations the house of prayer? But ye have made it a den of thieves. And the scribes and chief priests heard him, and sought how they might destroy him; for they feared him because all the people were astonished at his doctrine (Mark 11:17-20).

Just as we sometimes are upset when we see the world seeking to tarnish the things of God and people seeking personal gain from what is purported to be ministry, we can know that Jesus understands what we are feeling.

Jesus wept for sorrow

We know that Jesus felt the heartbreak of seeing people not respond to the ministry of the Father. The gospels show us Jesus weeping over Jerusalem:

And when he was come near, he beheld the city, and wept over it; Saying, If thou hadst known, even thou, at least in this thy day, the things which belong unto thy peace! But now they are hid from thine

eyes. For the days shall come upon thee, that thine enemies shall cast a trench about thee, and compass thee round, and keep thee in on every side; And shall lay thee even with the ground, and thy children within thee, and they shall not leave in thee, one stone upon another; because thou knewest not the time of thy visitation (Luke 19:40-43).

During his ministry in America, the Savior groaned within himself because he was troubled over the wickedness of the people of Israel. Out of this came the beautiful prayer for his people. The prayer was so beautiful it could not be written in human language.

Jesus also wept when his good friend Lazarus died. The Lord saw the suffering of Mary and Martha and was overwhelmed by their grief.

Now Jesus was not yet come into the town, but was in the place where Martha met him. The Jews then which were with her in the house, and comforted her, when they saw Mary, that she rose up hastily and went out, followed her, saying, She goeth unto the grave to weep there. Then when Mary was come where Jesus was, and saw him, she fell down at his feet, saying unto him, Lord, if thou hadst been here, my brother had not died. When Jesus therefore saw her weeping, and the Jews also weeping which came with her, he groaned in the spirit, and was troubled, And said, Where have ye laid him, They say unto him, Lord, come and see. Jesus wept. Then said the Jews, Behold how he loved him! And some of them said, Could not this man, which opened the eyes of the blind, have caused that even this man should not have died? Jesus therefore again groaning in himself cometh to the grave (John 11:30-38).

He understood their grief and understands ours. He has provided a way to succor us in grief by the promise of resurrection.

Wept for Joy

On the other hand, we know that Jesus wept for joy as well. He understands what is like for us to be truly joyful and he can share that with us as well.

He was ministering to people in the Americas and recognized their weariness.

Because of his experience with our human condition, he understands us and knows how succor us.

He tried to send them home to rest and reflect on what had been said. The multitude was in tears, looking steadfastly to him, pleading with him to stay. Jesus invited them to bring their sick and afflicted to be healed. “Your faith is sufficient that I should heal you,” he said and took away the infirmities and disease from every single person there. Then Jesus groaned and prayed his marvelous prayer and directed the eyes of the people towards their children. Every child was gathered into the arms of Christ and blessed. The entire scene was soon engulfed in the brilliance of a multitude of heavenly angels, surrounding the cluster of children (see 3 Nephi 8:20-26).

Jesus wept for joy at the experience of seeing people respond to the ministry he wants to give to everyone.

These are but a few examples of how Jesus is a partaker of the sorrows and joys of a human life. Because of his experience with our human condition, he understands us and knows how to succor us. He taught lessons from the everyday life of people all through his ministry, shepherds, olive growers, builders, and more, because he understood what their lives were like. If he were ministering among us today, some of the parables might change to deal with our changed life situations today, but the message would not.

These are the words of Christ in Section 18 of the Doctrine and Covenants,

For, behold, I, God, have suffered these things for all, that they might not suffer, if they would repent; but if they would not repent, they must suffer even as I; 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; wherefore, I command you again to repent, lest I humble you by 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 18:2h-2k).

A Testimony

Does this understanding of Jesus coming to understand our life so he could succor us in our time of need mean anything to us today? A testimony from my own life helps me believe it does.

I have been remodeling a house and as I reached for some trim above some stairs leading to the basement, I slipped and fell. I landed hard on the stairs with the middle of my back and rolled to the bottom. A great wave of pain flooded over me and I was unable to take a breath. I could barely cry out, “Jesus, help. Jesus, help.” Nobody was there to help me.

I realized that Jesus knew what it was like not to be able to get a breath. I knew he understood what I was feeling. I recognized again for split second that every breath we receive is from God.

I also knew it was no small thing to ask Jesus to ease my suffering by taking it for me, but I knew he has already made that decision. He wants to succor us in our afflictions and infirmities. We just need to call on him.

As the breath came back and the pain became bearable, I realized that I was not going to have to live with long-term consequences of my poor decision to step out and try to balance myself on both sides of a chasm. I could thank God that he sent his Son to help in situations just like this.

Jesus does understand our sorrows and our joys; he understands our condition. He came here just so he could. He understands our temptations, our sorrows, our pain, our joy. He came as one of us so he could. We cannot say he does not understand what we are going through because he does. He calls us to come to him today like he did in times past. And he longs for the time we can see him face to face—and he can smile on us.

May we too respond so that it can be said of us, as it was said of the people to whom Jesus ministered in America, “there was never a happier people on the face of the whole earth.” May the tears he weeps for us be tears of joy instead of tears of sorrow. When he sees our response, may he once again be able to say, “My joy is full.”

†

If he were ministering among us today, some of the parables might change to deal with our changed life situations today, but the message would not.



Never Forget Gethsemane

What Did Our Savior Endure in the Garden?

By Hugh Caldwell

In the Garden of Gethsemane, Jesus endured an agony so horrific that he sweat “as it were great drops of blood” (Luke 22:44). Pleading with his Father, he prayed, “if thou be willing, remove this cup from me; nevertheless, not my will, but thine be done” (Luke 22:42). Had it not been for the angel sent to strengthen him, he very well could have died from the experience, even before his crucifixion on Calvary.

What was it that caused our Lord such awful pain in the Garden? Was it an overwhelming fear of impending death? Or could it be that something even more excruciating came against him—something that no mortal has ever experienced?

It might be easy for us to assume that Jesus, because of his human flesh and emotions, struggled with the realization that he was about to die a painful death. Taking that thought a bit further, one might suggest that thing he feared most was the pain he would experience at the moment when he would be separated from his Father. In other words, he feared spiritual death.

Either of these explanations might seem plausible if we were to accept the notion that Jesus was merely being human and his flesh was simply crying out. Could it be that Jesus was really that afraid of dying?

The Servant is Not Above His Master

Over the centuries, many loyal followers of Jesus have been martyred, and some, including the apostle Peter, suffered death by crucifixion. And yet, based on eyewitness accounts, many of these martyrs went to their deaths displaying an aura of peace. History records that when the Christians in Rome were thrown to the lions, they sang

praises to God. If these disciples exhibited such courage and poise in the face of danger, why would Jesus have set a lesser example by asking God to grant him a less painful death? Was the Master weaker than his followers?

Other scriptures tell us that our Lord did indeed approach Calvary with determination, fully intending to die. For example, “when the time was come that he should be received up, he steadfastly set his face to go to Jerusalem” (Luke 9:51). For this reason, he had come into the world. And so Jesus, “who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God” (Hebrews 12:2).

If we suppose that the fear of spiritual, rather than physical, death led Jesus to plead with his Father, we still are saying that the cause of his suffering was fear. And yet, the Lord repeatedly tells us that we need not fear such things, for example, “And fear not them who are able to kill the body” (Matthew 10:25).

And while he does tell us to fear God, this deep sense of awe and reverence must be distinguished from the crushing feeling of dread, or anxiety that is associated with the fear of being hurt. There must be another explanation for what Jesus was feeling.

Jesus Felt Our Pain

Ruling out the fear factor, we have to conclude that the real cause of Christ’s agony was the burden of sin—our sin—that was being put upon Jesus as he prayed in the Garden.

For behold, he suffereth the pains of all men; yea, the pains of every living creature, both men, women and children, who belong to the family of Adam (2 Nephi 6:46).

He felt it all—every pain ever inflicted by sin, every act of abuse, every sensation of hurt resulting from rejection, ridicule, betrayal, mistreatment of any kind—all this descended upon him as he prayed in the Garden. Considering that billions of souls—all of them born into sin—have added their transgressions to this equation, it becomes more than we can fathom. And yet, the scripture says, Jesus took all of this pain, all of this sin, unto himself.

Jesus is holy. Sin grieves his Spirit. One sin coming against him is bad enough, but Jesus bore the weight of sin for billions magnified several times over.

What would it mean to wear, for just a moment, the combined filthiness of our rags? A lot worse

than diving headfirst into a sludge pond at a sewer treatment plant, if we could use that analogy. Awful is not the word to describe it. Repulsive does not come close. An exquisite shock to the system is perhaps a better description.

What Jesus was experiencing in the Garden was a shock to his spirit. He was trying to bear it while avoiding being crushed as it was being laid upon him and it was brutal, dark and oppressive. It had to be done, but at a dear price.

For, behold, I, God, have suffered these things for all, that they might not suffer, if they would repent; but if they would not repent, they must suffer even as I; 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 18:2:h-j).

The agony of sin that fell upon Christ in the Garden is something that no man has ever known. Our trials and temptations simply cannot compare to what Jesus bore.

For consider him that endured such contradiction of sinners against himself, lest ye be wearied and faint in your minds. Ye have not yet resisted unto blood, striving against sin (Hebrews 12:3-4).

Jesus Bled at Every Pore

Our Lord Jesus Christ shed his blood for us—it began in the Garden, continued during his trial, the scourging, the bloody crown and culminated as he hung upon the cross.

Through it all, he maintained absolute self-control. As Arthur Oakman said, “Jesus presided over his own execution.” He never cowered out of fear, never begged God to spare his life. What he did plead for was mercy, expressing his desire for relief, as the full weight of mankind’s collective sin bore down upon his mortal frame.

Jesus had every right to cry out. It tore him up! His Father sent an angel from heaven to strengthen him and our Lord was able to face and rise up from his ordeal.

He endured all of this because he loves us and by his power and glory he opened the way for sinful creatures to be changed into men and women of God, made clean by the power of his blood. †

A Tangible Ministry:

A Response to the Ministry of Jesus Christ in the World

By Kent Pedersen

One of the first recorded acts of Jesus, after attaining the age of manhood, was to go to John the Baptist for baptism. After his baptism, the Lord entered into his ministry. The kind of ministry Jesus performed has much to teach the Saints today.

A good example to review is the feeding of the five thousand recorded in Luke. We are given a glimpse of what Christ did and what he expected from his disciples. After a session of preaching and teaching, the large audience needed a meal break. The disciples approached Jesus about the multitude being hungry and suggested sending the crowd away to find their own food. Jesus had another idea.

Jesus wanted to feed the people and not to send them away hungry. He told the disciples to search the crowd for whatever food they could find and return to him. They brought a boy with five loaves and two fishes. Jesus blessed the food and gave to the disciples, who in turn, shared it with the whole assembly. Under the Lord's blessing, there was more than enough food for the thousands present.

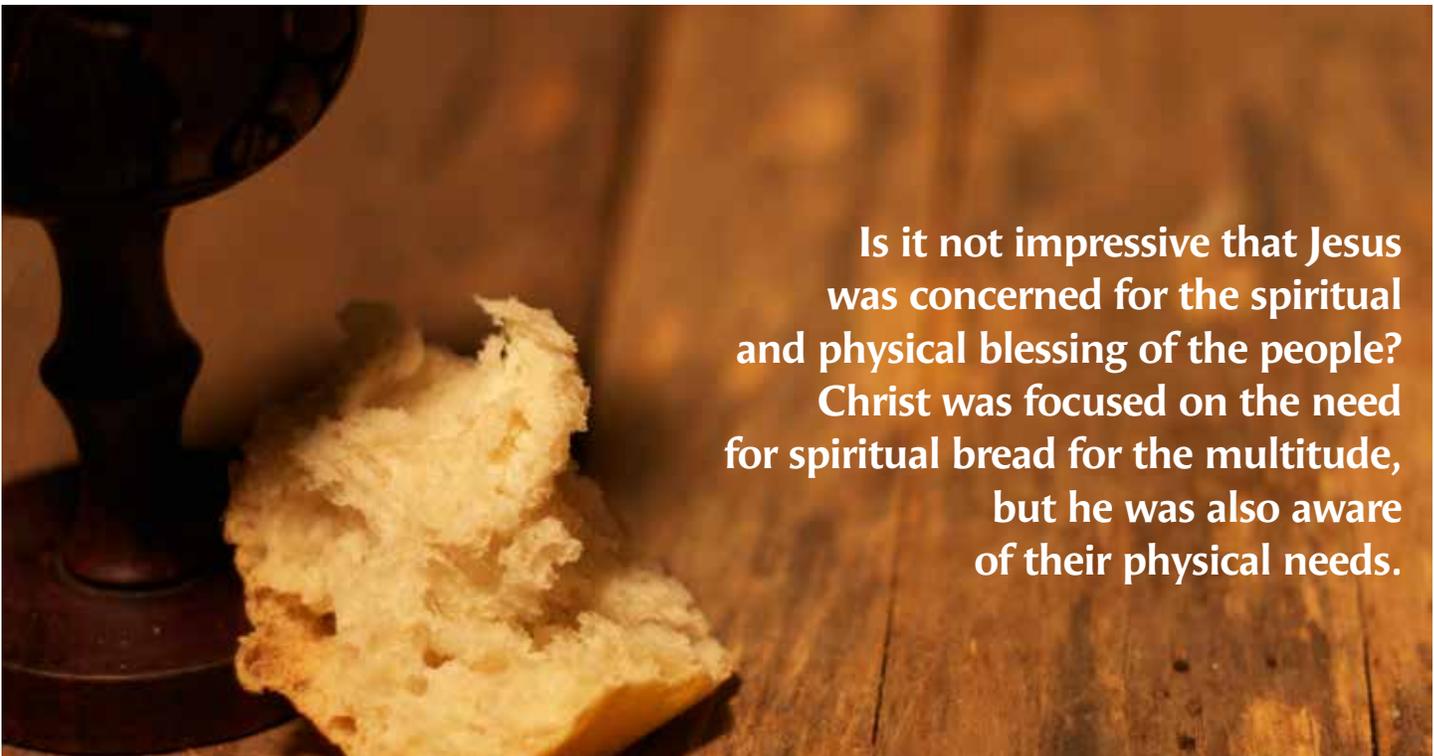
This is a picture of the ministry to which we are called. Our commission includes freely sharing the miracles of

Jesus in word and deed. Is it not impressive that Jesus was concerned for the spiritual and physical blessing of the people? Christ was focused on the need for spiritual bread for the multitude, but he was also aware of their physical needs.

I call these the tangible (physical) blessings coming from the preaching and ministry of his Word. The gospel must reach into the physical realms of life in its ministry. Why else would he take the time to feed over ten thousand people? This is a prime example of what we should be doing—preaching the gospel and feeding the poor.

In the second chapter of Jacob the prophet speaks to the godly use of material blessings. Jacob tells us that we are to think of our brethren as we think of ourselves, to be familiar with all and be free with our substance that others may be rich like we are. It is good to seek for riches, if you have first settled the issue of perspective. Before we are to seek for riches, we are to seek for the kingdom of God.

And after ye have obtained a hope in Christ, ye shall obtain riches, if ye seek them; and ye will seek them, for the intent to do good; to clothe the naked, and to feed the hungry, and to liberate the captive, and



Is it not impressive that Jesus was concerned for the spiritual and physical blessing of the people? Christ was focused on the need for spiritual bread for the multitude, but he was also aware of their physical needs.

administer relief to the sick, and the afflicted (Jacob 2:24).

Consider the admonition of Jacob in light of the testimony of Christ read to the Jews assembled at the synagogue in Nazareth when Jesus publicly announced his ministry:

The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he hath anointed me to preach the gospel to the poor, he hath sent me to heal the broken-hearted, to preach deliverance to the captives, and the recovering of sight to the blind; to set at liberty them that are bruised; To preach the acceptable year of the Lord (Luke 4:18-19; see also Isaiah 61:1-2).

Surely we can see that the ministry of Christ brought observable and concrete benefits of healing and hope, which healing and hope is illuminated in Jacob's charge to his people and to the miraculous feeding of the 5,000 men.

The church of Christ does not operate in a vacuum. We are to be the conduit for a full and happy life in Jesus Christ through the evidence of our faith and hope in him to a world bereft of hope, broken in heart and spirit, enslaved by carnal, sensual, and devilish chains of anguish and misery, blinded to the power of the risen Lord, and bruised by the hypocrisy and selfishness of men. We are to preach in word and deed what is acceptable to the Lord, in preparation for his return.

Now then we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God did beseech you by us; we pray you in Christ's stead, be ye reconciled to God (2 Corinthians 5:20).

The task that lies before us is to understand what that commission requires of us. An ambassador represents and acts on the behalf of another. The Webster 1828 American Dictionary of the American Language defines ambassador as:

A minister of the highest rank employed by one prince or state, at the court of another, to manage the public concerns of his own prince or state, and representing the power and dignity of his sovereign. Ambassadors (Ambassadors) are ordinary, when they reside permanently at a foreign court; or extraordinary, when they are sent on a special occasion. They are also

We must understand and execute our role as precisely as we can in accord with our commission from our Prince, Jesus Christ, who said, "I must be about my Father's business" (Luke 2:49). So too, must we be about our Father's business.

called ministers. Envoys are ministers employed on special occasions, and are of less dignity.

Members of the Restoration gospel are ordinary because we are temporarily absent from the fullness of the Kingdom of God and are living as strangers and pilgrims in a foreign land. We realize all mankind is in the same situation. Yet, we are also extraordinary because we are sent into this world for a special mission—to unite God's children with our Father. As such, we must understand and execute our role as precisely as we can in accord with our commission from our Prince, Jesus Christ, who said, "I must be about my Father's business" (Luke 2:49). So too, must we be about our Father's business.

Jesus did not come to save the righteous. He came to be a minister of righteousness through his works to those who would believe. In fact, in emphasizing his purpose, he once told followers:

Believe me for the very works' sake. Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that believeth on me, the works that I do shall he do also; and greater works than these shall he do (John 14:11-12).

He informed them that the works he did were not his own, but his Father's. We have, therefore, many witnesses saying our witness in the power of Jesus' name should include works that minister to the physical needs of people for the sake of God and his kingdom. Isaiah said it. Luke records it. Jacob illuminates it. Jesus testifies of it. God confirms it. The works of the Father are sanctioned through his Only Begotten Son. As in Abraham's covenantal blessing

when God said, “I have sworn by myself,” so too, has he given us his seal of approval to do works of righteousness with the kingly stamp of the Only Begotten.

Nevertheless, in your temporal things you shall be equal, and this not grudgingly, otherwise the abundance of the manifestations of the Spirit shall be withheld (D&C 70:3d).

For if ye are not equal in earthly things, ye cannot be equal in obtaining heavenly things (D&C 77:1f).

Restoration people tend to, in the words of a friend, “spiritualize away” the precepts Christ taught. Doing so minimizes our response to his teachings and reduces the physical and spiritual fruit of our lives. It is as if we believe that teaching and performing temporal ministry ignores or rejects the “meat” of the gospel.

I believe that the meat of the gospel, in part, lies in the doing and performing the “works” that God has given us to do. There can be no spiritualizing away the calling of our ambassadorship to be the emissaries of hope through the authentic and realistic giving of our riches to those who stand in need. We wonder aloud at times, “Why don’t we have Zion?” But the answer is before our eyes, recorded in the Doctrine and Covenants as mentioned above.

And now, if God, who has created you, on whom you are dependent for your lives, and for all that ye have and are, doth grant unto you whatsoever ye ask that is right, in faith, believing that ye shall receive, O then, how had ye ought to impart of the substance that ye have, one to another? And if ye judge the man who putteth up his petition to you for your substance, that he perish not, and condemn him, how much more just will be your condemnation, for withholding your substance, which doth not belong to you, but to God, to whom also, your life belongeth; And yet ye put up no petition, nor repent of

the thing which thou hast done. I say unto you, Wo be unto that man, for his substance shall perish with him; and now, I say these things unto those who are rich, as pertaining to the things of this world. And again, I say unto the poor, ye who have not and yet have sufficient, that ye remain from day to day; I mean all you who deny the beggar, because ye have not; I would that ye say in your hearts, that I give not because I have not; but if I had, I would give (Mosiah 2:36-40).

King Benjamin tells us that no one is exempt from the commission of producing fruits (works) of righteousness in relation to our tangible assets. We are all to share with one another.

Another point from the Mosiah scripture as it relates to the use of material blessings: our physical assets are not our own! They belong to God. We are not to hoard them. We are to be free with our things so others may be rich like us. Why do we guard them so tightly? Why are we not familiar with all and free with our substance as God, the One who has been free with his blessings to us?

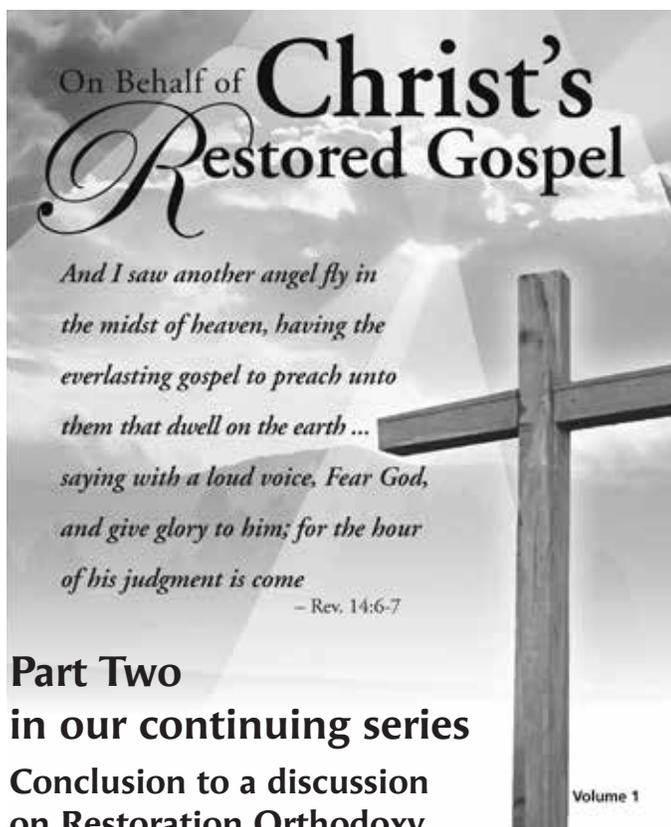
I have heard it said that when someone talks about “all things common” they are wanting “my money!” It is a sad reality that this is sometimes true. Too many times the poor think it someone else’s duty to help them pay their bills, while the wealthy consider their assets “shared” when they contribute to the church through oblation or other efforts. King Benjamin had something else, something greater, in mind when he said:

And behold, I tell you these things that ye may learn wisdom; that ye may learn that when ye are in the service of your fellow beings, ye are only in the service of your God” (Mosiah 1:49).

We are being told to be like Jesus. Like his Father. Like the citizens of the city of Enoch. Like the first century Christian church which had all things common.

The purpose of our tangible blessings is not to lay up in store against the day of famine, but to pursue the work of the kingdom. Remember the man who built bigger barns due to his abundant fruits of his labors (Luke 12:18-23)? According to the worldly outlook, he had a good idea. Yet, the Lord called him a fool because his life was going to be taken that very night. It appears to me that God who blesses us also wants us to share according to the abundance he has shared with us. †

I believe that the meat of the gospel, in part, lies in the doing and performing the “works” that God has given us to do.



Part Two
in our continuing series
Conclusion to a discussion
on Restoration Orthodoxy
by Robert Bobbitt.

Restoration Belief in Grace Alone and Christ Alone

Since its inception, the Restoration has vigorously affirmed the concept of salvation by grace alone through Christ alone.

And remember after ye are reconciled unto God, that it is only in and through the grace of God that ye are saved (2 Nephi 7:42).

And now, my beloved brethren, after ye have gotten into this strait and narrow path, I would ask, if all is done? Behold, I say unto you, Nay; for ye have not come thus far, save it were by the word of Christ, with unshaken faith in him, relying wholly upon the merits of him who is mighty to save (2 Nephi 13:27-28).

Relying alone upon the merits of Christ, who was the author and the finisher of their faith (Moroni 6:5).

This is an area where there is considerable common ground between fundamentalists and Restoration Christians. The above references show that the Book of Mormon affirms the concept of salvation by grace alone through Christ alone.

Apostasy or Merely Excess?

Some evangelicals say there was no apostasy during the Middle Ages, but simply that doctrinal error had crept into the church. All that Catholicism needed was a little fine tuning, a Reformation. Matthew 16:18 says “upon this rock I will build my church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it.” They believe that the concept of apostasy contravenes the prediction in Matthew 16.

Restorationists, on the other hand, maintain that being partially apostate is like being partially pregnant. The Greek word for “prevail against” is *katischuo*, which means to be strong to another’s detriment, to be superior in strength, to overcome. Ultimately, Christ’s church will prevail and will be victorious as promised in Matthew 16, but that does not preclude an apostasy. It would require more than Matthew 16:18 to prop up the theory that the Catholic church faithfully carried the gospel ball and then handed it off to the Reformation. Even Roger Williams did not believe in a succession from Rome or the legitimate calling of ministers to lead evangelical churches.

Later in 1638 Williams joined with others in organizing a church along strict Separatist lines (not halting between Christ and Antichrist), a church that rejected all civil jurisdiction over laws of the First Table and that embraced the Baptist principle of adult baptism. One member baptized Williams, who in turn baptized all the others. About twenty persons joined in the creation of this, the first church of Baptist identification not only in Rhode Island but in all of North America as well. At last Williams might find a fellowship in which he would be subjected to no scorn, no reprimand, no exile. And yet he could continue to subject himself to reprimand and subject his ecclesiastical views to ever closer examination. For Williams, who wrote of the “restless unsatisfiedness of my soul,” found no enduring peace, not even in the church molded by his own hands. What authority did he have to be baptized or to baptize others? What line of apostolic continuity could be traced to that score of Bible believers who agreed to worship together? What biblical commission or divine command set this church apart or perhaps even above all others? [Edwin

S. Gaustad, *Liberty of Conscience: Roger Williams in America* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Eerdmans Publishing, 1991) 90].

Significant Issues

There are three very significant issues that divide the Restoration and evangelicals:

1) Salvation

Luther's idea was that men are saved by faith alone. We are saved by faith, but there is sometimes a difference of opinion about the meaning of faith. The word "alone" can also be a point of contention. Salvation by faith alone is true in the sense that the Mosaic ordinances are no longer required. However, a true, saving faith must be accompanied by repentance, which is more than simply a change of mind, and surrender to Christ as Lord. Acts 22:16 makes it clear that baptism saves. Passages like Matthew 24:13 make it clear that the believer must faithfully endure to the end.

2) Scripture

Calvin's concept of sola Scriptura ("Bible alone") was that the Bible, as the inerrant word of God, is all that is necessary to comprehend God's will for man. A non-believer could easily ask the question, "Which Bible?" Would that be the Catholic Bible? The Bible based on Alexandrian manuscripts? The Bible based on Byzantine manuscripts? Who will make that determination? This is an issue that even divides evangelicals today.

3) Priesthood of All Believers

Based on passages like 1 Peter 2:5, 9, evangelicals maintain Calvin's assertion that ministerial priesthoods were replaced by the priesthood of all believers at the cross. The Restoration also believes in a priesthood of all believers (that is, that every member has certain sacred duties). However, as William Kelley mentions in his book *Presidency and Priesthood*, ministerial priesthoods and the priesthood of all believers are not mutually exclusive but can co-exist in the church. This is illustrated in Exodus 19:6 where the nation of Israel is referred to as a "kingdom of priests" at the same time that ministerial priests existed.

It is interesting to note that Catholics have scripture not found in evangelical Bibles, a ministerial priesthood, and a view that obedience has a bearing on salvation, all of which are anathema to some evangelicals. The more reasonable among evangelicals, such as Hank Hanegraaf, say that these things are not sufficient to categorize Catholicism as a cult. However, the more strident,

reactionary wing of evangelicalism stubbornly uses these facts to stigmatize both Catholicism and the Restoration as being non-Christian (i.e., cultic).

Different Evangelical Gospels

Just as there are various views within RLDS thought, it is difficult to paint evangelicals with a broad brush, assuming that they all maintain an identical position on major issues. The six hundred million evangelicals in the world comprise a mosaic containing a number of different views. In fact, rather than the united front that is commonly presented to outsiders, there appear to be doctrinal fissures resulting in more than one evangelical gospel.

The so-called "big tent" under which evangelicals frequently claim a unity of belief appears to have many compartments ranging from easy-believism to Lordship salvation. Chuck Swindoll talks about "faith" that is intellectual assent, while John MacArthur propounds a faith comprised of knowledge, assent and trust. Students of Dallas Theological Seminary might say repentance is simply "a change of mind about who Christ is," while Lordship adherents believe that the concept of repentance implies a resulting change in the pattern of sin (Luke 3:8 or 1 John 3:9).

For Lordship adherents, there must be a "willingness to obey" at the moment of conversion. Swindoll would have us understand that it is possible for a believer to accept Christ as Savior while never embracing him as Lord. Swindoll's view is in agreement with E. I. Schofield's idea that there are carnal Christians and spiritual Christians. On the other hand, John MacArthur would tell you that the believer must embrace Christ as Savior and Lord or he is not really saved (Acts 2:36).

Both camps accuse the other of cheapening the grace of God. MacArthur would accuse Swindoll's camp of teaching antinomianism (i.e., to be without law) or the more common term, "easy-believism." The Restoration would agree with John MacArthur on most of these issues.

Like the nuns in the Sound of Music singing "What are we going to do about Maria?" both easy-believers and adherents of Lordship salvation look at Wesleyanism and the Holiness movement with some concern. Wesleyanism, like the Restoration, has embraced several notions that give the majority of evangelicals considerable heartburn. Fundamentalists attempt to explain how Lordship Salvation and Wesleyanism are orthodox and Restoration thought is heretical cause them to enter into a lot of slicing and dicing, drawing some rather fine lines

of distinction—something the average fundamentalist finds difficult to articulate.

Restoration View of Jesus, Grace and the Gospel

The Restoration worships the Jesus found in the Bible. We could easily agree with Bill Gothard's use of 1 Corinthians 15:10 in demonstrating that grace is more than simply "unmerited favor." He derives an operational definition from that passage and concludes that grace is the "desire and power to do God's will." Therefore, grace does not just result in a saving faith, but it also bears fruit in the form of good works.

The Restoration would tend to agree with adherents of Lordship Salvation that a true, saving faith must necessarily include the elements of knowledge (understanding that Christ saves), assent (salvation applies to each individual personally) and trust (a commitment to Christ).

Faith alone, as defined by many evangelicals, is not enough; the believer must also repent. Though the Greek term for repentance literally means "to think differently or to reconsider," its operational context in scripture makes it evident that repentance must also lead to a change in the pattern of sin (Luke 3:8 and 1 John 3:9). However, faith and repentance alone are not enough. At the point of conversion, a true believer will surrender to Christ as Lord, not just Savior (Acts 2:36).

Jesus said, "Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God." The rub comes in how we interpret "born of water." Some evangelicals would say that phrase refers to the amniotic fluid at birth. However, because of passages like Acts 22:16, we believe that it refers to baptismal regeneration.

And now why tarriest thou? Arise, and be baptized, and wash away thy sins, calling on the name of the Lord (Acts 22:16).

Being baptized without the internal condition of a true faith, genuine repentance and surrender to Christ as Lord and Savior simply renders one a wet sinner. It is not baptism unless those internal conditions are there.

Wesleyans are correct in affirming the Arminian view that the believer must endure to the end and in saying that "perfection in love" (when one can love without regard to one's self) is possible in this life. A saving faith, repentance, surrender, baptism, enduring to the end and a perfect love of Christ are not possible in man's own strength; only by God's grace can they occur. In fact, the Bible tells us that faith itself is a work of God that he performs in every believer.

Then said they unto him, What shall we do, that we might work the works of God? Jesus answered and said unto them, This is the work of God, that ye

believe on him whom he hath sent (John 6:28-29).

All of these things are works of God. That is why Nephi tells us that we must rely "wholly" upon the merits of him who is mighty to save. That is why no believer can take credit for somehow saving himself by his own efforts, and that is why Jesus told us in Matthew 19:26, "With men this [salvation] is impossible; but with God all things are possible."

All of the above are forms of obedience. Obedience itself is simply yielding to God's grace. It is God who does that work by his grace alone; man could not do these things in his own strength. All of the glory goes to God.

Wherefore, my beloved, as ye have always obeyed, not as in my presence only, but now much more in my absence, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling. For it is God which worketh in you both to will and to do of his good pleasure (Philippians 2:12-13).

Glories: Different Position and Privileges in Heaven

On the subject of glories in heaven, the Restoration would agree with Charles Stanley's statement affirming that there will definitely be different privileges and position in heaven.

Does our behavior really make any difference if we know that we've been saved and are eternally secure? You bet it does. Are there any eternal consequences in the life of a believer who sins after they are saved? Yes, there are. Will everybody in heaven be able to experience the same blessings and the same reward? No, they will not ... Does it really make any difference, as far as eternity is concerned, how we live after we are saved? Makes an eternal difference. And is it possible that all of us are going to be able to experience heaven the same? It is absolutely not possible.

And what I want you to see here is all through the Bible we are continually brought back to the idea of being rewarded ... Rather he's going to judge us on the basis of how he equipped us, the opportunities he gave us, the privileges we had, and what we did with it, and the length of time we've had ... Everybody is not going to have the same position in heaven ... Secondly, nowhere does it indicate that everybody is going to have the same privileges in heaven. Nor does it indicate that everybody is going to be able to enjoy heaven to the same degree [Charles Stanley, "Eternal Security: What Do We Have to Lose?" In Touch radio program.]

Unfortunately, despite such common ground issues, the less informed in the fundamentalist community dog-

When referring to Bible infallibility or inerrancy, evangelicals often fail to explain that they are actually talking about the autographa (original writings)

gedly hold to a position that the RLDS view about degrees of reward in heaven must mean that they are non-Christian.

Restoration and Reformation Views of Scripture

When referring to Bible infallibility or inerrancy, evangelicals often fail to explain that they are actually talking about the autographa (original writings) only, not the Bible that we have today. In 1978, an International Council on Biblical Inerrancy, made up of 300 evangelical scholars, composed the Chicago Statement on Scripture. Article X of this statement says, “We affirm that inspiration, strictly speaking, applies only to the autographic text of Scripture, which in the providence of God can be ascertained from available manuscripts with great accuracy” [Norman Geisler and William Nix, *A General Introduction to the Bible* (Chicago, Illinois: Moody Press, 1986) 215].

Because they have a high view of scripture, more vociferous fundamentalists deride Joseph Smith’s statement in the 1842 Wentworth Letter that says, “We believe the Bible [King James Version] to be the word of God as far as it is translated correctly.” But in Article X of the Chicago Statement, 300 evangelical scholars made the following statement: “We further affirm that copies and translations of Scripture are the Word of God to the extent that they faithfully represent the original.” It appears disingenuous for evangelicals to criticize Smith’s statement while they simultaneously maintain an escape clause from their own inerrancy position; or at least, there is a disconnect between fundamentalist critics of Smith and the more reasonable position taken by evangelical scholars.

The Restoration might say that the Bible is “materially sufficient,” in other words all of the elements that comprise Christ’s gospel can be found in the Bible. However, it lacks “formal sufficiency,” the idea that those elements are given in a form that makes them easily discernible to the average reader from a simple reading of the text. The Restoration idea that certain “truths were lost” is not so much a reference to lost text in the Bible, but rather a lack of formal sufficiency and the way the text is taught.

Differences Between Two Families of Bible Manuscripts

A few more comments on the inerrancy of the Bible ought to be made. The King James Version comes from the Byzantine family of manuscripts, originating well after the fourth century. After the King James scholars completed their work in 1611, older manuscripts, called the Alexandrian, were discovered. This older family of manuscripts did not have some important passages found in the Byzantine such as Mark 16:9-20 and John 7:53-8:11. Also, Erasmus’ translations of the Greek New Testament, which were forerunners of the KJV, contained what some considered a spurious reading of 1 John 5:7.

The New International Version of the Bible is based largely on the older Alexandrian manuscripts. Many NIV believers maintain an “older is better” argument. From the time that the Alexandrian manuscripts were originally written until 1611 when the KJV was completed, who inserted these additional passages in the Byzantine manuscripts?

Some “King James only” advocates will tell you that they were “inspired emendations,” possibly made by Erasmus, whose translation arose from Byzantine manuscripts prior to the King James scholars. Some would also say that men like Erasmus had the right to make such changes.

If I were an evangelical, I would find it difficult to embrace the entire “King James only” position because of their conspiratorial theories about the NIV, but I personally do not have a problem with their idea of inspired emendations. This is very similar to the Restoration view of the Inspired Version and Doctrine and Covenants.

Some advocates of the New International Version say that such emendations were not inspired, but merely “conjectural.” It is interesting to note that the text of the questionable passages is included in the NIV Bible with a footnote explaining the discrepancy between manuscripts. These footnotes do not say where the NIV scholars got their text for such passages, since the wording in question cannot be found in the Alexandrian manuscripts! †

To be continued.

Becoming One with the Father

By Gary Metzger

Jesus prayed, “That they all may be one; as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee, that they also may be one in us; ... And the glory which thou gavest me I have given them; that they may be one, even as we are one” (John 17:21-22). I asked myself for many years, “How can this be?” How can I be one with the Father as Jesus is? How can I receive the glory of the Father as Jesus did?” I thought it impossible, until one day I read the words of Nephi in the Book of Mormon,

And also, the voice of the Son came unto me, saying, He that is baptized in my name, to him will the Father give the Holy Ghost, like unto me; wherefore, follow me, and do the things which ye have seen me do (2 Nephi 13:15).

Like unto him—to be baptized like unto him—to receive the Holy Ghost like unto him. I remembered the mother of two of the disciples told Jesus that she wanted her children to be one on his right and left hand. Jesus asked them, “Are ye able to drink of the cup that I shall drink of, and to be baptized with the baptism that I am baptized with? ... And he said unto them, Ye shall drink indeed of my cup, and be baptized with the baptism that I am baptized with” (Matthew 20:21, 23). We can imagine the cup they were to drink of was to be killed for their testimony. This was the bitter cup from which Jesus drank in his crucifixion (Matthew 26:39). Thus, to be baptized with his baptism is to die to ourselves.

In Restoration scripture, the Lord challenges us to come unto him with full purpose of heart,

Verily, thus saith the Lord, it shall come to pass that every soul who forsaketh his sins, and cometh unto me, and calleth on my name, and obeyeth my voice and keepeth my commandments shall see my face, and know that I am, and that I am the true light that lighteth every man

that cometh into the world (D&C 90:1a).

This instruction leaves most of us lacking. We do not forsake, come, call, obey and keep; therefore, we do not see his face or the rest of the promises of Section 90.

John describes the events at the river Jordan when Jesus was baptized. The fullness of the glory of the Father fell upon him. Our calling is to be sanctified by coming to him broken and repentant, while calling upon him with a full desire to serve him and obey him by keeping his commandments. This is how he leads us to the true Light—the power of the Holy Ghost; the fullness of the Father.

In January, 2000, I was asked to teach a class on sanctification for a South Chrysler Restoration Priesthood retreat in Kirtland, Ohio. I laid down to rest on the day of my class and when I awoke after twenty minutes, the Spirit of the Lord spoke to my mind. “Sanctify yourselves, that your whole bodies may be full of light.” I immediately turned to Section 85 and read, “Sanctify yourselves that your minds become single to God” (D&C 85:18b). Sanctification will yield a pure desire to glorify our Father in heaven.

The Lord revealed the necessary relationship between: 1) sanctification, 2) glorifying God, and 3) being filled with his light. They are interdependent. Desiring to live for the glory of God is the essence of sanctification. A sanctified person yields to his presence, or the light of Christ.

In my preparation before the Kirtland trip I had a dream one morning. In the dream I was seated in a classroom with a piece of paper in my hand. I was memorizing scripture references. I was saying, “Acts 2; 1 John 5,” and several others. I repeated them various times, until I found myself sitting up in bed, repeating the first two references as I awoke. The others were forgotten.

I went to the scriptures, but could not understand the meaning in Acts 2. I did see

Our calling is to be sanctified by coming to him broken and repentant, while calling upon him with a full desire to serve him and obey him by keeping his commandments. This is how he leads us to the true Light.

Our problem is that we do not comply with the commandments of God and do not make the spiritual preparation required to receive the third part of the rebirth—being sanctified by the blood.

the mention of the baptism of fire. When I turned to 1 John 5:6-8, I read that Jesus Christ was born of three elements: water, blood and spirit. There are three things bearing witness in heaven: the Father, the Word, and the Holy Ghost. There are also three that bear witness in the earth: the Spirit, water and blood.

My mind was reminded of another mention of the same three elements “ye were born into the world by water, and blood, and the spirit” (Genesis 6:61). The birth of Christ was by water, blood and Spirit [Holy Spirit]. Ours likewise, as was Adam’s, was of water, blood and spirit.

Genesis continues speaking of our spiritual rebirth:

Even so ye must be born again into the kingdom of heaven, of water, and of the Spirit, and be cleansed by blood, even the blood of mine Only Begotten (Genesis 6:62).

Thus, in birth and rebirth, the same three elements are involved. The three steps are further described in Genesis 6:63.

Adam was told that through the water, i.e., baptism, we keep the commandment of God. By or through the Spirit we are justified. It is the blood of Christ that sanctifies us. He washes away our sin as the fuller’s soap and purifies us as the refiner’s fire. Remember, there are three, which are one, that bear witness; from birth to eternal life.

As I meditated on these things the word “three” kept resounding in my mind. Then the Spirit of the Lord spoke to me, “How many are you teaching?” I replied, “Two. Born of the water and the Spirit.” I was convicted. I was not teaching the fullness of the gospel—Sanctification to abide in celestial glory. The promise of completing this birth process is in the next verse in Genesis.

Therefore, it is given to abide in you the record of heaven, the Comforter, the peaceable things of immortal glory, the truth of all things, that which quickeneth all things, which maketh alive all things, that which knoweth all things, and hath all power according to wisdom, mercy, truth, justice, and judgment (Genesis 6:64).

Additionally, he is called the Holy Spirit of Promise (D&C 85:1c) and is the prom-

ise of the presence of the Father—the fullness of the Holy Ghost and the baptism of fire. The word of the Lord received February 16, 1832, shows the very same three elements of sanctification, in the same order as described in Genesis 6: “Baptized after the manner of his burial, in the water ... according to his commandment ... receive the Holy Spirit by the laying on of hands of him who is ordained ... overcome by faith [in the atoning blood of Christ] and are sealed by that Holy Spirit of promise, which the Father sheds forth upon those who are just and true [sanctified]” (D&C 76:5b-d).

When Adam was baptized “and the Spirit of God descended upon him, and thus he was born of the Spirit, and became quickened in the inner man;” (Genesis 6:68). Adam also received a testimony of his rebirth: “And he heard a voice out of heaven, saying, thou are baptized with fire and with the Holy Ghost; this is the record of the Father and the Son” (Genesis 6:69).

God is calling us to this baptism with fire. The apostles were told to wait for the promise of the Father as Jesus had taught them (Acts 1:4). This promise was received on Pentecost. On that day the other Comforter Jesus promised was given to them by the Father (John 14:16, 26). This was the Spirit of truth (John 15:26; 16:13). Like Peter, we have to be converted before we can receive it. We must be quickened in the inner man.

The Lord has been sending fire and the Holy Ghost upon his people for a long time. Nephi and Lehi were encircled about by a pillar of fire and conversed with the angels of God (Helaman 2:85-87, 105-111).

Before Jesus descended to Zarahemla they heard him say, “Whoso cometh unto me with a broken heart and a contrite spirit, him will I baptize with fire and with the Holy Ghost, seen as the Lamanites, because of their faith in me.” When Jesus began to teach in Zarahemla he said of the twelve disciples,

And unto them I have given power, that they may baptize you with water, and after that ye are baptized with water, behold I will baptize you with fire and with the Holy Ghost” (3 Nephi 5:46).

Later that day, about 2,500 souls had congregated and the people saw angels de-

scending in the midst of fire and encircled the little ones about. The next day, the twelve disciples baptized the multitude, and:

When they were all baptized and had come up out of the water, the Holy Ghost did fall upon them, and they were filled with the Holy Ghost, and with fire. And behold, they were encircled about as if it were fire; and it came down from heaven ... and angels did come down out of heaven, and did minister unto them (3 Nephi 9:14-15).

When J. J. Cornish was baptized in water and received the Holy Spirit by the laying on of hands, he knew there was something missing in his rebirth. He expected some clear evidence that he had received the gift of the Holy Spirit. The testimony did not come at the time of the ordinance. He prayed for God to grant his request, but he received nothing for the first three days.

On the fourth day, he entered some nearby woods to ponder the situation. His thoughts ranged from wondering if had offended God to thinking he must have left something undone. He concluded that he must be patient until God granted the blessing. With this thought he began to leave.

When suddenly I heard, up in the air, a sound like a strong rushing wind; also something like the rumbling of a railroad train in the distance, coming nearer and nearer, until it descended upon my head, and my entire being was thrilled through and through, very sensibly, which caused joy, peace, and happiness” (John J. Cornish, *Into the Latter Day Light* (Independence, Missouri: Price Publishing Co., 1986), pp.18-19).

Our problem is that we do not comply with the commandments of God and do not make the spiritual preparation required to receive the third part of the rebirth—being sanctified by the blood. When we are baptized with fire, likened unto the apostles, we speak with the tongues of angels. Angels speak the words of Christ. We will have the presence of the Father and the Son and truly speak their words. This baptism brought evidence to the newborn Gentile church (Acts 10:44-47) and to the new disciples in Corinth after hearing of the baptism of the Holy Ghost (Acts 19:6). We must abandon the sin which so easily besets us and fix our eyes on Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith (Hebrews 12:1-2). We will truly come unto him and he in his time and ours will baptize us with fire—the presence of the Father. We will truly be one with him and the Son, and will not continue in sin, being born of God, having received that Holy Spirit of promise (1 John 3:9).

If ye follow the Son with full purpose of heart, acting no hypocrisy and no deception before God, but with real intent, repenting of your sins, witnessing unto the Father that ye are willing to take upon you the name of Christ, by baptism; yea, by following your Lord and your Savior down into the water, according to his word; behold then shall ye receive the Holy Ghost; Yea, then cometh the baptism of fire and of the Holy Ghost; and then can ye speak with the tongue of angels, and shout praises unto the Holy One of Israel” (2 Nephi 13:16-17). †

“If God were our one and only desire we would not be so easily upset when our opinions do not find outside acceptance.”

**— Thomas à Kempis,
*The Imitation of Christ***

Unable to attend a branch on Sunday?

The following websites
provide live streaming or recordings
of services or meetings.

www.ConferenceOfBranches.org

www.IndependenceDistrict.org

www.SaintsHaven.org

www.ZarahemlaBranch.org

www.ZionsOutpost.org

Revisiting the U.S. National Conference

Why is the Restoration Losing its Youth?

Conference Discussions *By Alan Smith*

Why is the Restoration, like other Christian groups, losing so many of its youth? The focus for the 2015 U.S. National Conference was to search for ways to engage and retain youth and young adults in the work of the church. The theme of the four-day event was “Chosen for Such a Time.” The conference, composed of branches from the United States, was focused on identifying the problems and suggesting potential solutions for assisting our young people to obtain and maintain a lively faith and hope in Christ. The first two days were used for panel discussions.



Little Flock:
How can we keep our kids in the church?

Saturday was a day for priesthood and business meetings. Each evening of conference, attendees shared in worship. Preaching ministry was provided by men with speakers chosen for their ability to minister to youth.

Discussions

Thursday and Friday were dedicated to eight panel discussions. Twenty-eight people from various Restoration groups involved in youth ministry appeared in panel discussions intended to identify the needs of youth. Each panel ended with a group discussion, to try to find starting points in meeting the identified needs.

Panel discussion topics included:

- “Our Youth—Facing Today’s Temptations,”
- “Why Are We Losing Our Youth?”
- “What Will Keep Youth Engaged In The Work,”
- “What Can Parents and Priesthood Do To Keep Youth Engaged In The Church?”
- “Making Church More Relevant For Youth,”
- “Communicating With Today’s Youth,” and
- “Equipping Youth To Overcome Babylon.”

Each panel member was given an opportunity to share their ideas on the topic. The panel fielded questions and comments from the audience after the presentations.

The final session was called “Putting It All Together for Action.” Fred Greene moderated the discussion which summarized some of the major points from the previous sessions. The observations and discussion points were categorized into individual actions and branch actions. Some examples of the ideas summarized from the panels are shared below. A copy of the complete list is available on the JCRB website (www.conferenceofbranches.org).

Saturday was set aside for youth, priesthood and women's quorum sessions. Each quorum was charged with using the information from the previous discussions to develop action plans.

Each group was asked to answer three questions: "Generally, what can all priesthood and members do to better retain youth and youth adults? What will your quorum and its members commit to accomplish over the next year that will contribute to enhancing youth and young adult interest in the church? What do you believe the Joint Conference of Restoration Branches can do to assist the branches in retaining youth and youth adult interest in the church?"

Such ideas as developing authentic relationships with youth, valuing the input of youth, encouraging youth to attend youth activities, helping youth acquire and share their testimony of Christ and more were shared. The report of

Many dedicated youth attended and contributed to the Conference.



Observations

- "Many of our youth have never participated in a unified church."
- "Youth, and adults for that matter, don't seem to have a vision of what the work is and where they fit in."
- "We need to love our youth over all the other forces working in their lives."
- "The action of adults means more to youth than talk."
- "We need to stop sheltering our children and equip them to bring solutions to the world."
- "There is a real difference between conducting church and bringing real ministry."
- "Young people see the church as part of our lives, not our lives."
- "Adults should remember to connect before you correct."
- "The conference should pursue joining with other restoration movements to bring support and ministry to the youth."
- "Unless our fruits match the gospel, we will have difficulty keeping our youth."

Individual Actions

- "Talk to youth, not at them."
- "If we live the gospel so his Spirit is with us, our youth will be fed."
- "If we want our children to be engaged in the church, we need to be engaged first."
- "Adults need to invest themselves in our youth."
- "Help youth identify the church as 'their' church, not their 'parent's' church."
- "Many youth are tired of the fighting between Restoration groups."
- "Youth should be expected to go somewhere to advance the work."
- "We need to help youth have their own testimony of Jesus."
- "Parents should send their children to youth camps and reunions where Christ is taught."
- "Teach youth how to pray and look for answers."
- "Help children know they are different from the world and why."
- "Help youth excel in the scriptures."

Branch Actions

- "When our youth go to church, do they encounter the Holy Spirit?"
- "We need special ministry to single parent homes."
- "Youth are ministered to by preaching and teaching that is well prepared."
- "We tend to believe we know what youth need without asking them."
- "Look at alternate ways to communicate the message to youth."
- "Give our youth the opportunity to share their experiences."
- "Encourage volunteering and servanthood."
- "We need more cross-generational activities where youth can be mentored."
- "Priesthood visits should include paying attention to the children of the family."
- "We need to give youth the answers to the skepticism they will encounter in the world."
- "Preaching and teaching need to be more positive and uplifting."
- "We need to establish an environment of a church 'family' for youth."
- "We need to keep in touch with college students, letting them know we love and care for them."
- "We need to pray more vigorously for our youth."

Priesthood prepare the emblems for the communion service on the last day of Conference.



each quorum will be included in the minutes of the conference available soon on the conference website.

A youth rally that would bring youth from across the Restoration together for worship and focus on strengthening their relationship with Christ was another of the possible future plans.

This time spent focusing on youth ministry was both enjoyable and potentially invaluable to the future of our branches. The cooperation between people who meet with participating branches and branches from other Restoration groups was refreshing.

Worship

Worship experiences in the evenings began with mixers to help people know one another better. Song services included songs that are popular at camps and reunions.

Speakers Steve Kropp, John Larson and Brian Mundy provided excellent ministry to those attending evening worship or viewing the service broadcast live over the internet. Prize drawings for attending youth were held nightly, and a final drawing on Saturday granted paid

camperships to 2016 camps for several young people who had attended all three nights.

On Sunday morning, a prayer service focusing on our youth and a communion service featuring Doug Smith's message on loving outrageously wrapped up our conference worship activities.

National Conference Business

By Alan Smith

Several items of business were handled by delegates from the 22 U.S. branches who took part in the business sessions. This was the first time the U.S. National Conference of the Joint Conference of Restoration Branches (JCRB) has met since becoming a separate entity from the General Conference. It now has its own officers and functions to deal with issues of the branches located in the United States. JCRB-affiliated branches from other countries have their own national conferences as well.

One Resolution Approved

One resolution was brought to the conference and passed by the delegates. This resolution noted that there was some evidence that the Community of Christ might be interested in divesting itself of the Auditorium in Independence, Missouri. The resolution set up a committee headed by Doug Patterson and Randy Vick to find out if this was true and to explore with other Restoration groups the possibility of acquiring the Auditorium.

The committee would investigate all possible uses of the facility, the financial obligations that would accrue with such an acquisition and provide a detailed report of their findings and any recommendations to the April 2016 General Conference.

Cheri Cruikshank leads a social mixer.



Officers Elected

Officers for the 2016 National Conference were also elected. They included Fred Greene, president; Dean Falconer, vice president; H. Alan Smith, secretary; Marilyn James, treasurer, and Janice Jordison, recorder.

Instead of naming members to the logistics committee for the next national conference, the delegates authorized the officers to recruit people to help plan the conference for next year.

Budget Passed

A budget of \$3,975 was approved for the conference, to be raised by conference offerings. In addition, the conference voted to allow the officers to open a bank account for the national conference, allowing up to \$5,000 in the account. Any carryover funds of more than this amount would go to the JCRB general fund.

Interim Reports

Many of the committees working on general conference business shared interim reports during the business sessions. These included the visioning process committees working in areas of mission, education, family and youth and the operations analysis committees set up at the last general conference.

Each of the committees will provide their full reports to the general conference in 2016.

Unofficial minutes of the U.S. conference will be available on the JCRB website when available. †



Special Music at the Fall Conference included: (top left) Tim Harrington, Erica Jobe, David Scott, Cyndi Harrington and Andrew Scott; (top right) Cheri Cruickshank and Rachel Mohler; (bottom left) Levi Vickery, Elizabeth Sperry and Jessica Tandy; (bottom right) Ron Smith.

Looking Ahead

From Fred Greene

I want to convey my sincere thanks to everyone who participated, in both effort and prayer, in making the U.S. National Conference such a success. This conference brought to light many important topics that need to be discussed by all Christians. There is no doubt in my mind that the Lord has abundantly blessed us. The Saints have positively responded to his call to begin rescuing our youth and young adults from Babylon, returning us all to the work of building his Kingdom. But this effort cannot end with this conference! This is only the beginning of many steps that need to be taken. Please review in your own congregations the summary of all panel discussions included on our website, to convey the changes that need to be made to bring about much needed ministry.

The coming (2016) General Conference will be on the subject of "Mission" and segments of that conference will be dedicated to our mission to the youth and young adults. Please begin now, to pray for that conference. Pray that it will continue to ignite Restoration Branches in this work. Then, as a body, we can fully respond to the Lord's calling. †



Into All the World

Honduras

Seventy Gary Whiting made a two-week visit to Honduras in early October 2015. He labored in Siguatepeque during his stay. The purpose of his visit was to fill in for Elder Chuck Sperry, who needed to return to the United States. Elder Sperry has raised his family in Honduras while laboring across the country, bringing the message of Jesus Christ and the Restoration to

may people.

Brother Whiting worked with members and nonmembers associated with the Restoration branch in Siguatepeque. During his stay he preached four times, taught a few classes and made several visits. His ministry was assisted by Joshua, Tikva and Hannah Sperry. They provided help with Spanish translation and transportation.

“The presence of the Holy Spirit was very much present with me during my visit in Honduras. Before every visit and ministerial opportunity I had clear and specific guidance about things that I should say and the kind of ministry that was needed. As I followed the instruction of the Lord, I discovered that in every case, the Lord had given me exactly what was needed.

It was a testimony to me and to the Saints that the Lord was with us. I felt that it was a fulfillment of the promise of the Lord to provide what I needed in the moment of need. Thanks be to God for his blessings to his people.”



Above left: Tikva, Hannah and Joshua Sperry at home in Siguatepeque, Honduras. Center: Tikva Sperry (right) with the Sunday School students of the Siguatepeque Restoration Branch. Far right: Sister Agada and her son Angel in their home. They are members of the Siguatepeque branch.

Northwestern United States

Seventy George Thomas traveled through Colorado, South Dakota, Wyoming, Montana, Idaho, Washington and Oregon in July and August of 2015. He had two major goals for this trip. He was searching for scattered Saints to whom he could minister. He was also desiring a way to make contacts with various First Nations peoples in the northwestern United States.

He started the journey with his wife, Jeanette. She accompanied him for the first three weeks. When Jeanette flew home, Elder Glenn Vreeland joined George for the remainder of the trip.

Brother and Sister Thomas ministered on the Pine Ridge Reservation in South Dakota where they had some opportunity to witness of Christ. In Montana, contact was made with a member of the Flathead nation who was seeking a witness of Jesus Christ. Brother Thomas was able to share with him and left contact information for follow up.

He reported that several areas in Colorado and Mon-

tana where Saints had previously lived, were now dead or had moved on. He and Brother Vreeland were able to visit several of the Saints in Idaho, but they are widely scattered.

While staying at a state park, Brother Thomas reported this event:

“A sixteen-year-old young man had accompanied his aunt to camp and fish for a few days. The trout were large and plentiful. I went to the dock the first night to just visit with the young man. I could tell by his body language that he was not happy being there. I talked to him about Jesus and we had prayer together. The next morning early he was down fishing alone. Once again we talked about Jesus. The young man was from a broken home and was really not wanted by his mom or dad. Religion was not a part of his life. Soon it was time for him to help his aunt break camp and prepare to drive back to Washington. We had prayer and I encouraged him to find a bible-based church and begin his walk with Jesus Christ. He thanked me and said he felt we were guided to meet.”

The trip ended with a return to the Pine Ridge Reservation. The pair of ministers were able to teach some classes and encourage the Saints.

Utah

Seventies Jim and Patrick McKay were invited as guests of Brigham Young University in Provo, Utah, to attend the Sperry Symposium. The symposium was the 44th annual gathering of this scholarly event. It was held from October 21-24, 2015. This year the event theme was “The Coming Forth of the Book of Mormon, A Marvelous Work and a Wonder.” Fourteen presentations were delivered covering various aspects of the coming forth of the Book of Mormon, the miracle of its translation and publication.

Patrick was asked to address the faculty from the Religious Education and Church History Departments. He shared with them the changes that had occurred in the Reorganized Church as well as the tension they too face with the same or similar issues confronting them as a church, such as women’s ordination; the pressure to accept alternative life styles, altering our Judeo-Christian concept of marriage; and progressive thinkers who question the historicity of the Book of Mormon. He also spoke about how they might respond to preserve the unique Restoration message. He concluded by sharing with them the common future we all share as believers in the Restoration.

The McKays attended several classes on campus, interacting with both the faculty and students and were asked to join the dialog. They were also invited to share in a fireside in one of the homes and testified of the wonderful things the Lord is doing among all Restoration believers.

They also met with several professors to work on the details for the next Book of Mormon Festival to be held this May in Independence, Missouri. †

Restoration Women’s Ministry

The Humble Servant

By Jani Thomas

The Apostle Paul, in his letter to the Philippians, says this of Jesus: “Who, being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God. But made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men” (Philippians 2:6-7).

What exactly does this scripture mean? More importantly, why would someone so special suffer and literally take on the weight of the world?

Taking on the “likeness of men” in simple terms means Jesus came to earth and took on our earthly appearance and had a body of flesh and bones. In this earthly form he also became someone’s son, cousin, brother and uncle.

His human frame came complete with the frailties of man. He suffered hunger, exhaustion and loneliness. Despite this, his actions while living on the earth earned him recognition as a trusted friend, leader, healer and defender.

Likewise, his unwavering, authoritative stance for that which was right, from a position of humble servant, made him an enemy of the powerful religious leaders of his day. Ultimately, his uncompromising position for righteousness led to great physical pain, blood and his death.

The big question is, “Why?”

Jesus did not have to be born as a human and come to earth. He chose to.

“But behold, my beloved Son, which was my beloved and chosen from the beginning, said unto me: Father, thy will be done, and the glory be thine forever” (Genesis 3:3). Coming to earth in the likeness of

man was an act of complete humility. This is especially so because he came to suffer the things he did at the hands of his “subjects.”

Jesus was a humble servant first and foremost, constantly demonstrating by his action the needs of other people were more important than his own. Perhaps humility is a central key to understanding his purpose on earth. “Humble service” may be the best “nutshell” explanation of how we should live today. It does embody the second great commandment of loving thy neighbor as thyself (Matthew 22:39).

Jesus’ willing, humble service, to the end, is what saved the human race from eternal death.

As people, we do not have much say in our earthly titles such as son, daughter, brother, sister, etc. While we do make choices, some good and some bad, in many cases we do not have much say over the kinds or amount of suffering in our lives either. Despite this, hopefully we will choose to follow Jesus’ example and stand for the right; take the consequences for the glory of God.

I pray that we each will choose to do so under the mantle of a humble servant. Servants who dare to be caring, loving, kind and patient. May we each be trusted friends, leaders, defenders of others, truly reflecting his image in our lives.

These are not passive roles we can undertake while sitting on the couch! Only by getting out there and truly loving our neighbors as ourselves, can we take part in the salvation of souls by sharing his gospel with the world—starting with our own neighbors. †

This is My Joy

Our Loving God, Who Saved a Wretch Like Me

by Joy Muir

Two of my very favorite people are Jim and Val Bradley. They live in Michigan and since moving to Missouri I only get to see them when I am back in Michigan for vacations. I have always loved them and appreciated their dedication to the church. The Jim I know is an awesome elder, who has given ministry to prisoners, served in a number of capacities in the church and is now teaching the adult Sunday School class in Algonac, Michigan. This summer, due to some health issues, I was on vacation with no car and the Bradleys picked me up for church every Sunday. We usually went out for lunch after church. One Sunday I was impressed to ask Jim for his testimony. I asked and he agreed to write it.

The next Sunday he brought his written testimony to me and I wept as I read it. I never knew the Jim I was reading about on that page. I only know the loving, dedicated Jim who loves the Lord with all his heart. This is a classic example of the amazing way the Lord can change our hearts and bring us close to him. His testimony is a lesson in welcoming back our brothers and sisters who may have fallen away. This is the testimony of my dear friend, Jim Bradley.

The Testimony of James D. Bradley

I was raised in the Reorganized Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints (RLDS) church as a child but started drinking at age 16. I entered the United States Navy at age 17. From the age of 17 until the age of 33 I seldom knew what it was to draw a sober breath. I was a loner who didn't like people and people didn't care too much for me either. That was fine with me. I used alcohol, drugs (pills because cocaine was not heard of back then) and marijuana.

Never being able to really understand the meaning of true love, I never had lasting relationships. As I grew older I knew something was missing from my life but I didn't know what. I was searching for some meaning to my life, some measure

of happiness because my life was a sad existence. I smoked 2-3 packs of cigarettes, drank 10-20 cups of coffee and at least a case of beer a day and weekends were worse.

I had gotten so bad that I had all but forgotten my childhood experiences with God. They were all pushed to the back recesses of my mind and very seldom even thought of. I had tried to quit smoking and drinking many times, but failed every time. My life was one endless circle of partying and bearing the results of that lifestyle. I was sick and tired of being sick and tired but didn't know how to escape the trap I had gotten myself into.

I couldn't blame it on anyone else. I knew better because I was raised better than that. I had chosen evil over good because I was attracted to the neon lights (Satan's tool) and

I wanted out. I just didn't have the strength to break the chains of sin.

Then my favorite aunt (Edna) died and I went to her funeral. After the funeral we all went back to the church for dinner and fellowship. As we approached the church I didn't even want to go in because I was sure the walls would fall in on me because of the life I was living, but I needed to be there for my cousins, so I went in. The first person I saw was my old Sunday school teacher, J. D. Cargill. He was still standing strong for God. He and his wife Mary embraced me and welcomed me with open arms. Had they held me at arm's length I would never have come back.

I went home a changed man. I wanted to come back to God, but I was a drunkard and not a very nice person. So I got down on my knees that night for the first time in almost 20 years and prayed to God. I told him I didn't even know if he was real or just the figment of a child's imagination but if he was real, I needed help because I couldn't do it on my own.

My prayers were answered that night for I awoke the next morning and all desire for cigarettes and alcohol were taken away and there were no withdrawal symptoms whatsoever. I finally knew what true love was all about as I embraced the Gospel.

That was in March of 1977. Today in July of 2015 I still embrace that life-changing gospel and am thankful for such a loving God that he saved a wretch such as me. †

Moroni visits Joseph

By Genie Simmons

For years after his wonderful experience in the woods at the age of fourteen, Joseph Smith Jr. was persecuted by many who learned of the experience. Even so, he never quit believing in his experience.

He was young and made some mistakes, as is common to human nature. They were things that caused Joseph to doubt his worthiness before God.

On September 21, 1823, at bedtime, he prayed for forgiveness. He was unsure if he was still called to help restore the Lord's church and felt very alone. Suddenly, a brightness above the light of the noontime sun filled his room and he saw a personage, an angel, at the side of his bed. This person wore no hat, gloves, nor shoes and lacked all the things that made a man in 1823 look respectable. He wore only a long white robe that stopped a little above the wrists and above the ankles. His feet did not touch the floor.

Joseph started with fear, but the personage saying, "Joseph, I am sent by God to teach you. I am Moroni." He continued, "God has a work for you to do and your name will be known for good and evil among all nations. There is a book hidden not far from here written upon golden plates. It tells about the former people of this continent; where they came from, how they lived and how they worshipped.

There are also two stones in silver bows, and fastened to a breastplate; these are called the Urim and Thummim. They have been used by seers since ancient times. God made them for translating the book." Moroni went on to tell of prophecies of Malachi and Isaiah in the Old Testament

and he quoted from Acts in the New Testament. Sometimes the quotes exactly matched the King James Bible that Joseph had read and sometimes the quotes were a little different. Moroni continued, "This is where you will find the book," and Joseph saw a place near the farm in a vision and recognized it.

After Moroni finished his teaching, he left, taking the light with him. The room got dark. Joseph was too excited to go to sleep, as he lay in bed thinking about what he had heard.

Soon the room began to grow brighter and brighter again. It was Moroni, a second time, and he repeated the message exactly word for word to Joseph. When he left Joseph could not sleep because of the extraordinary experience.

The room brightened a third time and Moroni again appeared to Joseph and repeated the message word for word. This time he added that Satan would try to get the plates from Joseph and would want him to sell them for profit. Joseph was warned to be wary of Satan's temptations and to believe strongly in the word of God.

"The only way the plates will be translated is if you do it for no other reason than to glorify God. No other reason." Moroni warned and he left. Again Joseph considered the strange things that had happened that night.

The night was gone and the sun was rising and it was time to begin his work on the farm that day. Joseph went to work with his father in the fields. Farm work is hard, physical work and soon the teen was exhausted. His father, Joseph Smith, Sr. noticed his son's tiredness. He said, "Go on home, boy. You look ill. Your mother will know what to do."

Joseph was so tired, that he fell while trying to cross over the fence around the field. "I don't remember how long I lay there," he recalled later. When he opened his eyes, there was Moroni again. The messenger related all that had he had taught Joseph during the night and at the end commanded Joseph to tell his father about the visions and commandments. Joseph told his father everything and his father believed and told him to "Go and do what the messenger commanded."

On September 22, 1823, Joseph left the field and went to the place where the messenger told him the plates were buried. He found them exactly where Moroni had shown him. He carefully opened the stone box and tried to take the plates out, but Moroni appeared and forbid it. "Leave them. The time is not right, yet." The angel met Joseph at the same place for four more years.

On September 22 of each year, Joseph went to see the plates. Each year, Moroni taught him more about the gospel and what the Lord would do and how the kingdom was to be conducted in the last days.

On September 22, 1827, four years later, the messenger gave Joseph permission to take the plates out of the stone box and carry them home. This is how Joseph Smith Jr., at age twenty-one, a man ready and willing to do the Lord's work, began the work of translating the Book of Mormon.

To find the rest of the story go to: *The History of the Reorganized Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints, Volume 1*, pages 10-16; *Joseph Smith and His Progenitors*, Lucy Mack Smith, pages 83-90; *Doctrine and Covenants 26:2*. †

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Join Us at the 2016 General Conference April 10-16 in Independence, Missouri

The 2016 General Conference will begin with a Sunday evening prayer and sacrament service. Throughout the week we will consider the mission of God's church, and discuss the needs for accomplishing it at home and abroad. We will also review the findings of the four research committees formed during the 2015 conference, and consider the mission aspect of the goals we set in 2014.

Please prepare for this conference with earnest prayer and fasting, asking the Holy Spirit lead us to God's will in the things we will consider.



JCRB Purpose Statement:

The purpose of the Joint Conference of Restoration Branches is to bring people into a covenant with the Father through Jesus Christ. We exist to spread the Restored Gospel of Christ, to assist in the gathering of the House of Israel, and to establish Zion, a city of righteousness, the New Jerusalem. We exist to provide a venue for the members of the Restoration to confer together to make decisions on how to carry out these purposes."