



The Latter Day Saints'  
**Beacon**

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Sharing the Light of Jesus Christ

**The Marriage Covenant**  
page 3

**Knowing the Father**  
page 5

**Giving Christ His Due**  
page 8

**The Wedding Parable**  
page 10

**The Four Seeds**  
page 12

**On Behalf of Christ's  
Restored Gospel**  
Page 15

**It's Time to Get to Work**  
page 20

**God's Warning to the  
Saints of the Latter Days**  
page 21

# The Gospel of Marriage

## Features

- 3** The Marriage Covenant  
*Jared A. Watson*
- 5** Knowing the Father  
*Yvonne Galusha*
- 8** Giving Christ His Due  
*Barbra Jordison*
- 10** The Wedding Parable  
*Neil Simmons*
- 12** The Four Seeds  
*Joel Loving*
- 15** On Behalf of Christ's  
Restored Gospel, Part Twelve  
*Robert Bobbit, et al*
- 20** It's Time to Get to Work  
*Sherman Phipps*
- 21** God's Warning to the  
Saints of the Latter Days  
*Antonio R. Vestor*

## Columns

- 1** Editor's Letter  
*The Marriage Covenant*
- 23** This Is My Joy  
*This Was Our Joy*
- 25** Restoration Women's Ministries  
*Righteous Revalation*
- 26** Bishop's Corner  
*The Equality of the Body*
- 28** Into All the World
- 29** The Little Beacon  
*William Marks, Servant to All*

## Other

- 4** Discerning Truth from Error
- 22** Letter from the Quorum  
of Restoration Apostles
- 24** Attributes of the Holy Spirit
- 27** Poem: The Easy Road Crowded
- Back  
Cover** The Passing of a Giant

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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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## Ancient Marriage as a Type for Maturing in Our Covenants

by Barbra Jordison

“Behold, I stand at the door, and knock; if any man hear my voice, and open the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with me” (Revelation 3:20).

Christians recognize this verse as a pleading by the Savior for entrance into their hearts. Would it surprise you to learn that it is a metaphor for an important part in the ancient Hebrew betrothal process? When the would-be groom and his father went to the home of his intended bride, their goal was to seek a marriage. When they were granted entrance to the home and invited to sit down over a shared meal, the hammering out of marriage details could commence.

Why should we care about such things? Because in addition to ancient Hebrew marriage details providing a template for our desired individual responses to God, they illustrate what will prepare the church for marriage to the Lamb. They illustrate the way forward on both a personal and a corporate level.

Our scriptures use marriage and wedding imagery over and over again. Within the context of these references are relationships, longing, preparations, key parties and unfolding events. Indeed, if you were to look at the Torah (the first five books in the Old Testament), you might even notice its likeness to an ancient marriage contract.

When the prospective groom and his father come to the chosen bride's home (hereafter referred to as “bride” and “groom”), the family likely knows why they are there. Because at ANY time throughout the betrothal process the bride can call things off, her willingness to open that door to an unfolding process is important, and her father knows it. It is not a decision made lightly. Once the door is opened, the question is not whether they can hold a wedding, it is whether she will commit to a marriage. Her approval means that the terms of the marriage begin to be discussed.

While those who write about ancient Hebrew marriage customs are not all in agreement about the details, here are a few things about ancient customs that most agree on:

1. There was an observable betrothal process that was recognized by all members within the ancient Hebrew community, even down until the time of Christ.
2. Whether or not the groom and bride had the initial impetus to be married, their decisions sealed the deal, though the approval of the parents was both sought and prized. The marriage may have been initiated to

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strengthen bonds between families, to give protection to a woman, to improve one family's circumstances, or even due to love and affection, though this motive was not given the emphasis it is in the western world today.

3. The betrothal process (marriage) included covenants, shared cups of wine, and seven key parties (the fathers of the bride and groom, the would-be groom, the would-be bride, a scribe to write out the marriage contract, and two witnesses).
4. Marriage covenants were valued as binding. Though up until a certain point the bride could call the whole thing off, the groom that chose her (even if motivated by a desire to satisfy his Father's wishes), might sacrifice greatly to win her heart and inspire her covenant follow-through. For instance, if the groom found that his bride was not pure, he had several options available to him. He could let her pay the price for her wrong-doing(s); he could give her a writ of divorce and walk away; he could choose to be her goel (redeemer) and take her punishment upon himself. Only the groom could speak for her worthiness as his bride.

In this issue of the *Beacon*, you will hear more about steps in the betrothal process, what it means to be married, and the relationships that are desired by those who make and keep covenant with mankind. Our goal is that you will see yourself in this process and will look to the expanding nature of the covenants (plural) and relationship-building that will lead you to become a prepared participant in the wedding feast described by the prophets of old. †

## Retirement

**Sister Barbara Giertz** retires from the JCRB Finance Office effective December 31, 2017. Barbara worked at the Finance Office for 6 years and served as the Office/Facility Manager for the past 4 years. Her management skills, positive attitude and cheerful countenance contributed to an environment where all who visited felt welcomed. She will be missed, but will continue to be active in the conference, volunteering in various other roles.



An open house to honor Sister Giertz is scheduled for Saturday, December 30th.

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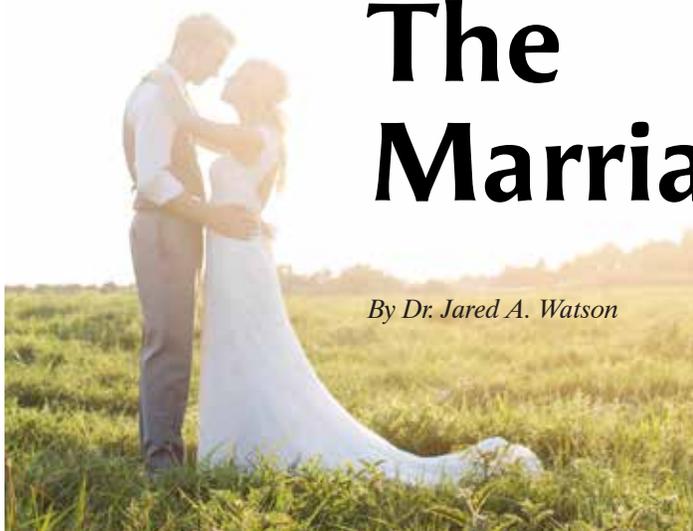
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# The Marriage Covenant



By Dr. Jared A. Watson

## How the marriage relationship foretells the relationship of Christ to his church

Marriage – just saying the word invokes images in our mind of a ceremony where two people are joined together and start a new life together as one. In America we have religious or civil services to legalize marriage, which is foundational to our society, our Christian religion and, specifically, our denomination. Our scriptures are full of references to marriage, which we view as a covenant – something that is meant to be a life-long relationship between a man and woman, with divorce taking place in rare circumstances.

As a licensed marriage and family therapist in the civilian world and a chaplain in the military, much of the work I do revolves around marriage. For the military, several times a year other chaplains and I, along with our families, teach marriage seminars called Strong Bonds, intended to strengthen the marriages of soldiers by teaching needed concepts/skills. While not overtly religious in nature, since we are all chaplains teaching the seminars we do tie in scripture and one theme we focus on is the marriage covenant.

The marriage covenant is one of the oldest institutions given by God. As early as the second chapter of Genesis, we see the foundation of the marriage covenant established with the first man and woman, Adam and Eve: “Therefore shall a man leave his father and his mother and shall cleave unto his wife; and they shall be one flesh” (Genesis 2:30).

In Ephesians 5 we see the marriage example used again, but this time compared to Christ and the church, where Paul gives direction to the church on how husbands and wives should act towards each other:

**Giving thanks always for all things unto God and the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, Submitting yourselves one to another in the fear of God. Wives, submit yourselves unto your own husbands, as unto the Lord. For the husband is the head of the wife, even as Christ is the head of the church; and he is the Savior of the body. Therefore,**

**as the church is subject unto Christ, so let the wives be to their own husbands in everything. Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the church, and gave himself for it, That he might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the word, That he might present it to himself a glorious church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing, but that it should be holy and without blemish. So ought men to love their wives as their own bodies. He that loveth his wife loveth himself. For no man ever yet hated his own flesh, but nourisheth and cherisheth it, even as the Lord the church; For we are members of his body, of his flesh, and of his bones. For this cause shall a man leave his father and mother and shall be joined unto his wife, and they two shall be one flesh. This is a great mystery; but I speak concerning Christ and the church (Ephesians 5:20-32).**

Since Paul wrote this letter about two thousand years ago, it has caused controversy as men tried using it to subjugate their wives. A complete reading, however, brings into view the full understanding of what Paul is telling the church regarding husband and wife relationships, and thus the marriage covenant. In verse 25, Paul tells us that husbands are to love their wives as Christ loved the church and gave himself for it.

For the Restoration Movement, almost since its inception in 1830, marriage has been at the forefront of the church. According to Doctrine & Covenants, Section 111 was ordered to be printed by unanimous vote, as church law regarding marriage. This section describes our church’s laws, rules, rituals, and customs around marriage, including the prohibition of polygamy and the limiting of marriage to one man and one woman (D&C 111:4b).

God also commands us to keep the marriage bed sacred. The writer of the letter to the Hebrews has this to say about marriage: “Marriage is honorable in all, and the bed undefiled; but whoremongers and adulterers God will judge” (Hebrews 13:4). We are to be physically, emo-

tionally and spiritually faithful to our spouse. In our modern day of Facebook, the Internet, instant messages and other electronic means, marriages are more open to corruption than ever before.

Considering more than 70% of the United States still claims Christianity as their religion<sup>1</sup>, relationship problems abound, and infidelity and divorce within and without the church are running rampant. While I do not have statistics specific to the Restoration, in mainstream society the divorce rate continues to hover around 45%.<sup>2</sup> Lack of faithfulness is a problem.

Faithfulness does not just apply to our marriage covenant. It also applies to the covenant we make with our Lord in the waters of baptism. The church as a body, the individuals within the church and both membership and priesthood are called to be faithful until the end. What does this have to do with marriage?

The Church has been compared to the bride and Christ the bridegroom in numerous verses in scripture. One of the most recognizable is from Revelation 21, recording: “And I, John, saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down from God out of heaven, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband” (Revelation 21:2).

As a church we expect that Zion will be built here on the earth and that the Lord will one day return. But as a precursor to his return, we as God’s people are called to be spiritually prepared and faithful to this covenant we have made to him. The church as his bride is called to remain pure to the guiding principles given the church through the scriptures.

In biblical times, there was a period of time that the bride and groom were separated from each other until the wedding. During this betrothal period, or time of separation, the bride (or church) is expected to keep herself pure, just as the church is expected to remain faithful until the return of the Lord. Paul makes reference to this in his second letter to the church in Corinth, saying: “For I am jealous over you with godly jealousy; for I have espoused you to one husband, that I may present you as a chaste virgin to Christ” (2 Corinthians 11:2).

We see the promise of Christ’s return in John’s vision from Revelation 19 where he discusses Christ being reunited with the church: “Let us be glad, and rejoice, and give honor to him; for the marriage of the Lamb is come, and his wife hath made herself ready. And to her was granted that she should be arrayed in fine linen, clean and white; for the fine linen is the righteousness of saints. And he saith unto me, Write: Blessed are they which are called unto the marriage supper of the Lamb. And he saith unto me, These are the true sayings of God” (Revelation 19:7-9).

These scriptures given to us regarding the marriage relationship apply to the church’s relationship to the Lord today. We eagerly anticipate the day when God’s people will be reunited with the Lord, their bridegroom. Let us live our lives as that pure bride in eager anticipation of that wedding day. †

1 Pew Research Center. Religious Landscape Study: [www.pewforum.org/religious-landscape-study](http://www.pewforum.org/religious-landscape-study)

2 Bureau of Labor Statistics. Marriage and Divorce: Patterns by Gender, Race, and Educational Attainment (2013): [www.bls.gov/opub/mlr/2013/article/marriage-and-divorce-patterns-by-gender-race-and-educational-attainment.htm](http://www.bls.gov/opub/mlr/2013/article/marriage-and-divorce-patterns-by-gender-race-and-educational-attainment.htm)

# Discerning Truth from Error

By Patrick McKay

**And whoso treasureth up my word shall not be deceived (Mark 13:43).**

Spiritual discernment is the ability to separate truth from error. The Apostle Paul counseled the Saints to prove all things; hold fast that which is good (1 Thessalonians 5:21). To prove means to give evidence, authenticate, document or confirm. The ability to prove requires one to study to show thyself approved (2 Timothy 2:15).

The Saints stand not so much in need of convincing, but rather of converting. Our ability to rightly discern the truth is a manifestation of devotion born out of a conviction of the Word of God welling up within us. We often think error is a gross departure of truth, that which is blatant and unacceptable. Satan, however, comes to deceive mostly with truth, skillfully woven with lies, but the Holy Spirit will lead us into all truth if we are fully yielded to him. Nephi, when asked by his brothers, “What meaneth the rod of iron which our father saw that led to the tree of life?” replied, “It was the Word of God and whoso would harken unto it, would never perish, neither could the temptations and fiery darts of the adversary overpower them unto blindness to lead them away to destruction” (1 Nephi 4:38-40).

The difference between error and truth is often a narrow margin, and almost indiscernible. If we want to take the Holy Spirit for our guide, we will prayerfully and studiously weigh in the balance what is presented to see if it fits the template of the acknowledged word of God, or if it found wanting. There is sewn within the fabric of the restored gospel various helps and governments to guide and direct our path. Fundamental to taking the Holy Spirit for our guide is the belief in and the love for God’s word. †

# Knowing the Father

## The Fulfillment of the Marriage Covenant

By Yvonne Galusha

**W**hy did Jesus come to earth? After Adam fell, men were separated from God. Great is the love of God for his children and great is his desire to again dwell with them. The only way to recover mankind from death was for Jesus to bring them into holy marriage covenant and offer himself for their transgressions. As the groom, he alone knows what is required for his bride to dwell in the presence of a perfect God. He, therefore, modeled the way for his children to mature, such, that they could again abide the Father's presence. The purpose of this work is to consider what it means to come to know the Father.

The words *New Testament* in Hebrew are *B'rit Hadashah*, where *b'rit* means “covenant” and *hadashah* means “a cycle of restoration or renewal of the relationship.” This was first spoken of by Jeremiah (Jeremiah 31:31-34) where *b'rit hadashah* is translated as “new covenant.” It would be more accurate to say “renewed covenant” or, even better, “renewed relationship.”

Renewing a relationship requires a commitment, an understanding of the commitment, and a consistent adherence to the tenets of the agreement, or in other words a covenant. This is key in how the Lord is accomplishing his work. Thus, Yehoshua—the Hebrew equivalent for the Greek Jesus which is often shortened to Yeshua—is still seeking a bride, a body of people with whom he can live in full agreement.

### Why is a Renewed Relationship Needed?

The Lord made with Israel, as a collective people (corporate body), a covenant at the base of Mt Sinai (Exodus 24:8). This is referred to as the old covenant. Israel broke this covenant (Jeremiah 11:10), which brought about their destruction, and the broken relationship led to the death of Jesus, because they did not know him. At his death, the covenant was no more (Zechariah 11:10). Therefore, Yehoshua is renewing the relationship via the new covenant.

At first, this is an individual covenant, established via authoritative priesthood, witnessed in the waters of baptism (Mosiah 9:49-50, 11:96; Acts 2:47, 16:5). However, God's original intent to have a corporate covenant has not changed. Israel's covenant began to break down when they broke into two kingdoms (Israel and Judah). Ultimately, Jesus will again have a corporate covenant (Galatians 3:20; Hebrews 8:8; D&C 104:9b) with both Israel and Judah (3 Nephi 9:57-85), as well as all others who are adopted

into the covenant (Romans 8:15, 9:4; Galatians 4:5; Ephesians 1:5) in order to have one family relationship.

The ancient Hebrew espousal process, where four cups of wine are drunk to signify full agreement to the marriage covenant, provides insight. Since we are to be the bride of Christ, does it not follow that Jesus and his Father are bringing us into full agreement with the marriage and all it entails? These four cups represent four levels of covenant relationship—servant-hood, friendship, sonship, and bride. When we first accept Christ as our Savior, we enter into a blood covenant relationship as his servant. For most people it takes a while to achieve consistent obedience to his laws, but once this happens, we enter into a friendship relationship, where Yehoshua shares more. As time passes, if we lay down self and continue to grow spiritually—meaning we achieve greater intimacy and understanding—we enter a sonship relationship. In this we are trusted with Jesus' authority to do the things that he himself would do in the earth. Eventually, there will be a body of people, well prepared through great sacrifice, who are equally yoked with Christ as his bride.

Scriptures that reflect this pattern of four are the explanation of the glories (D&C 76), the parable of the sower (Matthew 13; Mark 4; Luke 8) and the parable of the marriage supper (Matthew 22). In these, we see people in four groups, where some end up with greater reward (or glory) than others. Thus, to be part of the bride we must continue to come unto Jesus, submitting ourselves fully, if we want to receive his fullness, which is a place with him and his Father for eternity. Only the bride, those in celestial glory, will dwell with the Father.

### Enacting the Covenant

The key to the bridal relationship—meaning a fully prepared body that consists of fully prepared individuals—is a relationship not only with Yehoshua, but also with the Father. Adequate preparation requires that each individual must progress through the four levels of espousal relationship. The corporate body must also progress through the four levels of relationship. It is much more challenging to live as one with many people, as compared to living as one with one person, yet, this is what will be, once Zion is fully established. Additionally, in order for Zion to be redeemed, there must be individuals who are functioning in the Spirit of the Father—well prepared for the Lord to use them to accomplish this great work of redemption.

Zion requires a people to live according to the ce-

lestial law. These are they who can abide the presence of the Father (D&C 76:7i, 85:2a, 4c). Only those who can abide the celestial law can abide his presence. We know that the work of the Father began when the Book of Mormon came forth (3 Nephi 9:88-93) and the church authority was restored, enabling the corporate new covenant. But, the establishment of Zion is what enacts the corporate new covenant, and it will only be accomplished by the intervention of God, according to Elder Alfred White's experience: "The time was when my people might have redeemed Zion, if they had kept my counsel, but now it has passed out of their power. I will redeem Zion in its time." See also D&C 100:3d-e.

A key tenet of the restored gospel vision is the coming to corporate new covenant through Zion beyond an individual new covenant through baptism. Thus, more is required than an individual relationship with Jesus. In order to be part of Zion, we must first ask if we know the difference between the presence of Jesus and the presence of the Father? If we do not, how can we be a part of the redemption of Zion, Jesus' bride? Where does the Spirit fit into this? Is the Spirit a separate thing from the presence of Jesus or the presence of the Father?

Let us look at scripture to help with these questions. We know that all things are accomplished by the Spirit (Zechariah 4:6) and we gain the Spirit through prayer (D&C 63:16a). The Spirit bears witness of all truth (John 16:13, D&C 50:4c). We are sanctified by the Spirit (Alma 3:95; D&C 83:6c), the washing of water by the word (Ephesians 5:26) or the blood of Christ (Genesis 6:63; Hebrews 10:29). Since there must be two witnesses of a thing (Deuteronomy 17:6; 19:15), the Spirit and Jesus bear witness of the Father (Genesis 4:9, D&C 36:11, John 8:42, John 14:9) and the Father and the Spirit bear witness of Jesus (John 8:18; Genesis 4:9; D&C 1:8c, 36:11). Therefore, the Spirit must be a separate being (D&C 131:4a). Other passages that verify this say that Jesus is unto all men (1 Timothy 2:4) and the Spirit is sent to bring men to receive him (1 John 5:6). Yet, *the only way to know the Father* is through the individual new covenant, with Jesus Christ as the mediator (John 14:6;

1 Timothy 2:4-5; Hebrews 12:24; D&C 104:9b). The reason the new covenant is better than the old covenant is because the individual relationship enables each one to know the Father, to become one with him, and become one with all others under covenant, because of the abiding presence of love from the Father.

In other words, it is the Spirit that brings men to receive Jesus and enter into the blood covenant of servanthood. It is obedience to Jesus that brings men into a covenant of friendship with him. It is coming to know the Father that enables a sonship covenant of greater service. Moreover, it is full sacrifice (yielding) of self that brings about the bridal covenant. The Lord will provide an opportunity for each individual to lay down that which is most important to them, and by this, is the full sacrifice confirmed and a testimony of love offered.

## To Know the Father

Still, is there a difference between having a personal relationship with Jesus versus the Father? The answer is yes. When Yehoshua died, the veil to the holy of holies rent and any man individually could then come into the presence of the Father. Before then, only the sanctified high priest could seek his presence on behalf of Israel as a corporate body. This was primarily done yearly, on Yom Kippur (the Day of Atonement). Thus, it is Jesus, the mediator of the new covenant, which enables access to the Heavenly Father.

From scripture we know there is a difference between the spirit of the Father and spirit of Jesus. Recall that Jesus, soon after his resurrection, breathed on his disciples and told them to receive the Holy Ghost (John 20:22), which had been promised (John 7:39; Acts 2:33). He also told them to tarry fifty days to receive the promise of the Father (Acts 1:4). The number fifty is the first number after seven sevens are completed. The number seven according to biblical numerology represents spiritual completeness. Thus, seven sevens equals complete completeness. It puts a stamp of importance on how complete it must be. Thus, Israel had to press forward for fifty days from when they exited Egypt until they at last met the Father

**... Is there a difference between having a personal relationship with Jesus versus the Father?**

on Mt. Sinai. This timeframe of fifty was likewise required of Jesus' disciples when they had to wait fifty days to receive the promise of the Father at Pentecost. The lesson is that *complete* spiritual preparation must be accomplished to receive the presence of the Father.

The reason for seven periods of seven is because we must come to know God in his fullness, even the seven Spirits of God (KJV Revelation 3:1, 4:5, 5:6). Yehoshua had the seven spirits: "And the Spirit of the Lord shall rest upon him, the spirit of wisdom and understanding, the spirit of counsel and might, the spirit of knowledge and of the fear of the Lord" (Isaiah 11:2). If we are to be part of the bride and able to abide the full presence of the Father, we, too, must acquire the seven Spirits of God both individually and corporately.

The Father is a burning fire (Ezekiel 28:14). There are several verses that say those who will receive Jesus, and be baptized, will receive fire *and* the Holy Ghost (Matthew 3:38, 3:40, 5:4; Mark 1:6; Luke 3:23; John 1:28). In these we see a distinction—Holy Ghost being Jesus' presence and the Comforter being the promise of the Father. When Jesus visited Zarahemla and prayed to the Father for the children, they were surrounded by a ring of fire (3 Nephi 9:15). Ezekiel's heavenly vision came out of the midst of fire (Ezekiel 1:4).

The key difference between those who have an authoritative baptism and other Christians is access to the Father, for Jesus is unto all men and the Spirit was sent to all men to bring men to receive him (Genesis 4:9). Those with an authoritative baptism have the Spirit dwelling *within them*, not just working *outside of them*. This baptism requires an intercessory priesthood, who stand in the stead of Christ, since he is the mediator of the new covenant.

Words like Holy Ghost, Spirit, Spirit of truth, Spirit of Jesus Christ and Comforter are all used in scripture, and this makes it difficult to distinguish between the Spirit as a separate being versus Jesus or the Father's presence. Yet, this is a key understanding if we are to grow to experience and know the fullness of God. The Book of Mormon says that Jesus is the Father (Moses 1:102, 8:30; Ether 1:77). However, most scripture passages distinguish the Father from the Son; and, the basic point re-

mains the same, even if ultimately there is only one being, we must still grow to know the distinctions if we are to grow to know the fullness of God.

If we do not know the Father, how can we bring his presence into the earth realm? This is how he manifests through us. How can we do what the Father is doing, just as Jesus did (John 5:19), if we do not know him? How do we bear witness of the *fullness* of the gospel, such that other Christians can see a difference in us, if we do not know the Father? In the Father's presence can no unclean thing dwell (Genesis 6:60; Deuteronomy 23:14; Isaiah 52:11), therefore the bride must be spotless to abide the Father.

## The Role of the Father

All power comes from the Father (3 Nephi 9:90). God intends his gospel to go forth in miraculous power. This is why he gave it to Jesus (Helaman 2:73; 3 Nephi 9:98); and, for the sake of the Kingdom it is given to us (D&C 50:7e). We need this power today; therefore, we must learn to know and dwell with the Father.

Again, the Father's presence is different from the Spirit or from Jesus' presence. It is a burning ember that grows as one grows in their relationship with him. It is like touching infinity. When communing with the Father, we can experience union with all that we can perceive. In the Father's presence we can experience the heavenly realm, even though we now dwell in the flesh. We can become a burning flame with him.

When a group of individuals learn to walk continually in the Father's presence, a ring of fire will extend between them. Eventually a fiery ring of protection forms around the whole body, as individuals manifest the power of God unto the blessing of all. Once Zion is established, then will the gospel go forth in power, because we are one with the Father (3 Nephi 10:4).

Elder White saw in his experience a ring of protecting fire around Zion. Only those who could abide the judgment of the Holy Ghost could abide therein:

**I saw a narrow and very bright red ring, which enclosed Independence and a portion of the surrounding country, the center of which seemed to be a little**

**When a group of individuals learn to walk continually in the Father's presence, a ring of fire will extend between them.**

southwest of where I was standing, on a high spot of ground ... 'I have sanctified all of the ground inside of this ring, and I will not suffer any person to live inside of this ring except those who keep the celestial law. Now mine elders shall receive an endowment, and it shall be the same endowment that Peter had when he judged Ananias and Sapphira.' I was given to understand that only such elders received this endowment as were chosen by the Holy Ghost at this time. 'Now all written law ceases on the inside of this ring, but on the outside it shall continue as it is. Now my judgment commences inside of this ring which is the judgment of the Holy Ghost, that no sin may escape. By the written law and the judgments of men, many guilty ones go unpunished and many of the innocent suffer. You read in my word that Zion shall be redeemed by judgment. Many of my elders misrepresent me in regard to my judgment. They say it is storms, pestilence, earthquakes, etc., but this is not what I mean. I mean the judgment of the Holy Ghost, and as you see Peter yonder judging Ananias and Sapphira by the Holy Ghost, so shall the judgment be here. Death is laid at the feet of every person'" (*Autumn Leaves*, December 1890; *Zion's Ensign*, August 8, 1901; *Infallible Proofs*, pp. 84-89),

For the testimony of the restored gospel to go forth in power, for Zion to be, and for Christ to have his bride, we must learn to know the Father and to walk meekly with him, in order to allow his presence to manifest unto the protecting and blessing of all within his Kingdom. †

# Giving Christ His Due

## Considering the Worthy Response

By Barbra Jordison

Everything about the gospel, and what is in scripture, is in support of God's desire for his Son to have a relationship and a family. His aim from the beginning was to see his Son united with a beloved bride in such a way that offspring would be delivered. This is true on two levels—with us as individuals, and corporately as his people, Israel.

Types/illustrations/examples throughout scripture testify how God seeks after us, what he hopes to provide for us, and what he desires will result from our combined love/joy over one another on both of these levels. His aim is never to be parted from us, and to experience our coming together consummated in great joy on each of these levels.

When the Hebrew community was formed, the intention all along was to ready us through a combination of our personal offering/yielding of self, and his anointing/sanctification of us in a way that would prepare us as his worthy bride. The much-anticipated exchanging of pleasure in one another (consummation) and the resulting child that would be born (a kingdom of faithful heirs), were the prize that motivated his endless pursuit. But first, a marriage was needed to set things in motion for developing a relationship that would offer promise, a period of preparation, ongoing hope and the support of family and community.

## The Hebrew Marriage Culture

Most of the Bible was originally written in Hebrew (*Understanding the Difficult Words of Jesus*, by David Bivin and Roy Blizzard, Jr.). Understanding the Hebrew culture out of which it was written is essential if we are to visualize the intended benefit of God's plan.

Authors John Klein and Adam Spears (*Lost in Translation*, Volume 1) are just some of the many modern scholars whose writings illustrate how the Torah (first five books of the Old Testament) is written as an ancient Hebrew marriage contract (Ketubah) between God and Abraham (the bride Israel's father). Sometimes called a "corporate covenant," the Torah binds the entire posterity of Abraham through Isaac/Jacob, as well as their heirs.

This marriage contract includes:

1. Genesis—a combined history of the bride and groom.
2. Exodus—the personal and family history of the bride, with detailed family trees and anecdotes.
3. Leviticus—the personal and family history of the groom, with detailed family trees and anecdotes.
4. Numbers—the story of how the bride and groom met. Here we see the story of God's love affair with his people in the wilderness, and a record of his joys and sorrows as he reaches out to his bride.
5. Deuteronomy—the details of the bride and groom's responsibilities before and after the wedding.

As mentioned in other articles featured in this issue of the *Beacon*, the ancient Hebrew marriage contracts are worked out between the families of the bride and groom over a shared meal. When both sides are satisfied, a scribe is brought in to write up the document. While the idea of a contract for marriage may seem somewhat calculating, the result is an intentional covenant to which

the bride and groom can joyfully give their consent. Friends and family of both the bride and the groom, understanding that promises were exchanged in the covenant process, are motivated to support/encourage them in honoring their respective commitments with faithfulness. The bride and the groom are aware that all choices relating to one another must be made in purity and love.

In the ancient wedding scenario we also find other parties with key roles, such as groomsmen and bridesmaids. In Matthew's parable of the five wise and five foolish virgins, we are given only a partial glimpse of what is expected from the bridesmaids, but we are given enough to reflect on what Jesus thought was key for us to consider (Matthew 25:1-12). Questions we need to answer in order to understand what is expected include: "What is the significance of the oil these bridesmaids need for their lamps?" and "Why are some of them shut out of the wedding party festivities, unacknowledged by the bridegroom?"

Let's examine that parable.

## A Wedding in Ancient Palestine

When the groom's father gives him permission to go get his chosen bride, a period of great excitement begins. By this time, the "marriage" has been in place for some time, but the festivities have not yet taken place. These only begin when the groomsmen noisily alert the community that the bridegroom is coming. There are, after all, no cell phones, email or television broadcasts to spread the news, and there is much work to be done! Someone must alert the bride, prepare the food, secure a room and gather the wedding party, and usher in the festivities with lit *lamps* (torches). All this will take place on the evening before any of the invited friends and family gather for the wedding itself.

Because the groom will make his appearance sometime between 6 p.m. and midnight, the festivities begin as darkness approaches. The bridesmaids serve as the welcoming party to the groom and his friends, all making their way to the location where they and the bride will be shut in for the next 5-10 hours. This wedding party will enjoy a private celebration prior to the more public wedding that will take place the next day. Because they are all virgins, those attending to the bride and groom would be unmarried. Let's face it; with that many single people together in the same

room, it may be exciting for even the possibility of getting better acquainted!

In Matthew's parable, the groom is delayed, making the hour late. The bridesmaids have all fallen asleep. For reasons untold, five of the maids have no oil in their flasks, and are unable to perform the relatively simple task of carrying lit torches. That light is not only needed to illuminate the pathway to the festivities, but it also signifies to the citizenry who are awake that the pending wedding is at hand. If guests were not alerted, and therefore did not attend the wedding, would the bride and groom be disappointed in the lack of initiative taken by their friends? Would their long anticipated day be overshadowed by sadness? Would less love be present at the festivities than was hoped for? Why would the late arrival of the five bridesmaids deprive them of entrance to the festivities shared only by close friends of the betrothed, with the groom declaring they were unknown to him?

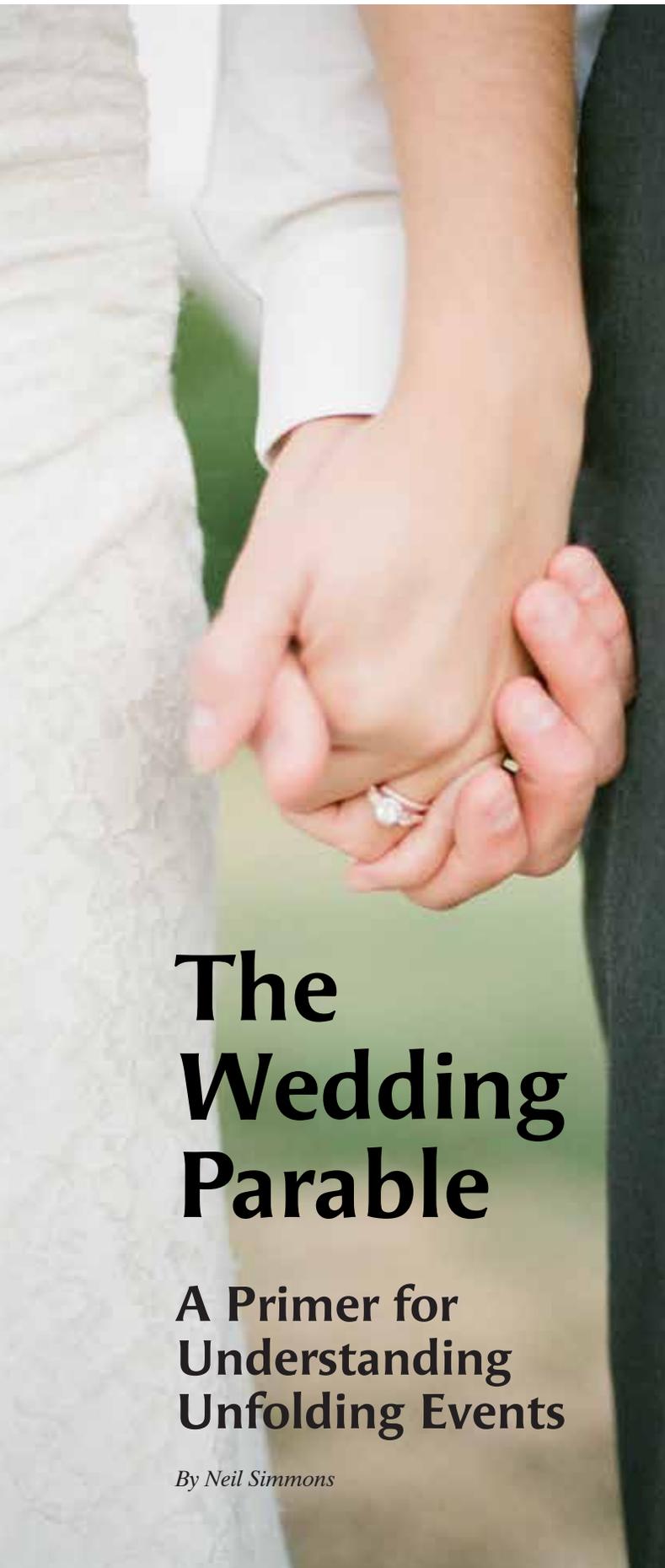
## What Due is Expected?

In the parable of the ten virgins we have a groom who has labored long to ready the place that will become the shared home with his bride. By his lateness, he has given the utmost opportunity to anyone who needs to make preparation for the wedding festivities—whether members of the wedding party or invited guests. Those in the bride's trusted circle neglected to perform the simplest of tasks, and diminished the announcement of the bridegroom's appearance by failing to illuminate the scene. Because of their misplaced priorities, they were excluded from the festivities reserved for the bride and groom's inner circle. Their hearts were essentially unrecognized by the groom who turned them away.

Throughout the history of the Restoration, we have received many testimonies that the hour grows late, indeed nearing midnight. Are your preparations in place? Do you know what the Lord expects of you? Do your priorities indicate your heart is aligned with the bridegroom with whom you wish to celebrate? Are you ready, always, to step forward when called; illuminating the way for others? Will you be recognized by the bridegroom who cometh?

This parable calls us to remember who we are, and to whom we are pledged. It is a call to introspection and a reminder of the magnificent redeemer to whom we are espoused by covenant. Let us not fail in readying our households and preparing our response in that great day of joy soon to overtake us. †

**Throughout the history of the Restoration, we have received many testimonies that the hour grows late, indeed nearing midnight. Are your preparations in place?**



# The Wedding Parable

## A Primer for Understanding Unfolding Events

*By Neil Simmons*

### Introduction

Throughout scripture are prominent and recurring references to the elements of a wedding. Although the wedding ceremony is a human institution, our Heavenly Father has chosen to use its customs as an analogy of latter day events. By understanding the wedding conventions of the Biblical period, we can better understand the many exciting and calamitous events prophesied for the last days. While the sequence of these events is not clearly understood, perhaps the wedding parable was given to guide us toward better understanding the events.

### Hebrew Marriage Customs

The people of the Hebrew nation had marriage ceremonies and customs that changed very little from the time of Abraham until the coming of Jesus. They were understood by everyone in the society. Indeed, the birth of Jesus causes us to be interested in these customs. For instance, the mother of Jesus was espoused to her husband Joseph, but they had not lived together as husband and wife. What were these ancient Hebraic customs?

In the scriptures, the prophets described the all-important relationships between God and mankind in the beautiful imagery of the wedding between man and woman. Jesus also appealed to the marriage customs of his time as a parable for events which were then taking place in Israel, and which would take place again at the end of time.

### Parables of Marriage in Scripture

Because of the stable and static quality of these ancient marriage customs, God can use them to communicate many important elements of his relationship with us. For instance, these scriptural marriage parables and related references:

- depict his relationship with his children as a covenant of love;
- describe how he relates to the House of Israel down through human history;
- use the marriage parable to motivate a more loving attitude toward God;
- certify that his covenant promises are faithful and true; and
- offer prophetic guidance to His people.

In considering the marriage parables, there are three particular elements of the ancient Biblical wedding.

First, the covenant between the fathers. This simply means that marriages were arranged by the fathers, and not by the bride and groom. They did not choose each other as is often done today, but rather they were chosen for each other, usually by their parents. The father of the bride agreed with the father of the groom to give his daughter in marriage. The covenant between the parents entailed making a pact or promise that involved penalties if broken, and rewards if kept.

Second, the betrothal (sometimes called the ketubah) happens when the groom decides that the time has come

for him to go to the father of his designated bride and give to him the bride price (not more than the value of 50 shekels of silver as set in the law). The groom also gives to the bride an offering of value which is non-refundable if something happens (for example the death of the groom before the actual marriage feast). This is called the “mattan.” When the ketubah is signed, the bride and groom are legally married, although they as yet have not consummated their marriage and still wait for the wedding to take place.

Third, the nuptials (the wedding feast), is the actual ceremony when the bride and groom consummate their marriage. This is a seven-day feast, held under the auspices of the father of the groom and usually at his house. It requires that there be two witnesses to stand before the assembled guests to certify to them that the marriage has been consummated.

All three of these steps have sub-elements of significance for us as we try to understand God’s plan for mankind. Since these three steps are separated by significant periods of time from each other, we can deduce that the parable of the marriage is given to us to illustrate the way God will work with his people down through time. Therefore, we envision there will be a time of the parents’ covenant, a time of the betrothal, and a time of the nuptials. These “types and shadows,” inherent in all aspects of the marriage customs, significantly inform our understanding of the scriptures.

## The Covenant of the Fathers

From scripture we understand our Heavenly Father is regarded as the father of the Bridegroom. The bride is of Abraham’s lineage, often called “the daughter of Zion.” Jesus refers to her as “my people with whom the Father has covenanted.”

Abraham was selected to give his “daughter” to the Son of God as his bride. God, the Father of the Bridegroom, makes covenant with Abraham (father of the bride), pledging that a special land would be promised to Abraham and his posterity in perpetuity. Abraham is also promised a posterity as numerous as the sands of the sea. This covenant is recorded in Genesis 5. To seal the agreement, a sacrifice is required from Abraham who chose to offer God four sacrifices: a heifer, a nanny goat, a ram and two birds. Dividing the animals in half and putting the two birds beside each other, Abraham offered them as his sacrificial token in response to God’s covenant. When God passed between the divided halves and between the birds, he certified to Abraham that he would keep his promise. The failure of Abraham’s posterity to keep their side of the covenant, however, resulted in the fulfillment of the symbolism of the sacrifices that Abraham offered God, causing each to experience division/separation.

Each of the animals Abraham offered in sacrifice had symbolic significance for the posterity of Abraham. For example, the heifer is a symbol of the house of Joseph;

it would be divided in half as the tribes of Ephraim and Manasseh (Genesis 33:17). There would be a division between “Ephraim,” the kingdom of Israel, and Judah.

The female goat is a symbol of the regular people of the House of Israel. On the Day of Atonement, two female goats are brought before the High Priest who, putting his hands on the heads of the goats, symbolically transfers the sins of the people upon the two animals; one of which is consumed by fire, and the other cast out to wander in the ‘Wilderness of Sin’ until it perishes. It is noteworthy that the House of Israel divided the promised land into a northern kingdom and a southern kingdom. The northern kingdom was dispersed into all the world, giving rise to the term, “the ten lost tribes of Israel.” The southern kingdom, Judah, was reserved for the Holocaust of the twentieth century wherein Hitler tried to murder and burn every Jew in the world.

The ram is obviously a symbol of the coming Savior, Jesus Christ. He is offered as a sacrifice, dividing his spirit from his body on the cross. Remember, the special son of Abraham, Isaac (and Jacob/Israel) were spared being sacrificed because God provided the ram.

The fourth symbol is that of the two birds, which are not divided but placed side by side. The dove was a symbol of innocence before God, as demonstrated by the dove that descended upon Jesus at the time of his baptism. The pigeon was the symbolic means to give thanks to God when a child was born and to purify its mother. Jesus makes an application to the pigeon when he tells Nicodemus that one enters the Kingdom of God by being reborn, that invokes the image of the pigeon. The dove symbolizes the innocence from sin and the pigeon signifies the purification of the church.

The sacrificial offering of Abraham had prophetic significance, for when God accepted the covenant offering of Abraham, he signified what was going to happen to Abraham’s posterity so that the covenant of marriage could be honored between God’s son and Abraham’s daughter. In spite of the failure of the House of Israel to abide by the covenants they made with God, our Heavenly Father did not abandon his parental agreement with Father Abraham. Jesus would yet be the bridegroom; the daughter of Zion would still become his bride, she needing to learn faithfulness and to love her designated husband above all others. But the promise was sure, the wedding would take place!

## The Betrothal

Jesus invoked the marriage parables of scripture when he spoke of himself as the bridegroom (Mark 2; see also John 3). If Jesus is scripturally regarded as the bridegroom, then the church is regarded as his bride.

Paul, when writing to the church in Corinth (2 Corinthians 11; see also Ephesians 5 and Acts 20), said that he has “espoused you (the church) to one husband, that I may present you as a chaste virgin to Christ.”

In order for Jesus to betroth the church, two factors

must apply. First, there must be a church for him to marry. Jesus affirmed to his apostles that he would build his own church (Matthew 16). Furthermore, we know that the church existed before Jesus's death, because on the day of Pentecost there were added to the church thousands of new members.

Second, Jesus would have to give the "father of the bride (the representative of Father Abraham) a gift that had the same value as 50 shekels of silver. Without the payment of a bride price there can be no betrothal. This gift had to be given to the representative of the bride's father, the High Priest of the Jews. To accomplish this, Jesus allowed his representative, Judas, to go to the representatives of Father Abraham, the High Priests in the Temple, to negotiate with them what they demanded. They demanded Jesus' betrayal and death. Putting a value on it, they determined that his death had a value of 432 grams of silver (fifty shekels) by paying Judas 30 silver coins.

Jesus pays the bride price because he accepts being betrayed and accepts death. Judas does not keep the money but casts away the coins, whose only value in this story is to demonstrate that the purchase price was the death of Jesus, and it was valued at exactly what the bride price was legally required to be (Deuteronomy 22:17).

## The Nuptials

For us, the most interesting part of the parables of the wedding is the feast, or the nuptials. This stage of the wedding process has not yet happened, but is near at hand. It begins when the bridegroom "remembers" the covenant of the fathers, and sets himself the task of fulfilling the final step of the marriage. In 3 Nephi, Jesus made a remarkable promise:

**...then fulfilleth the Father the covenant which he made with Abraham... And I will remember the covenant which I have made with my people, and I have covenanted with them that I would gather them together in my own due time (3 Nephi 9:65-68).**

Those words given to the Nephites at Bountiful have literally been fulfilled, and his people have been both gathered back to the true gospel teachings, and to the land of Jerusalem. We can identify the actual dates when these events happened. The restoration of the gospel and its authority began in 1830, and the return of the House of Israel to the land of Jerusalem became a reality in 1948. The time of the nuptials is at hand. †

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for future reference.

# The Four Seeds

*By Joel Loving*

**S**eeds are multipliers. If you plant them, they will multiply. Just as a seed grows into a tree which blossoms and produces much fruit, if you will put a seed into practice it will become something eternally edifying for not only you, but for the Lord and His people. The priesthood must plant seeds which prepare them to nurture and raise up God's people unto righteousness.

## Seed 1: Pursue Christ with Relentless Diligence

At the heart of all that we are doing is Jesus Christ. He is the greatest truth of all time. Through your relationship with him, you will find amazing insight. If you can lose yourself in that, wonderful things are in store.

Alma 17:9-19 records probably one of the biggest comebacks in all history. If you will recall, Alma and some buddies were going around persecuting the church and making fun of the people. An angel came and had some things to say about that—they were stopped in their tracks. After the angel admonished that if they didn't want to destroy themselves then they should no more seek to destroy the church, Alma tells us this:

**"I was struck with such great fear and amazement, lest perhaps I should be destroyed, that I fell to the earth, and I did hear no more; But I was racked with eternal torment, for my soul was harrowed up to the greatest degree, and racked with all my sins.**

**Yea, I did remember all my sins and iniquities, for which I was tormented with the pains of hell; Yea, I saw that I had rebelled against my God, and that I had not kept his holy commandments; yea, and I had murdered many of his children, or rather led them away unto destruction; Yea, and in fine, so great had been my iniquities, that the very thoughts of coming into the presence of my God, did rack my soul with inexpressible horror.**

**O, thought I, that I could be banished and become extinct both soul and body, that I might not be**

## An Admonition to the Priesthood (and Saints)

brought to stand in the presence of my God, to be judged of my deeds. And now, for three days and for three nights was I racked, even with the pains of a damned soul. And it came to pass that as I was thus racked with torment, while I was harrowed up by the memory of my many sins, behold, I remembered also to have heard my father prophesy unto the people, concerning the coming of one Jesus Christ, a Son of God, to atone for the sins of the world.

Now as my mind caught hold upon this thought, I cried within my heart, O Jesus, thou Son of God, have mercy on me, who art in the gall of bitterness, and art encircled about by the everlasting chains of death.

Imagine the extreme desperation of this cry and how you would think it was all over. He's in trouble here and he knows it; literally in a place between life on earth and an eternal death without salvation. Then he remembers Jesus:

And now behold, when I thought this, I could remember my pains no more; yea, I was harrowed by the memory of my sins no more. And O, what joy, and what marvelous light I did behold; yea, my soul was filled with joy as exceeding as was my pain; yea, I say unto you, my son, that there could be nothing so exquisite and so bitter as were my pains. Yea, and again I say unto you, my son, that on the other hand, there can be nothing so exquisite and sweet as was my joy.

As one of the seeds, you are to develop one of the highest standards of study, prayer and fasting that you can muster. Through that, plead with God for his inclusion and transformation in your heart and your mind. You will be visited, you will recognize and perceive and discern our holy heavenly father as he reveals himself to you. Pursue it with unrelenting diligence!

### Seed 2: You are to Be Taught From on High

It is the Holy Spirit that is the great teacher and whom you are really seeking. You are to be taught from on high.

[www.conferenceofbranches.org](http://www.conferenceofbranches.org)

Listen to this great truth from Matthew 16:16-20:

He said unto them, But whom say ye that I am? And Simon Peter answered and said, Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God. And Jesus answered and said unto him, Blessed art thou, Simon Bar-Jona; for flesh and blood hath not revealed this unto thee, but my Father who is in heaven. And I say also unto thee, That thou art Peter; and upon this rock I will build my church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it. And I will give unto thee the keys of the kingdom of heaven; and whatsoever thou shalt bind on earth, shall be bound in heaven; and whatsoever thou shalt loose on earth, shall be loosed in heaven.

In Matthew 3:24-25 it says, "And it came to pass that Jesus grew up with his brethren, and waxed strong, and waited upon the Lord for the time of his ministry to come. And he served under his father, and he spake not as other men, neither could he be taught; for he needed not that any man should teach him." Who taught him? It was the Holy Spirit.

There are many good books and authors to study, but make no mistake; it is the Holy Spirit which must be your teacher. In the Sermon on the Mount Jesus said, "blessed are all they that do hunger and thirst after righteousness; for they shall be filled with the Holy Ghost." To hunger after righteousness, simply pray for the desire of righteousness and to have holy desires. That is a solid prayer. I know. He has answered my prayers when I asked to not be deceived or misled; to know the truth. I wonder what he will answer you if you honestly say, "I would like to have holy desires take over my heart."

### Seed 3: Learn All You Can About God's Covenants

Do you ever wonder why the world is in so much turmoil? Is this what God wanted? Knowing God, trusting and having faith in him, he made a way for us to negotiate the travails and challenges of life in order to make

it to him, and to enlightenment and revelation. It is in the covenants he keeps making with these holy prophets; they get close to him, he meets with them, he reveals to them divine insights, and they end up making these covenants with Him. Seek out the covenants—they are key. This Book of Mormon is one of these covenants.

Listen carefully to D&C 1:4a-e: “Wherefore I the Lord, knowing the calamity which should come upon the inhabitants of the earth”—something calamitous is going to happen. So he called upon Joseph Smith “and spake unto him from heaven, and gave him commandments, and also gave commandments to others, that they should proclaim these things unto the world; and all this that it might be fulfilled, which was written by the prophets; the weak things of the world shall come forth and break down the mighty and strong ones, that man should not counsel his fellow man, neither trust in the arm of flesh that every man might speak in the name of God the Lord, even the Savior of the world; that faith also might increase in the earth; that mine everlasting covenant might be established; that the fullness of my gospel might be proclaimed by the weak and the simple, unto the ends of the world.” In the days that are coming, the Spirit will work directly with you. You will not have to hear someone else say things and test it, you will know directly from the Holy Spirit.

Our brethren and sisters in other denominations do not believe they need the Book of Mormon. But this book is for them as well, and we should understand how this all fits together and what the fullness of the gospel is. They would say to you, “Wait a second. We have the gospel. We have faith. We believe in Jesus. We have been saved. We are going to live with him in paradise. What’s better than that?” I would answer, the fullness of the gospel!

Genesis talks about the everlasting covenant that God made with Enoch: “that, when men should keep all my commandments, Zion should again come on the earth, the city of Enoch which I have caught up unto myself. And this is mine everlasting covenant, that when thy posterity shall embrace the truth, and look upward, then shall Zion look downward, and all the heavens shall shake with gladness, and the earth shall tremble with joy. And the general assembly of the church of the firstborn shall come down out of heaven, and possess the earth, and shall have place until the end come. And this is mine everlasting covenant, which I made with thy father Enoch” (Genesis 9:21-23). Do you know why the heavens are shaking and the earth is trembling? It’s because they are moving!

D&C 108:11a says, “And for this cause, that men might be made partakers of the glories which were to be revealed, the Lord sent forth the fullness of his gospel, his everlasting covenant, reasoning in plainness and simplicity, to prepare the weak for those things which are coming on the earth.” If we compare the fullness of the gospel with the covenant to restore Israel in D&C 39:3e, “Thou shalt preach the fullness of my gospel

which I have sent forth in these last days; the covenant which I have sent forth to recover my people, which are of the house of Israel,” we see how this is all wrapped up together. “Behold, this is wisdom in me; wherefore marvel not, for the hour cometh that I will drink of the fruit of the vine with you on the earth, and with Moroni, whom I have sent unto you to reveal the Book of Mormon, containing the fullness of my everlasting gospel” (D&C 26:2a).

So why is this Book of Mormon so critical? It is the key to heaven returning to earth so that Jesus may reign in our midst! Jesus will be walking in our midst—and not just Jesus, your parents and great grandparents that have passed on! These are your ancestors, even Moses or Abraham or Enoch. In the March *Beacon* you read a testimony from the 2016 U.S. conference in which the city of Enoch was seen eagerly yearning to return and be with you. This is where God gets what he’s wanted, what he’s been planning all along. The greatest sculptor, the greatest artist, the greatest creator, the greatest who will ever be has come up with this amazing end-time story which will be culminated as we accept and follow the covenants that bring to pass his freedom to make those occur. Is that not amazing?! Other faiths have Jesus, but they do not have this story about the return of heaven like we do as part of the Restoration, and yet we let our precious scriptures sit unread on our shelves.

## Seed 4: In the Pure Love of Christ Find Your Way into Hearts and Homes

This is a lost practice in the Restoration. Priesthood often struggle with this. I say this lovingly, but it’s hard for priesthood to even get into the homes. Is there a righteous reason why we are not allowed in the homes? Are the houses not clean enough? Does it make them too uncomfortable or they do not want to stop watching their favorite TV shows? I do not know. You need to find a way to get in their hearts and get in their homes. This will multiply your ministry many times over and add to it. You are going to do many other things in time, but for starters work on just getting into the hearts and homes of God’s people. What goes on in the growth of priesthood’s ministry and in the lives of the members will have a lot to do with priesthood visiting in the homes.

We are all recipients of these seeds at some point or another. We’ve all benefited from these promises. We want to honor God and praise him for who we are becoming. You have God’s DNA—it’s in you, this spiritual promise that will unfold as you develop these principles and others. There is an exciting road before you. May we all be blessed as we follow that light and pursue Jesus Christ is my prayer. †

## Answers to Textual Criticisms of the Book of Mormon

By Jon Tandy

### 13. Plan of salvation known before Christ

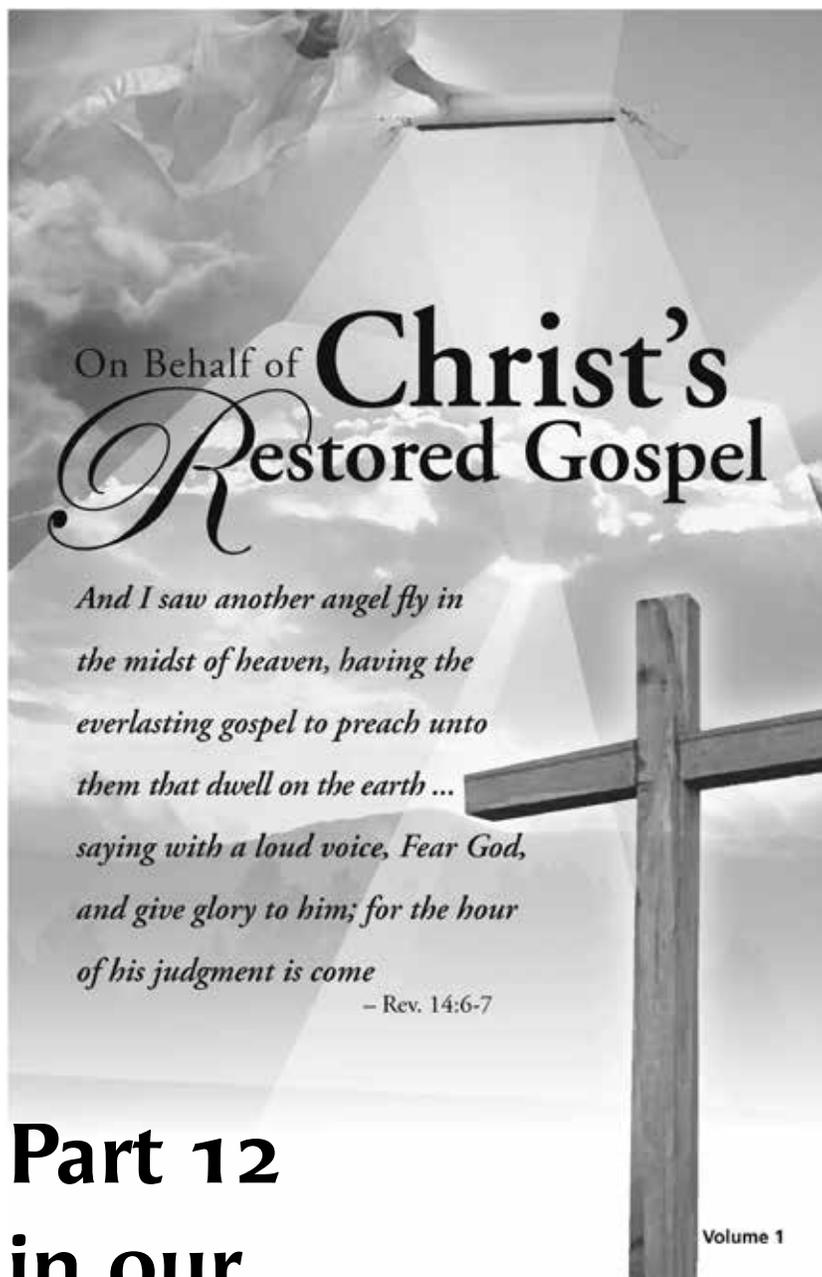
A contradiction is alleged to exist between Ephesians 3:4-6 and the Book of Mormon statement that the plan of salvation was revealed before the coming of Christ (Jarom 1:3-4).

The comparison is not valid. The Book of Mormon mentions the phrase “plan of salvation,” whereas the Bible does not use this term even once. What Ephesians 3:4-6 actually says is that the “mystery of Christ” was not made known unto the sons of men “as it is now revealed unto his holy apostles and prophets by the Spirit; that the Gentiles should be fellow heirs, and of the same body, and partakers of his promise in Christ by the gospel.”

Certainly, the appearance of Jesus Christ in the flesh on the Earth, the calling of twelve apostles, and the incorporation of Gentile believers into one body had never been revealed to men in the same manner prior to Jesus’ birth. Men had never actually witnessed the fulfillment of these marvelous events, as the Apostles and early Christians were allowed to witness them. But it is fallacious to say that such promises and the gospel of salvation had never been made known before Jesus’ birth through revelation to the prophets.

Noah was a preacher of righteousness (2 Peter 2:5). The gospel, including justification by faith, was preached to Abraham (Galatians 3:6-18). Salvation was available to those who lived before Christ (Psalm 18:35, 46; Isaiah 12:2; 43:3, 11). Paul also declared that the scriptures that Timothy had possessed from his youth, the Old Testament, were able to make one wise unto salvation through Christ Jesus (2 Timothy 3:15). According to the New Testament writers, the “gospel of Christ ... is the power of God unto salvation” (Romans 1:16). Jesus is the only name under heaven whereby mankind can be saved (Acts 4:12).

This being the case, how could the gospel have been revealed before Christ and yet have been called a “mystery”? In Romans 16:25-26, Paul made the following statement: “the preaching of Jesus Christ, according to the revelation of the mystery, which was kept secret since the world began, but now is made manifest, and by the scriptures of the prophets, according to the commandment of the everlast-



## Part 12 in our continuing series

ing God, made known to all nations for the obedience of faith.”

The mystery that was “kept secret” had already been manifest by the “scriptures of the prophets.” In this verse, it is clear that just because something is described as a mystery, it does not follow that no one knew about it. It had been revealed by the prophets, but many of the people did not fully understand it, through lack of faith or lack of training in understanding such mysteries.

The Book of Mormon prophets also revealed truths to their people, which were later revealed openly to all the world after the coming of Christ. The fact that they revealed the plan of salvation is in keeping with their role as prophets, even as it was for those in the Old Testament.

#### *14. Mulek brought to America*

The Book of Mormon claims that Mulek, one of the sons of King Zedekiah, was spared and came to the New World. This group became known as the “Mulekites” in the Book of Mormon narrative. “Will ye say that the sons of Zedekiah were not slain, all except it were Mulek” (Helaman 3:56)? The Bible records that the sons of Zedekiah were slain, with no apparent mention of any survivors (Jeremiah 39:6).

The Hebrew word “MLK” (ancient Hebrew contained no vowels), which is equivalent to Mulek, means “king.” Biblical evidence indicates that Mulek could have been an infant son of Zedekiah, protected by the king’s daughters (Jeremiah 43:5-7). In the Hebrew culture, an infant male child was not counted among the sons until he was weaned (Numbers 31:7-9, 17; Numbers 16:27; Deuteronomy 20:13-14). A similar occurrence happened with young Joash almost 300 years earlier. The Bible records that Athaliah, the mother of Ahaziah, “destroyed all the seed royal.” Yet Ahaziah’s sister, Jehosheba, took Joash “and stole him from among the king’s sons which were slain; and they hid him, even him and his nurse, in the bedchamber from Athaliah, so that he was not slain” (2 Kings 11:1-2; also 2 Chronicles 22:10-12). This verse shows that even though the Bible says Zedekiah’s sons were slain, the language employed does not necessarily require every living son to have been killed.

Further evidence is suggested from 2 Kings 25:1-10, where it is reported that Nebuchadnezzar and “all his host” scattered “all the men” and “all [Zedekiah’s] army”; they burned “all the houses of Jerusalem,” and with “all the army” they destroyed the walls. In the midst of all this passage, however, 2 Kings 25:7 (also Jeremiah 39:6 and Jeremiah 52:10) omits the word “all” when it reports simply that “the sons of Zedekiah” were killed, reinforcing the possibility that not all of his sons were necessarily slain. Recently, scholars have suggested other biblical and archaeological evidence confirming that a son of Zedekiah named Mulek may have survived the slaughter of Nebuchadnezzar (John W. Welch, ed., *Reexploring the Book of Mormon* (Salt Lake City, Utah: Deseret Book Company, 1992), 142-144).

Zedekiah had chosen to rebel against the king of Babylon and to put his trust in deliverance from the king of Egypt, despite the prophetic warnings of Jeremiah (Jeremiah 37:4-10; 42:7-19; 2 Chronicles 36:11-17). Ezekiel had also delivered a parable against Zedekiah, warning that Zedekiah’s trust in Egypt would result in his being carried captive to Babylon (Ezekiel 17). Part of Ezekiel’s prophecy was that the Lord would “crop off from the top of his young twigs a tender one, and will plant it upon an high mountain and eminent: in the mountain of the height of Israel will I plant it: and it shall bring forth boughs, and bear fruit, and be a goodly cedar.” (Ezekiel 17:22-23). This may refer to a descendant of Zedekiah being carried away from the land of Israel and developing into a great nation.

The Book of Mormon’s assertion that a son of Zedekiah could have survived the slaughter and come to the New World is not contradictory to the biblical record.

#### *15. Holy Ghost given before day of Pentecost*

The Book of Mormon speaks of people receiving the Holy Spirit before Christ, yet John 7:39 says, “But this spake he of the Spirit, which they that believe on him should receive; for the Holy Ghost was not yet given, because Jesus was not yet glorified.” Mrs. Hansen references Acts 2 as the fulfillment of this prophecy.

Her criticisms on this point are easily answered by the early Christian Fathers.

**Just because something is described as a mystery, it does not follow that no one knew about it. It had been revealed by the prophets, but many of the people did not fully understand it ...**

They believed that the Holy Ghost, or Holy Spirit, had been given to Saints who lived before Christ. Using the fact that “Christ” in Greek means “anointed,” they demonstrated the antiquity of the Christian gospel by showing that the ancient prophets, kings, and righteous men were anointed, just as the Christians after Jesus (Tertullian, “On Baptism,” Ch. 7, qtd. in *Ante-Nicene Fathers* 3:672).

Eusebius wrote in *History of the Church*,

**All these [righteous who lived before Christ], whose righteousness won them commendation, going back from Abraham himself to the first man, might be described as Christians in fact if not in name without departing far from the truth ... Hence, you will find that those men, God’s beloved, were even honored with the appellation of Christ, according to the word which says of them: “Touch not my Christs, and among my prophets commit no mischief.” [reference to “anointed” in Psalm 105:15]. Obviously we must regard the religion proclaimed in recent years to all nations through Christ’s teaching as none other than the first, most ancient, and most primitive of all religions, discovered by Abraham and his followers, God’s beloved (Eusebius, *History of the Church*, Vol. 1, Ch. 4).**

Does Jesus’ statement in John 7:39 mean that no person before the Resurrection had ever received the Spirit of God? Clearly, this is not the case. According to John, the disciples received the Spirit before the day of Pentecost (John 20:22). Ezekiel, David, Bezaleel, Jehaziel, and Zechariah were filled with the Spirit of God (Ezekiel 2:2; Psalm 51:11-12; Exodus 31:3; 2 Chronicles 20:14; 24:20), as were Joshua (Numbers 27:18), Moses and the seventy elders (Numbers 11:17), and many others.

“The Spirit of the Lord came upon David from that day forward” (1 Samuel 16:13), and David expressed his trust in God that he wouldn’t be separated from the Spirit (Psalm 139:7-10). The prophets had the Spirit within them (Nehemiah 9:30; Isaiah 63:11), including Micah who was filled with the Spirit (Micah 3:8), as indeed were all the prophets who wrote the inspired word of God (1 Peter 1:11; 2 Peter 1:21).

No person can know the things of God but through the Spirit (1 Corinthians 2:11). Moses indicated that all the Lord’s people should be prophets, and that the Lord would put His Spirit on them (Numbers

11:29). This promise is given to all faithful servants of God who hunger and thirst after righteousness (Isaiah 44:1-6; Matthew 5:6). Was there a different Holy Spirit given to Old Testament Saints than the Holy Spirit promised by Jesus in John 7:39? If so, how can God have two Spirits, since the Bible says there is only one Spirit? (1 Corinthians 12:11-13; Ephesians 2:18; 4:4).

It is clear that Jesus’ statement in John 7:39 cannot be taken to mean that no one had ever received the Holy Spirit before Christ, and thus there is no contradiction between the Book of Mormon and the Bible on this point.

#### *16. Promise of Gentiles becoming one with Jews given before Christ*

The Book of Mormon contains a prophecy that the believing Gentiles would be “numbered among the house of Israel” (1 Nephi 3:201-202). Mrs. Hansen claims that this contradicts Ephesians 3:1-9, which says that this mystery “in other ages was not made known unto the sons of men, as it is now revealed.”

Apparently, she intends to say that no biblical prophet had ever spoken concerning the conversion of the Gentiles. If so, then the apostle Paul must have been mistaken. He quoted several Old Testament prophecies to prove that this promise was “made unto the fathers” concerning the acceptance of the Gentiles by Jesus Christ and their union with the Jewish people (Romans 15:8-12). The promise of Gentiles being added to Israel had been made known before Christ (Isaiah 14:1; 49:6-8, 22-26; 56:6-7; 61:5-11, Jeremiah 12:14-17; Ezekiel 47:21-23; Zechariah 2:11).

The fact that the Book of Mormon prophets declared the same things as Old Testament prophets provides confirmation, rather than contradiction, with the biblical record.

#### *17. Brother of Jared redeemed because Christ showed himself to him*

Mrs. Hansen objects to Ether 1:76, saying that the brother of Jared was redeemed “because Christ showed himself to him.” This criticism is faulty, because the scripture has been misinterpreted. When the passage is taken as a whole, it is clear that the brother of Jared’s salvation, and the manifestation of Jesus to him, came about because of his great faith. This agrees with the teaching of evangelical Christianity, that men are saved by “grace through faith” (Ephesians 2:8).

**Was there a different Holy Spirit given to Old Testament Saints than the Holy Spirit promised by Jesus in John 7:39? If so, how can God have two Spirits, since the Bible says there is only one Spirit?**

### 18. Familiar spirits

In the Book of Mormon, Nephi quotes Isaiah 29 and relates it to his people and the record that he was writing. He says that these writings would eventually come forth to the people in the last days. Those of his people “who shall be destroyed shall speak unto them out of the ground, and their speech shall be low out of the dust, and their voice shall be as one that hath a familiar spirit” (2 Nephi 11:84). This passage is criticized by opponents because they say that “familiar spirits” always refers to witchcraft, and that familiar spirits are universally condemned in the Bible.

The term “familiar spirit” in Isaiah 29:4 is word 178 (“owb”) in the Strong’s Hebrew and Chaldee Dictionary. It is defined as follows: “from the same as [word] 1, apparently through the idea of prattling a father’s name; properly, a mumble, i.e., a water-skin, from its hollow sound; hence a necromancer (ventriloquist, as from a jar).” The word is translated as “bottle” in Job 32:19, clearly not a reference to witchcraft at all. The comparison with word 1 (“ab”) may also be instructive: “‘Father’ in a literal and immediate, or figurative and remote application” (Strong’s Exhaustive Concordance of the Bible, Hebrew word numbers 1 “ab” and 178 “owb”).

The word “owb,” as used in many verses, refers to such things as mediums, who call up (or pretend to call up) the spirits of deceased individuals. The Bible condemns such activity. One example is the witch of Endor, who appears to have conjured up the spirit of Samuel (1 Samuel 28:7-20). However, Isaiah 29 does not make any reference to witchcraft, except possibly by indirect comparison. It simply conveys the idea that the deceased “fathers,” inhabitants of Jerusalem who would be destroyed according to Isaiah’s prophecy, would somehow “mumble” from the ground and deliver their words to their posterity in some unspecified way.

This verse is a form of Hebraism called “immediate repetition,” a style of writing in which the same idea is repeated several times in slightly different words. The words of Israel’s inhabitants would speak “out of the ground,” whisper “out of the dust,” with their voice “as [similar to] one that hath a familiar spirit.” In this context, Isaiah is not saying that these deceased inhabitants of Jerusalem would be involved in witchcraft. Isaiah’s reference to a “familiar spirit” simply speaks by analogy to describe the collec-

tive voice of Israel after experiencing God’s judgment. Their words would speak to future generations after they were in the grave, or as it were “out of the dust.”

Nephi’s interpretation of Isaiah’s prophecy is consistent with the biblical context. Those of Nephi’s generation, who were led from Jerusalem to escape its destruction, left their testimony in a book that was buried in the ground—a book that would speak to future generations. Thus, the Book of Mormon claims no association whatever with familiar spirits, except in the single characteristic that familiar spirits were historically thought to whisper out of the ground. The Book of Mormon was a record of the Jews, which literally came out of the ground, being translated by the gift and power of God, thus fulfilling Isaiah’s prophecy.

### 19. Jews gathered back after knowledge of redeemer

A promise is given in the Book of Mormon that those tribes of Israel that were scattered will be gathered back when they come to a knowledge of their redeemer (2 Nephi 5:29). It is claimed that this prophecy has already failed because the nation of Israel was established in 1948, but a majority of the Jews have not come to belief in Christ. This is a misunderstanding of the Book of Mormon verse, and if true, the same criticism applies to several Bible prophecies also.

The Book of Mormon’s statement on this subject refers to the house of Israel, which encompasses all the tribes of Israel. The gathering that has taken place in Israel during the past century has been remarkable, but it is not the full extent of gathering that both the Bible and the Book of Mormon predict. As such, the majority of the prophecy’s fulfillment is still in the future. Yet, it should also be noted that at the present time in Israel there is a large movement of Messianic Jews who do know Jesus Christ as their Messiah and Redeemer.

The restoration of Israel is a central theme in the Book of Mormon, as it was in the ministry of Joseph Smith. In 1832, Joseph Smith prophesied that Orson Hyde would have a work to perform among the Jews. “In due time thou shalt go to Jerusalem, the land of thy fathers, and be a watchman unto the house of Israel; and by thy hand shall the Most High do a great work, which shall prepare the way and greatly facilitate the gathering together of that people” (*Documentary*

Those of Nephi’s generation, who were led from Jerusalem to escape its destruction, left their testimony in a book that was buried in the ground—a book that would speak to future generations.

*History of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints* (Salt Lake City, Utah: Deseret Book Company, 1902-1932), 4:31). In 1840, Apostle Orson Hyde declared that he had recently been moved upon by the Spirit, having received a vision that he should now go to Jerusalem and pray for the return of the Jews and the restoration of their land. Apostle Hyde did make this trip, and on October 24, 1841, he offered an inspiring prayer on the Mount of Olives (*History of the Reorganized Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints* (Independence, Missouri: Herald Publishing House, 1896), 2:446-447, 533-536, 552-556). Within a year, according to one Jewish rabbi, the rains returned to the land, helping it become more productive (Henry Schaefer, *I Will Be With You Always* (n.p., 1978), 53). Soon after, Lebanon became “probably the most productive region in Asiatic Turkey in proportion to its area” (Lebanon,” *Encyclopedia Britannica* 11th edition (1911) and 13th edition (1926), in fulfillment of the prophecy in Isaiah 29:17.

The Book of Mormon promise should not be taken to mean that no Israelite will be gathered to Israel without first believing in Jesus Christ. If so, then the same standard applied to the Bible reveals a similar failure of prophecy. Ezekiel 36, which is given as evidence in this regard by the critics, contains the following statement: “Thus saith the Lord God; In the day that I shall have cleansed you from all your iniquities I will also cause you to dwell in the cities, and the wastes shall be builded” (Ezekiel 36:33).

This implies that before, or at least at the same time as, the Israelites are restored to their cities, they will be cleansed of their iniquities. Certainly Israel has not been cleansed from all her iniquities, because as a nation it has not repented of its rejection of Jesus Christ. Yet some Israelites have dwelled in Jerusalem and other cities of the land for more than half a century. Other biblical prophecies run into the same difficulty.

**And a highway shall be there, and a way, and it shall be called the way of holiness; the unclean shall not pass over it; but it shall be for those: the wayfaring men, though fools, shall not err therein. No lion shall be there, nor any ravenous beast shall go up thereon, it shall not be found there; but the redeemed shall walk there; And the**

**ransomed of the Lord shall return, and come to Zion (Isaiah 35:8-10; see also Isaiah 11:16).**

**Art thou not it which hath dried the sea, the waters of the great deep; that hath made the depths of the sea a way for the ransomed to pass over? Therefore the redeemed of the Lord shall return, and come with singing unto Zion; and everlasting joy shall be upon their head; they shall obtain gladness and joy; and sorrow and mourning shall flee away (Isaiah 51:10-11).**

**And I will strengthen the house of Judah, and I will save the house of Joseph, and I will bring them again to place them ... I will hiss for them, and gather them; for I have redeemed them ... And I will sow them among the people; and they shall remember me in far countries; and they shall live with their children, and turn again. I will bring them again also out of the land of Egypt, and gather them out of Assyria; and I will bring them into the land of Gilead and Labanon; and place shall not be found for them. And he shall pass through the sea with affliction, and shall smite the waves in the sea, and all the deeps of the river shall dry up; and the pride of Assyria shall be brought down, and the sceptre of Egypt shall depart away. And I will strengthen them in the Lord; and they shall walk up and down in his name, saith the Lord (Zechariah 10:6-12).**

These verses agree that a highway of some kind will allow scattered Israel to return to Zion. Those who come will already have been “redeemed” before they travel. In fact, according to prophecy, no one who is “unclean” will pass over this highway, implying that all those who travel to Zion would already have come to a knowledge of their Savior.

This agrees with 2 Nephi 5:29. Israel will be gathered in a miraculous way. The events in Israel during recent decades have been remarkable, as the descendants of Jacob have returned to their land in large numbers, established a nation of Israel again, and obtained the city of Jerusalem. However, millions of Israelites still live outside the nation of Israel. All of these prophecies are pointing to an even greater gathering that will be far more marvelous. If not, then the Bible’s prophecies have already failed, in the same manner as alleged by critics against the Book of Mormon. †

**Israel will be gathered in a miraculous way. The events in Israel during recent decades have been remarkable, as the descendants of Jacob have returned to their land in large numbers, established a nation of Israel again, and obtained the city of Jerusalem.**

# It's Time to Get to Work

*By Sherman Phipps*

**H**ow well are you acquainted with God? It takes a while sometimes to have experiences and to really get acquainted with him—to know how God works in your life. Unfortunately, we are living in a time when public discussions about God are often discouraged because we may offend someone. The answer to that question, however, is important if we are to be prepared for the return of Christ. I want to share a few experiences from my life.

I was always the smallest guy in my class. Because of that there were a lot of things I worried about and a lot of things I was afraid of. Belonging to this church and saying to my classmates, “Yeah, I believe there is a God” didn’t always get the positive reaction I hoped it would. Some of my classmates would pick on me so I didn’t particularly like going to school because I knew what was going to happen there.

There were a lot of other things that worried me too. Because I was little I didn’t feel like I could take care of myself. I learned early on to take those worries to God and ask him for help. I found out early in life that he really does hear our prayers and he really does care about what’s going on in our lives.

One time my arm got caught between two cars. I could hear it break. By the time I got home it was all swollen up and looked like a grapefruit with little things sticking out of it. Boy did it hurt. I asked my wife if she would pray for me. We knelt and while she prayed I could feel the pain leaving my arm. By the time she finished the prayer the swelling was gone, and my arm didn’t hurt anymore. I never did go to the doctor because it was fine. The Lord can do that when he wants to.

Another time I got myself in a jam because I shouldn’t have been driving the way I was driving. Very quickly I had to decide whether I was going to run into another car or run off the road. I chose to drive into the ditch, except that when I yanked the steering wheel over, all of a sudden there were three lanes of highway instead of two like there had always been before. I drove down the road in the third lane until I got around everybody and then pulled back over into my lane. As I drove on down the road a little way I thought, ‘Wow, that third lane has never been there before.’ I turned around and went back. Sure enough, there were just two lanes all the way back to town just like there had always been. God put a third lane in for me when I needed it. He can do anything and he’s willing to do anything for us if

we just ask him and if we live day-to-day as though we really do want to be his children.

Another time I was in Texas on my motorcycle. I had one of my grandsons with me who was 16 years old at the time. He was sitting on the back when a car pulled in front of us and stopped. Traveling at nearly 60 mph, there was no place for us to go. We drove right through that car and touched neither the car nor the driver. We just drove through it and went right on down the road. The Lord knows what’s coming up before you do. He knows what you’re going to have to deal with and what you’re going to need his help with. If you work at being faithful to God, he will look out for you.

Saints, this God that you’ve said you are going to serve and worship is very real. There have been times when what he’s specifically told me to do is for my sake and sometimes it’s been for the sake of others.

One night I went home really late from a church activity. I was just getting ready to go to bed and suddenly felt like I should go out to a friend’s house in the country because he needed help. Then I thought, “That’s silly. Where did that thought come from?” I started to go ahead and get into bed when the phone rang. It was another friend of mine and he said, “The Spirit just told me our friend needs help.” I said, “Well, we need to get out there because the Spirit just told me that too.” He came and picked me up and we drove out there. Sure enough, as we rounded the corner and headed down his road, which is a dead-end road, there he was down in the ditch surrounded by a bunch of guys who were getting ready to beat him up and rob him. We were able to get him out of there. That’s what the Lord can do for you. You are never ever out of his sight and you’re never, ever where he doesn’t know what’s going on with you.

Before the Lord destroyed the earth with water he spoke to the people, through his prophets, over and over and over again telling them they needed to repent, or they were going to be destroyed. I don’t know how much time you’ve taken to read the Old Testament prophets, but based on my own experience, many of the things they were saying are for us today. We have their words right in front of us, but how much time do we spend listening to them and doing what we’re asked? In the Book of Mormon, the people are told to serve God, or he will destroy them. The warnings from

these men are very real. Those who do serve him have wonderful, wonderful promises. On the other hand, those who do not will face righteous judgment. I know we don't like to hear that God will destroy us if we don't obey him, but someone has to sound the alarm. Somebody has to give the word and call the people. Someone has to help people understand there is an enemy out there who is trying to destroy God's people and his work. He can't succeed, but he's trying. We need to try very hard to align our lives with God and with his commandments so we do not fall to this enemy. We need to know that no matter what obstacles seem to be before us, the Lord has a way of dealing with those. We've got to repent and live our lives the way the Lord has directed us. Study the prophets—see what they're telling you, then dig deep to come up with everything you can to obey God's instruction.

We are living in a dangerous time and God's words are going to be fulfilled even to the destruction of many if they will not repent. But God wants you to repent! He wants you to know that if you will humble yourselves, if you will study his word and turn to him consistently in prayer, he will make an everlasting covenant with you. He will not turn away from you but he will do you good and he will not depart from you. He will rejoice over you and will plant you in this land, his land, assuredly with his whole heart and with his whole soul.

Brothers and sisters, you are the reason he sent his Son to die and then to be resurrected. He loves you with his whole being. Everything he's done has been for us. All of this creation around us is for us. I hope his Spirit will carry that into your hearts. If you'll just look to him, he will preserve you. He will protect you and provide you with what you need. That doesn't mean we won't have to deal with tough times and tough things. It's time for us to quit talking about the gospel and live it. I know some of you are doing that already but we need to try harder. Our work has not yet born the fruit that it needs to bear; fruit which can only be borne by submitting ourselves fully to God. †

# God's Warning to Saints of the Latter Days

*By Antonio R. Vestor*

When our children were young, we fed them unsweetened baby foods and they ate them without complaint. Then, for some unknown reason—probably because we were already hooked on it—we started giving them sugar-laden breakfast cereals and eventually soda pop. As our son grew into adulthood, he developed health challenges that have caused me to take a hard look at our diet, sadly recognizing that we were responsible for leading our children astray in terms of healthy eating.

Oh, I was a stickler on coffee and even caused problems in my home congregation demanding we not serve coffee at potlucks. What a hypocrite I was. I loved my caffeine laden soda pop, but didn't recognize the example I was setting by neither seeing nor teaching the wisdom in the words set forth in D&C 86. But now, as my son's health languishes, I can! I can see that by not teaching by example the Word of Wisdom and eating habits meant to strengthen and fortify, my children have suffered various maladies not only during childhood, but now into adulthood.

Now that my son is ill and I'm studying dietary things in relation to this illness, I recognize the effect our diets have on our health. We are told that doctors do not know what causes ALS (a.k.a Lou Gehrig's Disease), but that what happens is the protective sheath around the neurons begins to break down and the neurons begin to die – no longer able to send the correct signals to the muscles, after which the muscles begin to fail.

The medical community has no cure for ALS, even though they know what is happening. In my research, I have found that a diet heavy in greens and vegetables, with very limited meat (especially red meat), can directly benefit the health of the neurons. It is not known whether a dietary change after-the-fact can help the protective coating around the neurons regenerate, but the fact that this kind of diet can “fire up” the neurons is hopeful. That being said, it is amazing how difficult it is to break old dietary habits, especially when we are addicted to much of what makes up our food content. It requires a change of palate which does not come easy, but it can be done.

As a family, we have committed ourselves to altering our diet and we have all been surprised at the tastiness of some of our new food choices. It takes a little more work, but we are having some success in changing our ways and we are having fun cooking together. My prayer is that God will have mercy on us for our past ignorance and for ignoring his counsel in Section 86. Our hope is that he will heal our bodies, our temples that play host to his Spirit—especially that of my child! As I watch my son suffer the physical failing of his body and endure the mental anguish of his ever-changing circumstance, I pray the Lord forgive us our trespasses against his counsel—words of life meant to raise up righteous generations for his Kingdom. †

# Letter from Quorum of Restoration Apostles

November 8, 2017

**Dear Brothers and Sisters of the Restoration,**

Nothing stirs the heart of the Saints more than the Book of Mormon. Recently, in Blue Springs, Missouri, at the Zarahemla Restoration Branch, Bob Moore and Joseph F. Smith presented testimonies about the Book of Mormon which have captivated the minds and hearts of many people. On October 22 and October 29, 2017, these brethren testified of activities in Brazil that included angel visitations, the Book of Mormon plates, the Sword of Laban and the Interpreters.

The testimonies of these men are posted online<sup>1</sup> and can be viewed there. Their testimonies have created both hope and concern in the hearts of many. Some are experiencing a confusion of spirit as they have attempted to discern the Lord's testimony regarding these things.

We, the Quorum of Restoration Apostles, met together on November 4 and 5, 2017, with prayer and fasting, to seek the Lord's will about the matter presented by Brother Moore and Brother Joseph F. Smith. We carefully reviewed the matter in the light of scripture and history.

Many aspects of the Brazilian testimonies are exciting and stimulating. The reappearance of the Book of Mormon plates and other artifacts associated with the plates, the reports of Moroni actively teaching men on the earth, the promise of the words of the Sealed Portion of the Book of Mormon all stir the hearts of the Saints with hope.

Based on the information presented in the testimonies of Bob Moore and Joseph F. Smith on the dates given above, we warn the Saints to use extreme caution before acknowledging the hand of God's blessing on these testimonies. We have received no evidence of divine affirmation that these testimonies are from God or that the Saints should exercise faith in the promises and prophecies declared. There are indications of spiritual deception in the revelations received by the men in Brazil as they are described in the testimonies of Brothers Moore and Smith. We cannot recommend this testimony to be the word of the Lord.

Every person will need to judge for himself/herself the merits of these testimonies. Each of us will need to give an account to the Lord for where we place our faith. We remind the Saints of the Lord's warning in Matthew 24:

**And again, after the tribulation of those days which shall come upon Jerusalem if any man shall say unto you Lo! here is Christ, or there; believe him not, For in those days, there shall also arise false Christs, and false prophets, and shall show great signs and wonders;**

**insomuch that, if possible, they shall deceive the very elect, who are the elect according to the covenant. Behold, I speak these things unto you for the elect's sake ... And whoso treasureth up my words, shall not be deceived (Matthew 24:22-24, 39 I.V.).**

God has given us clear instruction that his word, the Rod of Iron (see 1 Nephi 3:68), is able to guide us safely through this life to our rest with God and all of our holy fathers. Nephi also wrote that our hope and strength lie in placing our reliance wholly upon the merits of Jesus Christ, who is mighty to save. We must, therefore, press forward, feasting on the words of Christ, because they will tell us everything we should do.

**Wherefore, ye must press forward with a steadfastness in Christ, having a perfect brightness of hope, and a love of God and of all men. Wherefore, if ye shall press forward, feasting upon the word of Christ, and endure to the end, behold, thus saith the Father: Ye shall have eternal life. And now behold, my beloved brethren, this is the way; and there is none other way nor name given under heaven, whereby man can be saved in the kingdom of God. And now behold, this is the doctrine of Christ, and the only and true doctrine of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost, which is one God, without end. Amen ... Wherefore, I said unto you, Feast upon the words of Christ; for behold the words of Christ will tell you all things what ye should do. Wherefore, now after I have spoken these words, if ye can not understand them, it will be because ye ask not, neither do ye knock; wherefore, ye are not brought into the light, but must perish in the dark. For behold, again I say unto you, that if ye will enter in by the way and receive the Holy Ghost, it will shew unto you all things what ye should do (2 Nephi 13:29-32, 14:4-6).**

We offer this counsel to help you to choose wisely by seeking the Lord's wisdom, relying on the things written in the revealed word of God and in Jesus Christ, the very word of God made flesh and who lived among us. We plan further prayerful consideration and discussion of the specifics regarding the difficulties we discern in the testimony of these brethren which we will publish later.

Your Servants in the Lord Jesus Christ,

The Quorum of Restoration Apostles  
Gary R. Whiting, President of the Quorum

<sup>1</sup> <http://www.ustream.tv/channel/zarahemla-branch>

# This Was Our Joy

By Barbra Jordison and Randy Vick

It is a difficult thing to witness the passing of those dear to us—ones who remind us of goodness, generosity to others and a love of the gospel. That is where we find ourselves in the passing of a beloved friend and co-editor of the *Beacon*, Sister Joy Muir. Joy passed away on September 14, 2017, in Independence, Missouri. We shall long remember her easy laughter and contagious smile, her joyful attitude and her servant's heart! We are better for having known her and better off for having labored alongside her.

Known to many of those active in the Conference through the years, Joy was a staple—a dependable cheer leader, a go-to worker and an advocate for both missionaries and those with needs, whether at home or abroad. She loved the Restored Gospel and she loved serving the Conferences to help further the goals of the Kingdom whenever and however she could.

A native of Michigan, time and again she returned to the place and the people who nurtured her early years. She spoke with fondness of her childhood memories, and those actively involved in that part of the vineyard. Beyond the people, she also had a strong affection for blue water freighters and Michigan beaches. You only had to know Joy for a short time before she was showing you pictures of “her river” (the St. Clair River, Algonac, Mich.), and her favorite lighthouses and freighters. Many of her stories began with, “Have I told you about...” and ended with a place or person that brought her delight.

Joy's patriarchal blessing described her as a “Mother in Israel,” a name well earned as she worked to bring hope to young people wherever she found them. She worked with children at The Methodist Home

Hospital in New Orleans for a time, but her favorite job of all time was working for the children living at the Give Back Hope Orphanage in Liberia. She had a grandmotherly heart, which even the Amish recognized, allowing her to spend time around their children. Joy was especially fond of her own grandchildren, taking them on outings and fieldtrips she thought they would like.

After gathering to the Center Place a little later in her life, Joy went right to work and never asked a penny for her labors. Many of



Joy Muir

those who did not know her when she moved to the Center Place met her at the Conference of Restoration Elders (CRE). Someone there recognized her great desire to assist in the work, enlisted her to help, and Joy quickly came to know everyone in the area as she recruited and organized a staff of capable, willing volunteers. She developed a list of contacts and could be counted on to help coordinate efforts between priesthood and Saints who needed ministry. Her efforts might involve

someone who needed administration, helping Saints find Restoration branches/groups near where they lived, or guiding traveling priesthood members to locate scattered Saints and branches. Joy and her volunteers manned the office, answered the phone, did mailings, assembled conference notebooks, processed bulk mailings and more. In addition to her other duties, she would happily perform janitorial labor along with her husband, Richard.

In 2006, very excited about the work that was launched in the Center Place through the new Conference of Branches, she became the Office Manager for the JCRB office on Truman Road. In addition to all of the same duties she had done at the CRE office, she also took on the responsibility of arranging housing for international delegates who came to the annual conferences. With delegates arriving from many countries, some not speaking English, she embraced the challenge of finding housing and transportation, arranging tour guides, and sharing stories and introductions to help everyone become better acquainted. Like those of us who knew her well, they too fell in love with Joy and could always count on receiving a bright smile, warm greeting, and tears of joy upon hearing their testimonies and trials. She brought light and life to her work.

If you had a project and needed manpower, Joy would call on her cadre of volunteers. It was always great fun being in the office when the volunteers were assembling conference notebooks. If there was a financial need for an individual or a program, Joy would put out the word and the Saints would respond. She served on the board of directors of Storehouse Ministries of Zion and

as the Secretary for the board of directors of Give Back Hope International. Both organizations are tasked with helping those in need, both here and abroad.

When she adopted the orphans at the Future Hope Orphanage in Liberia, she gave her heart and soul to help make life better for those 60 children. She did everything from having a coin jar in the office so children visiting the office could contribute to the cause, to collecting barrels of clothes, toys and books to send to the orphans. Using her extensive contacts, she made arrangements for herself and others to visit various branches to present programs introducing the Saints to the plight of the orphan children.

As usual, the Saints always responded to Joy’s pleas. Joy’s labors of love had a profound impact on the daily life of the children in Liberia. When her family and friends gathered for Joy’s memorial service at the Waldo Restoration Branch in In-



Joy and Richard Muir

dependence, the Saints also gathered at the Buchanan Branch in Liberia, to honor the memory of “Sis Joy.”

Joy was also an artist, as evidenced by her photo-taking abilities, the way she decorated her home and her outdoor garden to which she and Richard welcomed neighbors and friends. Joy loved to play hostess, whether it was

to children in her living room or outdoor playhouse, neighbors coming to share ice cream, or new acquaintances she invited to share fast food take-out. She loved people, and her delight in the world around her introduced many to the gospel and new places in God’s creation.

As a young mother in New Orleans, Joy was once arrested for chaining herself to a “colored people only” water fountain. The only white person and the only woman involved in the protest, she felt strongly about injustice no matter the personal consequence. As an intake worker in the New Orleans Parish Prison, she once invited a parolee to live with her family until he could get back on his feet. She was also an actress! Joy would dress up in costume to tell the story of the “Exploding Cow” to children in the Independence schools.

Joy was an author of books and numerous articles in various church publications. All of her labor for the Lord was a labor of love! †

## Attributes of the Holy Spirit

“This Little Light of Mine” is one of the first songs Christian children learn, cheerfully declaring the many places they will let their light shine. According to the words of the song, they embrace guardianship over that light and the many places they desire to take it.

If one were to be possessed of the Holy Spirit, and lit from within, what do the scriptures reveal would be seen in them?

Holy Spirit as Described in Scripture	How Manifested by Those Possessing It	Reference
God’s presence	Holiness and joy	Psalm 51:11-12
A seal of promise	Hope	Ephesians 1:13
Sanctifies	Purified works	Alma 3:95
Sent from God	Shares giftedness	Helaman 2:111
Bears record of the Father & Son	Testifies	D&C 36:1i
A guide	Possessed of wisdom	D&C 45:10b
Comforter	Lives in the heart	D&C 85:1c
Confirmation of truth	Fellowship and obedience	Acts 10:38-48
Demonstrable	Declares God’s word	D&C 96:1b

# Righteous Revelation

By Betty Vickery

As an instructor, I have on occasion asked who in the class is righteous. One or two might raise their hands. Some will tentatively lift their hands, then put them down. I can see the wheels turning as the question is analyzed and students try to come to a conclusion. The problem lies in a fundamental misunderstanding of what righteousness is and being afraid to claim that for ourselves. This fear and misunderstanding defies the testimony of Paul:

**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. For he hath made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in him (2 Corinthians 5:20).**

Our fear of claiming this truth—that we are made righteous through Christ—has severely limited what we are able to receive from him. The promises of good are to the righteous. If we do not see ourselves as that, then we cannot confidently lay claim to those promises.

But, how do we say we are righteous when we know, oh so well, what our failings in faith and action are? How can we honestly make that declaration?

As I sat in a class on repentance at the 2017 General Conference, I was hearing familiar themes about what repentance is and areas where repentance is needed. I had a clear awareness that this information alone was not going to get us where we

need to be. The awareness took form in the clear thought that for repentance to be effective, we need a fundamental change in how we view ourselves.

Early the following day, while reviewing scriptures on coming out of Babylon for a class in the members' quorum, I was impressed that to come out of Babylon—which D&C 108:4b defines as wickedness—we need to come into righteousness. My understanding began to open up in a new way about what it means to say we are righteous, and how we can do so without shame or question. Throughout the morning those thoughts led the way to other thoughts as the Spirit enlightened my mind. Here is what I learned.

When God starts something, he speaks. At the point at which the words leave his mouth the finished thing or condition does not yet exist, but by faith he sees it as complete. God's creative method is described in Romans 4:17 where Paul says: "As it is written, I have made thee a father of many nations, before him whom he believed, even God, who quickeneth the dead, and calleth those things which be not as though they were." Because his word cannot fail, the thing that he has called will be complete whether it occurs in a split second or over centuries of time.

When we come to Christ, we are given the gift of righteousness (Romans 5:15-18). Christ, by his faith, calls that which is not as though it were. He places his robe of righ-

teousness upon us. At that moment we are babies in terms of our experience in walking in right ways. The robe does not fit very well and we aren't very good cinching the belts and draping it presentably. That is okay, because Christ is calling forth what is not yet fully manifested as though it were.

When we, by faith, say that we are righteous, we are not saying that we have achieved a fullness of righteousness, nor are we saying that we walk in perfect obedience to Christ. Rather, we are, by faith, agreeing to participate in what Christ is creating in us. We can claim what he says about us as being true, while we recognize that the creative process is not complete, because we know that his word is certain. When we receive Christ, we become the righteousness of God.

This perspective moves us out of condemnation, which is the counterfeit of a contrite spirit and a broken heart. When we are self-condemning we spiral downward into despair and misery, and failure is the result. Seeing ourselves as sinners who continually fall short, we lose hope and fail to honor the gift God has given us.

We cannot be sinners saved by grace. Either we are sinners or we are saved by grace. If grace has saved us from our sins, we are righteous. If we see ourselves as righteous, then when we receive the chastisement of a loving Father who is guiding us toward maturity in him. We accept his correction, acknowledge with sorrow our

**When we, by faith, say that we are righteous, ... we are, by faith, agreeing to participate in what Christ is creating in us.**

## Bishop's Corner

## The Equality of the Body

By B. A. Stuart

error and then change, allowing his grace to enter into that area of our lives which is deficient and therefore receive his blessing there to help us overcome.

Seeing ourselves as righteous changes the value of our works. We are not working to become righteous. We are working to reflect and honor the righteousness that we have received in Christ. Our works are the witness of whether or not we have received this gift. Receiving the gift of grace in an area of our lives allows it to change that area until grace is fully reflected there. The works that we do by faith are the witness we give that we have received the grace of God unto salvation.

If then, we see ourselves in this way—fundamentally righteous and in the process of being created in the full image of righteousness—then we must also see our brothers and sisters in the same way. This changes how we view their errors and failures. Rather than using our words to rehearse and lament their failures, it is our responsibility to agree with Christ and to call that which is not yet in them as though it were, allowing faith to create what the word of God has declared is true.

Christ is not coming back for a mediocre, sick, weak, fearful church. He is coming for a glorious church:

**Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the church, and gave himself for it; That he might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the word, That he might present it to himself a glorious church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing; but that it should be holy and without blemish (Ephesians 5:25-27).**

What we truly believe about ourselves often determines what we become. Seeing ourselves as glorious because of his righteousness, not because of our works, frees us to become the glorious church for which he is returning. †

**A**lma, the former priest of Noah, became the founder of the Church of Christ among the Nephites. After his repentance, he taught the word of God according to the teaching of Abinadi and the holy prophets before him. After the church was organized in the forest near the Waters of Mormon, Alma deliberately established some wise standards of conduct for the church and the ministry.

In the June-July 2017 *Beacon*, this column discussed Alma's instructions for the priesthood of the church. This one will review Alma's instruction to the people concerning their financial stewardship.

It is implied in Alma's remarks that the members of the church would be industrious. He expected the priests to labor for their own support (Mosiah 9:57) just as the rest of the church would do. If he specifically taught them to be industrious, we do not have that record, but Moroni did engrave some of Alma's words regarding the financial duties of the members of the Church of Christ.

Alma taught the members to be free with their substance, or in other words, to be generous in giving. The degree of generosity was directly related to what an individual had:

**And again, Alma commanded that the people of the church should impart of their substance, every one according to that which he had; If he have more abundantly, he should impart more abundantly; and he that had but little, but little should be required; and to him that had not should be given. And thus they should impart of their substance, of their own free will and good desires towards God, and to those priests that stood in need,**

**yea, and to every needy, naked soul. And this he said unto them, having been commanded of God (Mosiah 9:60-63).**

## God's stewardship plan provides equity

God's stewardship plan does not create a hardship for his people. Although it may require sacrifice, it is always equitable. Here is an example of a place where the Restored gospel provides needed clarification. Equality is frequently defined as everyone receiving the same amount of economic support; one house, one car and the same amount of money. The Lord defined equality quite differently in the Doctrine and Covenants and in practical terms:

**Wherefore let my servant Edward Partridge ... appoint unto this people their portion, every man equal according to their families, according to their circumstances, and their wants and needs (D&C 51:1b).**

**And you are to be equal, or in other words, you are to have equal claims on the properties, for the benefit of managing the concerns of your stewardships, every man according to his wants and his needs, inasmuch as his wants are just (D&C 81:4e).**

Both of these revelations define equality in terms of what a person manages or supports—the size of a family, the particular circumstances of that individual (recent illness, losses, gains, etc.), their wants and needs. The idea of need is straightforward—something required for life, safety or to maintain a business or livelihood. A want is something which is desired, but not necessarily an essential.

## Alma learned about stewardship from Abinadi and his own experience. What can we learn from his instructions to his people?

These revelations from the Doctrine and Covenants show the soundness of Alma's instruction to his people. Everyone should contribute to the common equality of the society known as the church. Some people will be blessed with resources greater than their needs and justified wants. The Lord is not pleased when we keep these resources for ourselves while others suffer for lack of necessary resources.

### Giving is one sign of a gathered condition

Alma recognized that the act of giving and supporting the body is an active sign of being a part of the body. Regardless of a person's prosperity, each member should plan to give. It is not uncommon for members to do well for a time and then have a period of need. This principle is not limited to finances but is applicable in spiritual matters as well.

Spiritual gifts are distributed among the members according to the will of the Father. These spiritual gifts, one or more, reside in every member of the body. Apostle Paul clearly states that the spiritual gifts are for the blessing and strengthening of the body of Christ, or the church (1 Corinthians 12:7-12).

By the principle of stewardship identified by Alma, we are ministers to one another in the temporal and spiritual realms. Christian life is a corporate life, i.e., it is lived out in a body or a society and not by individual effort alone. It is impossible to fully live the Christian life alone. Hence, there is a gathering principle underlying the life of a disciple. To resist the call to gather is to resist the plan of God. Furthermore, giving is a

sign of being gathered into the body of Christ.

Alma indicated that giving is to be "of their own free will and good desires towards God" (Mosiah 9:62). Giving is a conscious choice which is motivated by good desires toward God. What are these good desires? Reverence, gratitude, submission, love, obedience and longing for his fellowship must be considered as good desires toward God. It means we love each other actively because of our love for God and his love in us.

Finally, it is important to note the provision for the support of the priest who lacked. Alma had already instructed the priests not to depend upon the people's labor for their support (Mosiah 9:57, 59). Is he contradicting himself? The minister, like any other member of the body, may face a situation requiring the support of the church. Alma's prohibition was against regular or salaried support. This is a clarification that if circumstances required some help for the priest whose labors have proved insufficient, who has some urgent need, that the ministry may seek and receive that help. This may also anticipate a minister whose labors in the ministry have prevented him from spending enough time to earn enough to be self-sufficient. This may include an extended journey or even persecution, jail or injuries.

Alma's instruction to the newly formed church in the land near the Waters of Mormon was wise and practical. They agree with the instructions received through our latter day prophets as well. Alma reinforces the necessity of our free will in giving while also linking a member's response to their "good desires toward God." Alma had seen abuses

under King Noah which he desired to avoid. He was keenly aware of the need to act in a manner pleasing to God. He had learned to ask God for wisdom and God commanded him with the words he gave to his people (Mosiah 9:63). They are words worthy of our attention still today. †

### The Easy Road Crowded

*Submitted by Jeannette Thomas;  
Author Unknown*

**The easy roads are crowded,  
and the level roads are jammed;**

**The pleasant little rivers with  
the drifting folks are crammed.**

**But off yonder where it's rocky,  
where you get a better view,**

**You will find the ranks are  
thinning, and the travelers are few.**

**Where the going's smooth  
and pleasant, you will always  
find the throng,**

**For the many, more's the pity,  
seem to like to drift along.**

**But the steps that call for courage,  
and the task that's hard to do,**

**In the end results in glory  
for the never-wavering few.**

## Into All the World

# Memorial Service for Joseph, Hyrum and Emma

*Compiled by Gary Whiting*

On June 27, 2017 a service of remembrance was held in Nauvoo, Ill., to honor contributions made to the Restoration by three pioneers of the faith: Joseph, Emma and Hyrum Smith, each buried in the Smith Family Cemetery in Nauvoo. This date marked the 173-year anniversary of the martyrdom of Joseph and Hyrum in the Carthage, Illinois, jail.

Apostle Dave Drummond was one of three people asked to participate in the service, where short letters of thanks and remembrance were read acknowledging the response of Joseph, Emma and Hyrum to God's call. Brother Drummond was joined by representatives from the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints and the Community of Christ.

The service also included scripture reading and a dramatic presentation. At dusk people were invited to visit the graves of the three Smiths and reflect on the impact these faithful persons have made.

Brother Drummond's remarks, addressed to the three Smiths, acknowledged the faithful discharge of their responsibilities with both dignity and honor.

He recalled Joseph as both a leader and servant, instrumental in assisting God's plan to restore the plain and precious truths to the world through the Book of Mormon, Doctrine and Covenants, and the Inspired Version of the Bible. He noted that Joseph went to Carthage knowing full well what was coming, yet determined to sacrifice even his mortal body for purposes of the Restored Gospel.

Emma, wife of the prophet, was acknowledged for her testimony of the rightness of the Restoration in all the duties that were hers; having acted as a scribe during the translation of the Book of Mormon, as president of the Relief Society in attending to the needs of the people in Nauvoo, and in compiling hymns for the first Saints Hymnal. Suffering many trials, Emma was constant in her testimony until the day she died.

Hyrum, brother of the Prophet, and member of the First Presidency of the Church, was remembered for courageously going to Carthage to face the indignation of the world. His belief in the Restored Gospel, lived out until that fateful day, was a blessing to others as well.

## Midwest Ministry

Apostles Doug Patterson and Kent Pedersen provided ministry on a five-day journey through Iowa and Illinois, which included visits in Farmington, Bettendorf and Bloomfield, Iowa, and Colona, Chicago, Elgin and Weona, Illinois. They were accompanied on this trip by Ethan Wentzel-Potts.

Baptismal classes were provided to a young lady in Colona. Members were encouraged and multiple non-member contacts were made in other cities. The trio was also able to visit with Seventy Bob Elrod where plans for advancing the gospel there were discussed. The trip was brief, but much good work was accomplished.

## Honduras Ministry

Seventies Gary Metzger and Arturo Gomez spent nearly two weeks laboring together in Honduras performing various types of ministry. They visited with the Saints in El Triunfo and San Pedro Sula and attended a priesthood meeting in Siguatepeque. †



**There is a fund set up to assist with  
International Delegate Travel  
to the General Conference.**

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# William Marks, Servant to All

By Genie Simmons

**W**illiam Marks is a name probably unknown to most people. He was a man who truly believed in Doctrine and Covenants 4, which says: “O ye that embark in the service of God see that ye serve him with all your heart, might, mind, and strength, that ye may stand blameless before God at the last day.” William worked hard at whatever job he was given.

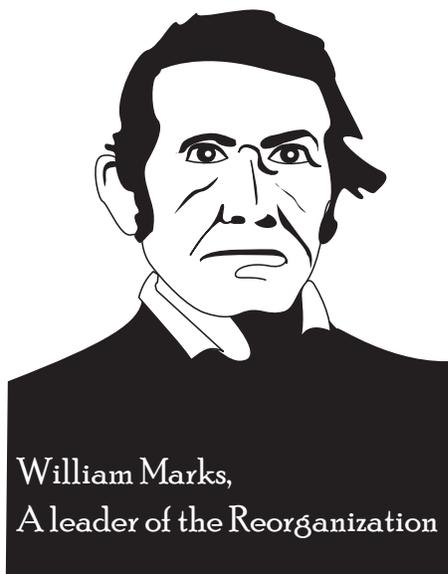
William was born in Rutland, Vermont, in 1792. His early life is a mystery; indeed he is not mentioned in church history until he was nearly 45 years of age. In 1837, he and his family lived in Kirtland, Ohio, when he was asked to take the place of the bishop, N. K. Whitney, who was needed to travel for the church.

Eventually William moved to Far West, Missouri. Later he was on a committee to help relocate the Saints after they had been driven out. William recommended a location in Iowa, which was rejected. Later, the site of Commerce, Illinois, was chosen—now called Nauvoo. William Marks served as the first stake president in Commerce.

Interestingly, while traveling to Missouri, the prophet Joseph Smith received a vision in which he saw William being lured to follow three different groups. William did not choose any of them. This vision became true after the death of Joseph, Jr., when William was voted off the stake counsel because he chose not to acknowledge the power of the Twelve Apostles. He looked into three other factions of the church led by Sidney Rigdon, J.J. Strang and John Page and others. William was even called to be a counselor to Strang. He accepted, but was soon voted out by the High Council of that group because of

doctrinal differences. He found each group to be unsatisfactory because they changed the beliefs of the church. He wanted to preach and teach the gospel as Joseph Jr. had taught. He chose none of them, just like in Joseph’s vision.

William also traveled to small groups and branches in Illinois and Wisconsin to preach and teach. At the Amboy, Illinois Conference,



June 1859, Marks was accepted into the Reorganized church with his original baptism.

In 1844, William Marks, like many Saints, decided that it was better not to gather in communities again. He eventually moved his family to Shabbona Grove, Illinois. It was here that he received a letter from Joseph Smith III asking him to choose “some others” to come with him to Nauvoo for a meeting. He was ready to lead the Mormon church, but did not know the best way to go about it. He was planning to attend the Amboy conference, and wanted to know if the mem-

bers would accept him. Later, he wrote that the letter went to Brother Marks because he was once the stake president at Nauvoo.

At the 1859 conference held in Kendall County, Illinois, Elder Marks was placed on a publishing committee for the church, where he was asked to help publish a new book of hymns. He also went on a missionary trip to Iowa for that conference.

During the April 1860 conference at Amboy, Joseph Smith III was ordained as president, seer and prophet of the church. Elder Marks assisted. In 1863, William Marks was called to be counselor to the church’s president. He remained at that position until his death in 1872.

William loved the gospel and taught the original beliefs of the church wherever he could. He stood firm in the dark years after Joseph, Jr.’s death. He served wholeheartedly in the Reorganization, serving with all his heart, might, mind, and strength that he might stand blameless before God at the last day.

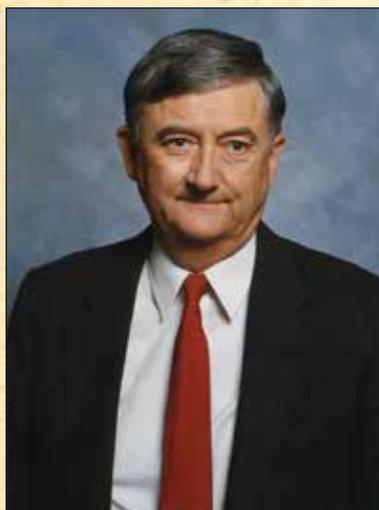
*Story of the Church*, Inez Smith Davis, pp. 415-423. *History of the Reorganized Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints*, vol. 3, pp. 721-731, 264. †

**William loved the gospel and taught the original beliefs of the church wherever he could.**

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## The Passing of a Giant

Raymond C. Treat sat alone reading the Book of Mormon in his truck parked on the ice of his father's frozen cranberry bog as he awaited the arrival of more sand trucks to spread sand needed for each year's crop, and there he met the Lord Jesus Christ. His conversion to the Lord led him on a lifelong effort to share his faith and testimony with others around the world. In 1967 Ray, his wife Mary Lee and their tiny daughter Mya traveled to Mexico City to study archaeology at the University of the Americas. There they met and studied with Saints who would become life-long friends and with whom they shared their dreams of service. During that year the concept of the Zarahemla Research Foundation (ZRF) was conceived.

By 1999 the ZRF had published the Restored Covenant edition of the Book of Mormon (RCE). It was the result of the efforts of Brother Ray and several others who worked closely with him, including Ed Faunce, Shirley Heater, Mary Lee Treat and others. Because that edition was published, many people around the world have found that the message of the Book of Mormon has more impact in their lives and has brought them closer to the Lord.

Brother Ray taught about the Hebrew covenant relationships as described in both the Bible and the Book of Mormon. The RCE helped bring to light the Hebrew literary structures within the Book of Mormon and helped restore a knowledge of God's covenants to His people.

Brother Treat was instrumental in helping those who had covenanted with God (re)attach with the roots of their Hebrew scriptural heritage. In doing that, the ZRF provided us with a richer, more complete understanding of the message contained within the Book of Mormon, at the same time shedding greater light on the book's authenticity as an ancient record brought forth from the writings of many prophets of God's covenant people in ancient America.

On October 29, 2017, on his way to church where he was to help teach a class on covenants, Brother Treat departed this life for his next great adventure. He was a giant in terms of the work he accomplished, and the blessing brought by his tireless efforts to elevate our understanding. Many people around the world have drawn closer to the Lord because of the efforts of Brother Ray and those who worked alongside him. †

### Save the Dates

The 2018 General Conference is scheduled for the week of April 2-7 in Independence, Missouri (USA). High Priest Sherman Phipps, from the Mount Ayr Restoration Branch, was elected conference president for the current year.