

The Saints of the Latter Days

First Edition (July 22, 2025)
English Edition

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This material was personally created by Toshihiro Kurogi as a study aid for individual scripture study and is not an official publication of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.

THE BOOK OF THE PROPHET ISAIAH

CHAPTER 18

Hail to the land in the shape of wings,
which is beyond the rivers of Ethiopia:
That sendeth ambassadors by the sea,
even in vessels of bulrushes upon the waters, saying,

Go, swift messengers, to a nation scattered
and peeled among the islands of the sea,
to a people feared from the beginning until now;
to a people who measure and trample the land,
laying it waste!

All ye inhabitants of the world, and dwellers
on the earth, see ye, when he lifteth up
an ensign on the mountains; and when he
bloweth a trumpet, hear ye.

For thus the Lord said unto me,
I will take my rest, and I will consider
in my dwelling place like a clear heat
upon herbs, and like a cloud of dew
in the heat of harvest.

In that time shall the present be brought
unto the Lord of hosts of a people
scattered and peeled among the islands
of the sea, and from a people feared
from the beginning until now; to a people
who measure and trample the land,
laying it waste!
to the place of the name of the Lord of hosts,
the mount Zion.



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<https://www.kurogitoshihiro.com/eng/>

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Introduction

This study material was compiled by Toshi Kurogi, drawing upon 26 years of experience as a volunteer instructor of Japanese-language Institute classes in Orem and Provo, Utah. It is a concise collection of the teachings he has shared over the years, thoughtfully organized under the theme: “The Saints of the Latter Days.”

A Remarkable Journey

The path that led to the creation of this book was, in many ways, unexpected. In 1995, I was invited by the Orem Institute of Religion (Utah Valley Institute of Religion) to teach a Japanese-language gospel class as a volunteer. I continued teaching for 22 years, until 2016, and it became an incredibly meaningful part of my own scripture study and spiritual growth. Afterward, I served in the bishopric of an Asian YSA ward in Provo for four more years, during which I also taught a Japanese Institute class under the YSA stake.

As the number of students grew steadily from week to week, new participants often had no way of knowing what had been taught in previous classes. I earnestly sought guidance in prayer and found a statement in the Church Handbook that encouraged the use of websites and other tools to support one’s calling. With the stake presidency’s approval, I created a class website and began uploading audio recordings of each lesson. New students were encouraged to listen to past classes so they could join the ongoing discussions more meaningfully—and it worked remarkably well.

As If Prepared in Advance

I was surprised and somewhat uneasy that my class materials were spreading far beyond their original purpose. At the time, the Church encouraged members not to teach beyond the boundaries of their own ward or stake, and I worried that continuing the website might unintentionally go against that guidance. I even considered shutting it down.

But soon, I began receiving heartfelt pleas not to take it offline. Around that time, the COVID-19 pandemic swept across the globe, and church meetings were suspended both in Japan and the U.S. In Japan, the closures lasted for an extended period, leaving many members feeling spiritually adrift. That’s when word spread rapidly that my website had over 50 recorded gospel lessons available for listening, and people all across Japan began tuning in.

The Call to Write

Once church meetings resumed in Utah, I was released from the bishopric, and also from my Institute teaching assignment. With that, I felt a sense of completion, having fulfilled my calling, and I was finally able to shut down the class website.

In 2022, nearly a year after returning to my home ward and serving in the Primary, I began to feel that I still had more to learn and more to do. I longed for further instruction from heaven and increased my prayers, continually seeking divine guidance. One Sunday, during sacrament meeting, while partaking of the sacrament, I suddenly felt a strong impression that I needed to compile the truths I had learned into writing. A phrase came clearly into my mind: “The Saints of the Latter Days.” I immediately understood that this was the title of the book I was meant to write.

Although I had never written anything resembling a book before, I prayed and sat at my computer, unsure of where to begin. To my amazement, the content began to flow effortlessly. Ideas surfaced one after another, and relevant scriptures came vividly to mind. I couldn’t keep up with the flow—at one point, my wrist became so strained from typing that I developed tendinitis and had to resort to taking notes by hand.

To All Who Seek the Light

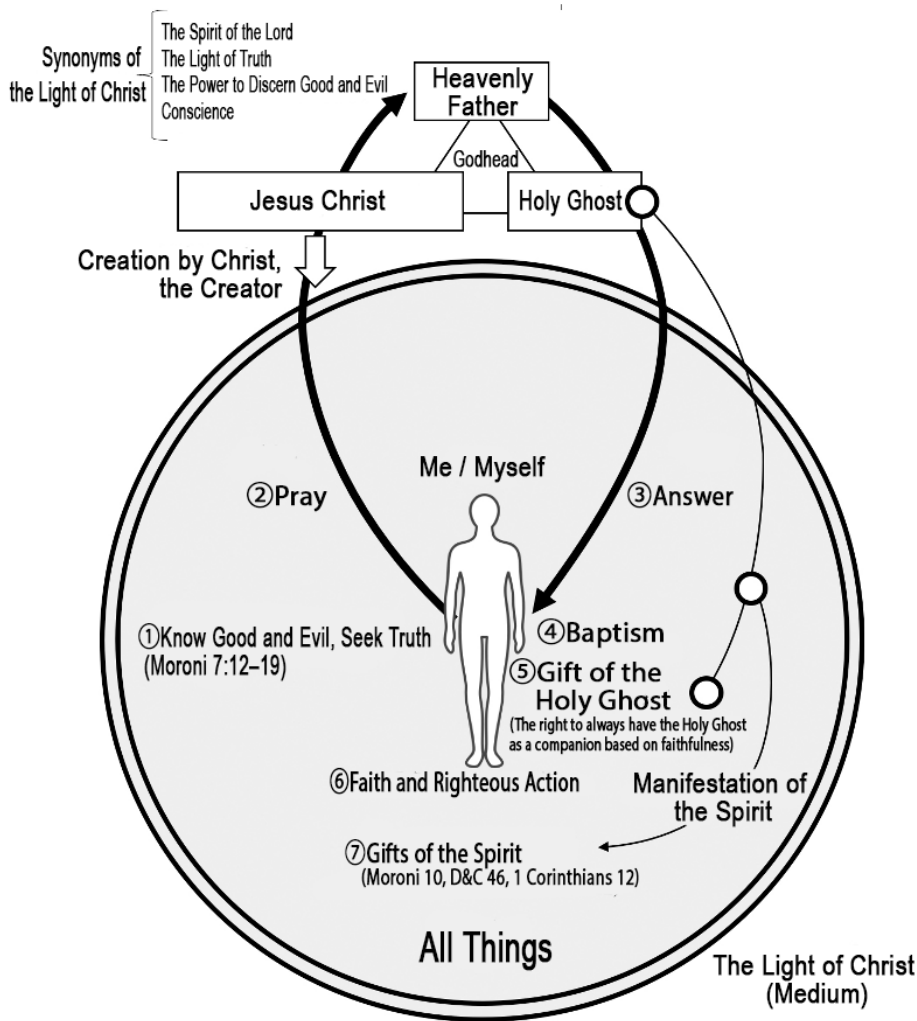
After about three months, I completed the Japanese manuscript. Because these truths were freely given by the Lord, I felt they should be freely shared. I reopened the class website, updated its content, and made the book available for free download. Within just one or two months, it had been downloaded more than 6,000 times. Many people contacted me, saying the material had helped them in their scripture study.

I thought my work was done, but soon after, I was called as a bishop. Through countless interviews and conversations with members, I came to feel deeply how many of us are still seeking light and understanding in our spiritual journey. Moved by this realization, I resolved to translate the book into English, hoping it might offer some small help to fellow seekers.

I sincerely hope that this resource will serve as a key to understanding the scriptures—that it will show how all doctrines, principles, teachings, revelations, and prophecies in this dispensation are connected to one divine

purpose. My prayer is that those who read and study this material will seek the help of the Holy Ghost in the name of Jesus Christ and receive greater light and knowledge from our Heavenly Father.

Heavenly Teachings and How They Work



Chapter 1: The Sacred Meaning Behind the Name “Latter-day Saints”

The name of our Church, The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, may not be one that people commonly use or fully understand. However, hidden within this name lies the very purpose of Church members and the sacred mission entrusted to us. As we begin to reflect on the meaning of this name, we will come to understand how all aspects of the gospel are interconnected.

The Church’s Official Naming in History

Eight years after the translation of the Book of Mormon and the establishment of the Church, on April 26, 1838, in Far West, Missouri, the Prophet Joseph Smith received a special revelation. This revelation, recorded in Doctrine and Covenants 115, contains the Lord’s command that His Church should be called “The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.”¹

Before this revelation, the Church was known by several different names, such as “The Church of Christ,” “The Church of Jesus Christ,” or “The Church of God.” In the Book of 3 Nephi, the resurrected Jesus Christ visited the Nephites and taught that His Church should be called in His name.² Because of this, the Church had long been known by names similar to this instruction.

In May 1834, a council of elders discussed the name “The Church of the Latter-Day Saints.”³ But four years later, the Lord gave a revelation that established the full and correct name, which has remained ever since: **“The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.”**

The Church of Jesus Christ of the Saints of the Latter Days

As history shows, the early members of the Church desired to name the Lord’s Church after Him, as instructed in the Book of Mormon. At the same time, they understood their mission and wished to include the term “Latter-day Saints” in the name as well. The Lord, in His wisdom, gave them a special name that encompassed both.

¹ Doctrine and Covenants 115:4

² See also 3 Nephi 27

³ See also Church History, Volume 2, pages 62–63

This name indicates that it is the Church of Jesus Christ, established specifically for the Saints of the latter days. But what makes this Church unique? And what does it mean to be a “Latter-day Saint”? As members of the Church, we must understand the significance of this name.

What Does “Saint” Mean?

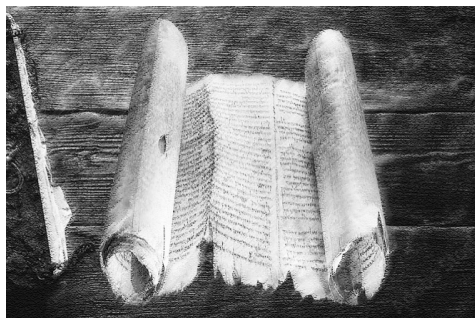


Figure 1 Ancient Prophetic Writings

In traditional Christianity, the term “saint” is often used to refer to individuals who have attained a high level of holiness or have been martyred for their faith.

However, in the context of the name of our Church, “saints” has a unique and significant meaning. In the epistles of Paul, the term “saints” appears frequently,

referring to the early Christians—**those who followed Christ in purity**. These faithful followers of Christ set themselves apart from the rest of the world by identifying as “saints.” Recognizing this, prophets in later dispensations prophesied of future groups of righteous followers of Christ and referred to them as “saints.”

Two key prophetic passages in the Bible prominently feature this term:

1. Daniel 7 (Old Testament)
2. Revelation (New Testament)

Both Daniel and John the Revelator wrote about the events of the last days. They saw visions of the end of the world—this very dispensation in which we now live—and in these visions, they saw a group of faithful servants of God, whom they called “saints.”

“I came near unto one of them that stood by, and asked him the truth of all this. So he told me, and made me know the interpretation of the things. These great beasts, which are four, are four kings, which shall arise out of the earth. But the **saints** of the most High shall take the kingdom, and possess the kingdom for ever, even for ever and ever...I beheld, and the same horn made war with the **saints**, and prevailed against them; Until the

Ancient of days came, and judgment was given to the saints of the most High; and the time came that the **saints** possessed the kingdom.”
(Daniel 7:16–18, 21–22)

“Here is the patience of the **saints**: here are they that keep the commandments of God, and the faith of Jesus.”
(Revelation 14:12)

The Saints in the Seven Seals of the Book of Revelation

From these scriptures, we learn that “**saints**” refers to a group of faithful disciples of Christ—**those who accept His Atonement and Resurrection and follow His teachings**. When we examine the prophecies of Daniel, John the Revelator, and Paul’s epistles together, we can see that the term “saints” appears twice in human history:⁴

1. The First Group of Saints—The original followers of Jesus Christ, who were led by His Twelve Apostles after His Ascension. However, after the martyrdom of most of the Apostles, true doctrine was lost, leading to the Great Apostasy, and this first group of saints disappeared from the earth.
2. The Second Group of Saints—Who are they?

The key to this question is found in the Book of Revelation. John saw a vision of a scroll sealed with seven seals, held in the right hand of Heavenly Father. Through revelation, Joseph Smith was taught that these seven seals represent seven thousand years of human history.



Figure 2 Scroll of the seven seals

“Q. What are we to understand by the seven seals with which it was sealed?
A. We are to understand that the first seal contains the things of the first thousand years, and the second also of the second thousand years, and so on

⁴ Of course, all righteous followers of Christ throughout every dispensation—beginning with Adam—can be considered saints. Here, the term refers specifically to those who appear after Christ personally proclaimed the gospel.

until the seventh.”
(Doctrine and Covenants 77:7)

John saw the saints working to establish Zion at the end of the sixth seal and the beginning of the seventh seal—just before the Millennium. The scriptures tell us that Adam was created around 4000 B.C., meaning the seven-thousand-year history spans from approximately 4000 B.C. to A.D. 3000.

Since we are now living in the beginning of the seventh seal (around the year 2000), it becomes clear that the saints John saw in his vision include us—faithful disciples striving to build Zion in the last days.

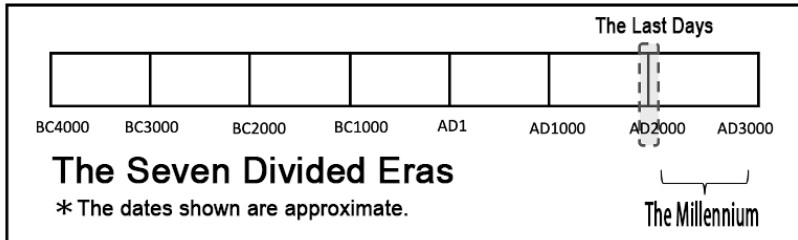


Figure 3 Seven divided eras

John Stood Among Those He Called “saints”

But John’s vision did not end there. He saw something extraordinary:

“And after these things I saw four angels standing on the four corners of the earth, holding the four winds of the earth, that the wind should not blow on the earth, nor on the sea, nor on any tree. And I saw another angel ascending from the east, having the seal of the living God: and he cried with a loud voice to the four angels, to whom it was given to hurt the earth and the sea, Saying, Hurt not the earth, neither the sea, nor the trees, till we have sealed the servants of our God in their foreheads. And I heard the number of them which were sealed: and there were sealed an hundred and forty and four thousand of all the tribes of the children of Israel.”

(Revelation 7:1–4)

It is a scene where four angels, who are desperately holding back the destruction of the world, stand at the four corners of the earth to prevent its

end. Then, another special angel appears, coming from the east. This angel cries out, declaring, "The end must not come yet!"

This special angel bears the seal of the living God, which represents the divine authority and power given by God. He proclaims that he is about to gather the tribes of Israel.

In reality, this remarkable scene is John the Revelator witnessing his own role in the latter days through revelation. Through the revelation recorded in Doctrine and Covenants 77, Joseph Smith was taught that this special angel is none other than John himself and that the divine authority (the seal of the living God) he possesses is the power to lead and gather the tribes of Israel.

"Q. What are we to understand by the angel ascending from the east, Revelation 7th chapter and 2nd verse?

A. We are to understand that the angel ascending from the east is he to whom is given the seal of the living God over the twelve tribes of Israel; wherefore, he crieth unto the four angels having the everlasting gospel, saying: Hurt not the earth, neither the sea, nor the trees, till we have sealed the servants of our God in their foreheads. And, if you will receive it, **this is Elias which was to come to gather together the tribes of Israel and restore all things.**"

(Doctrine and Covenants 77:9)

"Q. What are we to understand by the little book which was eaten by John, as mentioned in the 10th chapter of Revelation?

A. We are to understand that it was a mission, and an ordinance, **for him to gather the tribes of Israel; behold, this is Elias, who, as it is written, must come and restore all things.**"

(Doctrine and Covenants 77:14)

Of course, the Elias mentioned in verses 9 and 14 of Doctrine and Covenants 77 could refer to different individuals. However, since the title "Elias" applies to multiple figures, it is entirely reasonable to consider that John is also among them.

As we study the Book of Revelation more deeply, we see that Elias, who is to gather the tribes of Israel, and the Saints, who will build Zion in preparation for the coming of the Lord, will work together just before the Millennium begins.

If John is indeed this Elias, then it means that in the latter days, just before the beginning of the Millennium, he will be working together with the Saints of God who exist at that time. Through the Book of Revelation, John is teaching these Saints how to labor alongside heaven in this great work.⁵

Furthermore, we know from Doctrine and Covenants 7 that John never tasted death and is still alive, working for the purposes of God at this very moment. This means that if we are living in the latter days as John described, then he must be working alongside us. One significant event recorded in Church history confirms this truth—the restoration of the Melchizedek Priesthood.

On May 15, 1829, Joseph Smith and Oliver Cowdery received the Aaronic Priesthood from John the Baptist. Then, a few days later, Peter, James, and John appeared and conferred upon them the Melchizedek Priesthood. Peter and James, having passed through death, appeared as resurrected beings. However, John, who had been translated and remains alive, came in his immortal, transformed body, fulfilling the mission that had been given to him nearly two thousand years earlier.

This means that John the Revelator played a direct and sacred role in the establishment of this Church. Therefore, if there is an organization today that consists of the “saints” whom John saw in his apocalyptic vision—those who would work with him in the latter days—it can be none other than The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.

The Gathering of Israel and the 144,000

John the Revelator recorded a remarkable vision in the Book of Revelation. In Revelation 7:4, he hears the number of those who will be sealed with the seal of God—144,000 in total. Then, immediately afterward, he sees a countless multitude dressed in white robes.

An angel explains to John that these people have passed through great tribulation, and that Christ will be their Shepherd and lead them to victory. Later, in Revelation 14, John actually sees the 144,000. This time, he also sees that Jesus Christ Himself is standing among them. Through the revelation recorded in Doctrine and Covenants 77, Joseph Smith was taught who these individuals are.

⁵ See the separate document “A Study Guide for Reading the Book of Revelation.”

“Q. What are we to understand by sealing the one hundred and forty-four thousand, out of all the tribes of Israel—twelve thousand out of every tribe?

A. We are to understand that those who are sealed are **high priests**, ordained unto the holy order of God, to administer the everlasting gospel; for they are they who are ordained out of every nation, kindred, tongue, and people, by the angels to whom is given power over the nations of the earth, to bring as many as will come to the church of the Firstborn.”
(Doctrine and Covenants 77:11)

Even today, our wards include many high priests, and most of them belong to the tribes of Ephraim, Manasseh, or the house of Joseph. This is because, in the Old Testament era, Ephraim was the final patriarchal leader of Israel, and thus, the Restoration of the gospel also had to begin with Ephraim’s lineage, the presiding tribe of the priesthood.

Because of this, many converts to the Church are adopted into the tribe of Ephraim at baptism, and if they are literal descendants of Israel, their specific tribal lineage is declared through patriarchal blessing.⁶

Today, the Church has grown to over 16 million members worldwide. It is likely that 12,000 high priests could be called from among the tribes of Ephraim and Manasseh, or collectively from the house of Joseph. However, the other tribes of Israel do not yet have sufficient numbers to provide 12,000 high priests each.

The task of gathering these remaining tribes is the very mission given to John the Revelator—“**the gathering of Israel.**” And the ones called to assist him in completing this great work are none other than us—the “Latter-day Saints.”

⁶ See the separate document “A Study Guide for Reading the Book of Revelation.”

Chapter 2: The Great Plan of God

When we first encounter missionaries or attend Primary as children, we learn about the “Plan of Salvation.” This plan is so simple and logical that even those hearing Christ’s name for the first time can gradually come to understand it. However, even after many years in the Church, if we do not seek deeper understanding, we may fall into the illusion that this plan is unfolding somewhere far away—and that we are merely leaves drifting in its current. Yet, it is precisely the Plan of Salvation that is the fundamental reason we have been guided in mysterious ways to become members of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints today.

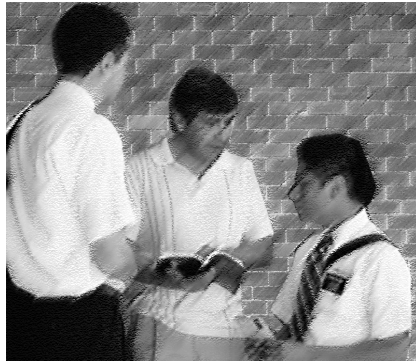


Figure 4 Missionaries teaching the Plan of Salvation

The Plan of Salvation

If you ask Church members, “*Do you know the Plan of Salvation?*” probably 100% would answer, “Yes.” But that is half correct and half incorrect. For example, if you ask, “*Do you know mathematics?*” most people would answer, “*Well, I know it,*” because they learned mathematics in school. However, this does not mean they know everything about mathematics. Advanced mathematics is profoundly deep and can be studied endlessly. Similarly, the Plan of Salvation is the plan for all humanity and the entire universe. Therefore, it is difficult for humans, in this imperfect physical state, to know everything in detail. However, it is possible to know **Heavenly Father’s will** concerning the Plan of Salvation at the level where one resides.

Just as mathematics has levels—first grade, second grade, and so on—the Plan of Salvation also has levels corresponding to one’s understanding. In American universities, freshman courses are numbered in the 100s, starting with classes like 101 (one-oh-one), then progressing to 102, 103, and in the sophomore year, to 201 (two-oh-one), and so forth. Just as there are classes like Math 101 and Math 201, the Plan of Salvation taught by missionaries is

merely “Plan of Salvation 101.” Beyond that, there are teachings like Plan of Salvation 201, 301, and 401—each opening the door to deeper light and knowledge, inviting us to never stop learning.

A Fair Opportunity for All Humanity

One of the most beautiful truths of the Plan of Salvation is that **every person is given a fair chance at salvation**. This fairness reflects the very nature of God Himself and gives us the hope that we, too, have a chance at salvation. As we continue to study deeper into the Plan of Salvation, our understanding of this truth will grow stronger.

The phrase “fairly to all” also serves as an encouragement: “Do not give up; keep moving forward.” When we gain confirmation that fairness truly exists in God’s plan, we become even stronger and more confident in our journey without fear. To gain this confirmation, let us first examine the foundational logic of how the Plan of Salvation operates fairly for all.

The Establishment of Zion for This Purpose

Even after explaining how the Plan of Salvation operates fairly for all, many people may still have a lingering question: *“But what about the countless people who have lived and died without ever hearing about the Plan of Salvation?”* That is a completely valid concern. In reality, the overwhelming majority of people throughout human history have passed away without ever knowing about this divine plan.

As members of the Church, we understand that sacred temple ordinances are performed on behalf of the deceased. This is because those who died without knowing the gospel still have the opportunity to learn about the Plan of Salvation in the spirit world. There, they can receive instruction from those who have already accepted it—much like missionaries teaching the gospel on earth.

Missionary work in the spirit world was established as an integral part of the Plan of Salvation during the time between Jesus Christ’s death and resurrection.

“But behold, from among the righteous, he organized his forces and appointed messengers, clothed with power and authority, and commissioned them to go forth and carry the light of the gospel to them that were in

darkness, even to all the spirits of men; and thus was the gospel preached to the dead.”

(Doctrine and Covenants 138:30)

Through this sacred process, the gospel is made available to all people—both the living and the dead—ensuring that God’s justice and mercy reach every soul. Those in the spirit world who come to understand the Plan of Salvation and desire to return to God’s presence are given the opportunity to receive baptism. However, since they no longer have physical bodies, they cannot receive baptism or other essential ordinances on their own. This is why we, the living, perform these sacred ordinances on their behalf in the holy temples of God.

This work not only blesses the deceased—it also brings profound blessings to us, the living. In the temple endowment, we learn how, after resurrection, we must pass through the presence of angels and be prepared to enter into God’s presence. This experience is sacred and unique—but understanding everything in a single visit is nearly impossible. Thankfully, as previously noted, the opportunity to perform proxy ordinances allows us to return to the temple again and again, participating in ordinances on behalf of multiple individuals. Through this continuous engagement, we reinforce our understanding, deepen our spiritual learning, and draw closer to God.

Because of this sacred responsibility, we diligently engage in genealogical research, striving to extend the opportunity of salvation to as many people as possible. However, as you may already know, temple ordinances for the deceased require accurate information about those individuals.

The unfortunate reality is that, out of the countless people who have ever lived on this earth, only a small fraction have left behind recorded histories. An overwhelming number of records have already been lost, making it impossible for us, at this moment, to provide temple ordinances for everyone who has ever lived. In this sense, the current state of things still falls far short of the divine fairness our Heavenly Father intends for all His children.

To resolve this great imbalance, we, the Latter-day Saints, have been given one of the most crucial missions of the last days—**the building of Zion**.

Ascending to the Mountain of the Lord

The Prophet Joseph Smith declared:

“We ought to have the building up of Zion **as our greatest object.**”⁷

In other words, the greatest mission entrusted to us as “Latter-day Saints” is none other than to build up Zion. The “gathering of Israel,” which was entrusted to John as mentioned earlier, is one part of that process. The prophets Isaiah and Micah both foresaw this great work and recorded their visions in poetic form:

“And it shall come to pass in the last days, that the mountain of the Lord’s house shall be established in the top of the mountains, and shall be exalted above the hills; and all nations shall flow unto it. And many people shall go and say, **Come ye, and let us go up to the mountain of the Lord,** to the house of the God of Jacob; and he will teach us of his ways, and we will walk in his paths: for out of Zion shall go forth the law, and the word of the Lord from Jerusalem.”

(Isaiah 2:2–3)

This prophecy can be seen as a sweeping depiction of the events from the Restoration of the Gospel to the establishment of Zion. In the last days, the mountain, representing the Lord’s Church restored to the earth, will rise above all other Christian denominations and religions. In time, those who ascend this mountain will receive teachings concerning eternal life in the house of God, the holy temple. Thus will begin the Millennial era, during which Zion and the New Jerusalem will be established.

Yet a profound question arises: if the Plan of Salvation teaches that the Final Judgment follows the Resurrection, why does scripture describe a thousand-year period in between? Yet, when we look at the sequence of events on Earth, we find that between the Resurrection and the Final Judgment, there is an extraordinary thousand-year period—the Millennium. Why does such a vast expanse of time exist before the Final Judgment? What purpose does this thousand-year period serve?

This brings us back to the concept of “fairness.” Zion is not just a symbolic ideal but a real place—a sanctified gathering place where people can dwell with Christ. The period that represents this gathering and preparation is

⁷ Teachings of Presidents of the Church: Joseph Smith, p. 186

what we call the Millennium. Joseph Smith clearly taught the purpose of the Gathering of Israel in relation to Zion:

“What was the object of gathering the ... people of God in any age of the world? ... The main object was to build unto the Lord a house whereby He could reveal unto His people the ordinances of His house and the glories of His kingdom, and teach the people the way of salvation; for there are certain ordinances and principles that, when they are taught and practiced, must be done in a place or house built for that purpose.”

(*Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith*, sel. Joseph Fielding Smith (1976), 307–8)

In other words, it is only when this promise is fulfilled for all people—not only those living now, but also those in the past and the future—that the will of God will be fully realized. This divinely appointed, thousand-year preparatory period—designed to bring about perfect justice for all—is what we call “the Millennium”.

The Millennium

When the Lord Jesus Christ destroys all evil and proclaims His victory, Zion will be established, Satan will be bound, and the Millennium will begin. Although we will enter a special era where Jesus dwells among us, our daily lives will continue. Of course, many things will change. Some examples of these changes are described in Doctrine and Covenants Section 101. During this time, we will continue to build temples and perform a vast number of ordinances on behalf of those who passed away without receiving them, throughout the Millennium—a time when the distinction between night and day will no longer exist.

At the beginning of the Millennium, a significant event will take place—the **First Resurrection**. This event will set the Millennium apart from all previous eras in human history. The First Resurrection began immediately after Jesus Christ’s own resurrection, as described in the Gospel of Matthew:

“And the graves were opened; and **many bodies of the saints which slept arose**, And came out of the graves **after his resurrection**, and went into the holy city, and appeared unto many.”

(Matthew 27:52-53)

“And Jesus said unto them: How be it that ye have not written this thing, that **many saints did arise and appear unto many** and did minister unto them? And it came to pass that Nephi remembered that this thing had not been written. And it came to pass that Jesus commanded that it should be written; therefore it was written according as he commanded.”
(3 Nephi 23:11-13)

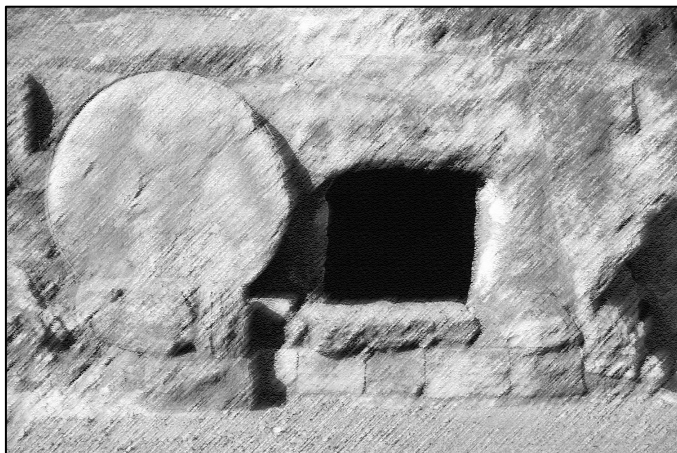


Figure 5 Ancient tomb

Thus, while a select few were resurrected immediately after Jesus Christ—as the first fruits of the First Resurrection, for the majority of the righteous, the morning of the First Resurrection will come at the beginning of the Millennium. As mentioned earlier, we currently lack records for countless individuals who lived and died throughout history. However, those resurrected at the beginning of the Millennium will retain the knowledge of their families, communities, and the people they knew during their mortal lives. With this information, the work of salvation for the dead in the temples will accelerate. As resurrected beings provide knowledge of those who have passed, additional individuals will be resurrected in turn. This chain of revelation will continue, gradually filling in the missing records, until every person from Adam onward has received their ordinances before the Final Judgment.

Thus, in God’s grand design, every soul who desires it will have an equal opportunity to receive the saving ordinances of the temple, ensuring that true fairness prevails in God’s plan of salvation.

The Abrahamic Covenant

When many Church members hear the phrase “the gathering of Israel,” they may picture descendants of Israel from around the world physically gathering together. However, this term is not merely about lineage or ancestry—it is a theme and mission that inspires us to take action. In reality, the gathering of Israel is better understood as the gathering of the righteous, or in other words, the gathering of all people throughout the world who seek to follow God. But why is the gathering of Israel equivalent to the gathering of all nations? The answer lies within the **Abrahamic Covenant**—the sacred promise God made with Abraham. When Abraham came to know the true and living God, he made the personal decision to dedicate his entire life to serving Him. This was a remarkable act of faith, especially considering that the world around him was filled with false teachings. In this way, his situation was similar to that of Joseph Smith, who, centuries later, sought for truth while surrounded by confusion and apostasy.

God made a sacred covenant with Abraham: if Abraham would dedicate his life to serving God, then both he and his descendants would receive the path to eternal life. And if they remained faithful to the end, they would be granted eternal life itself. However, this covenant was not limited to Abraham and his direct descendants alone—it extended far beyond. God declared:

“And I will make of thee a great nation, and I will bless thee above measure, and make thy name great among all nations, and thou shalt be a blessing unto thy seed after thee, that in their hands they shall bear this ministry and Priesthood unto all nations; And I will bless them through thy name; **for as many as receive this Gospel shall be called after thy name, and shall be accounted thy seed**, and shall rise up and bless thee, as their father;”

(Abraham 2:9-10)

Anyone who has seen pictures of the temple or has entered one will have noticed that the baptismal font is supported by statues of twelve oxen. These twelve oxen represent the twelve tribes of Israel. Through the Abrahamic covenant, it is shown that all people—even those who are completely Gentile, without a single drop of Abraham’s blood—may, by accepting the gospel and choosing to return to the true God, be adopted into the family of Abraham and assigned to one of the twelve tribes of Israel at the time of baptism.

Thus, because everyone in the world has the opportunity to become a descendant of Abraham, the “gathering of Israel” essentially means the gathering of the righteous from all nations throughout the world.

Chapter 3: The Great Apostasy

Throughout the six-thousand-year history of humanity, why has the work of Restoration and the gathering of Israel been entrusted specifically to the Latter-day Saints? The answer lies in the presence of an enemy—one whose purpose is to destroy God’s plan and deprive humanity of true happiness. This adversary is known as Satan, the Devil, and those who follow him, those who seek to deceive and mislead us, are called evil spirits.

The Altered and Lost Scriptures

The oldest record concerning the Plan of Salvation that we possess today is the Book of Genesis in the Old Testament. This record was originally written by Moses, based on the vision he received in the land of Midian.

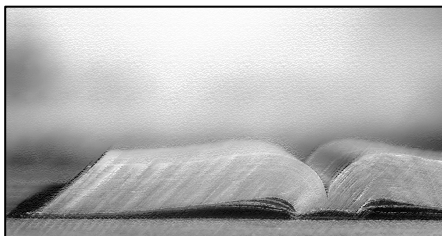


Figure 6 The bible with plain and precious parts lost

But in the version of Genesis we have today, there is no mention of “Satan” or “the Devil.” Does this mean they were never originally written? Certainly not. The original record that Moses wrote contained numerous references to Satan and the Devil as adversaries of God, along with warnings to humanity about their influence. We know this because the Book of Moses, revealed through Joseph Smith’s translation of Genesis, preserves traces of these lost teachings.

In particular, the very first part of Genesis—what we might call Genesis 0 (which would have originally been Genesis 1)—has completely disappeared from the current version of Genesis. We can understand this by reading Moses 1, which reveals a lost portion of scripture that describes how Satan attempted to deceive Moses, preventing him from learning and sharing divine truths with humanity.

“And it came to pass that when Moses had said these words, behold, Satan came tempting him, saying: Moses, son of man, worship me. And it came to pass that Moses looked upon Satan and said: Who art thou? For behold, I am a son of God, in the similitude of his Only Begotten...**Depart hence, Satan.**”

(Moses 1:12–18)

Moses recorded this event as one of the very first accounts in the Old Testament era. Through this, he preserved vital truths—not only the reality of our adversary, but also the divine pattern for recognizing and overcoming him. However, as history unfolded, these sacred truths were altered and lost at the hands of corrupt individuals. What was lost was not merely information about Satan and evil spirits, but also God’s plan and essential doctrines of truth.

The prophet Nephi foresaw this tragic loss of sacred knowledge. In his Small Plates, he recorded a prophecy intended for future generations—those who would one day read the record known as the “Bible”, which would come forth from the Jews. He warned that many plain and precious truths would be removed from this record. This prophecy is repeated multiple times throughout 1 Nephi 13, emphasizing the seriousness of the loss.

“Wherefore, thou seest that after the book hath gone forth through the hands of the great and abominable church, that there are many **plain and precious things taken away** from the book, which is the book of the Lamb of God...because of the many **plain and precious things** which **have been taken out** of the book, which were plain unto the understanding of the children of men, according to the plainness which is in the Lamb of God—because of these things which are taken away out of the gospel of the Lamb, an exceedingly great many do stumble, yea, insomuch that Satan hath great power over them.”
(1 Nephi 13:28–29)

The Vanished Presence of the Holy Ghost

Among the plain and precious truths that Nephi warned had been removed from the scriptures, one of the most significant losses was the mention of “the Holy Ghost.”

In fact, the term “Holy Ghost” never appears even once in the Old Testament as we have it today. Despite being one of the most extensive records of God’s dealings with humanity, the Old Testament contains no direct reference to the Holy Ghost. So, does this mean the Holy Ghost was not present during the Old Testament era? This answer, too, is found in the Book of Moses, as translated by Joseph Smith.

One day, as Adam was offering sacrifices as commanded by God, without knowing the reason, an angel appeared to him. The angel explained that the reason for offering sacrifices was to symbolize the future sacrifice of the Savior, Jesus Christ, who would one day give His life to bring about the forgiveness of sins.

“And in that day the **Holy Ghost** fell upon Adam, which beareth record of the Father and the Son, saying...”
(Moses 5:9)

Adam was able to understand the angel’s words in his heart through the power of the Holy Ghost. This means that **the Holy Ghost has been with humanity from the very beginning.**

The Holy Ghost is a special being who conveys the Plan of Salvation and the will of our Heavenly Father to us. Satan feared that people—especially those called “saints” who would work alongside John in the last days—would come to know about this special being. He knew that once the Plan of Salvation was carried out, his own destruction would be inevitable.

Thus, he and his followers tempted people and removed the term “Holy Ghost” from the Old Testament. As a result, the Holy Ghost suddenly appears in the New Testament alongside Jesus Christ. This alteration led to confusion, making some believe that Jesus Christ, the Holy Ghost, and God the Father are the same being. This misunderstanding laid the foundation for the Trinitarian doctrine, which ultimately obscured the truth of God’s distinct persons and their divine roles.

The Loss of Conviction in Believing the Unseen

By the time the Old Testament period arrived, the Holy Ghost’s role in conveying the essence of the Plan of Salvation had already been distorted. As a result, people lost the ability to comprehend the essence of the gospel both logically and spiritually.

In ancient times, before the advent of communication and printing technology, people could not freely read the scriptures daily. Instead, they relied on the teachings of church leaders to guide their faith. However, even these religious leaders, living in a world where the understanding of the Holy Ghost had been erased, became confused about the gospel’s true

meaning. Deprived of the Holy Ghost's guidance, they relied solely on their own intellect, convinced that they could interpret the scriptures without divine help. This led them to teach false doctrines to the people. Over time, humanity lost the ability to believe in an unseen God. Without the influence of the Holy Ghost, they sought faith in tangible things—things they could see and touch. As a result, they placed their trust in idols and other visible symbols, gradually abandoning the true and living God.

The Era of the Great Apostasy

At roughly the midpoint of human history, when many truths had already been lost from the prophecies of the Old Testament, one significant prophecy was fulfilled—the prophecy that Jesus Christ would come into the world in the flesh.

When Jesus came to this earth, He taught the people for about three years, but the teachings He imparted were very simple: “Have faith, repent, be baptized, receive the Holy Ghost, and treat others as you would want to be treated.” But why did Jesus not teach more deeply about the lost truths during His time on earth?

One of the reasons was the people's lack of understanding at the time. Long before Jesus came to this earth, Moses, having witnessed the glory of God in a vision, tried to help his people comprehend it. He taught them the doctrines and principles of the gospel, striving to lead them to God. However, after having lived in slavery in Egypt for over 400 years, the Israelites had lost the ability to think and act for themselves. They struggled to accept God's will and had difficulty embracing spiritual truths.

“Now this Moses plainly taught to the children of Israel in the wilderness, and sought diligently to sanctify his people that they might behold the face of God; But they hardened their hearts and could not endure his presence; therefore, the Lord in his wrath, for his anger was kindled against them...**he took Moses out of their midst, and the Holy Priesthood also;**”
(Doctrine and Covenants 84:23-25)

The Lord removed the Melchizedek Priesthood from among the people along with Moses. In its place, He provided a system for them to practice thinking for themselves—a preparatory tool, so to speak—by instituting the Aaronic Priesthood, which allowed them to “learn through form.” The ordinances and commandments associated with it were given as the Law of

Moses, which the Israelites were commanded to follow as a means of learning and progression.

However, over time, those who failed to rely on the Holy Ghost to understand these laws and teachings began to misinterpret them. By the time Jesus Christ came, what was meant to be a preparatory law had become a rigid system of external observances. Instead of using it as a stepping stone toward higher spiritual principles, the people had become so bound by the letter of the law that they were unprepared to receive a greater law. Their moral and spiritual state had declined to the point where they could not accept the fullness of the gospel when it was offered to them.

The primary purpose of Jesus Christ's coming to earth was not merely to teach but to take upon Himself the sins of the world—to **perform the work of atonement and become our Savior**. To fulfill this role, He had to experience death in mortality and then overcome it through resurrection. This was an essential part of the Father's plan.

Because Christ had received a mortal body in order to accomplish this mission, He could not personally teach every person the full extent of God's plan during His time on earth. The responsibility of teaching was instead entrusted to the **Holy Ghost**, whom the Father had prepared as part of His great plan of salvation. Thus, after the Last Supper, Jesus explained this to His disciples with the following words:

“Nevertheless I tell you the truth; It is expedient for you that I go away: for if I go not away, the Comforter will not come unto you; but if I depart, I will send him unto you...**I have yet many things to say unto you**, but ye cannot bear them now. Howbeit when **he, the Spirit of truth, is come, he will guide you into all truth**: for he shall not speak of himself; but whatsoever he shall hear, that shall he speak: and he will shew you things to come.”

(John 16:7, 12-13)

Jesus Christ will come to this world twice. When He rebuked the Jews, He spoke about the prophecies written in the scriptures, saying:

“Search the scriptures; for in them ye think ye have eternal life: and they are they which testify of me.”

(John 5:39)

In other words, Jesus taught that the prophecies in the scriptures were written about Himself. These prophecies not only foretold His birth and ministry on the earth but also declared that, in the last days, He would return once more—not merely as a Savior, but as our Lord and King. While Jesus was on the earth, He lamented that many people’s hearts were hardened, making them unable to accept the true gospel. Because of this, when He taught the people of His time, He spoke in a way that only those prepared to receive the guidance of the Holy Ghost could truly understand.

“And the disciples came, and said unto him, Why speakest thou unto them in parables? He answered and said unto them, **Because it is given unto you to know the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven**, but to them it is not given... But blessed are your eyes, for they see: and your ears, for they hear.”

(Matthew 13:10-11, 16)

However, the Lord knew that few would receive Him, and that the newly revealed truths would once again be buried in darkness with the martyrdom of His apostles. Because of this, He foreshadowed these events to Peter, who would later be called as the president of the Church.

“Verily, verily, I say unto thee, When thou wast young, thou girdedst thyself, and walkedst whither thou wouldest: but when thou shalt be old, thou shalt stretch forth thy hands, and **another shall gird thee, and carry thee whither thou wouldest not**. This spake he, signifying by **what death he should glorify God**. And when he had spoken this, he saith unto him, Follow me.”

(John 21:18-19)

After the ascension of Jesus Christ, wicked men slew the apostles of God’s Church, and with their own hands, they destroyed the Melchizedek Priesthood, which had been restored to the earth along with the true teachings. This loss of priesthood and truth led to a long, dark period in history, which we call the “Great Apostasy.”

Jesus Christ knew from the beginning that the Great Apostasy would take place. For this reason, He entrusted the preservation of the true gospel on earth to John, the one apostle who did not taste death, and to Nephi and his descendants, who were led to another land while holding the Melchizedek Priesthood. By the power of God, John and Nephi saw the same vision. To

prevent the details of his vision from being altered or removed, John recorded it in complex, symbolic language in the book known as “Revelation.” In this way, he ensured that people throughout the world would have access to it. Meanwhile, Nephi left a clue that what he had seen was written by a man named John.⁸ The record, later known as the “gold plates,” was buried by a man named Moroni in a small hill located in what is now Manchester, Ontario County, New York.

The Lord Jesus Christ will come again, just as foretold in prophecy. However, unlike His previous coming, when He took upon Himself the frailty of a mortal body, He will return in a glorified, resurrected form, clothed in divine majesty. At that time, He will purge the earth of all wickedness, establish the Kingdom of God—Zion—on this earth, and proclaim the beginning of the Millennium.

Those who prepare the way for His Second Coming, ensuring that all things are set in order, will be known as the Latter-day Saints. As previously mentioned, the term “saint” refers to pure and devoted disciples of Christ—those who became believers after His Atonement and Resurrection and **who possess the true gospel, as received directly from Christ Himself.** Therefore, the true gospel, which had been buried in the earth, needed to transcend time and be delivered once more into the hands of these saints.

⁸ See 1 Nephi 14:27

Chapter 4: The Restoration

The prophet Isaiah, having been shown the course of human history in a vision, recorded numerous prophecies concerning the marvelous events that would unfold in the last days.

“And he will lift up an **ensign** to the nations from far, and will hiss unto them from the end of the earth: and, behold, they shall come with speed swiftly:”

(Isaiah 5:26)

“And in that day there shall be a root of Jesse, which shall stand for an **ensign** of the people; to it shall the Gentiles seek: and his rest shall be glorious...And he shall set up an **ensign** for the nations, and shall assemble the outcasts of Israel, and gather together the dispersed of Judah from the four corners of the earth.”

(Isaiah 11:10, 12)

“Lift ye up a **banner** upon the high mountain, exalt the voice unto them, shake the hand, that they may go into the gates of the nobles. I have commanded my sanctified ones, I have also called my mighty ones for mine anger, even them that rejoice in my highness. The noise of a multitude in the mountains, like as of a great people; a tumultuous noise of the kingdoms of nations gathered together: the Lord of hosts mustereth the host of the battle.”

(Isaiah 13:2–4)

“All ye inhabitants of the world, and dwellers on the earth, see ye, when he lifteth up an **ensign** on the mountains; and when he bloweth a trumpet, hear ye... In that time shall the present be brought unto the Lord of hosts of a people scattered and peeled, and from a people terrible from their beginning hitherto; a nation meted out and trodden under foot, whose land the rivers have spoiled, to the place of the name of the Lord of hosts, the mount Zion.”

(Isaiah 18:3, 7)

In ancient times, various methods were used to send signals to soldiers at a distance during battles, including drums and trumpets. Among these, **flags** also played a crucial role. Different colors and shapes of flags conveyed specific meanings, prompting soldiers to take coordinated action. Isaiah employed this imagery to prophesy about the events of the last days.

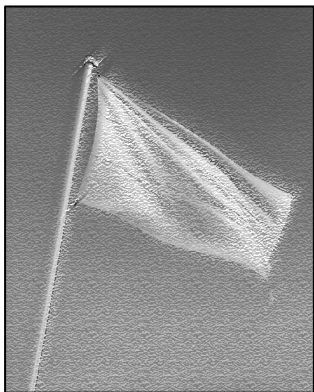


Figure 7 Fluttering flag

Just before the final moment when all evil would be swept from the earth—just before Jesus Christ returns in His triumphant glory—a special “ensign” would be raised, marking the beginning of these events. What is this ensign that Isaiah saw? It is the banner of the Restoration in the last days—Joseph Smith.⁹

Joseph Smith

On December 23, 1805, in a small rural town called Sharon, located in Windsor County, Vermont, a baby boy was born. Among the many children in the Smith family, the father chose to name his newborn son after himself—Joseph.

Joseph’s ancestors had left England in pursuit of a dream, settling in America. Their ambitions extended beyond merely finding a new home; they embraced the pioneering spirit, gradually moving westward from the East Coast, drawn ever deeper into the continent in search of new opportunities. In a remarkable turn of events, Joseph and his family eventually settled near the very hill **where Moroni had buried the gold plates** centuries earlier, as if guided there by an unseen hand.

From a young age, Joseph Smith was a serious and God-fearing individual. His deep sense of integrity and spiritual inclination earned him the trust of his family. As soon as he learned to read, he devoted himself to studying the Bible, the most sacred book available to him in their home.

One day, by chance, Joseph came across a mysterious

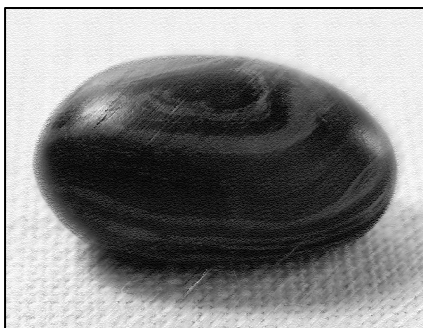


Figure 8 The mysterious stone Joseph found

⁹ The “ensign” mentioned by Isaiah can sometimes refer to the entire Restoration, so it does not necessarily mean that the ensign always represents Joseph Smith.

stone. It appeared to be an ordinary rock, but when he held it and focused his thoughts, he could perceive things that were otherwise hidden. In particular, he possessed an uncanny ability to locate lost objects, and word of this unusual gift spread among the villagers. There are several recorded instances of people seeking Joseph's help when they misplaced valuable items, and he would use the stone to successfully guide them to the missing objects.

However, such abilities were not considered particularly remarkable in his time. In the early 19th century, frontier towns and villages across America had individuals who claimed to possess similar stones, which they used for locating lost items or other purposes. It was regarded as a form of talent, rather than something supernatural or unheard of.

By the time Joseph Smith was fourteen years old, a spiritual upheaval had erupted in the village of Manchester, where his family had settled. However, this was not an isolated event. Across the rapidly expanding frontier settlements of what was now called America, a religious movement known as the Second Great Awakening was sweeping through towns and villages.

Initially, the various Christian denominations that had migrated to America in pursuit of religious freedom had settled and coexisted under the United States Constitution, which guaranteed that freedom. However, as pioneers moved westward, preachers and ministers began to notice that many settlers in these new communities were not formally affiliated with any particular church. Viewing these individuals as "lost sheep", religious leaders felt a duty to bring them into their respective congregations.

This missionary fervor ignited a powerful movement that became a defining characteristic of early 19th-century American religious history. The first wave of this movement was known as the First Great Awakening, and by Joseph's time, the second wave—the Second Great Awakening—had reached his village. Joseph himself later recorded the impact of this period:

"Some time in the second year after our removal to Manchester, there was in the place where we lived an unusual excitement on the subject of religion. It commenced with the Methodists, but soon became general among all the sects in that region of country. Indeed, the whole district of country seemed affected by it, and great multitudes united themselves to the

different religious parties, which created no small stir and division amongst the people, some crying, ‘Lo, here!’ and others, ‘Lo, there!’ Some were contending for the Methodist faith, some for the Presbyterian, and some for the Baptist.”

(Joseph Smith—History 1:5)

Joseph, like many others, became caught up in the religious excitement that surrounded him. The fervor of the revivals stirred his soul, and he began to earnestly desire to become a member of Christ’s true church.

At this time, he held a simple yet sincere belief—there was only one true God, and therefore, there must be one true church. However, as the revival meetings continued, divisions deepened among the different denominations. Each group claimed to be the only true faith, and as the number of converts to various sects grew, so did the spirit of contention. Ministers denounced each other, each insisting that their doctrine alone was correct, and that salvation could be found only within their congregation.

For a fourteen-year-old boy, this was deeply troubling. His heart ached as he witnessed the arguments and accusations among people who all professed to follow Christ. He wondered: *“If there is one true church, then which one is it?”* This question began to consume him, and an intense longing to discover the truth grew within his heart.

Joseph believed that God alone held the answer to his question. He felt certain that the Lord knew which church was true, yet he hesitated to ask Him directly. Like all people, Joseph recognized his own imperfections and weaknesses. In his mind, he was but a sinner, unworthy to personally approach a holy and perfect God. The idea of seeking divine guidance through prayer seemed almost presumptuous, as if he, an ordinary boy, could not possibly be worthy of receiving an answer from the Almighty. This hesitation was not unique to Joseph but was a product of the religious teachings of his time. The true nature and role of the Holy Ghost had been distorted or lost over the centuries. People had little understanding of the Spirit’s power to guide individuals to truth. Thus, Joseph’s reluctance was a natural result of the spiritual climate of the world in which he lived.

Despite his hesitation, Joseph could not let go of his deep yearning to find the true church. He knew that his only source of divine knowledge was the Bible, and so he continued to read it diligently, searching for guidance.

One day, as he was reading the New Testament, he came across a verse that would change his life forever—James 1:5:

“If any of you lack wisdom, let him ask of God, that giveth to all men liberally, and upbraideth not; and it shall be given him.”
(James 1:5)

When Joseph read this verse, he felt a ray of light shine into his heart.¹⁰ The mental barrier he had built up—believing he was not worthy to ask God directly—suddenly disappeared, and he felt a powerful impression: “I at length came to the determination to ‘**ask of God.**’”¹¹

At that time, much of Joseph’s daily labor involved cutting trees in the forest near his home. Towering trees stood tall and dense, their branches filtering the soft early spring sunlight, creating an atmosphere of peaceful solitude. The task of chopping wood had been assigned solely to Joseph, and he knew that during the day, no one else would venture to that secluded place. On that day, he went to the spot where he had left his axe the previous evening.¹² He knelt down, firmly believing that God would hear his plea, and with faith in his heart, he began to pray.

Almost immediately, an overwhelming dark force—unlike anything he had ever experienced—rose up from the depths and attacked him. It was an assault from Satan, the destroyer. Unless he could destroy the faith of Joseph Smith, who was destined to become the first standard-bearer for the Saints in the latter days, God’s final work would move forward. Knowing this, Satan launched a physical attack.¹³ But Joseph did not give up his effort to call upon God.

All at once, a pillar of light appeared directly above him and gradually descended toward him. At the same time, he became aware that he was delivered from the power of darkness that had bound him. When the light rested upon him, he saw within it a personage standing in the air, whose brightness and glory defied all description. Soon, another personage

¹⁰ 1840 Account by Orson Pratt of Joseph Smith’s Experience

¹¹ Joseph Smith—History 1:13

¹² 1843 Account by David White

¹³ Although we pass through a veil of forgetfulness when we come into this life, Satan and the evil spirits were cast out without such a veil and therefore seem to retain the memory of the premortal life. See Matthew 8:29.

appeared¹⁴, and one of them spoke, pointing to the other, saying, “This is My Beloved Son. Hear Him!”¹⁵

This was Joseph Smith’s First Vision. In it, Joseph learned that the true Church no longer existed on the earth. He received many other teachings, and when the light departed, he was left physically exhausted and lay on the ground for a time. This remarkable event is more than just a story—it is filled with profound meaning. It aligns with numerous prophecies, and from this moment forward, the history of the Church unfolded in accordance with those prophecies. Above all, in the history of humankind, Joseph is the only one who has seen and spoken directly with our Heavenly Father in this world.¹⁶ This event broke the long-standing dominance of the doctrine of the Trinity and became the turning point for the restoration of true doctrine.

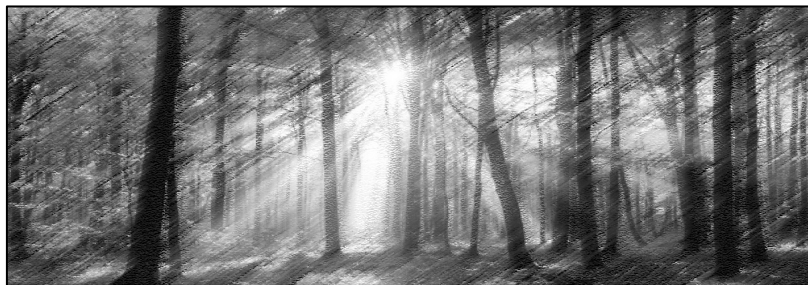


Figure 9 The sacred grove

¹⁴ 1835 Account by Joseph Smith

¹⁵ Joseph Smith—History 1:17

¹⁶ Many people have seen Heavenly Father through visions. One example is Stephen, who, at the time of his martyrdom, saw the throne of God in a vision. Many prophets throughout history have likewise seen the throne of Heavenly Father in visions. Early members of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints also recorded seeing similar visions together with Joseph Smith.

However, these individuals did not converse with Heavenly Father directly on this earth; rather, they saw Him in a separate realm revealed through vision. As for those who did meet and speak with Heavenly Father on the earth, Adam and Eve are examples—but their interaction with Him took place only within the Garden of Eden. After they partook of the forbidden fruit and were cast out, they no longer beheld Him.

President Joseph Fielding Smith explained that the person who spoke to Moses was not Heavenly Father but Jesus Christ. He added the following statement:

“Since the Fall, the Father has not dealt directly with man; He has never appeared except to introduce and bear record of the Son.”

(Doctrines of Salvation, vol. 1, pp. 27–28)

In this First Vision, Joseph Smith was instructed to wait patiently for a time.¹⁷ He was promised that if he remained faithful, all truth would eventually be revealed to him.

The timing of Joseph Smith's First Vision was perfect. In other words, it seems as though the course of world history itself was aligned to prepare for this very event. Why was Joseph able to receive this vision on that day, in that place? If the American continent had not been discovered, he would not have been there. If the U.S. Constitution had not been established, religious freedom would not have been guaranteed. If the discovery of America had been too recent, westward expansion might not have reached the area where the Smith family settled. If the Protestant Reformation had not occurred in Europe, Joseph might not have had access to the Bible, nor would the First and Second Great Awakenings have taken place. Without these religious awakenings, Joseph would not have developed the questions that led him to seek God in prayer. Did all of these events happen by chance, aligning perfectly just so that Joseph could be in the right place at the right time? Certainly not. This event was part of God's divine plan, as can be understood through the scriptures.

First, within the vast history of humankind, the American continent was divinely prepared, remaining unknown to the rest of the world until just 500 years ago—despite the 6,000 years of recorded human history. This land was preserved in secrecy, hidden from the knowledge of the nations. God first led the Jaredites, descendants of Noah, to this land. Later, before the scattering of all the tribes of Israel, He brought the Nephites and the Mulekites to the same land. Concerning these scattered peoples, the Savior Himself declared:

“And other sheep I have, which are not of this fold: them also I must bring, and they shall hear my voice; and there shall be one fold, and one shepherd.”
(John 10:16)

Jesus explained in 3 Nephi that He had not been commanded by the Father to reveal the meaning of these words to the Jews at that time. There was a divine purpose behind this restriction.

¹⁷ Joseph Smith's Account as Recorded by Orson Hyde in 1842

“And not at any time hath the Father given me commandment that I should tell it unto your brethren at Jerusalem. Neither at any time hath the Father given me commandment that I should tell unto them concerning the other tribes of the house of Israel, whom the Father hath led away out of the land. This much did the Father command me, that I should tell unto them: That other sheep I have which are not of this fold; them also I must bring, and they shall hear my voice; and there shall be one fold, and one shepherd.”
(3 Nephi 15:14-17)

Jacob, the brother of Nephi, also explained to his people that Israelites had been scattered to various lands, and that they themselves were among those brought to the American continent. He referenced the allegory of the olive tree, given by the prophet Zenos, to illustrate this divine scattering and gathering process.

“And these will I place in the nethermost part of my vineyard, whithersoever I will, **it mattereth not unto thee;**”
(Jacob 5:13)

Mankind was unaware that God had secretly prepared a special land—the American continent—where He preserved a wise and faithful people along with the priesthood authority. Knowing that Satan’s relentless attacks would lead to the Great Apostasy, God, in His divine wisdom, ensured that the true gospel of Jesus Christ would remain hidden and protected in this land. Then, in the latter days, as part of His final work, He began the process of making this land known to the world, setting in motion the events that would lead to the Restoration of His gospel.

“And I looked and beheld a man among the Gentiles, who was separated from the seed of my brethren by the many waters; and I beheld **the Spirit of God, that it came down and wrought upon the man;** and he went forth upon the many waters, even unto the seed of my brethren, who were in the promised land. And it came to pass that I beheld the Spirit of God, that it wrought upon other Gentiles; and they went forth out of captivity, upon the many waters.”
(1 Nephi 13:12–13)

Columbus, the Pilgrims, and many others were suddenly guided to this land, and through their journeys, the once-hidden American continent was made known to the world.

Within a mere 250 years, the United States gained its independence, and a constitution guaranteeing religious freedom was established. At the same time, the discovery of this continent triggered an era of rapid advancement across the world. Scientific and medical progress led to an unprecedented population explosion, whereas before the 1800s, the world's population hovered around 200 to 300 million, by the 19th and 20th centuries, it began to skyrocket. Today, the world's population has surpassed 8 billion, with projections suggesting it may reach 10 billion. It was precisely during this accelerating growth—amidst this divinely orchestrated shift in history, that Joseph Smith received his First Vision in 1820, marking the beginning of the Lord's latter-day work. And remarkably, through a series of migrations—first his ancestors' journey from England, then his family's successive relocations within America—Joseph's family was ultimately led to settle near the very hill where Moroni had buried the gold plates centuries earlier.

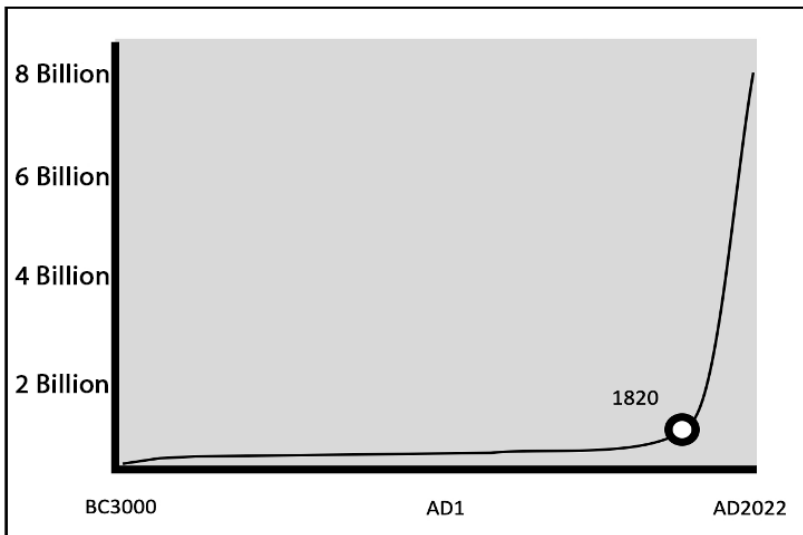


Figure 10 Changes in world population

Isaiah foresaw Joseph Smith's First Vision and how the Lord would instruct him not to join any existing church. He recorded this prophecy in his writings:

“Wherefore the Lord said, Forasmuch as this people draw near me with their mouth, and with their lips do honour me, but have removed their heart far from me, and their fear toward me is taught by the precept of men: Therefore, behold, **I will proceed to do a marvellous work among this people, even a marvellous work and a wonder:** for the wisdom of their wise men shall perish, and the understanding of their prudent men shall be hid.”

(Isaiah 29:13-14)

The Book of Mormon and the Preparation of the Seer

For some time after the First Vision, Joseph remained patient and faithful, waiting for further instruction from the Lord, just as he had been commanded. He did not cease praying. On the contrary, having now stood in the presence of Heavenly Father and Jesus Christ, his faith and conviction became even stronger, and his prayers became more fervent. However, no further heavenly manifestations came immediately. As time passed, Joseph’s account of his vision was met with hostility. Religious leaders, rather than rejoicing in his experience, turned against him. They mocked him, ridiculed him, and spread false accusations. Even many adults in his community scoffed at his words, unwilling to believe that God had truly spoken to a mere boy.

Amidst those unbearable days, Joseph endured with patience, holding fast to the promise of God and continuing to pray with unwavering faith. On the night of September 21, 1823, as he knelt in his bedroom, humbly seeking forgiveness for his weaknesses, a heavenly messenger appeared before him. His name was Moroni.

Approximately 1,400 years before that night, Moroni stood on the slope of a small hill near that very place. There, he dug a hole, built a stone enclosure, and sealed it with cement. Within that stone box, he carefully placed various sacred objects passed down from his ancestors. Among them was the small plates written by Nephi himself, the gold plates—a sacred record compiled by his father, Mormon, at the cost of his own life—along with an additional sealed portion that Moroni had prepared himself.¹⁸

Moroni was the last surviving member of his people—the Nephites, and the final disciple of Christ among them. After their devastating defeat in the

¹⁸ Ether 4:1–7

final war, he wandered for nearly 35 years¹⁹, evading his enemies while protecting the sacred records. At last, he found a place worthy of safeguarding them. As he prepared to bury the plates, he knew that these records would one day resurface and be entrusted to a chosen individual in the last days. With this knowledge, he left these words:

“Behold, I speak unto you as if ye were present, and yet ye are not. But behold, **Jesus Christ hath shown you unto me, and I know your doing.**” (Mormon 8:35)

To those who would stand for God in the last days, Moroni left words of warning and blessing inscribed upon the sacred plates. He then placed them carefully inside the stone box. One can imagine him kneeling in solemn prayer, pleading with the Father in Heaven that these records would one day emerge from the earth and fulfill their divine purpose. With that final act of faith, he sealed the box, covering it with stone and earth before departing from the site.

Long before Moroni’s time, the prophet Isaiah had foreseen the destiny of these buried records. He prophesied of a day when words, hidden in the dust of the earth, would once again speak to the world:

“And thou shalt be brought down, and shalt speak out of the ground, and thy speech shall be low out of the dust, and thy voice shall be, as of one that hath a familiar spirit, out of the ground, and thy speech shall whisper out of the dust.” (Isaiah 29:4)

Moroni passed from this life, and like all others, his spirit entered the spirit world. However, before the Millennium had even begun, he was resurrected and received a special calling—one that made him, in a sense, the guardian and teacher of the last-day prophet. Fourteen centuries after his earthly death, a divine command must have reached him—perhaps words like these: “The time has come. Go to the prophet of the last days, Joseph Smith.”

Moroni went as he was commanded, and before him, he saw a seventeen-year-old young man, kneeling in fervent prayer, pleading for forgiveness for

¹⁹ Mormon 6:5; and Moroni 10:1

his weaknesses. His purity and faith were evident, yet to the eye, he may have seemed frail, young, and uncertain—hardly the image of a prophet. Moroni spoke to him. Surely, he already knew that Joseph had been foreordained for the responsibility of being the prophet of the last days. But Joseph, clothed in an imperfect mortal body, had forgotten everything from his premortal existence. He would have to be taught from the very beginning. At that time, the fullness of truth had not yet been restored to the earth.

Moroni began to explain to Joseph using passages from the Bible—a book he himself had never read in mortality.²⁰ At that time, the gold plates had not yet been translated, and the only word of God Joseph knew was the Bible. Moroni was not merely asking Joseph to locate and translate the record he had buried. His purpose was far greater. Why had he and his father, Mormon, painstakingly compiled the record in the first place? It was to prepare the way for the establishment of Zion—the final step in God’s great plan. It was to ensure that the saints of the last days would believe in the Bible²¹, the sacred record of the Jews, and remember their divinely appointed mission in this world. For this reason, Moroni explained to Joseph that the gold plates were to be brought forth as the very first step in fulfilling the final phase of God’s great plan.

However, the message Moroni delivered was likely far from what Joseph had expected. Up until that moment, Joseph had anticipated that God would simply reveal the truth to him—that he would receive understanding from above. Instead, he was met with an unknown figure, someone not even mentioned in the Bible—Moroni. Rather than teaching him the truth directly, Moroni declared that Joseph himself was to become the instrument by which truth would be restored. For the young seventeen-year-old Joseph, this revelation must have been overwhelming.

Even so, Moroni limited the amount of information he shared with young Joseph. He understood that, having taken on a mortal, imperfect body, Joseph could not grasp everything at once. Moroni was patient. That night,

²⁰ The brass plates that Moroni likely had access to certainly contained the words of Isaiah. Given that Nephi left Jerusalem during that era, it is possible that the words of Joel were also included. However, the writings of Malachi, who is thought to have appeared later, were likely not recorded on the plates.

See Doctrine and Covenants section 2

²¹ Refer to Mormon 7:9

he visited Joseph three times, and then once more the next day. Each time, he repeated his teachings, carefully adding more information little by little, ensuring that Joseph could gradually absorb the knowledge he needed.

Even so, the only thing Joseph truly grasped at that moment was that he needed to go to the designated location and obtain the gold plates. However, he did not yet fully understand everything. When he finally stood before the plates, Satan's temptation overcame him, and his heart was drawn toward their material worth rather than their sacred purpose. Moroni saw through Joseph's thoughts and decided not to give him the plates at that time. But this was only the beginning of Moroni's responsibility as Joseph's mentor.

For four years, once a year, Moroni continued to teach Joseph at that same location. Through this process, Joseph was prepared physically, mentally, and spiritually to fulfill his role as a prophet. Moroni was not only his instructor but also a heavenly guide who stood by him, offering support and direction. In fact, throughout Joseph's life, Moroni appeared to him multiple times. It is likely that of all the heavenly messengers who visited Joseph, Moroni appeared the most frequently.

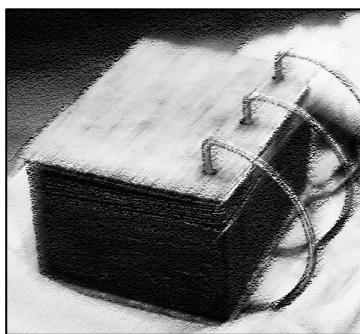


Figure 11 the golden plates

Four years after Moroni's first visit, on September 22, 1827, he finally entrusted Joseph with the golden plates. Along with them, Joseph was given a solemn charge—to guard the record with his life. True to Moroni's warning, Satan's influence stirred the hearts of men, leading them to pursue Joseph in an attempt to seize and destroy the sacred record. However, Joseph remained steadfast in his commitment, determined to fulfill his promise to Moroni. Through his unwavering

efforts and divine protection, the plates were preserved, and at last, the conditions for their translation were set in place.

When Joseph first saw the golden plates, he must have realized that the characters engraved upon them were unlike anything he had ever seen before. They were foreign, ancient, and completely unfamiliar to him. In order to convey their message to the modern world, he needed to translate

them. At that time, one of the most well-known ancient scripts in the scholarly world was Egyptian hieroglyphs. In 1799, during Napoleon's campaign in Egypt, the Rosetta Stone was discovered by chance. This artifact contained the same inscription in three different scripts—hieroglyphs, Demotic (the common Egyptian script), and Greek—allowing scholars like Jean-François Champollion to begin deciphering the ancient Egyptian language. It took approximately 20 years to unlock the meaning of the inscriptions on the Rosetta Stone alone, and another 30 years before scholars could fully comprehend the entire system of ancient Egyptian writing. Joseph received the golden plates in the midst of this era of linguistic discovery, at a time when no scholar in the world had yet achieved a complete understanding of ancient Egyptian writing.

Joseph and Martin Harris, when they first began the translation process, may have noticed a resemblance between the characters on the golden plates and the Egyptian script that was stirring great interest in the scholarly world at the time. However, they had no way of knowing that these characters were actually a modified form of Egyptian.²² Joseph started his work through trial and error. Uncertain of where to begin, he decided to copy several characters onto paper and used the Urim and Thummim, which he had received from Moroni, to see if he could make sense of them. Gradually, he began to understand the meaning of the inscriptions. As he gained comprehension, he recorded the translated text on paper, striving to decipher as many characters as possible in order to progress in his work.

Martin Harris, who assisted Joseph, was a wealthy farmer living near the Smith family. He was deeply religious and gradually began to consider the possibility that this work was indeed from God. Initially, his interest may have been mere curiosity, which was natural—after all, no one had ever heard of or seen anything like what Joseph was describing. Martin was not permitted to see the golden plates himself, but he believed that the characters Joseph had copied and their translation could serve as a confirmation of his faith. Holding onto both the copied characters and their translation, he traveled to New York to consult scholars who specialized in ancient languages, seeking their expert opinion.

Among the scholars Martin consulted, Professor Charles Anthon, a classical studies professor at Columbia College (now Columbia University), stood out. At the time, he was particularly interested in Jean-François

²² See Mormon 9:32–34

Champollion's ongoing efforts to decipher the Rosetta Stone and had gathered various materials related to ancient languages. Although the complete translation of Egyptian was still beyond reach, Martin presented him with the copied characters and Joseph's translation, asking whether they matched. It is likely that Professor Anthon carefully examined each character, comparing them with the known findings from the Rosetta Stone. After his analysis, he concluded that "the translation is generally correct" and even provided Martin with a certificate attesting to this fact.

As Martin expressed his gratitude and prepared to leave, Professor Anthon suddenly inquired, "By the way, how did that young man obtain these plates?" Martin, answering truthfully, explained that an angel had revealed their location to Joseph. Upon hearing this, the professor abruptly asked to see the certificate he had just written, took it back, and tore it into pieces. "There is no such thing now as ministering of angels," he scoffed. He then suggested that if Martin could bring him the actual plates, he would personally translate them. However, when Martin explained that a portion of the plates was sealed and could not be shown, Professor Anthon responded, "I cannot read a sealed book."

At that time, people regarded the Bible with a level of reverence and seriousness far greater than we might imagine today. It was, after all, the only preserved word of God known to mankind. Martin, being a devout believer, was undoubtedly well-versed in the scriptures. After his conversation with Professor Anthon, whether on his journey home or upon his arrival, he found his thoughts dwelling on a particular passage from the scriptures:

"And the vision of all is become unto you as the words of a book that is sealed, which men deliver to one that is learned, saying, Read this, I pray thee: and he saith, I cannot; for it is sealed: And the book is delivered to him that is not learned, saying, Read this, I pray thee: and he saith, I am not learned."
(Isaiah 29:11-12)

Martin knew that when Joseph received the golden plates and began the work of translation, he was overwhelmed by the task. Joseph had confided in him about his concerns—he had little formal education, lacked scholarly training, and felt unqualified to undertake such a monumental work. However, as Martin reflected on his recent conversation with Professor Anthon, he suddenly realized that the entire exchange had already been

foretold in the words of Isaiah. The “one who can read (who has learned)” referred to learned scholars like Professor Anthon, while “the one who cannot read (who has not learned)”²³ clearly pointed to Joseph Smith himself. The passage continued with God’s declaration: “Behold, I will proceed to do a marvelous work among this people, even a marvelous work and a wonder.” With this realization, Martin felt a renewed conviction. He encouraged Joseph, reassuring him that despite his lack of formal education, he was indeed the one chosen by God to carry out this sacred work.

The translation manuscript of the Book of Lehi, consisting of 116 pages, had taken six months of painstaking effort to complete. However, due to Martin Harris’s unfaithfulness, the manuscript was lost, most likely falling into the hands of those who opposed the work.²⁴ For Joseph, the loss of these pages was an overwhelming shock. As a result of this mistake, Moroni took back the golden plates, and Joseph lost the gift of translation. Both Joseph and Martin experienced profound sorrow, unlike anything they had faced before. This loss led them into deep repentance, forcing them to turn humbly to God in search of forgiveness and guidance.

To Satan, the loss of the 116 pages may have seemed like a great victory. However, God’s plan always far surpasses Satan’s schemes. When Adam and Eve were deceived by Satan, transgressed, and were cast out of the Garden of Eden, it might have appeared that Satan had succeeded in his plan. Perhaps even he himself believed he had won. Yet, the Book of Moses records a crucial truth about Satan’s limited understanding:

“And Satan put it into the heart of the serpent, (for he had drawn away many after him,) and he sought also to beguile Eve, **for he knew not the mind of God**, wherefore he sought to destroy the world.”
(Moses 4:6)

Satan, being unaware of God’s will and His magnificent plan, ironically ended up assisting in its fulfillment. Through this, humanity was set in motion, and all people were granted the opportunity to come into this world. In the same way, after the loss of the Book of Lehi, Satan likely believed that his plan had succeeded in nullifying God’s work. However, **because he did not understand God’s wisdom**, he once again inadvertently played a role in furthering the divine plan.

²³ See 2 Nephi 27:19

²⁴ See Doctrine and Covenants section 10

Despite having already created the Large Plates, Nephi also took the time to engrave the same historical account on the Small Plates. His reasoning for doing so was clearly recorded in his own words:

“Wherefore, the Lord hath commanded me to make these plates **for a wise purpose in him**, which purpose I know not. But the Lord knoweth all things from the beginning; wherefore, he prepareth a way to accomplish all his works among the children of men; for behold, he hath all power unto the fulfilling of all his words. And thus it is. Amen.”

(1 Nephi 9:5-6)

Furthermore, despite having already condensed the Large Plates into the Gold Plates, Mormon found the Small Plates and, for reasons he did not fully understand, decided to include them as well. He recorded his reasoning in his own words:

“And I do this **for a wise purpose**; for thus it whispereth me, according to the workings of the Spirit of the Lord which is in me. And now, I do not know all things; but the Lord knoweth all things which are to come; wherefore, he worketh in me to do according to his will.”

(Words of Mormon 1:7)

Then, when Joseph sincerely repented for the loss of the 116 pages, the Lord spoke these words of comfort and guidance to him:

“But behold, here is **wisdom**, and because I show unto you wisdom, and give you commandments concerning these things, what you shall do, show it not unto the world until you have accomplished the work of translation....And now, verily I say unto you, that an account of those things that you have written, which have gone out of your hands, is engraven upon the plates of Nephi; Yea, and you remember it was said in those writings that a more particular account was given of these things upon the plates of Nephi. And now, because the account which is engraven upon the plates of Nephi is **more particular concerning the things** which, in my wisdom, I would bring to the knowledge of the people in this account—Therefore, you shall translate the engravings which are on the plates of Nephi, down even till you come to the reign of king Benjamin, or until you come to that which you have translated, which you have retained; And behold, you shall publish it as the record of Nephi; and thus I will confound those who have altered my words. I will not suffer that they shall destroy my work; yea, **I will show unto them that my wisdom is greater than the cunning of the**

devil. Behold, they have only got a part, or an abridgment of the account of Nephi. Behold, **there are many things engraven upon the plates of Nephi which do throw greater views upon my gospel**; therefore, it is wisdom in me that you should translate this first part of the engravings of Nephi, and send forth in this work.”

(Doctrine and Covenants 10:34, 38-45)

Thus, ironically, through Satan’s futile interference, we have been granted not merely a historical record, but a more detailed account of the Lord’s gospel, providing us with a deeper perspective—preserved in the books from First Nephi to Omni.

For Joseph, this bitter experience became a profound lesson in his preparation. After receiving the gold plates once more and resuming the translation, he, together with Oliver Cowdery, completed the remaining 500 pages in just three months. Compared to the initial 116 pages, this was nearly ten times the speed. However, it was not an abrupt acceleration, but rather a gradual increase in pace. This progression was a clear manifestation of the growth of the gift of the Spirit that had been bestowed upon him.

At first, Joseph did not know how to proceed with the translation, so he gradually began to understand the meaning of the characters using the Urim and Thummim, which Moroni had given him—two stones set in a metal frame, also referred to as the interpreters. Since he had to interpret each character one by one, the process was initially very slow. However, over time, Joseph noticed that the sensation of using the interpreters was similar to the feeling he experienced when using the stone he had previously employed to locate lost objects. When he began using that stone for translation, he was astonished at how naturally it functioned, allowing him to comprehend the meanings of the characters with increasing ease. As mentioned earlier, such stones were not uncommon in America at the time, and many people used them for finding lost items or for divination. However, Joseph alone **discovered their true and divine purpose—the ability to translate.**

However, these were merely tools. Consider how a child learning to ride a bicycle for the first time uses training wheels to prevent falling. With their aid, the child can begin practicing without fear, yet the ability to ride a bicycle **inherently exists within the child from the start.** Once accustomed, the child will eventually no longer need the training wheels. Similarly, Joseph Smith was endowed with the gift of the Spirit as a “seer.”

Joseph, who was sold into Egypt, left a prophecy about this very “seer” many years later:

“For Joseph truly testified, saying: **A seer shall the Lord my God raise up**, who shall be a choice seer unto the fruit of my loins. Yea, Joseph truly said: Thus saith the Lord unto me: A choice seer will I raise up out of the fruit of thy loins; and he shall be esteemed highly among the fruit of thy loins. And unto him will I give commandment that he shall do a work for the fruit of thy loins, his brethren, **which shall be of great worth unto them, even to the bringing of them to the knowledge of the covenants which I have made with thy fathers.**”

(2 Nephi 3:6-7)

Joseph, who was sold into Egypt, foresaw that in the distant latter days, a seer bearing his own name would arise. He himself was a seer who interpreted dreams. And this latter-day seer was none other than Joseph Smith. The Urim and Thummim, as well as the seer stone, were merely training tools—like the training wheels on a bicycle—meant to nurture and develop a seer. As he became accustomed to using them, the spiritual gift of a seer, which had been with him from the beginning, was gradually refined. There are records that indicate this process. While Joseph was using the Urim and Thummim or the stone to translate, he eventually reached the point where he no longer needed to look at the gold plates. By the time he completed the translation, he had stopped using the stone entirely, and the gold plates remained wrapped in a cloth as he continued translating **without seeing them at all.**

“Joseph had other seer stones, but in the words of Elder Orson Pratt (1811–81), a member of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles and later Church Historian, Joseph had also matured by this time in his spiritual understanding. At a meeting on June 28, 1874, attended by President Brigham Young and many other General Authorities, Elder Pratt told his audience about being ‘present many times’ when Joseph Smith ‘was translating the New Testament.’ Seeing no interpretive instruments in use during the translation process, he wondered why Joseph ‘did not use the Urim and Thummim, as in translating the Book of Mormon.’”

As Elder Pratt watched the Prophet translate, ‘Joseph, as if he read his thoughts, looked up and explained that the Lord gave him the Urim and Thummim when he was inexperienced in the Spirit of inspiration. But now he had advanced so far that he understood the operations of that Spirit, and did not need the assistance of that instrument.’”

(From the October 2015 issue of *Liahona*, “The Seer Joseph”)

We often consider the translation of the Book of Mormon (the Gold Plates) as the greatest work of Joseph Smith's life. However, upon examining the many works he accomplished, it becomes evident that the translation of the Book of Mormon was also a necessary training process in his development as a Seer. He was first called a **"Prophet"** and was trained by Moroni and many other angels, receiving numerous revelations. This was an essential gift of the Spirit for the establishment of the Church, as he stood between God and His people. At the same time, as foretold by Joseph of Egypt, he was also prepared as a **"Seer."** This was evident in his restoration of sacred records that had been lost—the revelation of Doctrine and Covenants Section 7, containing the record of the Apostle John; the translation of the Old and New Testaments, whose original manuscripts had long been lost; the restoration of the Book of Moses; and the translation of the Book of Abraham, a record written over 4,000 years ago, of which only a few symbolic figures remained in oral tradition. All of these were divine works that could only be restored by a Seer. Indeed, as Joseph of Egypt prophesied, **"That work shall be of great worth unto them, and bring to their knowledge the covenants which I have made with thy fathers."**

All of these were essential for the Latter-day Saints. The true understanding of the gospel, the comprehension of Isaiah's writings and the Book of Revelation, and the restoration of the memory that they were born on this earth in this final dispensation for a divine purpose—all of these required the undeniable truth that Joseph was both a Prophet and a Seer. When Joseph was martyred, Elder John Taylor, who understood this deeply, wrote the following words about him:

"Joseph Smith, the Prophet and Seer of the Lord, has done more, save Jesus only, for the salvation of men in this world, than any other man that ever lived in it."

(Doctrine and Covenants 135:3)

The baton, which Mormon and his son Moroni risked their lives to carry forward—the earnest desires of the righteous from the past—was thus passed to Joseph Smith. Through his own life-risking efforts, it was finally delivered into the hands of the Latter-day Saints, allowing the work of salvation in the last days to move forward.



Figure 12 Susquehanna river

The Restoration of the Priesthood

While Joseph Smith and Oliver Cowdery were continuing the work of translation near the Susquehanna River, at the home of Emma Smith's parents, they suddenly became aware of an important truth. As they encountered the phrase "baptism by one having authority," they realized that they themselves had not received such a baptism. Moreover, they came to understand that there once existed in the world a divine power—the authority of God.

Naturally, they must have concluded that they too needed to receive a baptism that was recognized by God. At the same time, they might have felt a deep uncertainty—

where in the world could they find someone who held such divine authority? After all, in the First Vision, God had declared that "none of the churches were right." However, despite their uncertainty, they had one unwavering conviction: God would answer if they asked. Both Joseph and Oliver²⁵ had already experienced this truth firsthand. And so, they left the house and entered the nearby woods. On May 15, 1829, amid the fresh greenery and gentle sunlight of spring, they found a place where they could kneel and began to pray.

"This was not long desired before it was realized. The Lord, who is rich in mercy, and ever willing to answer the consistent prayer of the humble, after we had called upon Him in a fervent manner, aside from the abodes of men, condescended to manifest to us His will. On a sudden, as from the midst of eternity, the voice of the Redeemer spake peace to us, while the veil was parted and the angel of God came down clothed with glory, and delivered the anxiously looked for message, and the keys of the Gospel of repentance. What joy! what wonder! what amazement!"

(Joseph Smith—History, as recorded by Oliver Cowdery)

The angel who descended was the resurrected John the Baptist. It was absolutely necessary that he be the one to come. John the Baptist was not

²⁵ See Doctrine and Covenants 6:22

the last holder of the Aaronic Priesthood—there were still Levites performing temple ordinances after him. However, in all of history, he is the one person universally recognized as having held the Aaronic Priesthood beyond any doubt. He was the very man who baptized Jesus Christ. There could be no question that he possessed the proper authority. By his coming, the Aaronic Priesthood—the lesser priesthood—was once again established on the earth in a way that could be recognized in the latter days.²⁶ John explained his mission and responsibility, and then declared the following:

“The messenger who visited us on this occasion and conferred this Priesthood upon us, said that his name was John, the same that is called John the Baptist in the New Testament, and that he acted under the direction of Peter, James and John, who held the keys of the Priesthood of Melchizedek, **which Priesthood, he said, would in due time be conferred on us**, and that I should be called the first Elder of the Church, and he (Oliver Cowdery) the second. It was on the fifteenth day of May, 1829, that we were ordained under the hand of this messenger, and baptized.” (Joseph Smith—History 1:72)

There is only one priesthood, as it represents the sole power of God. However, in accordance with the spiritual progression of mankind, God has established this priesthood in two forms, or rather, in two stages. The Aaronic Priesthood, also known as the “preparatory priesthood,” serves as a preparation for the higher ordinances administered through the Melchizedek Priesthood. All ordinances essential for our spiritual salvation are ultimately completed through the Melchizedek Priesthood.

Having received the Aaronic Priesthood from John the Baptist, Joseph and Oliver baptized one another. Then, a few days later, Peter, James, and John, who had been transfigured and had not tasted death for 1800 years, having been entrusted with the responsibility of gathering Israel in the last days alongside the Saints, came to them and conferred upon them the Melchizedek Priesthood.



Figure 13 Two types of Priesthood

Among Church members, some may think of the priesthood simply as a “special power from God

²⁶ Whether people believe it or not

that only men can hold.” Given the language used and the ordinances performed, it is understandable that one might think this way. However, the essence of the priesthood is God’s love for His children. The priesthood is the power by which the world was created and is continually sustained. It is not only the power of creation but also the power of preservation. Even now, we live in a world sustained by the power of the priesthood. The fact that all things move according to laws, and that our physical bodies, though composed of countless tiny elements, do not disintegrate into chaos, is because they are maintained by the power of the priesthood. From the smallest particles to the planets revolving around the sun, all things move according to the laws of the priesthood. Mormon described this principle in the following words:

“How great is the nothingness of the children of men; yea, even they are less than the dust of the earth. For behold, the dust of the earth moveth hither and thither, to the dividing asunder, **at the command of our great and everlasting God**. Yea, behold at his voice do the hills and the mountains tremble and quake...And thus, according to his word the earth goeth back, and it appeareth unto man that the sun standeth still; yea, and behold, this is so; for surely it is the earth that moveth and not the sun.” (Helaman 12:7-9, 15)

The power of the priesthood is far greater and mightier than we can imagine. It has existed with God from eternity to eternity and will never cease nor be extinguished. Paul also described the greatness of this priesthood, which is given to man, in the following words:

“Without father, without mother, without descent, having neither beginning of days, nor end of life; but made like unto the Son of God; abideth a priest continually.” (Hebrews 7:3)

We are given the opportunity to receive the priesthood and participate in its ordinances in this life because God has a divine purpose for bringing His children to earth—a purpose of learning and growth—and of ultimately guiding them back to His presence. This purpose is what we call “salvation.” In this work of salvation, both men and women labor equally. Neither can fulfill it alone. Holding the priesthood is not synonymous with manhood; rather, it is a sacred stewardship granted to serve God’s children, and it involves both men and women working together to fulfill the work of

salvation. President Joseph Fielding Smith explained this principle in the following words:

“In an address to the Relief Society, President Joseph Fielding Smith, then President of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, said this: ‘While the sisters have not been given the Priesthood, it has not been conferred upon them, that does not mean that the Lord has not given unto them authority. . . . A person may have authority given to him, or a sister to her, to do certain things in the Church that are binding and absolutely necessary for our salvation, such as the work that our sisters do in the House of the Lord. They have authority given unto them to do some great and wonderful things, sacred unto the Lord, and binding just as thoroughly as are the blessings that are given by the men who hold the Priesthood.’” (Joseph Fielding Smith, “Relief Society—an Aid to the Priesthood,” Relief Society Magazine, Jan. 1959, 4)

In this world, the ordinances we perform using the priesthood granted to us by God serve two major purposes. One is to administer the essential ordinances necessary for salvation, and the other is to provide help and support for our growth. The ordinances required for salvation include baptism, the laying on of hands for the gift of the Holy Ghost, and temple ordinances.

On the other hand, the ordinances that aid us in our growth might not have been necessary if we were perfect, always able to follow God’s commandments with strength and faith. However, in reality, this is not the case. We easily forget our baptismal covenants and quickly fall prey to Satan’s temptations. We become discouraged by our own mistakes, suffer from illness, injury, or unexpected hardships, and shed tears in times of sorrow. When embarking on new paths in life, we often find ourselves in need of divine assistance.

Ideally, Heavenly Father and Jesus Christ would personally come to comfort and strengthen us. However, if they did so, faith would no longer be necessary, and the very purpose of this earth—designed as a school for our learning and growth—would lose its meaning.

Therefore, instead of directly intervening, God entrusts priesthood holders with the responsibility to act on His behalf. They are appointed to administer ordinances that “provide help for growth” to His children who

are weak, weeping, and in need of comfort and encouragement. Priesthood ordinances are divinely prepared for this purpose.

As priesthood holders act as representatives of God, they must work with an understanding of His will and perform their duties with faithfulness.

“Wherefore, now let every man learn his duty, and to act in the office in which he is appointed, in all diligence. He that is slothful shall not be counted worthy to stand, and he that learns not his duty and shows himself not approved shall not be counted worthy to stand. Even so. Amen.”

(Doctrine and Covenants 107:99-100)

It is not only in ordinances. In both the Church and the home, all administration through the priesthood must be carried out with the same spirit—never according to our own will, but always seeking the will of God and acting in **love**.

“We have learned by sad experience that it is the nature and disposition of almost all men, as soon as they get a little authority, as they suppose, they will immediately begin to exercise unrighteous dominion. Hence many are called, but few are chosen. No power or influence can or ought to be maintained by virtue of the priesthood, **only by persuasion, by long-suffering, by gentleness and meekness, and by love unfeigned; By kindness, and pure knowledge**, which shall greatly enlarge the soul without hypocrisy, and without guile.”

(Doctrine and Covenants 121:39-42)

The Latter-day Saints had to receive this priesthood. It was not only so that they could partake of the ordinances necessary for salvation, but also so that they could learn to stand in the place of God and help one another. The Zion that the Saints strive to establish is a place that resembles the resurrected earth—the celestial kingdom of glory. Only those who can abide by the laws of that kingdom, particularly the law of love, will be able to dwell there.

“For he who is not able to abide the law of a celestial kingdom cannot abide a celestial glory.”

(Doctrine and Covenants 88:22)

This principle was also taught by Jesus when He was on the earth. When a lawyer sought to test Him by asking which commandment was the greatest, His response was as follows:

“Jesus said unto him, Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind. This is the first and great commandment. And the second is like unto it, **Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself.** On these two commandments **hang all the law and the prophets.**”

(Matthew 22:37-40)

To love our neighbor in the same manner as we love God is a form of training, preparing us to enter the celestial kingdom. This is why Jesus declared that “on these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets.” Furthermore, during His final moments with His disciples after the Last Supper, He imparted one last commandment as His concluding message in mortality:

“A new commandment I give unto you, That **ye love one another**; as I have loved you, that ye also love one another.”

(John 13:34)

The law and the words of the prophets teach us the importance of love, and the priesthood serves as the necessary training to put that love into action. Whether we hold the priesthood or not, when we serve in harmony with its divine order and with Godlike love for His children, we enter a refining process. Through this training, the law of love becomes a habitual part of us, ultimately preparing us to be worthy of entering the glory of the celestial kingdom.

In this last dispensation, the restoration of the priesthood first given to Adam holds profound significance. This is the final dispensation of the priesthood upon the earth. There will be no further dispensations of priesthood authority during this mortal probation. This is humanity’s final and only opportunity to prepare before that great and final day. When this sacred priesthood was entrusted to the Latter-day Saints through Joseph Smith, the necessary authority to bring about the final preparations for the Lord’s coming was at last fully restored.

The Establishment of the Church and the Restoration of Its Organization

When the gold plates were translated and published as the Book of Mormon, the complete restoration of the gospel had begun. With the priesthood authority that was passed down from Adam now restored, and

the power to carry out the Lord's work once again granted, the next essential step was the restoration of the Church—**the sacred organization through which the Latter-day Saints would labor together.**

For example, in the early days of the Nephites, when the number of believers consisted only of family units, there was no formal church organization. There was no need to establish a separate church, for the entire family was united in faith, and it was a natural practice to hold worship services on the Lord's day. However, as the Nephite population grew, groups emerged who resisted the Lord's commandments. At that point, a structured organization became necessary to unify the believers and allow them to carry out God's work in harmony. The Book of Mormon records the formation of the first church among the Nephites as follows:

“And they were called the church of God, or the church of Christ, from that time forward. And it came to pass that whosoever was baptized by the power and authority of God was added to his church...And it came to pass that king Mosiah granted unto Alma that he might establish churches throughout all the land of Zarahemla; and gave him power to ordain priests and teachers over every church.”

(Mosiah 18:17; 25:19)

Jesus Christ established His church both in Israel and in the land of America. The mission given to the Latter-day Saints is to establish Zion through the gathering of Israel. Therefore, it could not simply remain a gathering of Joseph, his friends, and his family. Since this is the work of God that involves the entire world, there must be a “church” that serves as the fundamental place of activity for the Latter-day Saints working worldwide. Moreover, it was necessary to restore the very same organization that Jesus Christ had established in ancient times.

“We believe in the same organization that existed in the Primitive Church, namely, apostles, prophets, pastors (bishops), teachers, evangelists, and so forth.”

(Articles of Faith 1:6)

When Jesus Christ visited the Nephites, He taught that if, in the future, the **Gentiles (the Latter-day Saints)** who would come to this land would repent and walk in God's ways, He would permit them to establish His church.

“But if they will repent and hearken unto my words, and harden not their hearts, **I will establish my church** among them, and they shall come in unto the covenant and be numbered among this the remnant of Jacob, unto whom I have given this land for their inheritance;”
(3 Nephi 21:22; see also Doctrine and Covenants 10:53)

The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints was organized on April 6, 1830, in accordance with the laws of the state of New York, with six individuals signing as its founding members. The organization took place in the home of Peter Whitmer Sr., the father of David Whitmer.

The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, organized according to the pattern of the early Church, is led by a prophet who serves as its President. However, the President is not the head of the Church. The one whom we should always look to is Jesus Christ. The purpose of this Church is to build Zion in preparation to welcome the Lord as its head. At this stage, Zion has not yet been fully established, and therefore, we cannot yet receive the Lord. For this reason, the President of the Church, as the prophet, holds the keys of the priesthood as delegated by Jesus Christ. These priesthood keys are also conferred upon all the apostles, but only the President is authorized to exercise them. Eventually, when the mission of the Latter-day Saints is fulfilled, Israel is gathered, and we prepare to receive the Lord, the presiding priesthood leaders will assemble in the Valley of Adam-ondi-Ahman. Under the direction of Adam, all the keys of the priesthood will be returned to Jesus Christ upon His coming.²⁷



Figure 14 the Valley of Adam-ondi-Ahman

²⁷ Joseph Fielding Smith, *The Way to Perfection*, p. 228

The Construction of Temples and the Restoration of Priesthood Keys

With the formal organization of the Church, more people were able to join in an orderly and unified way. As members took every opportunity to introduce the Church, the Book of Mormon, and the prophet Joseph Smith, the number of converts gradually increased in various places. However, the geographical spread of these new converts was vast, communication methods were still limited, and the only printed material available was the Book of Mormon. As a result, confusion arose in congregations where Joseph Smith was not nearby to provide direct guidance. For us today, this may seem difficult to imagine, but at that time, every single member of the Church had converted within just a few years. Without sufficient information, they struggled to move forward in their new faith, and the ideas they applied often reflected residual influences from their previous religious backgrounds. Without proper organization and structure, misunderstandings and doctrinal inconsistencies began to emerge, emphasizing the need for further revelation and a centralized foundation to unify the growing body of Saints.

Here, God provided a revelation instructing the Saints to gather in Kirtland. But why was it necessary for the Church, which had begun in New York, to relocate all the way to Kirtland, Ohio? There are several possible reasons, and I would like to introduce four of them here.

The first reason was, as mentioned earlier, to bring the scattered and confused members together in one location, where they could receive unified and correct teachings. By gathering them in a single place, the Lord ensured that all members could learn the gospel in its purity and avoid doctrinal misunderstandings.

The second reason was to move geographically closer to the location where Zion would eventually be established. While the Saints did not yet know this at the time, Church history later revealed that the Lord was gradually leading them closer to Zion. Looking at the Church's movements, we can see a clear pattern of progression toward the land where Zion was to be built.

The third reason was to gather laborers for the Lord's work. The mission given to Joseph was to build Zion, which is why the phrase "for the sake of Zion" appears repeatedly throughout the Doctrine and Covenants. In order to fulfill this mission, it was necessary to gather the covenant people of

God—this is what is meant by the gathering of Israel. But who, exactly, was supposed to gather the people of Israel? To accomplish this purpose, there first needed to be workers dedicated to this effort. At this time, the Church had not yet received the keys of the gathering of Israel—the priesthood authority necessary to carry out this divine work. Therefore, the Saints gathered in one place to begin missionary efforts aimed at gathering the first laborers who would help bring Israel together.

The fourth reason was to receive the necessary priesthood keys. That winter, despite facing many hardships, a great number of Saints obeyed the Lord's command and relocated to Kirtland. It was there that the Lord gave an important revelation:

“Organize yourselves; prepare every needful thing; and establish a house, even a house of prayer, a house of fasting, a house of faith, a house of learning, a house of glory, a house of order, a house of God;”
(Doctrine and Covenants 88:119)

This “House of God” became the first temple in the history of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. The Kirtland Temple was different from modern temples—it did not contain a baptismal font or endowment rooms as we see today. That was because such ordinances had not yet been revealed at that stage. The primary purpose of the Kirtland Temple was to bestow the necessary **priesthood keys** required for the functioning of the newly established Church.

Some may wonder why all the priesthood keys were not given at once when the priesthood was restored. However, even today, we have not yet received all of the priesthood keys. The priesthood continues beyond this life, and there are additional ordinances and works that lead to exaltation, each requiring its own specific keys. Priesthood keys are granted according to the stage of God's plan being fulfilled, ensuring that the work of salvation progresses in an orderly manner, just as it has since the beginning.

For example, when John the Baptist conferred the Aaronic Priesthood, he bestowed the keys necessary to perform baptism.²⁸ Later, when Peter, James, and John conferred the Melchizedek Priesthood, they likely bestowed the keys for the laying on of hands for the gift of the Holy Ghost, as well as the keys for organizing and administering the Church. Now that

²⁸ See Doctrine and Covenants 13:1

the Church had been established and the first laborers had been gathered, the time had come to prepare the keys for the next phase of the Lord's work.

In the midst of the Kirtland Priesthood dedication, that sacred event took place. The resurrected Moses, Elias, and Elijah appeared. First, Moses bestowed the "keys of the gathering of Israel." Through this, the Church was empowered to go forth into all the world to preach the gospel and gather the people. Next, Elias appeared and delivered the "keys of the gospel of Abraham." Through this, all the gospel truths that Father Abraham had learned were made available for us to live by. All that we learn in the Church—our connection to ancestors and posterity, the passing down of covenants, and the knowledge gained in the temple—is now made available through the priesthood, which serves as the Lord's divine channel. Finally, Elijah appeared and bestowed the "sealing keys." Through these, we are able to be sealed together as families, united not only with each other but also with our ancestors and our posterity.²⁹

Compilation of the Doctrine and Covenants

Now that the Latter-day Saints had received both the priesthood and the keys of the priesthood, they were finally prepared to begin their work on a broader scale and engage in missionary efforts throughout the world. However, just as obtaining an automobile does not mean one can drive without first learning the rules and techniques of driving, the early Saints lacked sufficient knowledge to effectively carry out the Lord's work. Even if all the teachings had been given at once, they would not have been able to fully comprehend or retain them. Therefore, God continued to teach them gradually, revealing His will through the prophet on various occasions in the form of revelations. The number of these revelations grew significantly, with many of them being recorded by hand. As these handwritten records accumulated, more and more Saints desired access to these divine teachings, leading to an increase in hand-copied manuscripts. However, just like a game of telephone, errors and discrepancies began to appear as copies were made, causing some parts of the revelations to deviate from their original wording.

Concerned about the growing issue of errors in copied revelations, Church leaders decided to compile the revelations given up to that point into a single volume for publication. This project was known as the "Book of

²⁹ See Doctrine and Covenants Section 110

Commandments”, and preparations for its publication steadily progressed. However, just as the final stage of printing was underway, a mob attacked the town and destroyed the printing press.

Miraculously, several critical manuscripts were preserved from destruction. These documents were later gathered and edited, leading to the first publication of the “**Doctrine and Covenants**” in 1835. Unlike other scriptures, the Doctrine and Covenants is a collection of revelations given to latter-day prophets. Because revelation is ongoing, additional sections and pages have been added since the 1835 edition. In this sense, the book remains “unfinished,” continually expanding as God reveals His will to His chosen servants.

In preparation for the publication of the Doctrine and Covenants, the Lord Jesus Christ Himself provided both a preface and an appendix for the book. The preface is now recorded as Doctrine and Covenants Section 1, while the appendix is found in Section 133. In Section 1, the Lord gives a solemn warning to the Latter-day Saints, emphasizing the importance of His revelations and the need for the world to heed His voice in these latter days.

“And he that repents not, from him shall be taken even the light which he has received; for my Spirit shall not always strive with man, saith the Lord of Hosts...Search these commandments, for they are true and faithful, and the prophecies and promises which are in them shall all be fulfilled.”
(Doctrine and Covenants 1:33, 37)

This warning is directed at those who study the Doctrine and Covenants—namely, the Latter-day Saints. Doctrine and Covenants Section 1 closely resembles Isaiah Chapter 1. Both passages serve as a warning, emphasizing the need for repentance and purification of the heart so that individuals may receive instruction through the Holy Ghost.

“And inasmuch as they were humble they might be made strong, and blessed from on high, and receive knowledge from time to time.”
(Doctrine and Covenants 1:28)

If we heed this warning, repent, purify ourselves, and humble our hearts, studying the scriptures with prayer, we will be able to gain even greater knowledge.

The Pearl of Great Price

Joseph diligently sought to walk with God throughout his life. Because of this, beyond the revelations recorded in the Doctrine and Covenants, he received numerous teachings, wisdom, and knowledge, much of which remains beneficial to us today. While most of the Doctrine and Covenants consists of revelations given to Joseph by God, he also received many other truths, which were occasionally published through church periodicals and newspapers by church leaders. However, most of these were only published once, meaning that only those in Kirtland or Nauvoo at the time had the opportunity to read them in real-time. Among these writings were many precious and significant records, but due to relentless persecution and the expulsion of the Saints from Nauvoo, much of this material was on the verge of being lost.

When the Saints arrived in Salt Lake City, they began their efforts to settle and establish their new home. As their lives gradually stabilized, missionary work resumed on a global scale. During this time, Elder Franklin D. Richards, who was then serving as a member of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles and as president of the British Mission, took the initiative to gather many of these nearly lost records.

He compiled them into a collection titled “**The Pearl of Great Price**”, with the intent that they be used in missionary efforts and to instruct and edify Church members. Over time, this compilation gained widespread use, and in 1880, under the proposal of the First Presidency, **The Pearl of Great Price was canonized as one of the Church’s standard works.**

The Pearl of Great Price is shorter in length compared to the other standard works and contains a diverse range of content. Because of this, it is rarely studied as a standalone curriculum in Sunday School or other Church classes. Instead, it is often used as a supplementary reference alongside other scriptures. However, for those who take the time to study it seriously, they will discover that it holds remarkable wisdom and knowledge. As its name suggests, The Pearl of Great Price is a rare and invaluable treasure. When we come to understand why the Lord provided this additional scripture alongside the Book of Mormon and the Doctrine and Covenants, we draw one step closer to becoming true Latter-day Saints, fully embracing the restored gospel in these last days.

The Pearl of Great Price is composed of five distinct sections:

- The Book of Moses

- The Book of Abraham
- Joseph Smith—Matthew
- Joseph Smith—History
- The Articles of Faith

As stated in the preface of *The Pearl of Great Price*, each of these writings has its own explanation. However, what is truly important is understanding how these records benefit us. While there are various purposes for these writings, one key purpose will be introduced here.

“The Book of Moses” and “Joseph Smith—Matthew” are excerpts from the translations of the Old and New Testaments that Joseph Smith undertook. However, the fact that these particular sections were singled out and included as a separate volume of scripture holds significant meaning. The Book of Moses restores many lost portions of Genesis, including invaluable records that had been erased from the world, most notably, the account that “Zion had once been established on this earth.” Without this information, no one would be able to properly interpret the following passage from the Book of Revelation.

“And **she** brought forth **a man child**, who was to rule all nations with a rod of iron: and her child **was caught up unto God**, and to his throne.”
(Revelation 12:5)

Prior to Joseph’s translation of the Book of Moses, no one had fully understood this passage in Revelation. Joseph also worked on translating the Book of Revelation, where he explained the meaning of the “woman” and the “child” mentioned in this verse. According to his explanation, the “woman” represents the Church of God, while the “child” symbolizes the Kingdom of God, namely **Zion**. In the passage from Revelation, the newly established Kingdom of God—Zion—is caught up to God. In the Book of Moses, it is recorded that Enoch spent his life preaching repentance, ultimately establishing Zion, and that this Zion was taken up into heaven.

“And Enoch continued his preaching in righteousness unto the people of God. And it came to pass in his days, that he built a city that was called the City of Holiness, even Zion... And it came to pass that the Lord showed unto Enoch all the inhabitants of the earth; and he beheld, and lo, Zion, in process of time, **was taken up into heaven**.”
(Moses 7:19, 21)

This revelation holds great significance for us as Latter-day Saints. At times, we might perceive the events recorded in the Bible as distant stories from another land, disconnected from our own lives, and even feel that God's promises do not directly concern us. However, from the very beginning of Joseph's calling, the Lord repeatedly revealed through revelation that the greatest purpose of our work as Latter-day Saints is to establish Zion. At that time, many church members may have viewed the idea of building Zion as something akin to a fairy tale. But when Joseph translated and explained this portion of scripture, the Saints came to understand a vital truth: **"People just like us have built Zion once before."** This realization made the concept of Zion a tangible reality. If others before us, living on this same earth, had once succeeded in establishing Zion, then surely, we too could accomplish it. Moreover, to reinforce this truth, the Lord declared the following:

"I am the same which have taken the Zion of Enoch into mine own bosom; and verily, I say, even as many as have believed in my name, for I am Christ, and in mine own name, by the virtue of the blood which I have spilt, have I pleaded before the Father for them."
(Doctrine and Covenants 38:4)

How much courage these words must have given to the Saints at that time! Not only was it proven that humans could indeed establish Zion, but through revelation, it was declared that the very head of this Church was the same One who had received that Zion. The Saints began to move forward with renewed conviction toward the great cause of Zion.

"Joseph Smith—Matthew" preserves the words of Jesus Christ as He explained to His disciples what would occur in the last days, warning them of the conditions and what they should be mindful of when those events come to pass. However, these words were spoken to the Twelve Apostles of that time, yet except for John, none of them lived to see the last days. Therefore, these teachings were directly intended for those who would live in the latter days, which is why they were excerpted into the Pearl of Great Price. In this passage, Jesus repeatedly warns those living in the last days, saying, "Take heed that no man deceive you" and "Be not led astray." This is an extremely important message for us. Likewise, the Apostle John, who was shown the latter-day Saints, also sent a similar message through the Book of Revelation.

“And all that dwell upon the earth shall worship him, whose names are not written in the book of life of the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world. **If any man have an ear, let him hear.** He that leadeth into captivity shall go into captivity: he that killeth with the sword must be killed with the sword. **Here is the patience and the faith of the saints.**”
(Revelation 13:8–10)

Here, John explains that even the saints who fall into Satan’s deceptions will be led into captivity. To counter this, he provides a key piece of wisdom: “If any man have an ear, let him hear.” This phrase was frequently used by Jesus during His earthly ministry. However, an interesting detail emerges—Jesus’ phrase in English is typically written with “ears” in the plural, as people naturally have two ears. But John, in this instance, writes “**an ear**,” using the singular form.

The phrase “an ear” appears only nine times across all of scripture. Eight of those instances are found in the book of Revelation, and seven of them appear in John’s letters to the seven churches, where he gives a guiding principle on how to approach the teachings of Revelation. The final occurrence is found in Revelation 13—the very center of both the chapter and the book’s overall chiasmic structure.

If we consider that John’s writings are a message directed at the Latter-day Saints, carrying the same significance as Jesus’ teachings, then the most critical warnings regarding Satan’s attacks on us are about “pride” and being deceived by false information. After explaining that he has seen us, Moroni adds the following warning:

“And **I know that ye do walk in the pride of your hearts**; and there are none save a few only who do not lift themselves up in the pride of their hearts, unto the wearing of very fine apparel, unto envying, and strifes, and malice, and persecutions, and all manner of iniquities; and **your churches, yea, even every one, have become polluted because of the pride of your hearts.**”
(Moroni 8:36)

This is Satan’s most effective attack against the Latter-day Saints. The Lord has addressed this issue multiple times in revelations, repeatedly warning us:

“Behold, verily I say unto you, there are hypocrites **among you**, who have deceived some, which has given the adversary power; but behold such shall be reclaimed (meaning those who were deceived without knowing, yet whose hearts are still open to be reclaimed); But the hypocrites shall be detected and shall be cut off, either in life or in death, even as I will; and wo unto them who are cut off from my church, for the same are overcome of the world.”

(Doctrine and Covenants 50:7-8)

“Wherefore, beware lest ye are deceived; and that ye may not be deceived seek ye earnestly the best gifts, always remembering for what they are given;”

(Doctrine and Covenants 46:8)

Nephi teaches us the only way to avoid this problem while explaining the words of Isaiah:

“For behold, thus saith the Lord God: I will give unto the children of men line upon line, precept upon precept, here a little and there a little; and blessed are those who hearken unto my precepts, and lend **an ear** unto my counsel, for they shall learn wisdom; for unto him that receiveth I will give more; and from them that shall say, We have enough, from them shall be taken away even that which they have.”

(2 Nephi 28:30)

Earlier, it was explained that the phrase “an ear” appears nine times throughout all the scriptures. Eight of these instances are found in the book of Revelation. The remaining occurrence is used here by Nephi, who saw the same vision as John. When Nephi explains Isaiah’s words about how God teaches us, he writes, “blessed are those who hearken unto my precepts, and lend an ear unto my counsel.” In this passage, he specifically uses “an ear”—a single ear. He then proceeds to explain what it means to listen with “an ear,” or with a single ear.

“Cursed is he that putteth his trust in man, or maketh flesh his arm, or shall hearken unto the precepts of men, save **their precepts shall be given by the power of the Holy Ghost.**”

(2 Nephi 28:31)

To hear with “an ear”—that is, with a single ear—means to perceive the **words of the Holy Ghost** with the heart. When individuals rely on their own wisdom and cease to seek direction from God, the gap created by their pride allows false information from Satan to enter. This misinformation may seem like the truth, and church members may begin spreading it among themselves. This is the “**internal collapse**” that Mormon and Moroni feared most for the Latter-day Saints in the last days.

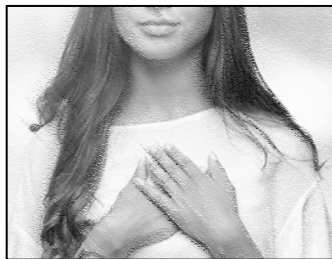


Figure 15 with "an ear"

Mormon and Moroni knew that their people were not ultimately destroyed by the Lamanites but rather perished due to “internal collapse.”

“O ye fair ones, **how could ye have departed from the ways of the Lord!** O ye fair ones, **how could ye have rejected that Jesus**, who stood with open arms to receive you! Behold, if ye had not done this, ye would not have fallen. But behold, ye are fallen, and I mourn your loss.”
(Mormon 6:17–18)

We must continually examine our thoughts and actions. If we do not, we may unknowingly be deceived by Satan, believing that we are spreading truth while actually becoming hypocrites who mislead the Saints within the Church. How, then, can we overcome this situation? The hint is found in the Doctrine and Covenants:

“And all these gifts come from God, **for the benefit of the children of God.**”
(Doctrine and Covenants 46:26)

If the words we speak and the actions we take to influence others do not stem from our own thoughts but come through the Holy Ghost from God, **they will ultimately benefit others.** However, if our actions or words do not lead others closer to God, we may unknowingly become hypocrites, false teachers, or even false Christs. **Teachings learned through the Holy Ghost will always bring both ourselves and others closer to God.**

“Therefore, why is it that ye cannot understand and know, that he that receiveth the word **by the Spirit of truth** receiveth it as it is preached by the Spirit of truth? Wherefore, **he that preacheth and he that receiveth, understand one another, and both are edified and rejoice together.** And that which doth not edify is not of God, and is darkness. That which is of God is light; and he that receiveth light, and continueth in God, receiveth more light; and that light groweth brighter and brighter until the perfect day.”

(Doctrine and Covenants 50:21-24)

Therefore, receiving training in learning from the Holy Ghost is of utmost importance. When we are baptized, we receive the “**gift of the Holy Ghost.**” This, in essence, grants us the privilege of always having the Holy Ghost as our companion. However, learning from the Holy Ghost requires step-by-step progress and repeated training. This does not mean that one must reach a certain level before receiving instruction from the Holy Ghost. As explained earlier, the Plan of Salvation has levels—101, 201, 301, and far beyond. At each level, the Holy Ghost teaches us accordingly. Moroni’s promise, that through prayer we can know whether the Book of Mormon is true, is merely the first step into this journey.³⁰

Jesus Christ has provided spiritual tools to help the Latter-day Saints undergo this training, grow in faith, and remember the missions assigned to them in premortality. These tools include the Book of Isaiah, the Book of Revelation, and the “**Book of Abraham**”.

Aside from the Book of Mormon, no other scripture has been more frequently targeted by critics of the Church than the Book of Abraham. Because of Joseph Smith’s martyrdom, the publication of the Book of Abraham remained incomplete, and furthermore, scholars proficient in ancient Egyptian have confirmed that the Book of the Dead—found with the mummies and purportedly the source material for the translation—contains none of the text that we currently have as the Book of Abraham. Additionally, when Joseph first examined the papyri that accompanied the mummies, he secluded himself and later said he had found that one of the rolls contained the writings of Abraham. However, in 1966, fragments of these papyri were rediscovered at the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York. Upon analysis, scholars determined that the fragments dated to approximately 100 B.C. to A.D. 100. Since these documents were Egyptian

³⁰ See Moroni 10:4–5

funerary texts known as the Book of the Dead, scholars concluded it was impossible for them to have been authored by Abraham, who lived around 2000 B.C. As a result, Joseph Smith and the Church came under widespread criticism from around the world.

However, Joseph Smith did not claim that the Book of the Dead itself had been written by Abraham; rather, he stated that one of the rolls contained writings attributed to Abraham. This raises an important question: What exactly did he mean by this? At this point in his life, Joseph had already completed the translation of the Book of Mormon, published the Doctrine and Covenants, and nearly finished his inspired translation of the Old and New Testaments—he had, in essence, **become a fully developed seer**. Understanding this context allows us to begin unraveling the mystery surrounding the Book of Abraham. And as we uncover this mystery, we will further come to understand our own purpose as Latter-day Saints in these latter days.

In Doctrine and Covenants Section 7, when Joseph Smith inquired of the Lord regarding whether the Apostle John had died or if he was still alive, he had not yet fully developed as a seer. At that time, he still needed to rely on the Urim and Thummim, which acted as “training wheels” for his prophetic gift. As he sought understanding, something remarkable appeared to him. This is recorded in the preface to Section 7:

“The revelation is a translated version of **the record made on parchment by John and hidden up by himself.**”
(Doctrine and Covenants 7, preface)

The fact that John himself wrote this record suggests that it may have been written sometime between A.D. 30 and 100. This aligns with the approximate time when he wrote the Book of Revelation, his Gospel, and his three epistles—around A.D. 100.³¹ However, there has never been any report—

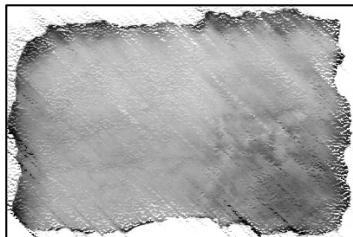


Figure 16 Parchment made from stretched sheepskin

³¹ According to research conducted by scholars of ancient scripture at BYU, records preserved among early Christians indicate that the Book of Revelation was the first to be written by John, composed after he was pardoned and released from exile on the Isle of Patmos. It is believed that the vision recorded in Revelation was received during or shortly after his time there. Following this, the Gospel of John and the three epistles were written.

either within the Church or elsewhere in the world—of such a record hidden by John being discovered. In other words, it has never been found. Perhaps it has been lost entirely from the earth. Yet, at that moment, although Joseph still needed to use the Urim and Thummim, as a seer, he was able to perceive the original parchment and understand the words written on it.

The translation of the Bible follows the same principle. One of the main reasons why important parts of the Bible have been lost or removed and cannot be fully restored is the absence of the original manuscripts. The existence of copies of these records indicates that an original once existed. However, over the course of history, those originals have either been buried and hidden somewhere, burned, or simply lost. This is why the discovery of ancient manuscripts—such as the Dead Sea Scrolls—is considered significant, even though they are not the original texts but merely copies. Their value lies in bringing us closer to the original words that have been lost over time.

The Book of the Dead, a religious text from ancient Egypt, began to be placed in the coffins of the deceased during the latter half of the New Kingdom period, roughly between 1500 B.C. and 1000 B.C. It served as a guide to the afterlife, detailing how the deceased would meet Osiris, the god of the underworld, and undergo judgment. Both the Book of the Dead and the religious beliefs it represents developed over time within Egyptian history; they did not exist at the time of Egypt's founding. Thus, it is likely that when Abraham visited Egypt, its native religion had not yet been fully developed. However, Abraham, as a legitimate heir to the priesthood and a teacher of God's ways, was invited by Pharaoh himself. Before entering Egypt, Abraham had already been trained by the Lord and received divine teachings, which he then explained to Pharaoh.³²

The teachings Abraham conveyed must have been astonishing, particularly for the Egyptians of that time, especially for the reigning Pharaoh, who, despite not holding the priesthood, had been taught by his ancestors to claim that he did. For Pharaoh, encountering someone with true priesthood authority who could expound divine truths must have been a profound and unsettling experience. It is likely that during this time, Abraham used the Urim and Thummim to receive revelatory visions,³³ which he then illustrated to explain them to the king. Given the significance of these

³² See Abraham 3:15 and Facsimile 3

³³ See Abraham 3:1

teachings, it is plausible that Pharaoh's royal scribes carefully recorded them and preserved this sacred knowledge in the royal archives for future generations.

At the time of Abraham's visit to Egypt, hieroglyphic writing was still in its early stages and had not yet reached the level of refinement seen in the inscriptions found in tombs today. The Book of the Dead, which had previously been used only in fragments among royalty and the nobility, began appearing in its more complete form nearly a thousand years after Abraham's time in Egypt. It is possible that the people of that later era could no longer fully interpret the hieroglyphs from a thousand years earlier and instead perceived them merely as symbolic figures. Fascinatingly, in the three facsimiles recorded and translated by Joseph Smith, he did not attempt a direct translation of any hieroglyphs. Rather, the explanations he provided—especially those concerning Facsimile 2 (the hypocephalus, which was placed beneath the head of the mummy and is not part of the Book of the Dead), focus exclusively on elements that even modern Egyptologists struggle to interpret—ancient symbols whose meanings remain elusive.

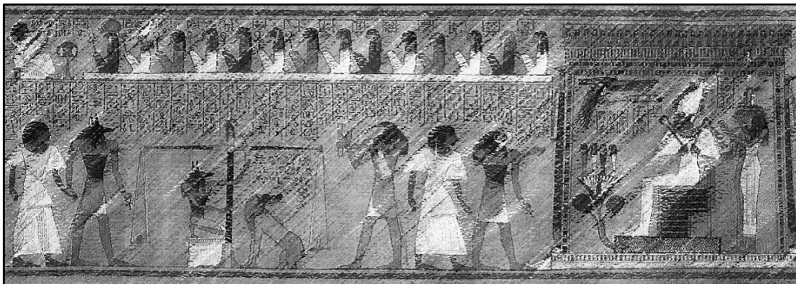


Figure 17 Book of the Dead

What exactly did Joseph see, and what did he translate when he said that one of the rolls contained the writings of Abraham? When we come to understand this, we begin to grasp what it truly means to be a “fully developed seer.” By recognizing both Joseph Smith as a prophet and Joseph Smith as a seer, we can start to comprehend the full picture of the gospel. To achieve this understanding, it is crucial to reflect on what Joseph Smith believed and the experiences of his life. Fortunately, *The Pearl of Great Price* includes two sections that provide this necessary perspective: “Joseph Smith—History” and “The Articles of Faith”.

Doctrine and Principles

Through the work of the Restoration, Joseph Smith taught us many truths as doctrine. However, this does not mean he provided a detailed explanation of everything. Rather, he taught all that God permitted to be revealed. Our Heavenly Father desires that **we think and act for ourselves**, for this is the very purpose of our training in this earthly school. Joseph Smith himself expressed this principle in the following words:

“I teach them correct principles, and they govern themselves.”

(*Teachings of the Presidents of the Church: Joseph Smith*, p. 284, as quoted by John Taylor).

What does Joseph Smith mean by the term principles?

In the Church, we often hear the terms doctrine and principles.

Doctrine refers to unchanging truths and teachings. The fundamental doctrines that members of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints learn and teach in Sunday School, Seminary, and Institute include the following:

- The Godhead
- The Plan of Salvation
- The Atonement of Jesus Christ
- Dispensations, Apostasy, and the Restoration
- Prophets and Revelation
- Priesthood and Priesthood Keys
- Ordinances and Covenants
- Marriage and Family
- Commandments

Of course, these doctrines can be further divided into more specific topics, but they generally fit within one of these categories. The doctrines of the Church are absolute and unchanging truths; they cannot be created or altered by human authority—not even by central Church leaders, including the apostles. **Many people misunderstand Church doctrine by isolating and misinterpreting statements made by apostles or other leaders.**

However, such interpretations do not accurately represent the doctrine of the Church. Our apostles have taught the following:

“At the same time it should be remembered that not every statement made by a Church leader, past or present, necessarily constitutes doctrine. It is commonly understood in the Church that a statement made by one leader on a single occasion often represents a personal, though well-considered,

opinion, not meant to be official or binding for the whole Church.”
(D. Todd Christofferson, “The Doctrine of Christ,” *Liahona*, May 2012, p. 88)

“The doctrine is taught by all 15 members of the First Presidency and Quorum of the Twelve. It is not hidden in an obscure paragraph of one talk.”

(Neil L. Andersen, “Trial of Your Faith,” *Liahona*, November 2012, p. 41)

It is crucial that we do not attempt to interpret the doctrine of the Church on our own. If we make this fundamental mistake, we may unknowingly adopt Satan’s doctrine. Satan’s teachings often appear similar to true doctrine, which is why many are deceived. No matter how appealing a teaching may seem, or how closely it aligns with the moral values and social norms of a given era, it does not become true doctrine. To guard against these false teachings that appear almost indistinguishable from the truth, John used a cryptic message to warn the Latter-day Saints who would work alongside him in the last days:

“Here is wisdom. Let him that hath understanding count the number of the beast: for it is the number of a man; and his number is **Six hundred threescore and six.**”

(Revelation 13:18)

Six hundred sixty-six, when written in numerals, is 666. Throughout the Book of Revelation, John intentionally uses the number “seven” three times to symbolize the completion of Zion: “the seven seals,” “the seven trumpets,” and “the seven bowls of wrath.” The reason I say “intentionally” is that the seven bowls are all contained within the final trumpet, so there was no strict necessity to separate them. However, by doing so, John establishes the sequence of 777. As a Jew, John would have understood that the number “seven” signifies “completion” in Jewish thought.³⁴ Thus, 777 represents the Latter-day Saints successfully building Zion, a vision John was shown in his revelation. Yet, in the midst of this process, he also

³⁴ Because humans have ten fingers, people have long used the decimal (base-10) counting system: 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10. Once they reach 10, the digit shifts to the next place value. The Jews noticed that the numbers from 1 to 10 are all interrelated through multiplication and division, with the exception of 1. For example, $2 \times 3 = 6$, $2 \times 4 = 8$, $2 \times 5 = 10$, $3 \times 3 = 9$, and so on. However, they found that the number 7 does not have a direct numerical relationship with the others, and for this reason, they came to see 7 as a number that is “complete” in and of itself.

saw Saints who, deceived by seemingly true doctrines, fell away and succumbed to Satan's influence.

“And it was given unto him to make war with the saints, and to overcome them: and power was given him over all kindreds, and tongues, and nations.”

(Revelation 13:7)

Joseph Smith and Sidney Rigdon, in the vision of the degrees of glory, also saw Latter-day Saints who had misjudged the truth and fallen into Satan's grasp. These individuals, becoming “sons of perdition,” or “children of Satan,” were cast into outer darkness alongside him.

“Wherefore, he (Satan) maketh war with the saints of God, and encompasseth them round about. And we saw a vision of the sufferings of those with whom he made war and overcame, for thus came the voice of the Lord unto us: Thus saith the Lord concerning all those who know my power, and have been made partakers thereof, and suffered themselves through the power of the devil to be overcome, and to deny the truth and defy my power—They are they who are the sons of perdition, of whom I say that it had been better for them never to have been born;”

(Doctrine and Covenants 76:29–32)

I say this repeatedly—Latter-day Saints who do not rely on the teachings of the Holy Ghost, but instead are swayed by their own or others' ideas, will be deceived by these false doctrines that appear to be true. Believing themselves to be right, they will unknowingly follow the path of “6,” never reaching the completeness of “7.” Even after joining the true Church of God and receiving the “gift of the Holy Ghost,” they may fail to use that gift. And if they do, what is the point of being a member of the Church at all? To journey from 1 to 6, only to realize that there is no path beyond, would bring indescribable sorrow. Let us once again heed Nephi's words:

“Cursed is he that putteth his trust in man, or maketh flesh his arm, or shall hearken unto the precepts of men, save their precepts shall be given by the power of the Holy Ghost.”

(2 Nephi 28:31)

Doctrine is the unchanging truth and teaching. The explanation of how to understand and apply that doctrine in practice is called “principles.” For example, one principle under the doctrine of “Godhead” is “prayer.”

Because the Godhead exists, we can pray to our Heavenly Father in the name of Jesus Christ and receive answers from Him through the Holy Ghost. However, as Joseph Smith taught, “I teach them correct principles, and they govern themselves.” We are not given strict instructions on how many times a day we must pray or that we must pray only in specific places. Once we understand doctrine and principles, we must learn to “think and act for ourselves.” This is what we call spiritual training. Paul left us these words regarding such training:

“Now no chastening (training) for the present seemeth to be joyous, but grievous: nevertheless afterward **it yieldeth the peaceable fruit of righteousness** unto them which are exercised thereby.”
(Hebrews 12:11)

Latter-day Saints are those who bring forth this “peaceable fruit of righteousness.” Through it, they influence those around them for good and sanctify the land in which they dwell.

Through God’s plan and the efforts of Joseph Smith and many early Saints, we now have all the tools necessary to establish Zion. This is the “Work of the Restoration.” From here, the “marvelous work and a wonder” has begun, leading to the end of this world and the coming of a new one.

Chapter 5: The Promised Land

People around the world sometimes wonder, *“Why do so many embrace Christianity—something that originated in Israel—as if it were their own religion?”* Regarding The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, many people, seeing American missionaries on the streets, assume it to be an “American religion.” It is true that the Restoration began on the American continent, where Lehi, Nephi, and the Jaredites also once dwelt. Isn’t it remarkable how often America is linked to such sacred events? By unraveling this mystery, we begin to glimpse the grandeur of God’s divine plan.

A Special Place: The American Continent

As previously explained, the discovery of the American continent occurred relatively recently. If we truly live in the last days—the final stage of human history—then it follows that God deliberately kept this land hidden until the appointed time. But why? What makes America such a special place? Or rather, could it be that because America is a special place, it was reserved until the end? Surely, there must be a reason behind this.

Here is a scripture that provides a clue. When Nephi and his people arrived on the American continent, they recognized it as a land of promise. Moreover, God referred to this place with a special designation:

“And inasmuch as ye shall keep my commandments, ye shall prosper, and shall be led to **a land of promise**; yea, even a land which I have prepared for you; yea, **a land which is choice above all other lands.**”
(1 Nephi 2:20)

In other words, this land was foreordained by God as the most choice of all lands on earth. But what made it so? And for what purpose?

Think about it carefully. At the beginning, as far as we know, this land was uninhabited. Then, the Jaredites were brought here, followed by Lehi’s family, and later the people of Mulek. But is it possible that something sacred existed on this land even before their arrival? When the Lord revealed the location of Zion in Doctrine and Covenants 57, He also imparted special knowledge to Joseph Smith. Unfortunately, this revelation was not officially recorded, and it remained only in Joseph’s memory. However, records indicate that he shared this information with early Church leaders.

Brigham Young: “The Prophet Joseph taught me that **the Garden of Eden** was located in Jackson County, Missouri.”³⁵

Heber C. Kimball: “Joseph learned from the Lord that Adam lived in the land of America, and that **the Garden of Eden** was in what is now Jackson County, Missouri.”³⁶

President Joseph Fielding Smith stated the following:

“According to multiple revelations given to Joseph Smith, **the Garden of Eden was located in the very place where the city of Zion will be established—the site where we will build the New Jerusalem.** After Adam and Eve were expelled from the Garden, they settled in what is now known as Adam-ondi-Ahman, located in Daviess County, Missouri... We accept as fact that Adam lived on the American continent.”³⁷

In other words, the very place where Heavenly Father and Jesus Christ began human history is the American continent, and the location where we are striving to establish Zion is that same sacred place. This means that the land where Zion once stood—the land where Enoch dwelled—was close enough for him to meet with Adam. It is likely that it was the same location. **From the very beginning, this land was sanctified by God, and from the very beginning, it was foreordained as the place where we, in the last days, would build Zion.**

However, this would mean that people originally lived on the American continent since the time of Adam. Yet, when the Jaredites arrived, the land was uninhabited. When did the people of this land disappear? The Book of Revelation contains a fascinating passage regarding this matter:

“And to the woman were given two wings of a great eagle, that she might fly into the wilderness, into her place, where she is nourished for a time, and times, and half a time, from the face of the serpent. And the serpent cast out of his mouth water as a flood after the woman, that he might cause her to be

³⁵ Journal of Wilford Woodruff, vol. 5, 15 Mar. 1857, Archives Division, Church Historical Dept., Salt Lake City.

³⁶ Andrew Jenson, Historical Record, 9 vols., Salt Lake City: Andrew Jenson, 1888, 7:439; see also Orson F. Whitney, Life of Heber C. Kimball, Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1967, p. 219.

³⁷ Doctrines of Salvation, 3 vols., comp. Bruce R. McConkie, Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1956, 3:74. Compare Answers to Gospel Questions, 5 vols., Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Co., 1957–75, 2:93–95, 4:19–24; and Alvin R. Dyer, in Conference Report, Oct. 1968, pp. 108–9.)

carried away of the flood. And the earth helped the woman, and the earth opened her mouth, and swallowed up the flood which the dragon cast out of his mouth.” (Revelation 12:14-16)

According to Joseph Smith’s explanation, the woman represents the Church of God. The true Church, which had been driven into the wilderness by the Great Apostasy, was preserved by the two great wings of an eagle that God had prepared, allowing it to wait for the appointed time. John then continues to describe how these two wings were formed. The serpent, representing Satan, cast out of his mouth a flood of water that covered the earth. However, in time, the earth opened its mouth, swallowed up the water, and the land reappeared.



Figure 18 The land of the eagle's wings

Now, let us read another scripture from the Doctrine and Covenants that seems to be related to this matter. This passage describes events that will take place in the final days.

“He shall command the great deep, and it shall be driven back into the north countries, and **the islands shall become one land**; And the land of Jerusalem and the land of Zion shall be turned back into their own place, and **the earth shall be like as it was in the days before it was divided.**” (D&C 133:23-24)

From these two scriptures, a particular scenario begins to emerge. When Adam and Eve were created, there was only one continent on the Earth. However, as people became increasingly wicked, God chose to cleanse the earth of humanity—the Great Flood in Noah’s time. Noah and his family remained on the ark for forty days as rain fell upon the earth. Even after the rain ceased, it took approximately five months before the waters receded enough for them to set foot on land. During this entire period, they remained afloat, unaware of what was happening beneath the vast waters. If

a massive continental shift had taken place beneath them, they would not have noticed. After months of drifting, they finally arrived at a new land, and even if it was unfamiliar, they would not have questioned it. Yet in reality, before the Flood, the earth had been one single landmass. But during the flood, the land was broken apart, and among these fragments, the sacred land where their ancestors had once dwelled—the land of Eden—was severed in the shape of an eagle’s wings and placed far away from all other lands.

There is a man who sent a greeting 2,500 years ago, from the kingdom of Judah in Israel, to this unknown land shaped like the wings of an eagle and to the Gentiles who would one day rise from that land—the Latter-day Saints. The prophet Isaiah, looking far beyond the sea, beyond Africa, saw this eagle-wing-shaped land. He foresaw that just before Zion would be established there, a special group of people would gather. When a signal flag was raised in that land, those people would begin to move at the command of God, and eventually, Zion would be built.

This prophecy is recorded in Isaiah 18. However, whether in English, Japanese, or any other language, translating Isaiah from the original text is challenging, and it is difficult to fully capture the prophet’s original message. Expressions differ even between Japanese and English translations. Based on the teachings of President Joseph Fielding Smith³⁸, let us examine Isaiah 18 **while considering it as a prophecy about the Latter-day Saints.**

Woe to the land shadowing with wings,
which is beyond the rivers of Ethiopia:
That sendeth ambassadors by the sea,
even in vessels of bulrushes upon the waters,
saying, Go, ye swift messengers,
to a nation scattered and peeled,
to a people terrible from their beginning hitherto;
a nation meted out and trodden down,
whose land the rivers have spoiled!

³⁸ See The Signs of the Times [1952], p. 51

To the land far beyond the seas of Africa,
shaped like the wings of an eagle—
I, Isaiah, send my greeting.
From this land, the Lord shall send forth His servants to the world.

All ye inhabitants of the world,
and dwellers on the earth, see ye,
when he lifteth up an ensign on the mountains;
and when he bloweth a trumpet, hear ye.

O noble, mighty, and unwavering people,
when you see the banner—the signal of the Lord’s restoration—
and hear the sound of the trumpet,
begin to act.

For so the Lord said unto me,
I will take my rest,
and I will consider in my dwelling place,
like a clear heat upon herbs,
and like a cloud of dew in the heat of harvest.

From His dwelling place, the Lord quietly watches to see what work
you will do.

For afore the harvest,
when the bud is perfect,
and the sour grape is ripening in the flower,
he shall both cut off the sprigs with pruning hooks,
and take away and cut down the branches.
They shall be left together unto the fowls of the mountains,
and to the beasts of the earth:
and the fowls shall summer upon them,
and all the beasts of the earth shall winter upon them.

When your labor bears fruit, the wicked and Satan shall be cut down,
gathered, and cast away.
As no one dares lay a hand upon wild beasts, so shall none arise to help
them.

In that time shall the present be brought
unto the Lord of hosts,
of a people scattered and peeled,
and from a people terrible from their beginning hitherto;
a nation meted out and trodden under foot,
whose land the rivers have spoiled,
to the place of the name of the Lord of hosts,
the mount Zion.

In that final hour, the noble, the mighty, and the unwavering shall be
prepared to receive the Lord.
And that place shall be called Zion, for there shall the Lord Jesus Christ
come.

Since the words of Isaiah can be interpreted in multiple ways, it is not easy to render them into a simple modern translation. However, if we consider, as President Joseph Fielding Smith suggested, that this passage was written for the Latter-day Saints, then we might interpret it in this way: Isaiah foresaw that when God's plan was set in motion, the marvelous work of the Restoration would begin from a land shaped like the wings of an eagle—a land that had been separated by the great flood in the days of Noah.

The Land to Which Nephi and His Family Were Foreordained to Arrive

Long before Joseph Smith was born, Nephi's family was led by the Lord to this land. Had they not come, their records would not have been written; the golden plates would not have been made. As a result, Joseph and his family might have had no additional divine resources beyond the Bible. However, God's plan was already in motion—perhaps even altering the very shape of the world—to bring Nephi, the Jaredites, and others to this sacred land.

We learn from the Book of Mormon that Nephi built a ship and sailed to the American continent. It was likely the first time he had ever built a ship, and the record states that the method given by the Lord differed from that of men.³⁹ Furthermore, when Nephi and his family set sail, the scripture records that “we did put forth into the sea and were driven forth before the wind towards the promised land.”⁴⁰

The Lord taught Nephi how to build the ship, but how did he learn to navigate? He set sail in an era long before the great age of exploration. The Jaredites, who came even earlier, left no record of where they had originally embarked. We do not even know if Nephi’s or the Jaredites’ ships had sails. Yet somehow, they managed to cross the vast and treacherous oceans and arrive at the land of promise.

If God had already planned their journey—even shaping the world for this purpose—shouldn’t we take this miracle more seriously? While what follows is merely a hypothesis, it may help us to think more deeply about this wondrous event.

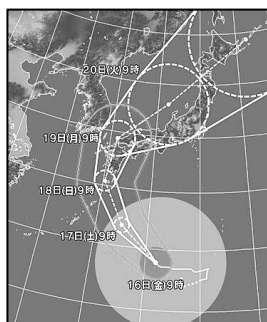


Figure 19 The path of the typhoon

Every year, from spring to autumn, Japan experiences typhoons. These storms form in the central South Pacific, gradually increasing in strength as they move westward toward Japan. Once they reach approximately 30 degrees north latitude, they shift their direction eastward. This typhoon trajectory follows a predictable pattern, as seen on weather maps every year. The reason for this movement lies in the Earth’s rotation and atmospheric circulation. The trade winds and westerlies cause typhoons to change their course as they move forward.

³⁹ 1 Nephi 18:2

⁴⁰ 1 Nephi 18:8

This wind direction affects not only typhoons. Since the trade winds and westerlies blow in opposite directions across the entire Earth, the most affected element is the ocean water. Water up to a depth of 400 meters is stirred in a consistent direction due to the influence of these winds. The resulting flow of water is known as “ocean currents.” Because global wind patterns remain constant, ocean currents also follow a consistent direction—moving clockwise in the Northern Hemisphere and counterclockwise in the Southern Hemisphere.

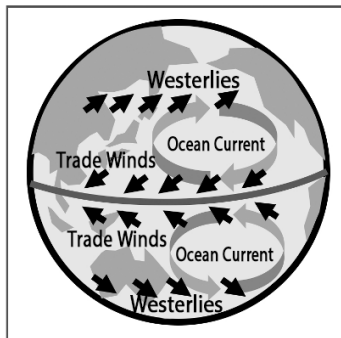


Figure 20 Wind and ocean currents

When we overlay this information on a world map, an interesting observation emerges. Depending on the shape and location of landmasses, ocean currents can become enclosed, forming unique circulation patterns within various bays and seas. From Nephi’s record, after leaving Jerusalem, they traveled south-southeast⁴¹ along the Red Sea as directed by the Liahona. However, after traveling a certain distance down the Arabian Peninsula, they changed course eastward⁴² and arrived at a coastal location, which they named Bountiful. Since it was a coastal area, the ship they built could immediately set sail.

Nephi may not have been fully aware of the existence of ocean currents or the fact that these currents moved in the same direction as the wind. However, when they launched the ship, it moved forward without being rowed, leading Nephi to describe it as “driven forth before the wind toward the promised land.”

On the vast ocean, even if they followed a winding path dictated by the currents, Nephi would have always felt the wind at their backs, giving the impression that they were moving directly toward the promised land. This is no coincidence—when aligning trade winds, westerlies, and ocean currents with Nephi’s route on a world map, it becomes evident that their ship would have been carried from the southern tip of the Arabian Peninsula to the

⁴¹ 1 Nephi 16:13

⁴² 1 Nephi 17:1

American continent. Supporting this theory, the people of Mulek, who set sail only a few years later, also arrived at the American continent, settling near the land where Nephi's people lived and establishing the city of Zarahemla.

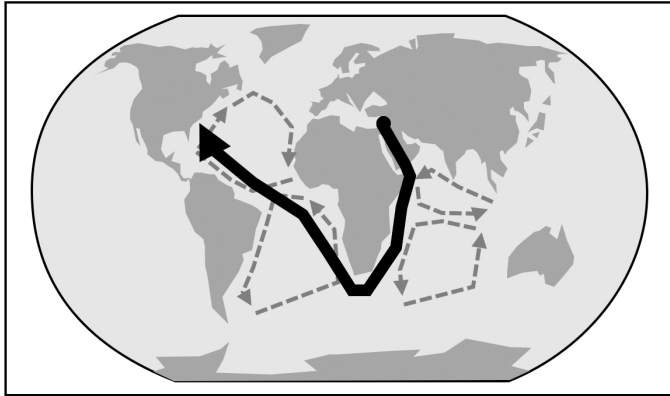


Figure 21 Ocean currents and the journey of Nephi and his people (Hypothesis)

If these events were not mere coincidences but part of a divinely orchestrated plan—where God, during Noah's flood, concealed the sacred land so that His gospel would remain on earth until the last days—then we must recognize this truth. We are part of a grand, global-scale plan that God established for the final, great work of the latter days. He shaped the world in harmony with the winds and ocean currents to ensure that specially chosen people, in times when maritime navigation was not yet developed, could safely arrive at the promised, sacred land.

Consider this carefully: what did John see in the Book of Revelation? He saw the Church of God, represented as a woman—meaning truth and the everlasting gospel—being preserved in a special place, shaped like the wings of a great eagle, during the apostasy. And it wasn't just during the apostasy. When wickedness began to spread again after Noah's flood, when those who should have known God were enslaved in Egypt and nearly forgot the truth, when only a few remained faithful after reaching the land of Canaan, and even when people started interpreting the Law of Moses according to their own desires—**during each of these periods of apostasy and spiritual decline, the true gospel was preserved in the Americas.**

From the Jaredites to the Nephites and through the unchangeable record of the gold plates, the truth remained on this land. And if we take this even further—throughout the past 6,000 years of human history, from the time of Adam to the present day—the land uniquely preserved by God for the restoration of the true gospel of Jesus Christ in the latter days is the land we now call America.

The Brother of Jared and the Sealed Record

According to Mormon's record, in the Americas, the responsibility of preserving sacred records was passed down from kings and prophets. This ensured that, unlike the Bible, which experienced alterations and losses of precious sections, the records remained intact until Moroni finally buried the last record in the earth. In this sense, the separation of the Americas from the rest of the world was of great importance. Among these records, **there is one in particular that we must be aware of:** The gold plates have not yet been fully translated. David Whitmer, one of the witnesses of the plates, gave the following testimony:

“According to one witness, there was a sealant securing ‘about the half of the book’ from tampering. This sealed portion made it impossible to separate the leaves and ‘appeared as solid as wood.’”

(David Whitmer, Interview by P. Wilhelm Poulson, *Deseret Evening News*, Aug. 16, 1878, in Lyndon W. Cook, *David Whitmer Interviews: A Restoration Witness* (Orem, Utah: Grandin Book Company, 1991), 20–21)

Moroni took the gold plates after Joseph had translated the unsealed portion—the part we now have as the Book of Mormon. Joseph explained this event as follows:

“When, according to arrangements, the messenger called for them, I delivered them up to him; and he has them in his charge until this day, being the second day of May, one thousand eight hundred and thirty-eight.”

(Joseph Smith—History 1:60)

In other words, even today, this sealed portion has never been translated and remains in Moroni's possession.

What exactly is written in this sealed record? Isaiah left us an intriguing statement:

“And in that day shall **the deaf hear the words of the book, and the eyes of the blind shall see** out of obscurity, and out of darkness. The meek also shall increase their joy in the Lord, and the poor among men shall rejoice in the Holy One of Israel. For the terrible one is brought to nought, and the scorner is consumed, and all that watch for iniquity are cut off:”
(Isaiah 29:18-20)

Isaiah prophesied of a day when a book would be read, the meek will hear it and rejoice, and the wicked will be destroyed. What is this book? A prophet who provided a remarkably clear explanation of Isaiah 29 was Nephi. While he recorded many chapters of Isaiah on the small plates, his account of Isaiah 29 is written quite differently from the version found in our present-day Bible. It is unclear whether Isaiah originally wrote it this way or if Nephi adapted it to make its meaning clearer for us. Nevertheless, through his writings, we gain a much sharper understanding of this prophecy.

Nephi describes several key characteristics of this record in 2 Nephi 27:

- The book contains the words of those who have already passed away. (v. 6)
- The record is sealed. (v. 7)
- It contains revelations from God covering the beginning to the end of the world. (v. 7, 10)
- The record remains hidden from people when they become wicked. (v. 8)
- The book is given to one man, but the sealed portion is not given to him. (v. 9-10)
- The book will eventually be read from the rooftops. (v. 11)
- It will be read by the power of Christ. (v. 11)
- The book will reveal all the deeds of the people. (v. 11)
- Three witnesses, besides the one who receives it, will see the record. (v. 12)
- A scholar will attempt to read it but will realize it is sealed and give up. (v. 15-18)
- The man first given the record will be unlearned, but he will be given the power to read it—though he will not touch the sealed portion. (v. 19-21)
- The book will be sealed again and entrusted to the hand of God. (v. 22)
- It will be preserved until the time appointed by God’s wisdom. (v. 22)
- When the book is read, the righteous will rejoice. (v. 29)

To Church members, this clearly refers to the golden plates—the source of the Book of Mormon. However, Isaiah and Nephi clearly speak of two distinct records. One is read by an unlearned man—Joseph Smith—and made public, but the other is sealed, kept by the hand of God, and will remain hidden until the appointed time. Furthermore, while three witnesses are permitted to see the record as a whole, they are not allowed to view its contents. Recall that one of the Three Witnesses, David Whitmer, described seeing the golden plates and noted that “about half of it was sealed shut.” His account confirms what Nephi prophesied—that part of the record would remain sealed until a future time.

In summary, it seems that the golden plates have two major purposes. First, at a certain point in history, they were to be taken out of the earth and translated by Joseph Smith to become the Book of Mormon, serving as a banner of the Restoration—the restoration of the true gospel of Jesus Christ. However, part of the plates remain sealed. That portion has again been entrusted to the hand of God and preserved until a day appointed in His wisdom. On that day, it will be opened and read upon the housetops—that is, declared to the whole world so that all may hear. It is said that within it are written the revelations of God from the beginning of the world to the end, and the works of all mankind. The righteous who hear it will rejoice, and the wicked will be destroyed. Surely, that must be the case.

Where did this record originate, and who wrote it? As we read the Book of Mormon (since we do not have the Book of Lehi), we cannot be certain whether Mormon included an explanation about the sealed portion. However, Mormon’s own record clearly begins with Lehi’s departure from Jerusalem and continues for a thousand years, concluding in Mormon 7. If the sealed portion is roughly as long—or longer—than the translated portion, it must contain something of great significance, distinct from the Nephite record and worthy of being sealed.

Like John, Nephi, who likely saw the end of the world, left us with these words:

“For behold, my beloved brethren, **I say unto you that the Lord God worketh not in darkness...**For none of these iniquities come of the Lord; for he doeth that which is good among the children of men; and he doeth nothing save it be plain unto the children of men; and he inviteth them all to come unto him and partake of his goodness; and he denieth none that come unto him, black and white, bond and free, male and female; and he

remembereth the heathen; and **all are alike unto God**, both Jew and Gentile.”
(2 Nephi 26:23, 33)

Immediately following this discussion, Nephi quotes from Isaiah regarding the sealed book. What if these two topics are connected?

The Lord cares for all people, and all are equal in His sight. Nephi explains that “the Lord God worketh not in darkness.” If, as we learned in Plan of Salvation 101, this life is a school, then would it be fair if the rules were written after enrollment, the answers were provided after the test, and the laws were established after the lessons? A God who does not work in darkness would have prepared the rules and answers beforehand—explaining them to humanity at the very beginning of history, having them recorded, sealing them, and preserving them until the final day when **all the answers are revealed**. If, in the process of the Restoration, the Lord allowed Joseph Smith and the Three Witnesses to see this sealed portion in order to testify of its existence, then should we not prepare for the day when this book will finally be read?

So, who was commanded by God to write this record? From a historical perspective, Adam would seem to be the most suitable person. However, it is likely that nearly all records from before Noah’s time were lost in the flood. For this reason, even the priesthood lineage appears to have been reset, with God establishing a new covenant with humanity through Abraham after the flood.⁴³ So, is there someone after Noah—someone who lived after the great flood—who recorded something of significance for all of humanity?

There is a peculiar record within the Book of Mormon—the Book of Ether. It seems likely that Moroni originally had no intention of adding it, or if he did plan to include it, he had to significantly condense its contents. Perhaps he was fulfilling the intent of his father, Mormon.⁴⁴ When Moroni received the gold plates from his father, he recorded that only a “small” amount of space remained:

“Behold I, Moroni, do finish the record of my father, Mormon. Behold, I have but **few** things to write, which things I have been commanded by my

⁴³ See Abraham 2:9

⁴⁴ See Mosiah 28:19

father...Behold, my father hath made this record, and he hath written the intent thereof. And behold, I would write it also if I had room upon the plates, **but I have not**; and ore I have none, for I am alone.”
(Mormon 8:1, 5)

Moroni abruptly concluded the record⁴⁵ entrusted to him by Mormon in just two chapters, then proceeded to include the history of the Jaredites, which spanned even longer than that of the Nephites. Regarding the content he wrote, he stated:

“But behold, I give not the full account, but **a part of the account** I give, from the tower down until they were destroyed.”
(Ether 1:5)

Moroni himself stated that he included only a portion of the account, which resulted in much of the Book of Ether consisting of genealogical records, covering approximately 2,000 years⁴⁶ of history in just 15 chapters. Since much of it consists of genealogical records, it may not be the most engaging book for some readers. It is difficult to believe that Moroni, who was risking his life and constantly on the run, would have gone through the arduous task of engraving words onto the golden plates for something insignificant. The fact that he recorded it within the “small” remaining space and continued writing until the very last part of the historical record suggests that there was a highly significant purpose behind it. Here, let us consider two key points regarding this matter.

First, when one thinks of the Book of Ether, the story that stands out most is that of the brother of Jared, who melted transparent stones, and when the Lord touched them, they began to shine. Apart from the genealogical records, no other particularly significant stories are preserved in detail—only this account is recorded extensively. This suggests that something important is hidden within this story.

The second key point is the meticulous recording of the genealogy, listing names in detail all the way to the last surviving individual. The question then arises: how does this exhaustive genealogy connect with the story of the shining stones? Why is this connection so important?

⁴⁵ The book of Mormon, which comes after Fourth Nephi

⁴⁶ The history of the Nephites spans approximately 1,000 years.

The original manuscript of this book was written by Ether, the last prophet of the Jaredites, on twenty-four plates of pure gold. These records were later discovered by the people of Limhi and were translated by King Mosiah I, the grandfather of the better-known King Mosiah.⁴⁷ This record contained an account stretching from the time of Adam to the last surviving Jaredite, Coriantumr. It is crucial to note that their record included details from the time of Adam.⁴⁸ While the Nephite records also mention Adam, they do so only by referencing the brass plates and do not contain a direct account from Adam himself. This is significant because Nephi wrote that the sealed book would contain an account from the very beginning, meaning from the time of Adam. Does this mean that the Book of Ether is the sealed book Nephi described? Clearly not. Nephi stated that “the book shall again be sealed,” meaning that if the Book of Ether is already in our possession, it cannot be the same record that is meant to remain sealed.

In writing the Book of Ether, Moroni recorded something profoundly significant:

“And now, after that, they have all dwindled in unbelief; and there is none save it be the Lamanites, and they have rejected the gospel of Christ; therefore I am commanded that **I should hide them up again in the earth. Behold, I have written upon these plates the very things which the brother of Jared saw**; and there never were greater things made manifest than those which were made manifest unto the brother of Jared. Wherefore the Lord hath commanded me to write them; and **I have written them**. And he commanded me that **I should seal them up**; and he also hath commanded that I should seal up the interpretation thereof; wherefore **I have sealed up the interpreters**, according to the commandment of the Lord.”

(Ether 4:3-6)

This passage is found in Ether 4, yet the Book of Ether itself continues for ten more chapters. However, at this point, Moroni is already speaking in the past tense, indicating that he had “written” a certain record and has “sealed it up” along with the interpreters. This suggests that the “sealed book” was already completed at this moment. Moreover, he explicitly states that its contents are “the things which the brother of Jared saw.” The brother of Jared saw things “greater than had ever been manifested before,” but in the

⁴⁷ Mosiah 28:11–18

⁴⁸ See Ether 1:3-4

current version of the Book of Ether, the only detailed event that comes to mind is the account of the glowing stones. While that is certainly a remarkable event, it does not seem to match the magnitude of Moroni's statement that "nothing greater has ever been revealed." Fortunately, Moroni provides us with another clue:

"And after the brother of Jared had beheld the finger of the Lord, because of the promise which the brother of Jared had obtained by faith, the Lord could not withhold anything from his sight; wherefore he showed him **all things**, for he could no longer be kept without the veil."
(Ether 12:21)

After the miraculous event where the stones began to shine, the brother of Jared, because of his faith, was shown "all things"—from the creation of Adam to the end of the world. This understanding helps us recognize the connection between the glowing stones and what followed.

"And it came to pass that the Lord said unto the brother of Jared: Behold, thou shalt not suffer these things which ye have seen and heard to go forth unto the world, until the time cometh that I shall glorify my name in the flesh; wherefore, ye shall treasure up the things which ye have seen and heard, and show it to no man. And behold, when ye shall come unto me, **ye shall write them and shall seal them up**, that no one can interpret them; for ye shall write them in a language that they cannot be read. And behold, **these two stones will I give unto thee, and ye shall seal them up also with the things which ye shall write.**"
(Ether 3:21–23)

The Lord commanded the brother of Jared to record everything that had been shown to him. At this time, the Lord also gave him the Urim and Thummim, the interpreters. Since the language of the Jaredites had not been confounded⁴⁹, they likely continued speaking the Adamic language. Because of this, when Moroni translated these words using the Urim and Thummim, he was astonished at their power and lamented the weakness of his own words in comparison.

"And I said unto him: Lord, the Gentiles will mock at these things, because of our weakness in writing; for Lord thou hast made us mighty in word by faith, but thou hast not made us mighty in writing; for thou hast made all

⁴⁹ See Ether 1:37

this people that they could speak much, because of the Holy Ghost which thou hast given them; And thou hast made us that we could write but little, because of the awkwardness of our hands. Behold, **thou hast not made us mighty in writing like unto the brother of Jared, for thou madest him that the things which he wrote were mighty even as thou art, unto the overpowering of man to read them.** Thou hast also made our words powerful and great, even that we cannot write them; wherefore, when we write we behold our weakness, and stumble because of the placing of our words; and I fear lest the Gentiles shall mock at our words.” (Ether 12:23–25)

Why, then, was Moroni able to see the brother of Jared’s record, even though it was supposed to remain sealed? The answer lies in Ether 3:21: “until the time cometh that I shall glorify my name in the flesh.” This means that the record was to remain sealed until Jesus Christ came into the world in the flesh and was resurrected. Having learned this beforehand from the twenty-four plates of pure gold, King Mosiah (the first) received the sealed record by some means and commanded his descendants not to open it until after the resurrection of Christ.

“And the Lord commanded the brother of Jared to go down out of the mount from the presence of the Lord, and write the things which he had seen; and they were forbidden to come unto the children of men until after that he should be lifted up upon the cross; and for this cause did **king Mosiah keep them, that they should not come unto the world until after Christ should show himself unto his people.**” (Ether 4:1)

It is clear that King Mosiah received a sealed record in addition to the twenty-four plates of pure gold. This is evident from the fact that he possessed the Urim and Thummim, which were originally sealed along with the record.⁵⁰ The Urim and Thummim had been given to the brother of Jared by the Lord. This is confirmed in the Doctrine and Covenants:

“Behold, I say unto you, that you must rely upon my word, which if you do with full purpose of heart, you shall have a view of the plates, and also of the breastplate, the sword of Laban, **the Urim and Thummim, which were given to the brother of Jared upon the mount, when he talked with the Lord face to face,** and the miraculous directors which were given to Lehi

⁵⁰ See Mosiah 8:13

while in the wilderness, on the borders of the Red Sea.”
(Doctrine and Covenants 17:1)

The Urim and Thummim that Joseph Smith received were the very ones given to the brother of Jared. The Urim and Thummim in Moroni’s possession were passed down from King Mosiah through successive generations, confirming that King Mosiah had both the interpreters and the sealed record. Furthermore, since Jesus Christ visited the Nephites after His resurrection, it is possible that the sealed record was opened at that time, allowing Moroni to read it. However, as wickedness increased, Moroni transcribed the record into the Nephite language and sealed it once again, along with the interpreters, to be preserved until the appointed time.

Mormon knew that the record sealed by his son would one day come forth and be read again. He also seemed to understand that this day would come through the efforts of the Gentiles—specifically, the Latter-day Saints—who would clearly recognize their mission in this world.

“...but I, knowing that these things must surely be made known, and that all things which are hid must be revealed upon the house-tops—And also that a knowledge of these things must come unto the remnant of these people, and also unto the Gentiles...therefore I write a small abridgment, daring not to give a full account of the things which I have seen...And now behold, this I speak unto their seed, and also **to the Gentiles who have care for the house of Israel, that realize and know from whence their blessings come.**”

(Mormon 5:8–10)

If these matters constitute some of the hidden mysteries within the book of Ether, then what other secrets might lie within that long and detailed genealogy?

First, Moroni may have realized that his father, Mormon, intended to include Ether’s record—as indicated in Mosiah 28:19—but ultimately passed the responsibility to Moroni without writing it himself. Seeing the remaining space on the plates, Moroni likely resolved to continue his father’s intent and include the record. However, he had limited space to work with. Faced with this constraint, Moroni seems to have decided to preserve two particularly significant points: one, the sealed record of the brother of Jared, which we have discussed thus far; and two, the genealogy tracing from that record down to the last surviving Jaredite, Coriantumr.

This detail is seldom addressed in Sunday School settings, and for that reason, it often goes unnoticed. Interestingly, however, the Jaredites and Nephites coexisted on the American continent for more than 300 years. That is, the final 300 years of the Jaredites’ 2,000-year history overlapped with the first 300 years of the Nephites’ 1,000-year history. Though they lived on the same continent, they occupied separate regions and remained unaware of each other’s existence. The only recorded instance where these two civilizations intersected through a living individual is found at the end of the book of Ether, where Coriantumr appears.

Remarkably, Coriantumr’s name appears at the very end of the Small Plates of Nephi, which were added to the gold plates as a replacement for the lost 116 pages.

“And they gave an account of one Coriantumr, and the slain of his people. And **Coriantumr was discovered by the people of Zarahemla; and he dwelt with them for the space of nine moons.**”
(Omni 1:21)

This single verse creates a bridge between the genealogy preserved by Moroni and the Nephite history. Without it, we would not have known the significance of the sealed record, how long the Jaredites existed, or where King Mosiah’s Urim and Thummim came from. The very structure of the Book of Mormon itself becomes a remarkable miracle, as the records of these two peoples intertwine across time.

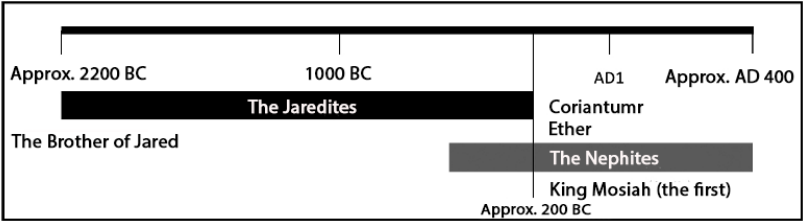


Figure 22 The interaction between Jaredites and Nephites

Now, who exactly delivered the sealed record and the Urim and Thummim to King Mosiah? Unfortunately, that detail is not recorded anywhere. However, one thing we do know is that besides Coriantumr, there was one other survivor among the Jaredites. That survivor was none other than Ether

himself. After witnessing the final battle of Coriantumr and realizing that no one else remained, Ether was commanded by the Lord to go forth.

“And the Lord spake unto Ether, and said unto him: Go forth. And he went forth, and beheld that the words of the Lord had all been fulfilled; and he finished his record; and he hid them in a manner that the people of Limhi did find them.”
(Ether 15:33)

This record refers to the well-known twenty-four plates of pure gold. However, there is no mention of the sealed record of the brother of Jared. Nevertheless, since the first King Mosiah obtained the Urim and Thummim during this same era, someone must have either made contact with the Nephites to deliver it, or, like the discovery of the twenty-four plates, a Nephite may have stumbled upon it.

The final words recorded by Ether are as follows:

“Now the last words which are written by Ether are these: Whether **the Lord will that I be translated**, or that **I suffer the will of the Lord in the flesh**, it mattereth not, if it so be that I am saved in the kingdom of God. Amen.”
(Ether 15:34)

Ether wrote about two possible futures for himself, yet neither involved death. He spoke of either being changed so that he would not die or continuing in the flesh to fulfill the Lord’s will (this could, of course, also include faithfully laboring until death, according to the Lord’s will). Clearly, he seemed to understand that some mission remained for him, though what that mission was is left unknown. Perhaps it was connected to the sealed record of the brother of Jared, yet no written record confirms this.

Why was the Restoration carried out in the Americas? Why did Nephi and his family come to this land? Why was the brother of Jared’s record sealed? And above all, why are all these answers now before us? As we come to understand these things, the weight of the responsibility entrusted to us as Latter-day Saints in the last days begins to unfold before our eyes.

Chapter 6: Patriarchal Blessings and the Gifts of the Spirit

Latter-day Saints who strive to work within the restored truths are given two special blessings: the gifts of the Spirit and the patriarchal blessing. We have passed through the veil of forgetfulness and entered this world with no memory of anything that came before. We have no memory of the education we received in heaven, the conversations we had, or the commitments and covenants we made. However, if becoming a Latter-day Saint is not merely a coincidence, would God not provide a way for us to remember these things?

The Gifts of the Spirit

As explained earlier, Joseph Smith did not initially know who he was. However, through relentless effort, he cultivated the spiritual gifts given to him and allowed them to grow through faithful effort. In doing so, he ultimately came to understand his purpose in coming to this world and successfully fulfilled it.

Is Joseph Smith the only one who is to labor in the work of God in the latter days? No, that is not the case. All Latter-day Saints are required to make the same effort. Without doing so, we cannot develop or bring forth the spiritual gifts that have been given to us. And without that, Zion cannot be built. As the Church of Christ was being restored in this dispensation, the Lord repeatedly revealed to Joseph that all members of the Church must understand the importance of the gifts of the Spirit.

“And again, verily I say unto you, I would that ye should always remember, and always retain in your minds what those gifts are, that are given unto the church.”

(D&C 46:10)

We must understand what the “gifts of the Spirit” are and for what purpose they are given, so that we may fulfill our responsibilities in this world. This world is both a school and a place of labor for us. However, in our natural state, we are powerless. That which Christ Himself grants us so that we may labor in His work is the “gifts of the Spirit.” Let us read Moroni’s words:

“And all these gifts come by the Spirit of Christ; and **they come unto every man severally, according as he will.**”

(Moroni 10:17)

Moroni explains that the gifts of the Spirit are given by Christ to all people. In a broad sense, these gifts are granted to everyone, regardless of whether they are members of the Church, and they are used according to each person’s agency. Through the righteous use of these gifts, the work of God progresses. The ultimate purpose of the gifts of the Spirit is singular:

“...and they are given by the manifestations of the Spirit of God unto men, **to profit them.**”

(Moroni 10:8)

“To profit them”—that is, to help bring people closer to God. The very essence of using the gifts of the Spirit is to help others and guide them, even in the smallest way, closer to God. There is no other purpose. As more Latter-day Saints recognize this and strive to use their gifts for this divine purpose, Zion will be built. There are various kinds of gifts of the Spirit, each holding great importance. Some people may be given one gift, while others may be blessed with several.

When members of the Church hear the word “gift”, the first thing that often comes to mind is “the gift of the Holy Ghost”. While the gifts of the Spirit and the gift of the Holy Ghost are distinct, they are nonetheless closely linked. In fulfilling their purpose of profiting others, these two gifts work together in profound harmony. Let us revisit the scripture to understand this connection:

“...and they are given **by the manifestations of the Spirit of God** unto men, to profit them.”

(Moroni 10:8)

The “manifestation of the Spirit of God” can be understood as being taught by the Holy Ghost or receiving His influence. This phrase appears repeatedly throughout the Doctrine and Covenants. Moroni speaks of the gifts of the Spirit immediately after writing his well-known promise in Moroni 10. He first declares that if we ask God, in the name of Christ, whether the Book of Mormon is true, the Holy Ghost will confirm it to us. Then, he continues by explaining that this same Holy Ghost teaches us all things, leading directly into a discussion of the gifts of the Spirit. He

explains that when individuals receive the manifestation of the Spirit, the gifts of the Spirit are given to them accordingly.

However, the gifts of the Spirit are not suddenly bestowed, nor are they fully developed all at once. Remember Joseph Smith—he was first trained with a stone, then with the Urim and Thummim, then returned to the stone for further training. Only after this process was he able to translate ancient records without any physical instruments, and his gift as a Seer began to function in its fullest form. In a sense, the gifts of the Spirit may have already been given to us when we were born into this world. However, unless they are refined and strengthened, they cannot be fully utilized.

Now, let us consider the story of another Seer—the account of Joseph, who was sold into Egypt. He was born as one of the twelve sons of Jacob. From a young age, he had dreams and spoke about them, as recorded in the scriptures. It is possible that even at this early stage, he had already been given the spiritual gift necessary to become a Seer in the future. However, being still immature and unaware of how to use this gift, the young Joseph’s dreams caused resentment among his brothers. As a result, he was hated, trapped, and eventually sold into Egypt.

While living as a slave in Egypt, he once again fell into a trap and was cast into prison. However, one day, he interpreted the king’s dream, which led him to become the second most powerful person in Egypt and ultimately save his entire family—the whole house of Israel. The fact that he was able to interpret the king’s dream demonstrates that Joseph had become a fully developed Seer. But where did he train this gift?

Here, we find a verse that reveals the process through which Joseph developed his gift:

“And they knew not that Joseph understood them; for he spake unto them by an interpreter.”
(Genesis 42:23)

This passage comes from the moment when Joseph, now a ruler in Egypt, was visited by his brothers who had sold him into slavery. Although Joseph fully understood their language, he concealed his identity by using an interpreter, making it appear as though he could not comprehend them. This implies that the language of the Egyptians and the Israelites was different, and they could not communicate directly. When Joseph was first

sold into Egypt as a young boy, it is likely that he did not understand the Egyptian language. Imagine the despair he must have felt—suddenly torn away from his family, thrown into a world where no one spoke his language, and forced into slavery. At that moment, all he could do was turn to his Heavenly Father, the One who could understand his words no matter where he was, and plead for help in prayer.

A miracle took place at this moment.

When we speak of prayer, we naturally mean seeking answers through it. But prayer is also an action—an act of communication with our Heavenly Father. Whenever He speaks to us, it is always through the Holy Ghost. And when that happens, it becomes a “manifestation of the Spirit.” Joseph, who continually prayed to be delivered, experienced such manifestations of the Spirit again and again because of the earnestness of his prayers. Each time, the spiritual gifts he had were further refined. He began interpreting others’ dreams and, in time, became a perfected seer, standing before the king of Egypt and ultimately saving all the house of Israel. By interpreting the king’s dream and saving his people, Joseph truly fulfilled the purpose of spiritual gifts—to benefit others.

If we understand the principle that our “spiritual gifts” are refined through the “manifestation of the Spirit,” then we may gradually come to realize what we, as Latter-day Saints, are meant to do.⁵¹

Patriarchal Blessing

Once we understand that we have been given some form of the gifts of the Spirit, we naturally desire to recognize and use them. However, at first, we may not clearly recognize what that gift is. It is only natural to think, *“If only I could be told from the beginning what my gift is, I could work more efficiently in the Lord’s work.”* Yet, God’s plan is not structured that way.

Building Zion is, of course, a necessary work, but before anything else, each Latter-day Saint must, like Joseph Smith and Joseph of Egypt, overcome trials, learn, grow alongside their gifts of the Spirit, and become worthy to accomplish the work of God. To support us in this process of spiritual growth, God provides personal guidance tailored to each of us. Within this

⁵¹ See the diagram at the beginning titled “Heavenly Teachings and How They Work”

guidance, there may also be insights into the spiritual gifts we have been given.

The patriarchal blessing is the very guidance for growth that our Heavenly Father personally grants to each of us. This blessing, which can be called a map of our lives, includes both the declaration of lineage, ensuring our reception of the Abrahamic covenant, and personalized words from God. When reading their patriarchal blessing, some may wonder, *“Would God really use these kinds of words?”* However, patriarchs also receive revelation through the Holy Ghost and express it in words for us, much like Joseph Smith, who continually received revelation to compile the Doctrine and Covenants. In fact, when the Church was first established, some people questioned the revelations received by Joseph Smith, thinking, *“Would God really speak like this?”* In response to such concerns, the Lord explained:

“Behold, I am God and have spoken it; these commandments are of me, and were given unto my servants in their weakness, **after the manner of their language**, that they might come to understanding.”
(D&C 1:24)

Joseph Smith conveyed God’s revelations to the Saints by expressing them in his own words through the Holy Ghost. If he had attempted to directly communicate the exact words spoken by Jesus Christ or Heavenly Father, what would have happened? Mormon explains it as follows:

“And after this manner do they bear record: The eye hath never seen, neither hath the ear heard, before, so great and marvelous things as we saw and heard Jesus speak unto the Father; **And no tongue can speak, neither can there be written by any man**, neither can the hearts of men conceive so great and marvelous things as we both saw and heard Jesus speak;”
(3 Nephi 17:16-17)

If Joseph had been commanded to write down such great and marvelous words, he would not have been able to, and we might not have been able to read and understand them either. Similarly, patriarchs receive messages in their hearts and convey them in their own words so that we can understand them clearly.

The patriarchal blessing, compared to the scriptures, is relatively short and written in simple, understandable language. You may read it through once, memorize its contents after a few readings, and feel as though you fully

understand it. But that is only the beginning. As you gain more life experience, after ten, twenty years, each time you revisit your blessing, your understanding of its meaning will change. If you reach a point where you begin to understand Isaiah's writings, you may find even deeper meanings in your patriarchal blessing. This is because Isaiah's writings serve as training to understand the teachings of the Holy Ghost.

If you continue to study diligently and reach a certain level, you may one day read your blessing and realize that references to your spiritual gifts were present from the very beginning. When that happens, you will come to understand that you have always been a special individual in the eyes of God and that throughout your life, He has always been by your side, guiding and sustaining you.

God's Personal Plan for You Unfolds as You Follow His Guidance

If you continue to move forward with faith in your patriarchal blessing and reach such a stage, you may begin to see how you, as a Latter-day Saint, can little by little contribute to God's great plan. Your role may seem small in the grand scheme of things, and compared to the work of others, it might appear insignificant. However, that does not matter.

If we understand the meaning of the gifts of the Spirit and use them to the fullest extent of our abilities for the benefit of others, our lives will draw closer to true success. There is no need to feel discouraged if we have never been given significant responsibilities in the Church, such as serving as a bishop, stake president, or Relief Society president. Holding such callings does not make those individuals greater than others. It simply means that they have been given the necessary gifts of the Spirit by the Lord Jesus Christ to fulfill those roles.

Those who have not yet developed the ability to play the organ may not be called to accompany hymns in sacrament meeting—but as they grow, that opportunity may come. On the other hand, those who have been given the gift of playing the organ will likely receive that calling. Of course, spiritual gifts often grow through service itself. Sometimes, individuals are called even before a gift has fully developed, or before the individual is even aware of which gift they have. In such cases, a person may be called to serve in ways that seem unrelated to their eventual gift of the Spirit, until it begins to emerge. Every calling is important, and every gift of the Spirit is

essential. There is no such thing as an unnecessary gift, nor is there a gift that allows one to look down on others. As Paul explained:

“Now concerning spiritual gifts, brethren, I would not have you ignorant, for the manifestation of the Spirit is **given to every man to profit withal**, all these being worked by the one and selfsame Spirit, who distributes to every man individually as He wills.

For as the body is one, and hath many members, and all the members of that one body, being many, are one body: so also is Christ...and the eye cannot say unto the hand, I have no need of thee: nor again the head to the feet, I have no need of you.

Nay, much more those members of the body, which seem to be more feeble, are necessary: and those members of the body, which we think to be less honourable, upon these we bestow more abundant honour...that there should be no schism in the body; but that the members should have the same care one for another...now ye are the body of Christ, and members in particular.

Are all apostles? are all prophets? are all teachers? are all workers of miracles? Have all the gifts of healing? do all speak with tongues? do all interpret? But covet earnestly the best gifts: and yet shew I unto you a more excellent way.

Though I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, and **have not charity, I am become as sounding brass, or a tinkling cymbal**. And though I have the gift of prophecy, and understand all mysteries, and all knowledge; and though I have all faith, so that I could remove mountains, and **have not charity, I am nothing**. And though I bestow all my goods to feed the poor, and though I give my body to be burned, and **have not charity, it profiteth me nothing.**”

(1 Corinthians 12:1, 7, 11-12, 21-23, 25, 27, 29-31; 13:1-3)

Priestly ordinances performed without love and the exercise of the gift of the Spirit without love are meaningless. They do not teach the most essential condition for entering the glory of the celestial kingdom—loving others and serving them. No matter how small the calling or how seemingly insignificant the gift, when one strives with diligence, their efforts contribute to weaving a pure white thread in the wedding garment of the Saints. John described the day when each Latter-day Saint, having worked

tirelessly, wiping away their tears, and using their gifts to fulfill their callings, would be prepared to receive Christ:

“Let us be glad and rejoice, and give honour 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.**”

(Revelation 19:7-8)

In Revelation 12, the woman represents the Church of God, as Joseph explained. When this woman is finally prepared for the marriage, meaning when she is ready to receive Jesus Christ and dwell in Zion with Him, John describes seeing a radiant wedding garment woven from fine linen threads. Imagine the joy we will feel when we are found worthy to have spun even a single pure white thread for that glorious garment.

Knowing That You Were Chosen as a Latter-day Saint

Many members of the Church may believe that their conversion—or their birth into a Latter-day Saint family—was simply a coincidence. But is that truly the case? In a world of over 8 billion people, the likelihood of becoming a member of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints is remarkably small—far less than 1%. Was it really just by chance that you happened to be in the right place at the right time when the missionaries found you? Is it mere coincidence that you were born in this specific time period, after 6,000 years of human history, just when everything had been restored and prepared for the great work? If we were to believe that our membership in the Church is merely a random occurrence, then to whom were Nephi, John, Isaiah, and Mormon directing their messages? Who were they writing for, if not for us?

For years, many latter-day prophets have consistently taught that we are a special generation, set apart for a divine purpose. If we take their words seriously, we must ask ourselves: Why was I given the opportunity to enter into the Abrahamic covenant through my patriarchal blessing? What gifts of the Spirit have I been given, and how can I use them to fulfill my purpose? When we sincerely ponder these questions, we will inevitably be guided toward a singular path—the path that God has prepared for us.

Chapter 7: Jesus Found His Own Way

If we made certain promises in the premortal life and received an important role from Heavenly Father, then we must remember them in this life. It may be like searching for a small gemstone buried in the desert. It may take time, but once we understand how to search and remember, it becomes possible. The one who taught us this method is none other than our teacher, Jesus Christ.

The Veil of Forgetfulness

In the Plan of Salvation, this world is like a school—a place for spiritual training and growth. To fulfill this purpose, we must all pass through the “veil of forgetfulness.” Whether such a literal veil exists is uncertain, but conceptually, passing through it causes us to forget everything. We are taught that before we were born, we lived with God in the premortal existence, yet no one remembers that life. Even Jesus Himself did not retain that memory. This was because He needed to endure trials under the same conditions as we do, experiencing the same weaknesses. Let’s read Paul’s explanation:

“For in that he himself hath suffered being tempted, he is able to succour them that are tempted.”
(Hebrews 2:18)

Many people in the world may assume that because Jesus was the Son of God, He inherently knew everything and could do anything. However, the truth is different. He remained pure, used His spiritual gifts, and, with the help of the Holy Ghost, eventually reached the point where He remembered everything. There is someone who can testify of this—John the Baptist, a relative of Jesus. Before Jesus and John were born, their mothers, Mary and Elizabeth, met. It is possible that they had opportunities to see each other after birth as well. Even if they had not, they met when Jesus was baptized, and there seem to have been other occasions where they saw each other afterward.

There exists a record written by John the Baptist, though we have not yet seen it.⁵² However, part of it was revealed through a revelation given to Joseph Smith. This is found in Doctrine and Covenants 93, a revelation that

⁵² See Doctrine and Covenants 93:6, 18

is crucial for Latter-day Saints because it explains how we can come to understand who we truly are. Let's read John the Baptist's testimony:⁵³

"And he (John the Baptist) bore record, saying: I saw his glory, that he was in the beginning, before the world was; Therefore, in the beginning the Word was, for he was the Word, even the messenger of salvation—The light and the Redeemer of the world; the Spirit of truth, who came into the world, because the world was made by him, and in him was the life of men and the light of men. The worlds were made by him; men were made by him; all things were made by him, and through him, and of him. And I, John, bear record that I beheld his glory, as the glory of the Only Begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth, even the Spirit of truth, **which came and dwelt in the flesh, and dwelt among us.**"
(Doctrine and Covenants 93:7-11)

Here, John explains that through the power of the Holy Ghost, he was able to understand both the premortal and mortal missions of Jesus Christ. He testifies that the glorious Being who created all things came into this world in an imperfect, mortal body, living in the same time and place as himself. What follows is especially significant in John's testimony:

"And I, John, saw that **he received not of the fulness at the first, but received grace for grace; And he received not of the fulness at first, but continued from grace to grace, until he received a fulness;** And thus he was called the Son of God, because **he received not of the fulness at the first.**"
(Doctrine and Covenants 93:12-14)

John declares clearly that Jesus "received not of the fulness at the first." What does this mean? If we carefully read Doctrine and Covenants 93, we can understand that Christ is showing us how we, too, can learn "a certain

⁵³ Regarding the question of whether the John mentioned in Doctrine and Covenants section 93 refers to the Apostle John or John the Baptist, Elder Bruce R. McConkie stated the following:

"John the Baptist [was] destined to write ... the gospel of that Lord whose witness he is, but his account, perhaps because it contains truths and concepts that the saints and the world are not yet prepared to receive, has so far not been given to men. On May 6, 1833, however, the Lord did reveal to Joseph Smith eleven verses of the Baptist's writings, and promised that 'the fulness of the record of John' would be revealed when the faith of men entitled them to receive it." (D&C 93:6–18.)

"... John the Apostle had before him the writings of John the Baptist when he wrote his Gospel" (The Mortal Messiah: From Bethlehem to Calvary [1979], 1:426–27).

thing” by the same process He followed. That “certain thing” is the process of **remembering the mission God gave us**. If the phrase “received not of the fulness at the first” means that Jesus also passed through the veil of forgetfulness and was born as an infant who did not remember anything, then that is a profound and extraordinary truth. Abraham, in his own record, wrote about a vision in which he saw the great council in heaven:

“And the Lord said: Whom shall I send? And one answered like unto the Son of Man: **Here am I, send me**. And another answered and said: Here am I, send me. And the Lord said: I will send the first. And the second was angry, and kept not his first estate; and, at that day, many followed after him.”

(Abraham 3:27-28)

Here, the one referred to as “the Lord” is Heavenly Father. The first to answer was Jesus Christ, and the second was Lucifer, who later became Satan. In the great council in heaven, in which all of God’s children participated, Heavenly Father presented the Plan of Salvation. In doing so, He asked if there was someone who could become the Creator, the Redeemer, and the Savior. From the time we existed in the premortal world, we had agency. It was with that agency that Jesus was the first to respond.

If Jesus Christ had entered this world and passed through the veil of forgetfulness without ever regaining His memory, salvation would not have come to us. Just as Joseph, who was sold into Egypt, was given opportunities to develop and refine his spiritual gifts through life’s trials, perhaps Jesus Himself was also given similar opportunities. However, because agency operates in this world as well, He was not compelled to endure those trials. He could have avoided hardships and pursued only what He desired. Yet, He applied the divine attributes He had exhibited in the premortal life to His mortal agency, remaining sinless and keeping Himself pure. John continues his testimony:

“And I, John, bear record, and lo, the heavens were opened, and the **Holy Ghost** descended upon him in the form of a dove, and sat upon him, and there came a voice out of heaven saying: This is my beloved Son. And I, John, bear record that **he received a fulness of the glory of the Father**; And he received all power, both in heaven and on earth, and the glory of the Father was with him, for he dwelt in him.”

(Doctrine and Covenants 93:15-17)

It may seem unnecessary for Jesus Christ, who holds a unique position as one of the Godhead, to come to this world and forget everything. However, consider the moment when Jesus came to John the Baptist to be baptized.

“Then cometh Jesus from Galilee to Jordan unto John, to be baptized of him. But John forbad him, saying, I have need to be baptized of thee, and comest thou to me? And Jesus answering said unto him, Suffer it to be so now: **for thus it becometh us to fulfil all righteousness.** Then he suffered him.”

(Matthew 3:13-15)

Jesus Christ said that He would “fulfill all righteousness,” using baptism as an example to teach us. Among the requirements of “all righteousness” is the need for us to **remember the mission we were sent here to fulfill.** To accomplish this, Jesus Himself first forgot everything, becoming like us, and then made the effort to remember all things. This was not an easy task. Even Jesus was tempted by Satan. However, each time He overcame temptation, He increased “grace for grace”, gradually remembering His mission until He ultimately received the fullness of glory. This did not happen after His crucifixion, but while He was still alive. We know this because John the Baptist, who wrote this record, was martyred during Jesus’ ministry. Yet, before his death, he bore witness that he had seen these things for himself.

Jesus explained why He quoted from John the Baptist’s record—one that was not yet meant to be revealed—in Doctrine and Covenants 93:

“I give unto you these sayings that you may understand and know how to worship, and know what you worship, that you may come unto the Father in my name, and in due time receive of his fulness. For if you keep my commandments you shall receive of his fulness, and be glorified in me as I am in the Father; therefore, I say unto you, **you shall receive grace for grace.**”

(D&C 93:19-20)

By quoting from John the Baptist’s record, Jesus explained that He began from the very beginning in this life and ultimately came to a full understanding. The reason He shared this was to teach that **“we” can also receive grace for grace and come to know the truth in the same way.** And for this to happen, He taught that we must understand to whom we should pray and how we should pray.

Why is it necessary to understand prayer specifically in order to know our mission and the truth? We pray every day, and we may feel that we already understand prayer well. However, if Jesus, knowing this, still tells us to deepen our understanding of prayer, could it mean that there is a higher level of understanding beyond what we currently have? There are many things we assume we already know. Nephi taught us the following:

“Yea, wo be unto him that saith: We have received, and we need no more!”
(2 Nephi 28:27)

Jacob, Nephi’s brother, explained this in a similar way:

“Behold, great and marvelous are the works of the Lord. How unsearchable are the depths of the mysteries of him; and **it is impossible that man should find out all his ways**. And no man knoweth of his ways save it be revealed unto him; wherefore, brethren, **despise not the revelations of God.**”
(Jacob 4:8)

What if there are greater truths beyond what we think we already “know”—truths that will not be revealed to us unless we actively seek to understand them? If we believe that the scriptures contain truth, should we not follow what is written in them?

Jesus continues in Section 93, explaining why we have the potential to receive grace upon grace. He describes how our existence has grown from the distant past, even before our premortal life:

“Man was also in the beginning with God. Intelligence, or the light of truth, was not created or made, neither indeed can be...Behold, here is the agency of man, and here is the condemnation of man; because that which was from the beginning is plainly manifest unto them, and they receive not the light...For man is spirit. The elements are eternal, and **spirit and element, inseparably connected, receive a fulness of joy**...The glory of God is intelligence, or, in other words, light and truth.”
(Doctrine and Covenants 93:29, 31, 33–34, 36)

We existed long before what we understand as our premortal life—from the very beginning, in fact. At that time, we were intelligence⁵⁴, not something created, but an eternal element of existence. God prepared a way for these intelligences to progress and grow. Whether intelligence itself became spirit or intelligence was already spirit is not entirely clear, but when spirit is united with element, it becomes man and receives a fulness of joy. Intelligence alone cannot progress, but through the grace of God, it can move to the next stage. Abraham, who was shown a vision of the premortal existence, learned a similar truth.

“And we will prove them herewith, to see if they will do all things whatsoever the Lord their God shall command them; And they who keep their first estate **shall be added upon**; and they who keep not their first estate shall not have glory in the same kingdom with those who keep their first estate; and they who keep their second estate shall have glory **added upon** their heads for ever and ever.”
(Abraham 3:25-26)

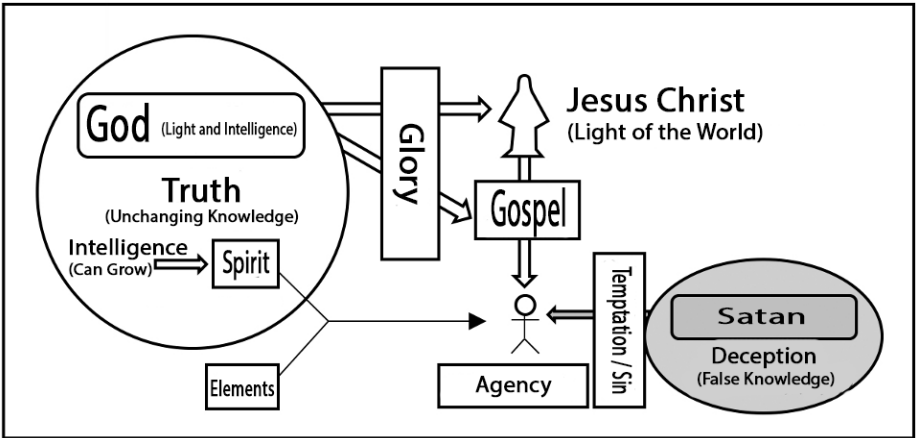


Figure 23 Illustration of Doctrine and Covenants Section 93

⁵⁴ In this case, “intelligence” refers to something that has existed since the beginning of the world. We cannot know exactly what it is. However, what is important is to understand that it has always existed from the very beginning.

⁵⁵ See Doctrine and Covenants 93:20

What If We Had Chosen It Ourselves?

We do not recover our memories through written words, but rather through the Holy Ghost, as they are brought back to our hearts. It does not happen instantly. Since it is “grace for grace,” it happens little by little, step by step. So, what exactly do we remember? What kind of memories do we recover?

Now, consider why Doctrine and Covenants 93 and Abraham 3 were given to us. Abraham 3 records the heavenly council, where Jesus Himself voluntarily chose to become the Savior. Doctrine and Covenants 93 explains how He remembered that mission in this mortal life.

This is an extremely important truth. For us, understanding how Jesus became our Savior is a precious revelation.

But then...why does Jesus, immediately after explaining this in Doctrine and Covenants 93, go on to teach that “we can also come to know?”

Think carefully about this. Even if we think it was by chance, the reality is that we have become Latter-day Saints. This is an undeniable fact. What if, just like Jesus, we had also chosen our path before coming to this world?

Let’s consider a sacred possibility. In the heavenly council described in Abraham 3, Heavenly Father likely asked all His children, “Who will be the Savior for everyone?” We probably understood how difficult and immense this responsibility would be. Only two individuals raised their hands. However, one of them sought to become the Savior not for the sake of everyone, but for his own desires. Because of this, Heavenly Father did not choose him. Instead, Jesus was chosen as the Savior.

But perhaps this council also included discussions on *who* would be chosen to carry out the plan of salvation. If we assume this to be the case (and this is purely hypothetical), then after selecting Jesus as the central figure of the plan, Heavenly Father may have asked another question.

“Who will be the first to begin human history?”

Perhaps Adam and Eve raised their hands.

“Who will serve as prophets in their respective times?”

Enoch, Noah, Moses, Elijah, Nephi, Alma, Mormon... Many courageous individuals likely raised their hands.

“Who will serve as apostles alongside Christ?”

Peter, James, John, Paul... A distinguished group of individuals likely raised their hands.

“Who will stand as the ‘banner’ of the restoration of the true gospel in the last days, at the final stage of this plan?”

Joseph Smith raised his hand.

“Who will assist Joseph in establishing and expanding this restored Church?”

Martin Harris, Emma Smith, the Smith family, Oliver Cowdery, David Whitmer, Brigham Young... countless hands must have been raised.

And if Heavenly Father had asked this **final** question...

“Who will become Saints in the latter days, build Zion, and prepare the way for Christ, helping to bring the plan of salvation to completion?”

If we had been there, witnessing the greatness of the plan of salvation and the courage of so many who willingly raised their hands to fulfill their sacred missions—if, in that moment, we had been deeply moved, and when **this final question** was asked, we had lifted our hands high and cried out with determination,

“Here am I! Send me!”

We have forgotten everything. Truly, everything.

When Jeremiah was called as a prophet, he felt young, inexperienced, and weak. Even if he had raised his hand in the premortal life, he would have forgotten it. To such a man, the Lord said:

“Before I formed thee in the belly I knew thee; and before thou camest forth out of the womb **I sanctified thee**, and I ordained thee a prophet unto the nations.”

(Jeremiah 1:5)

This is taught in the doctrine of this Church as “foreordination.” In other words, those who fulfill a role in this life were already chosen in the premortal life. However, when we read Abraham 3, we understand that Jesus Christ was not arbitrarily chosen to be the Savior—He was chosen because He willingly stepped forward and said, “Here am I, send me.”

If that is the case, could it not be the same for Jeremiah, who was also chosen? The phrase “I sanctified thee” may imply that he was chosen because he voluntarily declared, “I will do it!”—and was set apart for that responsibility. Isaiah described the scene of many Saints being sent to this world in the latter days in this way:

“Lift ye up a **banner** upon the high mountain, exalt the voice unto them, shake the hand, that they may go into the gates of the nobles. I have commanded **my sanctified ones**, I have also called my mighty ones for mine anger, even them that rejoice in my highness. The noise of a multitude in the mountains, like as of a great people; a tumultuous noise of the kingdoms of nations gathered together: **the Lord of hosts mustereth the host of the battle.**”

(Isaiah 13:2-4)

I say this repeatedly—if, before we were born, we were moved by our Heavenly Father’s prepared Plan of Salvation, if we were inspired by the example of those who stepped forward to labor alongside Him, and if, at the very least, we desired to contribute in some way during the final phase of that great work, and thus voluntarily raised our hands—then should we not deeply reflect upon the reality that, regardless of the circumstances, we have now actually become Latter-day Saints?

Chapter 8: The Path Shown by Jesus

From the discussion in the previous chapter, let us assume for a moment that we became Latter-day Saints in this life because we made that choice ourselves in the pre-earth life. This idea may seem both mysterious and profound. At the same time, even if this were true, many of us might feel a vast gap between our current life circumstances and the ideal image of what a “Latter-day Saint” should be.

No one lives a perfect, ideal life every single day. There are daily responsibilities—work, housework, school, and child-rearing—that demand our attention. In addition, the burdens of life weigh heavily on us: family, friendships, relationships, finances, the future, marriage, employment—the list of concerns seems endless.

If we were truly foreordained to be Latter-day Saints, then why doesn’t God make our lives a little easier? Why not provide an environment where we can serve Him more effectively?

Even when we have a sincere desire to work as the Lord’s servants and dedicate ourselves to His cause, the constant weight of daily challenges can leave us feeling like we’re falling short. Many of us may find ourselves wondering: If I really want to serve, why is it so hard to do so?

The Possibility That We Can Attain It, Too

Remember that this world is both a school and a place of labor. In other words, we learn while working on-site, much like apprentices or interns. We are given only one life, and since we cannot start over just because we fail, we must train ourselves, assist in God’s work little by little as we live, grow, and move closer to completion—all while learning in the field.

And this is **possible**.

If it were impossible, would Jesus say the following to us who are in this mortal life?

“Be **ye therefore perfect**, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect.”
(Matthew 5:48)

When reading this scripture, many people might think, *“Is it really possible for imperfect beings like us to achieve this in this mortal life?”* Of course, it is impossible. We cannot become like our Heavenly Father while in mortality—there is a set process for that. However, **what if these words refer not to personal perfection, but rather to fulfilling the mission we have been given?**

Joseph Smith remained human until the very moment of his martyrdom. He was likely an imperfect person up until his last breath. However, if we consider whether he fulfilled the promises he made to God in the premortal life, it seems that there was no one who contributed more to God’s plan of salvation than he did.

When John Taylor wrote in Doctrine and Covenants 135, describing Joseph by saying, **“except Jesus only, he has done more for the salvation of men in this world than any other man that ever lived in it,”** wasn’t this exactly what he meant? In other words, though humans are inherently imperfect, when it comes to fulfilling promises, we have the potential to achieve completeness. That means we can fulfill the promises we made before coming to this life—completely.

This understanding is profoundly significant. If we can grasp this possibility, we will naturally begin the search for our personal mission in this life. If we truly believe in this potential, we will be able to rise again and again, no matter how many times we fall, strengthening our weakened knees each time.

Now, let us consider how we can begin this search for our personal mission and explore the methods to do so.

The Light of Christ and the Holy Ghost

Let us return to the concept of the veil of forgetfulness. Even if we made personal covenants before coming into this world, we have forgotten them all. No trace of those memories remains in our minds, and it is impossible to recall them on our own. Since we cannot remember them on our own, someone must teach us.

Is it not remarkable that God prepared the Holy Ghost specifically for us? The Holy Ghost knows all things and can teach all things.⁵⁶ However, if we had not been born into a family of Church members, or had not converted at some point in our lives, we might have had few opportunities to learn about the Holy Ghost. During the time when Satan's schemes had removed even the mention of the Holy Ghost from the scriptures, people were not even given the chance to know of His existence. Paul encountered such people in his time. When he asked them,

“He (Paul) said unto them, Have ye received the Holy Ghost since ye believed? And they said unto him, **We have not so much as heard whether there be any Holy Ghost.**”
(Acts 19:2)

Indeed, those of us who were born in this era are living in a special time—a time when we have been given the **opportunity to know the Holy Ghost**. On the first night that the angel Moroni appeared to Joseph Smith, he quoted the following scripture from the Bible, revealing it as something that was about to come to pass:

“And it shall come to pass afterward, that **I will pour out my spirit upon all flesh**; and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, your old men shall dream dreams, your young men shall see visions: And also upon the servants and upon the handmaids in those days will I pour out my spirit.”
(Joel 2:28-29)

“All flesh” —meaning all who desire it—can receive God's Spirit, the Holy Ghost. This was the declaration. This scripture continues:

“And it shall come to pass, that whosoever shall call on the name of the Lord shall be delivered: **for in mount Zion and in Jerusalem shall be deliverance, as the Lord hath said, and in the remnant whom the Lord shall call.**”
(Joel 2:32)

In other words, those who receive that Spirit and continue to call upon the Lord will be chosen and called by Him to build Zion. This has never

⁵⁶ Moroni 10:5

happened before in history.⁵⁷ As the final work of the plan of salvation, Heavenly Father has made it possible for us to learn from the Holy Ghost. For what purpose? To gather those who will labor for Zion.

However, returning to the previous discussion, if one is not born into a family of church members, it is extremely difficult to come across this opportunity. In a world with over 8 billion people, the probability of meeting a missionary, and even more so, the likelihood of being willing to listen to their message at that moment, is incredibly low. Even those born into Latter-day Saint families may pass through life without recognizing the greatness of that opportunity, rendering it ultimately meaningless. How, then, can a person reach the teachings of the Holy Ghost that Heavenly Father has prepared?

Remember the discussion about how intelligence became a spirit and then progressed to becoming a human, continuously exercising “free will” along the way. No matter how many times we pass through the veil of forgetfulness, we retain our essence and our agency. With that small yet significant power, Heavenly Father has prepared a way for us to reach the Holy Ghost. That path is the **Light of Christ**.

“The Light of Christ” is known by many names—“the Spirit of the Lord,” “the light of truth,” “conscience,” and “the power to discern good from evil,” among others. Though the terms vary, they all refer to the same divine influence. This Light of Christ envelops the world; in other words, it permeates the entire universe that Jesus Christ created. When He created the universe, He imbued it with this influence—a guiding force to lead people toward the Holy Ghost. Since every person is born within this Light of Christ, they naturally sense its presence. Mormon taught about the nature of this light as follows:

“And now, my brethren, seeing that ye know the light by which ye may judge, which light is the light of Christ, see that ye do not judge wrongfully; for with that same judgment which ye judge ye shall also be judged. Wherefore, I beseech of you, brethren, **that ye should search diligently in the light of Christ that ye may know good from evil**; and if ye will lay hold upon every good thing, and condemn it not, **ye certainly will be a**

⁵⁷ Although something similar may have occurred in the time of Enoch, this was the first time in history that the fullness of the gospel and the truth of the existence of the Holy Ghost had been lost.

child of Christ.”

(Moroni 7:18-19)

Every person, regardless of their circumstances, possesses the right to choose for themselves. Through this right, they can determine the path they will follow. Even if they begin in a state of complete ignorance, the Light of Christ will point them in the right direction. The Light of Christ can be described as the guiding influence that leads a person to the Holy Ghost.

Regarding the phrase “a child of Christ” used by Mormon, King Benjamin offers further explanation in the Book of Mormon as follows:

“And now, **because of the covenant which ye have made ye shall be called the children of Christ**, his sons, and his daughters; for behold, this day he hath spiritually begotten you; for ye say that your hearts are changed through faith on his name; therefore, ye are born of him and have become his sons and his daughters.”

(Mosiah 5:7)

People are born into the light of Christ, which naturally enables them to discern between good and evil. Whether they accept or reject it is entirely their choice. However, if they accept it and desire to move in the right direction, and if the time and circumstances permit, they will eventually draw closer to the teachings of Jesus Christ. There are those who live in places where believing in Christ is restricted by national laws or regulations. Yet if they do their best within their circumstances, they will eventually be given a fair opportunity to receive the true gospel—whether in another time, another place, or in the spirit world.

If there are people who came into this world having promised to become Latter-day Saints, then surely they will be given an opportunity to reach the true gospel of Jesus Christ through the light of Christ. The light of Christ serves as a guidepost to lead Latter-day Saints to their covenant.

Isaiah addressed those who thought that since Christ died before having children, He would not have the joy of seeing His descendants. In response to this misunderstanding, Abinadi explained Isaiah’s words in greater detail:

“And now I say unto you, who shall declare his generation? Behold, I say unto you, that when his soul has been made an offering for sin he shall see his seed. And now what say ye? And who shall be his seed? Behold I say unto you, that whosoever has heard the words of the prophets, yea, all the

holy prophets who have prophesied concerning the coming of the Lord—I say unto you, that all those who have hearkened unto their words, and believed that the Lord would redeem his people, and have looked forward to that day for a remission of their sins, I say unto you, that these are his seed, or **they are the heirs of the kingdom of God**. For these are they whose sins he has borne; these are they for whom he has died, to redeem them from their transgressions. And now, **are they not his seed?**” (Mosiah 15:10–12)

Mormon, King Benjamin, Isaiah, and Abinadi all taught that when people accept the light of Christ and walk in the right path, eventually reaching the gospel of Jesus Christ, they become the children of Christ—His sons and daughters, His seed. And as His seed, they will inherit the kingdom alongside Christ, the King.

The Void in the Heart and the Fruits of the Spirit

The ultimate purpose of the Light of Christ is to lead us to the Holy Ghost and to the reception of the gifts of the Spirit. The Light of Christ helps us discern between good and evil, but it does not go beyond that role. Since we are born within the Light of Christ, in a way, we possess it inherently. However, when we follow its promptings to seek Christ, we are given the opportunity to receive further light and truth. The one who helps us in this process is the Holy Ghost. And as Moroni explained by quoting the words of Joel, we who live in this modern era are granted a special opportunity to receive it.

Before discussing the Holy Ghost, let us first consider baptism. When we hear the word “baptism,” we immediately think of immersion in water. This is not incorrect; it is a ceremony designed to be remembered in this way. However, in the gospel, ceremonies that are meant to be understood through symbolic actions are administered by the Aaronic Priesthood. The Aaronic Priesthood is also called the “Preparatory Priesthood.” It is responsible for performing ordinances that prepare individuals for something greater. The true purpose of baptism is not merely immersion in water, but to forsake sin, return to a state of spiritual innocence, and receive the greatest gift our Heavenly Father gives us in this life—**the gift of the Holy Ghost**. The gift of the Holy Ghost cannot be bestowed through the Aaronic Priesthood. It is given only by the Melchizedek Priesthood upon a body that has been purified through the ordinances of the Aaronic Priesthood.

The “gift of the Holy Ghost” is a promise, a qualification, and a right that allows us to have the Holy Ghost as our constant companion. If we keep ourselves pure and sincerely seek to be taught, we can receive instruction from the Holy Ghost at any time. However, the way people experience the influence of the Holy Ghost can vary greatly. This is because the degree to which we desire to understand God’s will affects how we receive it. For example, in the Book of Mormon, when King Lamoni and his father, the king of the Lamanites, came to know the truth, they were so overwhelmed by the Spirit that they lost consciousness. It is rare to see such a dramatic reaction among modern-day converts to the Church. The difference lies in how deeply one feels the spiritual emptiness within their heart.

King Lamoni and his father, the king of the Lamanites, were not taught by their ancestral traditions and culture that shedding the blood of the innocent was wrong. Therefore, they likely engaged in such actions under the authority of their kingship. However, even if their culture and laws permitted it, the Light of Christ still whispered the truth of right and wrong to their hearts. Perhaps, over the course of their lives, they bore an unseen burden of suffering, and eventually, a vast emptiness formed within them—an emptiness that nothing could fill. Yet, through the work of the missionaries, they came to understand the truth. And when they prayed and sought Christ with sincere hearts, the Holy Ghost filled their emptiness with the will of the Father, overflowing with divine truth. In that moment, they were so overcome with joy that they lost consciousness.

In the modern world, we live in societies governed by laws and order, making it unlikely that we would find ourselves in such extreme circumstances. However, even so, the Holy Ghost continues to whisper to us.

The influences of both the Light of Christ and the Holy Ghost are inherently good, so for those of us who are born within the Light of Christ, it may be difficult to discern what exactly is coming from the Holy Ghost. Paul addressed this by explaining that even though it may not be immediately obvious, the Holy Ghost is indeed whispering to us. He illustrated this concept using the metaphor of the “fruit” that the Spirit produces, which he called the “fruit of the Spirit.”



Figure 24 The gift of the Holy Ghost

“But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, Meekness, temperance: against such there is no law.”
(Galatians 5:22–23)

Paul teaches that when we feel love, joy, peace, patience, and kindness in our daily lives, it is a sign that the Holy Ghost is already near. As we are led by the Holy Ghost, we begin

to bear such fruit ourselves. Even if it is difficult to recognize at first, a sense of goodness in our hearts regarding what we are doing may indicate that the Holy Ghost is already influencing us.

The Holy Ghost can influence even those who have not yet been baptized and do not possess the gift of the Holy Ghost. Otherwise, Moroni’s promise in Moroni 10 would not be fulfilled. This is evident in Peter’s astonishment when he saw the Holy Ghost descend upon Cornelius, a Gentile.⁵⁸

However, if this is the case, why is it necessary to receive the gift of the Holy Ghost? If those who have not been baptized can still feel the influence of the Holy Ghost, some may wonder whether receiving this gift is necessary to really feel the Spirit more fully. But the difference between receiving the gift of the Holy Ghost and not receiving it is as vast as the heavens and the earth.

For example, consider this scenario: A person who is not a member of the Church meets the missionaries and is given the opportunity to learn about God and the true gospel. While receiving the missionaries’ lessons, they may feel the influence of the Holy Ghost. However, if they do not take that influence seriously and act upon it, over time, the influence will fade. If they part ways with the missionaries, even the good feelings they once experienced may eventually disappear from their memory. Without the gift of the Holy Ghost, the truths taught by the Spirit do not remain with them.

Those who possess the gift of the Holy Ghost can always seek His guidance, and this very gift helps them retain the teachings they receive. Then, one day, when their spirit is truly illuminated by the Holy Ghost and

⁵⁸ Acts 10:44–45

they come to a full knowledge of the truth, they can experience, in its truest sense, the **“baptism of fire and of the Holy Ghost”** and advance to yet another level of spiritual growth.

“Wherefore, my beloved brethren, I know that if ye shall follow the Son, with full purpose of heart, acting no hypocrisy and no deception before God, but with real intent, repenting of your sins, witnessing unto the Father that ye are willing to take upon you the name of Christ, by baptism—yea, by following your Lord and your Savior down into the water, according to his word, behold, then shall ye receive the Holy Ghost; **yea, then cometh the baptism of fire and of the Holy Ghost**; and then can ye speak with the tongue of angels, and shout praises unto the Holy One of Israel.”
(2 Nephi 31:13)

Through the gift of the Holy Ghost, as one experiences the baptism of fire and the Holy Ghost multiple times throughout life, they can be born again as a new person. This is the true meaning of the words spoken by Jesus:

“Jesus answered and said unto him, Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except **a man be born again**, he cannot see the kingdom of God. Nicodemus saith unto him, How can a man be born when he is old? can he enter the second time into his mother’s womb, and be born? Jesus answered, Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born of **water** and of **the Spirit**, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God. That which is born of the flesh is flesh; and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit. Marvel not that I said unto thee, Ye must be born again.”
(John 3:3-7)

This does not happen all at once; progress comes gradually as our efforts to move forward begin to bear fruit. Let us read from the words of Elder D. Todd Christofferson of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles:

“You may ask, Why doesn’t this mighty change happen more quickly with me? You should remember that the remarkable examples of King Benjamin’s people, Alma, and some others in scripture are just that—remarkable and not typical. For most of us, the changes are more gradual and occur over time. Being born again, unlike our physical birth, is more a process than an event. And engaging in that process is the central purpose of mortality.

At the same time, let us not justify ourselves in a casual effort. Let us not be content to retain some disposition to do evil. Let us worthily partake of the sacrament each week and continue to draw upon the Holy Spirit to root out the last vestiges of impurity within us. I testify that as you continue in the path of spiritual rebirth, the atoning grace of Jesus Christ will take away your sins and the stain of those sins in you, temptations will lose their appeal, and through Christ you will become holy, as He and our Father are holy.”

(Excerpt from Elder D. Todd Christofferson’s talk, *"Born Again,"* Sunday Morning Session, April 2008 General Conference)

The Meaning of Christ’s Atonement

When a person learns nothing, they grow through sin. Born into this world in an imperfect state and without knowledge of the gospel, we, like newborn babies, grow through failure. Though we are surrounded by the Light of Christ, we do not always follow its teachings. Because of our weaknesses, we succumb to temptation, wound ourselves, and defile our own hearts. If Heavenly Father had not provided a way to save us from this condition, we would never have been able to see His face again.

In the Garden of Eden, Adam and Eve, unable to fully obey God’s commandment and having succumbed to Satan’s temptation, were cast out. They had known the joy of beholding the face of Heavenly Father. Imagine their sorrow when that privilege was lost. In the Book of Moses, there is a record of the joy Adam felt when he learned from an angel that there was a plan through which he could once again behold the face of God.

“And Adam and Eve, his wife, called upon the name of the Lord, and they heard the voice of the Lord from the way toward the Garden of Eden, speaking unto them, and they saw Him not; for they were shut out from His presence...after many days an angel of the Lord appeared unto Adam, saying...This thing is a similitude of **the sacrifice of the Only Begotten of the Father**, which is full of grace and truth...And in that day the Holy Ghost fell upon Adam...Adam blessed God and was filled, and began to prophesy concerning all the families of the earth, saying: Blessed be the name of God, for because of my transgression my eyes are opened, **and in this life I shall have joy, and again in the flesh I shall see God.**”

(Moses 5:4–10)

The Only Begotten, who would sacrifice Himself for our sins, is Jesus Christ, the very center of the plan of salvation. When Adam was taught that there would be One who would take upon Himself the punishment for the sins we commit unknowingly, he rejoiced. He understood that through continual effort and striving to remain pure, he and his posterity could once again behold the glorious face of the Father.

Neither a sinful human being nor an animal could atone for the sins of another. While the Law of Moses is well known for its sacrificial ordinances, the law of sacrifice existed long before Moses. This is evident from the account of Adam offering sacrifices. Sacrifices were instituted from the very beginning of the world through priesthood ordinances to symbolize the atonement for sin and to teach the people about the plan of salvation.⁵⁹

However, offering animals as sacrifices was merely a symbolic act meant for learning—it did not actually transfer a person’s sins onto the animal. A sinful human being, or even an animal, could not atone for the sins of another. Only one way existed to fulfill the demands of justice, as Alma and Amulek explained to the Zoramites:

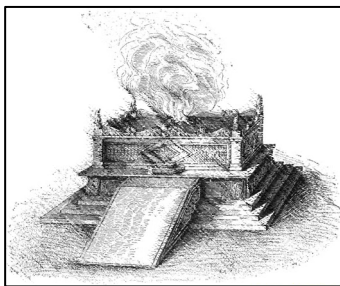


Figure 25 Altar of burning offering

“For it is expedient that there should be a great and last sacrifice; yea, not a sacrifice of man, neither of beast, neither of any manner of fowl; for it shall not be a human sacrifice; but it must be an infinite and eternal sacrifice. Now there is not any man that can sacrifice his own blood which will atone for the sins of another. Now, if a man murdereth, behold will our law, which is just, take the life of his brother? I say unto you, Nay. But the law requireth the life of him who hath murdered; **therefore there can be nothing which is short of an infinite atonement which will suffice for the sins of the world**...then shall the law of Moses be fulfilled; yea, it shall

⁵⁹ Sacrifice is a priesthood ordinance that uses symbolic form to help us learn about the role of the Savior. Because it is expressed through symbols, it is part of the ordinances of the Aaronic Priesthood. Although this ordinance is not currently practiced, it has not been done away with. John the Baptist declared that it would be restored in connection with the restoration of the Aaronic Priesthood. (See Doctrine and Covenants 13.)

be all fulfilled, every jot and tittle, and none shall have passed away. And behold, this is the whole meaning of the law, every whit pointing to that great and last sacrifice; and that **great and last sacrifice will be the Son of God, yea, infinite and eternal.**"

(Alma 34:10-14)

Only one being, chosen and possessing both the power of God and the imperfections of man, could serve as the great and last sacrifice. The ultimate work of the Atonement began when Jesus entered the Garden of Gethsemane and commenced His prayer. Upon His shoulders was laid the burden of all the sins of humanity—those who had lived before, those living then, and those who would come thereafter. Isaiah described this sacred burden as follows:

"And I will fasten him as a nail in a sure place; and he shall be for a glorious throne to his father's house. **And they shall hang upon him all the glory of his father's house**, the offspring and the issue, all vessels of small quantity, from the vessels of cups, even to all the vessels of flagons." (Isaiah 22:23-24)

This suffering was beyond human comprehension. Even the Lord, who understood all things, was overwhelmed and pleaded, "Father, if thou be willing, remove this cup from me: nevertheless not my will, but thine, be done."⁶⁰ Yet, for our sake—for our hope, for our ability to rise again from the depths of sorrow—He bore it all alone. The Lord Himself described His suffering in these words:

"Therefore I command you to repent—repent, lest I smite you by the rod of my mouth, and by my wrath, and by my anger, and your sufferings be sore—how sore you know not, how exquisite you know not, yea, how hard to bear you know not. For behold, I, God, have suffered these things for all, that they might not suffer if they would repent; But if they would not repent they must suffer even as I; Which suffering caused myself, even God, the greatest of all, to tremble because of pain, and to bleed at every pore, and to suffer both body and spirit—and would that I might not drink the bitter cup, and shrink—

Nevertheless, glory be to the Father, and I partook and **finished my preparations unto the children of men.**" (D&C 19:15-19)

⁶⁰ Luke 22:42

To ensure that people have the chance to be reborn in this life, Jesus overcame this suffering and achieved victory, making it possible for us to be guided to the very end. When we truly understand this meaning, we must once again reflect on the words of the prophet Joel:

“Therefore also now, saith the Lord, turn ye even to me with all your heart, and with fasting, and with weeping, and with mourning: And rend your heart, and not your garments.”

(Joel 2:12-13)

If we become Latter-day Saints in name only, the efforts of Christ will remain unfulfilled. If we are merely satisfied with the fact that our sins have been forgiven, Jesus may feel disappointed. When we seriously consider why Jesus Christ sacrificed His life for us, and when we take sincere action, striving to be born again, the plan of salvation prepared by Heavenly Father and Jesus Christ will gradually bear fruit.

We may fail countless times in our daily actions. However, each time we strive to stand up again, Christ’s sacrifice bears fruit, and we become purified and sanctified.

Chapter 9: The Meaning of the Doctrine of Christ

When people hear the missionaries explain Jesus Christ's Atonement and His sacrifice and begin to understand it, they also start their effort to be born again. But from where? What should they begin with? This is a question they will likely consider. At this point, the missionaries teach the first principles and ordinances of the Gospel. Another way to describe this is **the doctrine of Christ**, which Jesus Himself taught in 3 Nephi⁶¹, and which Nephi also explained in 2 Nephi⁶². This is a crucial first step, marking the beginning of our eternal journey in this life.

The First Principles and Ordinances of the Gospel

The first principles and ordinances of the Gospel, also known as the doctrine of Christ, are very simple. Joseph Smith explained them in the Articles of Faith:

“We believe that the first principles and ordinances of the Gospel are: first, Faith in the Lord Jesus Christ; second, Repentance; third, Baptism by immersion for the remission of sins; fourth, Laying on of hands for the gift of the Holy Ghost.”

(Articles of Faith 1:4)

As shown, the first principles and ordinances of the Gospel follow a divinely appointed and essential order. Beyond this, neither Jesus Christ nor Nephi provided further explanations. In other words, they could not teach what comes next. Right after explaining the doctrine of Christ—the first principles and ordinances of the Gospel—Nephi said:

“And now I, Nephi, cannot say more; **the Spirit stoppeth mine utterance,**”

(2 Nephi 32:7)

That means there are things beyond this point that cannot be recorded in the scriptures. But by now, after everything we've discussed, you probably already understand why. It is because the rest must be taught by the Holy Ghost. The Holy Ghost teaches us personally through revelation. While the scriptures provide universal teachings that apply to everyone, the teachings of the Holy Ghost are direct messages from God, given to each of us

⁶¹ 3 Nephi 11:31–39

⁶² 2 Nephi 31:2–21

individually at the exact moments we need them. Without the guidance of the Holy Ghost, we would neither grow spiritually nor be able to fulfill the divine purpose for which we came into this life. And in order to receive these teachings, we must first go through the initial four steps—the first principles and ordinances of the gospel.

First, we need **faith in the Lord Jesus Christ**. He is the very center of the plan of salvation. Without knowing Him and learning about Him, our eternal progression cannot begin. What missionaries teach is about Jesus. What we learn in church is about Jesus. The scriptures, too, are filled with His teachings. Jesus Himself said:

“Search the scriptures; for in them ye think ye have eternal life: and **they are they which testify of me.**”

(John 5:39)

Being one of the Godhead, Jehovah, the God of this earth from the beginning, who has helped us and, having taken on flesh, came into this world to dwell among us—without Him, we would know nothing of Heavenly Father or the Holy Ghost.

In addition to teaching the doctrine of Christ, Jesus taught through the Sermon on the Mount and other teachings how to live righteously in this world. He showed us how to pray to God, reached out to those burdened with sorrow, healed those afflicted with illness, gave hope to those striving to live, and revealed the truth that one can be reborn. Through His perfect example of love, He taught us many things and filled us with hope. This is what becomes “faith.”

Alma, addressing those who did not yet understand faith, used an analogy familiar to all Nephites of his time—the process of planting seeds. A seed sown in hardened soil will not sprout because it lacks air. Therefore, before planting, the soil must be tilled to soften it and allow air to enter. Seeing that the people’s hearts were humble and ready to receive, Alma compared their hearts to well-prepared soil. He invited them to plant the word of Christ, likened to a seed, and asked them to consider what they would think if the seed began to swell and sprout. Since they all had experience with planting, they understood the joy of seeing a seed they had sown begin to grow. Alma then encouraged them to imagine what kind of flowers and fruit this good seed would eventually produce, urging them to nourish it

diligently. When the time came for the fruit to be harvested, it would bring forth eternal life. He then explained faith with these words:

“And now as I said concerning faith—faith is not to have a perfect knowledge of things; therefore if ye have faith ye hope for things **which are not seen, which are true.**”

(Alma 32:21)

The next step for those who have gained faith is repentance and commitment. Commitment is necessary because, once a person has learned about the plan of salvation and the Atonement of Jesus Christ, they cannot simply return to their former way of life. The gospel is about progression and growth. When a person, through their own agency, decides to walk the path prepared by Jesus Christ, they come to expect a special gift from God. This gift is the greatest blessing one can receive in this life, and without it, they cannot move forward—it is the Gift of the Holy Ghost.

Since the Gift of the Holy Ghost grants the privilege of having the Holy Ghost as a constant companion, one must return to the state of purity they had as an infant, free from sin, in order to receive it. The Holy Ghost is the holiest of all beings, and His presence cannot dwell in impurity. Thus, to return to this state of cleanliness, one must first **repent** by reflecting on their past life and seeking forgiveness for the sins they have committed. Additionally, they must commit to maintaining this purity and strive to always be worthy to receive the teachings of the Holy Ghost. To outwardly express this commitment—to live as a disciple of Jesus Christ, take upon themselves His name, and continue to work as true Christians—they receive **baptism by immersion in water**.

Even when one decides to repent, they may not be able to recall every action they have taken until that moment. Most of the sins that one cannot remember are likely those committed unknowingly or without ill intent. It is for these very sins that Jesus Christ took upon Himself the burden. Therefore, one repents to the extent they can remember and makes a firm commitment to strive for righteousness moving forward. The inability to recall every sin does not disqualify one from receiving the Gift of the Holy Ghost. This is precisely why baptism has been prepared as the fruit of repentance. By receiving baptism, one is symbolically restored to the state of purity they had as an infant, making them worthy to receive the Gift of the Holy Ghost.

Being baptized does not instantly make us perfect. We will continue to make mistakes, again and again. When hardships arise, our spirits may weaken; when we fall ill, our physical strength may deteriorate, making us more susceptible to Satan's temptations. However, if we continually strive to repent and maintain our purity, the Gift of the Holy Ghost will always be at work, allowing us to receive direct teachings from Heavenly Father through the Holy Ghost.

Hearing this, some might misunderstand and think that no matter how many sins they commit, they will be forgiven as long as they repent each time. However, that is not the case. The Savior Himself said:

“And now, verily I say unto you, I, the Lord, will not lay any sin to your charge; go your ways and sin no more; but **unto that soul who sinneth shall the former sins return**, saith the Lord your God.”

(Doctrine and Covenants 82:7)



Figure 26 The ordinance of baptism

The gospel, as mentioned earlier, exists to promote growth and progress. Therefore, if someone continues to repeat the same sins, they risk squandering the precious opportunity that repentance offers. It is essential to correct one's habits promptly, be spiritually reborn, and strive to distance oneself from sin.

Some may say, *“I can't stop thinking about the sins I've committed. No matter how sincerely I repent, I still don't feel that I've been forgiven by God.”* These individuals sincerely desire to be forgiven.

However, the true purpose of repentance is to move forward. Repenting does not erase the memory of one's sins from one's mind. Nor does God immediately declare, “Your sins are forgiven,” at the very moment of repentance. God watches to see whether the person truly strives to leave their sins behind and move forward. The joy that comes from the fruits of repentance often arrives later. Those who feel, *“I do not feel forgiven,”* need to understand that repentance opens the way to a renewed heart. When we truly repent and turn away from sin, we can maintain purity and receive the guidance of the Holy Ghost. As we follow that guidance, we become so engaged in the work of the Lord that we no

longer have time to dwell on past sins. As our efforts bear fruit, we begin to glimpse a new world—one in which we are no longer bound by the past.

Baptism is an ordinance performed under the Aaronic Priesthood, allowing us to understand its meaning through a **symbolic act**. Immersion in water represents death and burial—it symbolizes burying our old self and rising as a new person, cleansed of past sins. This understanding is crucial. Since the Aaronic Priesthood is a preparatory priesthood, it serves as preparation for something greater—the gift of the Holy Ghost. The gift of the Holy Ghost is bestowed through the Melchizedek Priesthood. To fully understand this process, we must first grasp the difference between the Aaronic and Melchizedek Priesthoods.

The Aaronic Priesthood holds the power to perform outward ordinances. Because of this, its ordinances are often symbolic in nature, representing greater spiritual truths. Additionally, those who hold this priesthood work to support the temporal needs of Church members.

“Why it is called the lesser priesthood is because it is an appendage to the greater, or the Melchizedek Priesthood, and **has power in administering outward ordinances.**”

(Doctrine and Covenants 107:14)

In contrast, the Melchizedek Priesthood holds the keys to spiritual blessings related to salvation.

“The power and authority of the higher, or Melchizedek Priesthood, is to **hold the keys of all the spiritual blessings** of the church.”

(Doctrine and Covenants 107:18)

In other words, through the outward ordinance of baptism—symbolically declaring, “From now on, I will walk in God’s path” and being immersed in water—a person is cleansed as a fruit of repentance. Shortly thereafter, they can receive the greatest gift from God, the “Gift of the Holy Ghost,” a spiritual blessing related to salvation.

The reason this is the greatest gift from God is that, having forgotten everything upon coming into this world, the only way for us to return to His presence and see His face again is by learning the Plan of Salvation, understanding who we are, and discovering what we must do. And this can be taught only through the Holy Ghost. To receive guidance from our

Heavenly Father through the Holy Ghost, there is no other way but to pray and ask in the name of Jesus Christ. That is why Jesus declared that only through Him can we come to the Father.⁶³ When we pray in the name of Jesus Christ, we are granted the privilege of receiving constant guidance from our Heavenly Father through the Holy Ghost. This privilege—the “Gift of the Holy Ghost”—**is the greatest gift God has prepared for us, who have forgotten all things.**

What becomes especially important here is the order of the first principles and ordinances of the gospel: gaining knowledge, repenting, becoming clean, and receiving the Holy Ghost. In other words, those who do not seek to learn, who do not make an effort, and who do not maintain cleanliness cannot receive the Holy Ghost. The Holy Ghost is the holiest among holy beings and cannot influence that which is unclean. Therefore, as a fundamental principle, in order to receive guidance from the Holy Ghost, one must maintain a state of cleanliness. Notice the distinction between the words “clean” and “holy.” Before a person can enter into the holiness of God, they must first become clean both physically and spiritually. However, merely being clean is not enough to receive instruction from the Holy Ghost. Those who neither study the scriptures nor seek the words of the prophets cannot receive the will of the Father through the Holy Ghost.

Furthermore, those who, like the scribes described in the New Testament, learn without acting upon that knowledge cannot receive the personal witness of truth that the Holy Ghost grants through personal revelation.

The difference between baptism and the Gift of the Holy Ghost—between water and fire—can be expressed in another way: it is the difference between “cleanliness” and “holiness.” Cleansing by water washes away physical impurities, restoring something to its original state. In contrast, sanctification by fire melts and reshapes, meaning it creates something entirely new.

Knowledge and Wisdom That Cannot Be Contained in the Scriptures

When we understand that the gift of the Holy Ghost is the greatest gift from God, we can also understand why the scriptures exist. Many people around the world believe that all of God’s words are contained within the scriptures

⁶³ See John 14:6

they currently have. But is that really the case? Can the infinite wisdom and knowledge of God truly be contained within a collection of written records that spans only a few hundred pages? Nephi teaches us that such an idea is simply not possible.

“And because my words shall hiss forth—many of the Gentiles shall say: A Bible! A Bible! We have got a Bible, and there cannot be any more Bible. But thus saith the Lord God: O fools...Have ye obtained a Bible save it were by the Jews? Know ye not that there are more nations than one? Know ye not that I, the Lord your God, have created all men, and that I remember those who are upon the isles of the sea; and that I rule in the heavens above and in the earth beneath; and I bring forth my word unto the children of men, yea, even upon all the nations of the earth? Wherefore murmur ye, because that ye shall receive more of my word? ...And because that I have spoken one word ye need not suppose that I cannot speak another; for my work is not yet finished; neither shall it be until the end of man, neither from that time henceforth and forever. Wherefore, because that ye have a Bible **ye need not suppose that it contains all my words**; neither need ye suppose that I have not caused more to be written.”
(2 Nephi 29:3-10)

Of course, Nephi, having seen the coming forth of the Book of Mormon in vision, explains this concept. However, if the Lord’s words recorded here—“Ye need not suppose that my word is all contained therein”—are indeed true, then even with the Book of Mormon, there must still be much more we have yet to receive. Mormon, the compiler of the record, along with his son Moroni, further elaborates on this point.

“And whoso receiveth this record, and shall not condemn it because of the imperfections which are in it, **the same shall know of greater things than these**. Behold, I am Moroni; and **were it possible, I would make all things known unto you.**”
(Mormon 8:12)

Mormon is believed to have spent over ten years compiling this record on the golden plates. His son Moroni, after receiving the plates, spent another thirty-five years fleeing from his enemies while completing the record. For these two prophets, this record was undoubtedly one of the most precious things to which they had dedicated their lives. Yet Moroni states, “Were it possible, I would make all things known unto you”—which, in other words, means that not everything is written here. Furthermore, he declares that

those who receive this record and do not condemn it will come to know “greater things than these.” What could possibly be greater than the record they preserved at the cost of their lives? It is the word of God, the will of God. And the only way to truly come to know it is through learning by the Holy Ghost.

People often assume that everything is already written in the scriptures and repeatedly revisit the same passages. Indeed, rereading the scriptures many times is essential. However, there is a significant difference between reading with the mindset that “*everything is written here*” and reading with the belief that “*there must be more beyond this.*”

Paul addressed those who, despite repeatedly reading the scriptures, learn nothing beyond the basics—those who cannot move past the first principles and ordinances of the gospel, the doctrine of Christ. He said:

“Therefore leaving the principles of the doctrine of Christ, let us go on unto perfection; **not laying again** the foundation of repentance from dead works, and of faith toward God, Of the doctrine of baptisms, and of laying on of hands, and of resurrection of the dead, and of eternal judgment. And this will we do, if God permit.”
(Hebrews 6:1-3)

“But now we are delivered from the law, that being dead wherein we were held; that **we should serve in newness of spirit, and not in the oldness of the letter.**”
(Romans 7:6)

The holy scriptures are records written by prophets under the influence of the Holy Ghost, **the great Revelator**. Therefore, readers must not merely focus on the written words, but seek the revelation from the Holy Ghost that originally inspired them. Without it, they can never truly grasp the essence of the scriptures. Nephi, like Paul, explains this principle:

“And now, behold, my beloved brethren, I suppose that ye ponder somewhat in your hearts concerning that which ye should do after ye have entered in by the way. But, behold, why do ye ponder these things in your hearts? Do ye not remember that I said unto you that after ye had received the Holy Ghost ye could speak with the tongue of angels? And now, how could ye speak with the tongue of angels save it were by the Holy Ghost?

Angels speak by the power of the Holy Ghost; wherefore, they speak the words of Christ. 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 cannot 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 show unto you all things what ye should do. Behold, this is the doctrine of Christ.**”

(2 Nephi 32:1–6)

The doctrine of Christ is the only path for us, who have forgotten everything, to regain what was lost in this world. However, if we remain there indefinitely, we will not be able to receive the teachings of God that have been prepared for us, nor the personal revelations that are meant for us. To come to know all things, we must continue progressing.

The Living Water Given by Jesus

When Jesus was in Judea, there was a time when He passed through Samaria with His disciples. While His disciples went into town to buy food, Jesus rested by a well near the city. At that moment, a Samaritan woman came to draw water. This conversation is recorded in John 4. Considering that John wrote this account more than 70 years after his time with Jesus⁶⁴, he was likely not merely recording history, but intentionally selecting essential lessons that would benefit future generations. With that perspective, let us revisit the story of the Samaritan woman.

Samaria was originally the land of the northern kingdom of Israel, which was destroyed by Assyria more than 700 years before Jesus’ time. The surviving Israelites intermarried with foreign settlers, forming a mixed population that grew into the Samaritan people. To the Jews of Jesus’ time, the Samaritans were viewed as an impure and despised group, and even interacting with them was looked down upon. The Samaritans, in turn, were well aware of this contempt. In this context, while Jesus was resting by the well, a Samaritan woman came to draw water. When Jesus, a Jew, asked her, “Give me to drink,” she was astonished and responded:

⁶⁴ John is said to have written his Gospel after being released from exile on the Isle of Patmos and after recording the Revelation. See the separate resource, “A Study Guide for Reading the Book of Revelation.”

“How is it that thou, being a Jew, askest drink of me, which am a woman of Samaria?”
(John 4:9)

Since there was no interaction between Jews and Samaritans—and the latter were considered impure and to be avoided—it was only natural that the woman was surprised when a Jewish stranger spoke to her. However, Jesus continued and said:

“If thou knewest the gift of God, and who it is that saith to thee, Give me to drink; thou wouldest have asked of him, and he would have given thee living water.”
(John 4:10)

The Samaritans, too, were lost sheep of Israel. The words Jesus spoke to her, however, left her perplexed, as she did not understand their meaning.

“Sir, thou hast nothing to draw with, and the well is deep: from whence then hast thou that living water? Art thou greater than our father Jacob, which gave us the well, and drank thereof himself, and his children, and his cattle?”
(John 4:11-12)

At this moment, the Samaritan woman was about to be taught the very essence of Christ’s doctrine. Yet, the suddenness of the conversation likely left her uncertain about how to begin understanding the words of this mysterious man. Seeing her confusion, Jesus gently began to unravel the doctrine in a way she could grasp.

“Whosoever drinketh of this water shall thirst again: But whosoever drinketh of the water that I shall give him shall never thirst; **but the water that I shall give him shall be in him a well of water springing up into everlasting life.**”
(John 4:13-14)

Here, Jesus speaks of two kinds of water. One is the water that He gives, and the other is the water that, when received, becomes a wellspring within us, springing up into everlasting life. Both represent the living water—the water that leads to eternal life.

In just a few exchanges, Jesus taught the essence of His doctrine. Those who believe in Jesus Christ, understand His teachings, and seek even greater knowledge through the guidance of the Holy Ghost will, through the gift of the Holy Ghost within them, receive an abundance of wisdom and knowledge from Him.

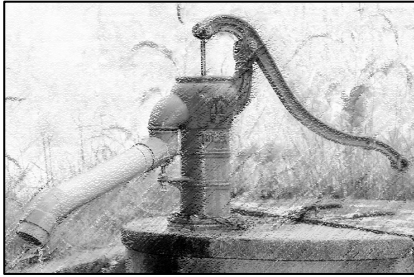


Figure 27 Manual water pump

In the past, hand-operated pumps were a common sight near wells throughout Japan (and in many other countries as well). These metal pumps had large lever-like handles, and by repeatedly pushing and pulling the handle, people could draw up cold water from the well. However, when trying to pump water for the first time, no matter how much one moved the handle, there was no resistance—

only air escaping, and no water would come up. This pump functioned using a vacuum mechanism, so before it could properly draw water, a small amount of water had to be poured into it from the top to create the necessary vacuum. Once this was done, the pump would generate suction, allowing an astonishing amount of water to flow from the well. This initial water, used to prime the pump and draw up the well water, was called *yobimizu* (literally, “calling water” or “priming water”).

Jesus taught the Samaritan woman that what He was offering was like a kind of “priming water.” He explained that if she accepted this initial teaching, the Holy Ghost would then cause an overflowing fountain of wisdom and understanding to well up from within her. Hearing this, she began to wonder if this man might indeed be the prophesied Savior. She then went into town and gathered many people, bringing them to listen to Jesus. After hearing His words over the course of two days, many came to believe in Him and said to the woman:

“Now we believe, not because of thy saying: for we have heard him ourselves, and know that this is indeed the Christ, the Saviour of the world.”

(John 4:42)

To those who seek earnestly, the Holy Ghost will always bring a strong confirmation within their hearts. Nephi explained that through the method God has prepared—inquiring of the Holy Ghost—those who diligently seek will surely discover the “**mysteries of God.**”

“And it came to pass after I, Nephi, having heard all the words of my father, concerning the things which he saw in a vision, and also the things which he spake by the power of the **Holy Ghost**, which power he received by faith on the Son of God—and the Son of God was the Messiah who should come—I, Nephi, was desirous also that I might see, and hear, and know of these things, by the power of the **Holy Ghost**, which is the gift of God unto all those who diligently seek him, as well in times of old as in the time that he should manifest himself unto the children of men. For he is the same yesterday, today, and forever; and the way is prepared for all men from the foundation of the world, if it so be that they repent and come unto him. **For he that diligently seeketh shall find; and the mysteries of God shall be unfolded unto them**, by the power of the Holy Ghost, as well in these times as in times of old, and as well in times of old as in times to come; wherefore, the course of the Lord is one eternal round.”
(1 Nephi 10:17-19)

When we understand the doctrine of Christ and come to recognize that there is still more to learn beyond it, we can spend our entire lives learning directly from Heavenly Father through the Holy Ghost in a deeply personal way.

The Book of Isaiah and the Revelation of John

Just as Paul taught that even those who are just beginning their spiritual journey can hear the whisperings of the Holy Ghost through the “fruits of the Spirit,” we too can hear the promptings of the Holy Ghost in our daily lives if we earnestly seek them. However, if we desire to know even greater things—if we wish to understand the mission given to us in this life and how we can take part in God’s plan—**we must make an effort to study and learn.**

Just as Joseph Smith continued to receive spiritual training through the Urim and Thummim and the seer stones until he eventually fulfilled his mission as a seer, we too can reach our own mission through similar effort. Just as Joseph Smith was given training tools such as the Urim and Thummim and the seer stones, we have also been given tools to train

ourselves in learning greater things from the Holy Ghost. Among the tools we have been given are **the Book of Isaiah** and **the Revelation of John**.

The Book of Isaiah is found in the Old Testament, and the Revelation of John is in the New Testament, making them accessible to people all over the world. However, these two books share a common characteristic: they are difficult to understand. Why is that?

We know from other writings of John that he was capable of writing in a straightforward manner when he chose to do so. It is likely the same for Isaiah. Yet, both of them intentionally wrote certain matters in a special and obscure way. There is a reason for this. Among the many things they saw in vision, two major themes appear repeatedly. One is that a group of people, called Saints, will work to establish Zion in the last days. The other is that there will be adversaries who alter or remove parts of the scriptures to prevent God's true message from reaching these Saints.

The messages of Isaiah and John needed to be included in the Bible—rather than in the Book of Mormon—so that people throughout the world could recognize that God's plan has been present among all of humanity from the very beginning. However, to ensure that these messages would not be erased or altered, they were written in a form like a code, so that they would reach the Saints of the latter days when the time was right.

“And now, behold, I say unto you, that ye ought to search these things. Yea, a commandment I give unto you that ye search these things diligently; for great are the words of Isaiah. For surely he spake as touching all things concerning my people which are of the house of Israel; **therefore it must needs be that he must speak also to the Gentiles.**”
(3 Nephi 23:1-2)

This is the word of Jesus. When He commanded us not only to read the words of Isaiah but to “search” them, He established it as a commandment. Jesus said that Isaiah had to speak to the Gentiles, especially those in the last days who would come to know the true gospel—that is, us. In another passage, He also explained about the Revelation of John:

“For the Lord said unto me: They shall not go forth unto the Gentiles until the day that they shall repent of their iniquity, and become clean before the Lord. And in that day that they shall exercise faith in me, saith the Lord, even as the brother of Jared did, that they may become sanctified in me,

then will I manifest unto them the things which the brother of Jared saw, even to the unfolding unto them all my revelations, saith Jesus Christ, the Son of God, the Father of the heavens and of the earth, and all things that in them are...And then shall **my revelations which I have caused to be written by my servant John** be unfolded in the eyes of all the people. Remember, when ye see these things, ye shall know that the time is at hand that they shall be made manifest in very deed.”
(Ether 4:6-7, 16)

These two books cannot be truly understood unless one grasps a specific method of interpretation. They were written in coded language to prevent their destruction by the hands of enemies. Isaiah and John, the authors, knew that the Saints in the last days would possess the key to decipher these coded messages, and thus they deliberately wrote in this manner. That key consists of the scriptures given exclusively to this era, the restored truths of the Bible, the words of living prophets, and what Nephi refers to in the following passage:

“Wherefore, hearken, O my people, which are of the house of Israel, and give ear unto my words; for because the words of Isaiah are not plain unto you, **nevertheless they are plain unto all those that are filled with the spirit of prophecy.**”
(2 Nephi 25:4)

The spirit of prophecy is generally considered to be a gift of the Spirit given to prophets. However, for a prophet to use this gift of the Spirit, the manifestation of the Holy Ghost must, of course, be present. Prophets record revelations, but revelations are given through the Holy Ghost, who is the revealer. Just as a record etched by a needle must be played back with a stylus, and magnetic recordings must be read with a magnetic head, so too must writings inspired by the Holy Ghost be interpreted with the help of the Holy Ghost, utilizing the gift of the Spirit that may dwell within us, known as the spirit of prophecy. The reason Isaiah and the Book of Revelation, unlike other scriptures, require such a high degree of the Holy Ghost’s assistance is not only because understanding them is challenging, but also because reading and mastering them serves as training to receive the guidance of the Holy Ghost.

For example, some people go to the gym to build muscle. Among them, there may be those who aspire to lift a 100-kilogram barbell. However, no matter how frequently one visits the gym, if they only practice lifting 5-

kilogram or 10-kilogram barbells each time, when will they ever be able to lift 100-kilogram? That goal will never become a reality. If one truly wants to lift a 100-kilogram barbell, they must gradually increase the weight, ultimately training with the full 100-kilogram. Without doing so, they will never develop the strength required to lift it.

The Book of Isaiah is like a 100-kilogram barbell. The spiritual strength it develops is the ability to understand both the scriptures and personal revelation through the power of the Holy Ghost. Joseph Smith recorded the moment he gained that ability as follows:

“Our minds being now enlightened, **we began to have the scriptures laid open to our understandings**, and the true meaning and intention of their more mysterious passages revealed unto us in a manner which **we never could attain to previously, nor ever before had thought of.**”
(Joseph Smith—History 1:74)

Once you can lift a 100-kilogram barbell, how light will a 5-kilogram or 10-kilogram barbell feel? Ordinary scriptures are very easy to understand—they are like 5-kilogram or 10-kilogram barbells. Once you become capable of understanding the Book of Isaiah, returning to other scriptures will feel like reading them with a light shining in your heart, making the meaning of the scriptures remarkably clear.

Furthermore, once you gain the ability to understand the Book of Isaiah, you will naturally be able to comprehend the Book of Revelation as well. Compared to Isaiah, the Book of Revelation is about a 30-kilogram barbell. The reason for this is that Isaiah wrote about all things in the world, whereas John focused solely on “things that must shortly come to pass”⁶⁵ and recorded only the visions he saw concerning the last days.

Isaiah and John, of course, wrote their records not only for the Latter-day Saints but for all humanity. The ultimate purpose of their writings is to proclaim to the whole world that in the last days, Christ will come again and establish Zion. They revealed who will be involved, for what purpose, and how the final days and Zion will come to pass. However, for the Latter-day Saints, who will labor in the final stages, they repeatedly wrote about “how Zion will be built.” Therefore, as Latter-day Saints, if we believe that “these scriptures were written specifically for us” and study them

⁶⁵ See Revelation 4:1

prayerfully, we will continually be trained by the Holy Ghost. Through this process, our understanding will gradually deepen.

Moroni fully understood that in order for people to receive the teachings of the Holy Ghost, they must undergo training. He himself had reached understanding in this way. Knowing this, he made a crucial suggestion to the Latter-day Saints, who would come in the future to restore the gospel alongside Joseph Smith and build Zion.

“Search the prophecies of Isaiah.”
(Mormon 8:23)

It is a very brief statement, but it carries profound significance that Moroni is the one who speaks these words. He had already obtained and read the record of the brother of Jared. In other words, he offers this counsel to us with full knowledge of the sealed portion of the golden plates, which is to be read to all the world in the last days. It is as if a teacher who already knows the answers to an upcoming test were offering the students **a crucial hint on how best to prepare**. For the Latter-day Saints to withstand the trials of the last days and fulfill their role in building Zion, it is essential that we heed this counsel. Otherwise, we will not be able to overcome Satan or arrive at the will of God.

Precept upon Precept

Isaiah recorded in his writings the way in which God teaches truth to mankind. This is expressed in the following verse:

“But the word of the Lord was unto them **precept upon precept, precept upon precept; line upon line, line upon line; here a little, and there a little.**”⁶⁶
(Isaiah 28:13)

This verse expresses the stages by which a person learns from God, presented in reverse order. People are born into the Light of Christ and therefore naturally develop an innate sense of good and evil in this world. This is the first stage of how God teaches His children—“**here a little, and there a little.**”

⁶⁶ If the context around this verse is difficult to understand, see 2 Nephi 28:30.

Eventually, individuals are led to the teachings of Christ, where they begin to learn His law. Even if they do not fully grasp its meaning at first—just as Adam did in the beginning⁶⁷—they strive to obey God’s word, His teachings, and commandments. This marks the second stage of God’s teaching method—“**line upon line, line upon line.**” It is about obedience to what is taught, and in a sense, it can be seen as an Aaronic Priesthood-level stage of understanding.

However, people must not remain at this stage indefinitely. Through diligent learning and obedience, they must reach the point where they begin to think and seek understanding for themselves. This aligns with Paul’s statement: “Therefore, leaving the principles of the doctrine of Christ, let us go on unto perfection.”⁶⁸ If one simply continues repeating the same things without understanding their deeper meaning—attending church each week as if by routine, praying at set times each day as a mere habit—then they are merely circling the same ground. Instead, when a person begins to ponder the deeper meaning behind laws and commandments—asking, “What lies beyond this?”—and seeks answers directly from God, they enter the third stage of divine learning: “**precept upon precept.**”

“Precept upon precept” is the stage one can only reach by continually seeking, searching, and praying—a stage where one can be taught directly by the Holy Ghost. When Nephi heard his father Lehi recount the vision of the tree and learned that his father had understood it through the power of the Holy Ghost, he began to wonder if he too might be given the opportunity to understand in the same way. When he asked to be taught by the Holy Ghost, the Spirit cried out with a loud voice, declaring:

“And when I had spoken these words, the Spirit⁶⁹ cried with a loud voice, saying: Hosanna to the Lord, the most high God; for he is God over all the earth, yea, even above all. And blessed art thou, Nephi, because thou believest in the Son of the most high God; wherefore, **thou shalt behold the things which thou hast desired.**”
(1 Nephi 11:6)

⁶⁷ See Moses 5:6

⁶⁸ Hebrews 6:1–3

⁶⁹ It is not entirely clear whether the “Spirit” mentioned here refers specifically to the Holy Ghost, but based on the surrounding context, it is highly likely. Even if it does not, it is reasonable to assume that the same could be said of the Holy Ghost if He were present in that situation.

And as Nephi had been promised, he received the interpretation of his father's dream. But not only that—he was shown all the events that would come upon his descendants, and in the end, he beheld the group of Gentiles who would bring salvation to his people: the latter-day Saints. Because of this, he repeatedly wrote to the latter-day Saints, testifying that they too could experience what he had experienced.

Nephi recorded that when he inquired, the Holy Ghost rejoiced. And the same is true for us. That is why the Holy Ghost is here—to teach us and guide us when we seek with real intent. When we reach that point, the Holy Ghost will abundantly grant us knowledge of truth and may even declare with rejoicing:

“Blessed art thou, [your name], because thou believest in the Son of the Most High God; wherefore, thou shalt behold the things which thou hast desired.”

Chapter 10: Being Reborn as a Saint

The teachings from the Holy Ghost are teachings of truth. When we come to know them, we begin to gradually regain our true memory and transform into Latter-day Saints. However, do not forget this: to Satan, the ruler of this world, the Latter-day Saints are among his greatest enemies. Naturally, Satan and his followers, the evil spirits, will try to hinder this transformation. Therefore, it is crucial that we thoroughly understand Satan's methods of attack and ensure that we do not fall into his traps.

The Meaning Embedded in Doctrine and Covenants Chapter 1 and Isaiah Chapter 1

The Doctrine and Covenants is a book that instructs the members of the restored Church on how to strengthen the Church, spread the gospel throughout the world, gather Israel, and build Zion. If Isaiah is the book that serves as essential training for receiving instruction from the Holy Ghost in order to understand these matters more deeply, then these two books share a significant characteristic: the first chapters of both books were not placed in chronological order but were arranged with a specific purpose in mind.

No one knows for certain why the current first chapter of Isaiah was placed in its current position. However, since the opening section lists the names of four kings under whom Isaiah served, with Hezekiah being the fourth, it suggests that this chapter was written later in his life. Of course, it is possible that Isaiah was called as a prophet during Hezekiah's reign and that this chapter records his first vision. However, since chapter 6 provides a more detailed account of his prophetic calling through a vision, it is more likely that chapter 1 was given to him at a later time.

Similarly, Doctrine and Covenants Chapter 1 was recorded as being given on November 1, 1831, meaning that it was received approximately a year and a half after the establishment of the Church. While the reason why Isaiah Chapter 1 was placed at the beginning remains unknown, the reason why Doctrine and Covenants Chapter 1 holds its current position is very clear. At the time, revelations given to Joseph Smith were increasing, and Church leaders were preparing to compile them into a single book titled "the Book of Commandments" for publication. It was during this process that God directly commanded that this revelation serve as the "preface"⁷⁰ to the book.

⁷⁰ See Doctrine and Covenants 1:6

Perhaps a similar rationale applies to Isaiah Chapter 1 as well. This is because both chapters are strikingly similar in content, as they both speak about the sins of the covenant people.

A newly baptized individual, having humbled their heart and repented, may find themselves shocked when reading these scriptures due to the severity of the words. The repeated admonitions to “repent” may seem overwhelming. However, there is a clear reason for this. When one strives to understand the message sincerely, using the gift of the Holy Ghost to receive and internalize divine instruction, the greatest obstacle to this process is pride—an inflated sense of self, or spiritual arrogance.

If the gifts of the Spirit are given uniquely to each individual, doesn’t it follow, then, that the effort required for spiritual growth must also differ from person to person? Despite this, many members of the Church mistakenly believe that as long as they are doing about the same as those around them, they will ultimately be saved. Why, then, does this misconception persist?

The answer lies in the subtle trap of pride. Thoughts such as, *“As long as I am doing this much, I’ll be fine,”* or *“Others are only doing about this much, so I won’t be condemned”* create a sense of complacency. While it may be true that one will not be condemned for doing only the bare minimum, it also means forfeiting the opportunity to learn and grow beyond that point.

Because the gifts of the Spirit vary from person to person, each individual must seek and strive in their own way, in accordance with their unique strengths and divine potential. This requires humility—first, to recognize when we are slipping into pride, and second, to make the necessary course corrections. Only by acknowledging this tendency can we break free from the stagnation it causes and continue on the path of eternal progress.

I Have Seen Your Pride

Consider once again the meaning of the words spoken by Moroni. These words were not addressed to those outside the Church, but specifically to its members:

“And I know that ye do walk in the pride of your hearts; and there are none save a few only who do not lift themselves up in the pride of their hearts, unto the wearing of very fine apparel, unto envying, and strifes, and malice, and persecutions, and all manner of iniquities; and your churches, yea, even every one, have become polluted because of the pride of your hearts.”

(Mormon 8:36)

When we are baptized, we are filled with pure joy and make a sincere resolution to strive forward. But as time passes and we continue as members of the Church, do we not, amid the challenges of daily life, begin to adopt the attitudes and lifestyles of those around us as our own *“acceptable standard?”* Have we not unconsciously set for ourselves a self-made standard, thinking, *“If I do this much, I’m a good member,”* even though no such notion is found in the scriptures? Do we not, perhaps, look down upon new members, the youth, or those in less prominent positions of leadership? Do we ever find ourselves judging others solely by their outward appearance, based on our own perspectives? Have we assumed we are being taught by the Holy Ghost when we have not even undertaken the spiritual training found in the study of Isaiah or the Book of Revelation?

All of these are signs of the path of pride. Without realizing it, we may find ourselves standing on a false foundation—one that Satan has subtly raised beneath us, making others appear lower by comparison. If we remain in such a state, how can we ever truly be “born again,” as the Savior has commanded?

This is precisely why both Isaiah and the first section of the Doctrine and Covenants teach us to purify ourselves, receive instruction from the Holy Ghost, and prepare to be born anew—to become vessels of the Lord. We must pay close attention to the words that Moroni wrote immediately after urging us to study the book of Isaiah:

“Behold, look ye unto the revelations of God.”

(Mormon 8:33)

When we rely on our own wisdom, the Holy Ghost withdraws from us. Instead, we must depend on the wisdom of God until our very last moment in this life. By doing so, we will come to understand His profound purposes and deep mercy. Knowledge is something we acquire through our own efforts, but wisdom is a gift from God. When we receive the wisdom of

God, we gain the ability to use the knowledge we have accumulated through our efforts in the most effective way.

Casting Off the Natural Man and Becoming a Saint

To be born again means to part ways with our old selves. It signifies being reborn repeatedly. Just as iron is melted in intense fire and reforged repeatedly to become stronger, we, under the guidance of Christ, feel the influence of the Holy Ghost, come to understand the will of the Father, and experience the baptism of fire and of the Holy Ghost, renewing ourselves again and again. Read Paul's words:

“Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new.”
(2 Corinthians 5:17)

As we strive to regain the memory of the promises we may have made before we were born, we cannot continue living the same way as before. To become a saint, we must cast off the natural man.

“For the natural man is an enemy to God, and has been from the fall of Adam, and will be, forever and ever, unless he yields to the enticings of the Holy Ghost, and **putteth off the natural man and becometh a saint** through the atonement of Christ the Lord, and becometh as a child, submissive, meek, humble, patient, full of love, willing to submit to all things which the Lord seeth fit to inflict upon him, even as a child doth submit to his father.”
(Mosiah 3:19)

Before The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints was organized, Joseph Smith was called, and the priesthood was restored. From this order of events, we understand that saints were called first, and then the Church was organized. The Church is the stage that God has prepared for saints to use their individual gifts of the Spirit to serve. Therefore, being a Church member does not automatically make one a saint. However, all Church members must go through the necessary process to truly become saints. What is this necessary process? it is the refinement that God provides. Earlier, we mentioned how iron is forged in the flames to be transformed, and the same is true for people. Paul describes this process as follows:

“Ye have not yet resisted unto blood, striving against sin. And ye have forgotten the exhortation which speaketh unto you as unto children, **My son, despise not thou the chastening of the Lord, nor faint when thou art rebuked of him: For whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth, and scourgeth every son whom he receiveth.** If ye endure chastening, God dealeth with you as with sons; for what son is he whom the father chasteneth not? But if ye be without chastisement, whereof all are partakers, then are ye bastards, and not sons. Furthermore we have had fathers of our flesh which corrected us, and we gave them reverence: shall we not much rather be in subjection unto the Father of spirits, and live? For they verily for a few days chastened us after their own pleasure; but he for our profit, that we might be partakers of his holiness. Now no chastening for the present seemeth to be joyous, but grievous: nevertheless afterward it yieldeth the peaceable fruit of righteousness unto them which are exercised thereby.”

(Hebrews 12:4-11)

Two Types of Trials

Every person who comes into this world will inevitably face trials and be refined. In those moments of hardship, one might think, “*Why is this happening to me alone?*” However, the truth is that trials come to all. This world is a school for learning, and most lessons are taught through trials. In the premortal life, each individual progressed at different levels⁷¹, and so in this world, the methods of testing and learning vary from person to person.

“And we will prove them herewith, to see **if they will do all things whatsoever the Lord their God shall command them;**”

(Abraham 3:25)

Trials, in other words, can be seen as a form of **training**. Like all training, they have an end. The true test lies in how we endure them during that time. Many in the world, when faced with hardships, lament their circumstances, thinking, “*I was born into misfortune,*” or “*I lack talent,*” and thus, they give up on overcoming their trials. However, God does not judge us by our birth circumstances, appearance, talents, or wealth. Instead, He looks at how earnestly we strive to improve despite our circumstances. It is by our efforts and choices that He judges us.

⁷¹ See Abraham 3:22

“But the Lord said unto Samuel, Look not on his countenance, or on the height of his stature; because I have refused him: for the Lord seeth not as man seeth; for man looketh on the outward appearance, but **the Lord looketh on the heart.**”

(1 Samuel 16:7)

Trials serve as training, and no matter how long they may last, we are always given the ability to overcome them. Paul and Nephi both understood this principle throughout their lives and left us with these words of encouragement:

“There hath no temptation taken you but such as is common to man: but God is faithful, who **will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able**; but will with the temptation also **make a way to escape**, that ye may be able to bear it.”

(1 Corinthians 10:13)

“And it came to pass that I, Nephi, said unto my father: I will go and do the things which the Lord hath commanded, for I know that the Lord giveth no commandments unto the children of men, save **he shall prepare a way** for them that they may accomplish the thing which he commandeth them.”

(1 Nephi 3:7)

We may wish to avoid severe trials in this life—and to some extent, that is possible. Earlier, it was stated that no one is exempt from trials. If that is the case, then why did Jesus include the following words in His prayer?

“Lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil.”

(Matthew 6:13)

It is important to understand that there are generally two types of trials. One is the “training given by God,” which we have discussed so far. The other is “the consequences of our sins.” When we are born into this world, we are given both a physical body and agency. We are also born into the Light of Christ, and through our agency, we are tested on whether we will choose to follow where that Light leads. The choice is ours, but regardless of what we choose, we will inevitably face the consequences of that choice.

Those who choose good will receive good outcomes. Naturally, those who choose evil will experience negative consequences. These negative consequences are not part of the trials that God originally prepared for our

growth and training. Rather, they are the natural result of sin, requiring individuals to face the consequences and make amends.

The trials that God has already prepared for us are sufficient. This is why Jesus taught us not to bring additional trials upon ourselves through sin. The Lord explains this principle further in the Doctrine and Covenants:

“Behold, verily, verily, I say unto you, that at this time your sins are forgiven you, therefore ye receive these things; but **remember to sin no more, lest perils shall come upon you.**”

(Doctrine and Covenants 29:3)

I say it again—enduring only the trials that God has prepared for our training is already sufficient. There is absolutely no need to invite additional trials upon ourselves through our own sins.

Trials and Temptations

Does the fact that God gives us trials mean that the temptations we face come from Him? No, that is not the case. God is a righteous and holy being, and He does not tempt people. The Apostle James explains this clearly in the New Testament:

“Let no man say when he is tempted, I am tempted of God: for God cannot be tempted with evil, **neither tempteth he any man.**”

(James 1:13)

Then, how should we understand the relationship between temptation and trials, which seem to always accompany each other? We can explain it in the following way: First, we must recognize that God has granted us countless blessings in this life, truly beyond measure. The trials God gives us can be seen as temporary pauses in His blessings, designed for our growth according to His divine plan. Because we are surrounded by God’s blessings from birth, even a temporary pause can fill us with fear and uncertainty. We naturally begin to worry about the future, wondering, *“What will happen next?”* It is in those very moments that Satan’s temptations arise. God does not tempt people—rather, Satan seeks to deceive and lead them astray.

“And it must needs be that the devil should tempt the children of men, or they could not be agents unto themselves; for if they never should have bitter they could not know the sweet. ”

(Doctrine and Covenants 29:39)

In this world, as part of our training, God sometimes withholds His blessings, allowing Satan to tempt us—to see whether we will endure in faith. Remember the conversation between God and Satan when Job faced his trials:

“Then Satan answered the Lord, and said, Doth Job fear God for nought?...thou hast blessed the work of his hands, and his substance is increased in the land. But put forth thine hand now, and touch all that he hath, and he will curse thee to thy face. And the Lord said unto Satan, Behold, all that he hath is in thy power; only upon himself put not forth thine hand...And the Lord said unto Satan, Behold, he is in thine hand; but save his life.”

(Job 1:9–12; 2:6)

James describes the sobering process by which a person falls into temptation as follows:

“But every man is tempted, when he is drawn away of his own lust, and enticed. Then when lust hath conceived, it bringeth forth sin: and sin, when it is finished, bringeth forth death. Do not err, my beloved brethren.”

(James 1:14–16)

From the moment we are born, we are surrounded by countless blessings from God—so abundant that we often take them for granted and fail to recognize them. However, when even a single blessing is suddenly withheld, we often find ourselves overcome with anxiety. At that very moment, Satan comes to tempt and shake our hearts. This withholding of God’s blessing is merely temporary, given as a means of training, and it will surely return. Yet, if one’s heart is not strong, they may succumb to temptation. So how can we overcome such temptations?

If God were to clearly state, “I will temporarily withhold My blessings, but at the appointed time, they will be restored,” and if He were to specify exactly when that restoration would occur, we would likely be able to withstand Satan’s temptations. However, because such a declaration is not given, we lack assurance and fall into anxiety. In truth, we have faced

similar situations many times before and have seen that God’s blessings are always restored in due time. Yet, when faced with a new trial, we convince ourselves that this time is different. This means that, to endure, we need something to take the place of direct assurance from God—something that fills our hearts with the light of His promise. The only one who can convey that assurance to us is none other than the Holy Ghost.

When trials come and Satan’s temptations arise, we may become confused and find our hearts drawn toward human words, media, advertisements, ideologies, religions, or societal norms. However, when we receive personal revelation directly from God through the Holy Ghost—the true Revelator—our hearts are filled with peace. As Paul and Nephi taught, we can gain the firm assurance that “a way will surely be prepared.” This is training. Those who are not swayed by human words or philosophies but instead wait upon the guidance of the Holy Ghost will overcome temptation and endure the refining process of God.

“... that ye may not be seduced by evil spirits, or doctrines of devils, or the commandments of men; for some are of men, and others of devils.

Wherefore, beware lest ye are deceived; and that ye may not be deceived seek ye earnestly the best gifts, always remembering for what they are given;”

(D&C 46:7–8)

“For they that are wise and have received the truth, **and have taken the Holy Ghost for their guide**, and have not been deceived—verily I say unto you, they shall not be hewn down and cast into the fire, but shall abide the day.”

(D&C 45:57)

The Meaning of Being Baptized at Age Eight

In this Church, children are not baptized at birth but are instructed to receive baptism at the age of eight.

“And their children shall be baptized for the remission of their sins when **eight years old**, and receive the laying on of the hands.”

(D&C 68:27)

Why did God designate the age of eight for baptism? It could be said that eight is when children begin to discern between good and evil. However,

some children may not have fully reached that stage yet. God has declared that little children, who do not yet distinguish between good and evil, cannot be tempted by Satan and are therefore without sin.

“But behold, I say unto you, that little children are redeemed from the foundation of the world through mine Only Begotten; Wherefore, they cannot sin, **for power is not given unto Satan to tempt little children**, until they begin to become accountable before me;”
(D&C 29:46-47)

If a child’s development is slower and they are not yet able to fully distinguish between good and evil at age eight, one might wonder whether baptism is still necessary. However, this question stems from a misunderstanding of the true purpose of setting the age for baptism. The reason for baptism at eight is not primarily focused on whether the child is fully capable of repentance. Rather, it is deeply connected to **the doctrine of Christ**.

Recall what was previously explained—the doctrine of Christ is not solely focused on repentance. Rather, repentance is necessary to prepare oneself to receive something of great importance. Through faith, repentance, and baptism—administered by the authority of the Aaronic Priesthood—one prepares to receive the greatest gift God has given us in this life: the gift of the Holy Ghost. The primary reason why children receive baptism at the age of eight lies in this very point.

As children pass the age of eight, they soon enter adolescence, a period marked by sudden physical and mental changes. One of the most significant transformations is the rapid expansion of the brain. By around age ten, the brain reaches nearly 90% of its adult size, and this development is largely completed just before puberty. However, while the brain’s physical structure—its hardware—develops swiftly, the software of wisdom and knowledge remains insufficient, leading to emotional and psychological instability.

This phase, occurring roughly between the ages of thirteen and twenty, is a period of uncertainty. Adolescents begin to perceive themselves as adults, yet they struggle with how to process and interpret the world around them. This developmental gap makes them highly vulnerable, and it is during this time that Satan’s influence becomes particularly aggressive. In fact,

statistical trends indicate that a significant number of young members leave the Church during adolescence, more than at any other stage of life.

How, then, can they protect themselves from Satan's attacks? The answer lies in the guidance of the Holy Ghost.

Children receive baptism at the age of eight so that they may receive the gift of the Holy Ghost and begin practicing how to use it, preparing themselves for the inevitable attacks of Satan that will soon come upon them. For this reason, parents in the stakes of Zion are instructed to teach their children the doctrine of Christ by the time they reach the age of eight. They are to guide them in maintaining a constant connection with God through prayer, so that even amid future trials, they will be able to discern God's will through the Holy Ghost.

"And again, inasmuch as parents have children in Zion, or in any of her stakes which are organized, that teach them not to understand **the doctrine of repentance, faith in Christ the Son of the living God, and of baptism and the gift of the Holy Ghost by the laying on of the hands**, when eight years old, the sin be upon the heads of the parents...And **they shall also teach their children to pray, and to walk uprightly before the Lord.**"

(Doctrine and Covenants 68:25, 28)

Taking Responsibility for Our Choices

When people face trials, there is often an event that triggers them. It could be an accident, illness, divorce, financial troubles, a global recession, war, issues with neighbors, or societal problems—truly, the causes are countless. In many cases, people think, "*If only that hadn't happened, everything would have turned out differently.*" When suffering weighs on the heart, the natural instinct is to find something or someone to blame, saying, "*This suffering is entirely because of ____.*" Some even go so far as to blame God.

However, such blame does nothing to resolve the situation. Instead, it leaves the heart burdened with darkness, preventing true healing. No matter how much one resents the cause of their suffering, resentment alone does not clear the obstacles in the heart.

There are moments when the trials we face cut so deeply that they seem impossible to overcome, leaving us engulfed in sorrow. However, if trials are given by God as a means of growth and refinement, then instead of

lamenting, “*Why is this happening to me?*” true growth begins when we start asking, “*How can I rise again?*”

When struck down by severe trials, when one loses everything—literally everything—what should our response be? Consider the first words that came from Job’s lips when he was devastated and had lost all that he possessed:

“Then Job arose, and rent his mantle, and shaved his head, and fell down upon the ground, and worshipped, And said, **Naked came I out of my mother’s womb, and naked shall I return thither: the Lord gave, and the Lord hath taken away;** blessed be the name of the Lord. In all this Job sinned not, **nor charged God foolishly.**”
(Job 1:20-22)

A person cannot stand without exerting effort—without directing energy into the body—because of gravity. Without action, nothing begins. Similarly, when a person attempts to rise from trials, a great amount of spiritual energy is required. If we do not continually send energy to our spirit, we will be unable to stand in the face of adversity. For Satan, nothing is more troublesome than a person using their energy to rise again. To prevent this, he seeks to divert that energy elsewhere. The most effective way he does this is by leading people to harbor resentment—toward others, toward their circumstances, and ultimately, toward God. By placing blame on God or others, people fall into the illusion that their burden has lightened, but in reality, they are merely wasting their energy on resentment. As long as they remain in that state, they will never truly *rise*. It is only when a person stands and begins to walk forward that they can finally look back and see where they once were. That moment marks the beginning of true growth.

All of human life is determined by the *choices* made within the framework of divine training. Naturally, everyone desires to make the best possible choices. However, many people fall into the misconception that “*God will tell me what to choose. That is why the Holy Ghost exists.*” Indeed, if we ask, God may provide guidance, and the Holy Ghost can teach all things. But would that truly qualify as training? Imagine taking a test at school and simply asking someone, “*Is the answer A or B?*” If someone provides the answer, does that test hold any true value? Consider the experience of the brother of Jared when he sought the Lord’s guidance on how to bring light into the barges. Initially, he assumed that simply asking would result in

receiving direct instructions. However, God's response was something he had never expected:

"And the Lord said unto the brother of Jared: **What will ye that I should do** that ye may have light in your vessels? "

(Ether 2:23)

For the brother of Jared, who had believed that God would answer if he simply asked, the Lord's response came as a shock. He was made aware that what he lacked was the effort to think for himself. As he began to reflect on what he truly wanted God to do for him, he eventually arrived at an idea: if he could receive a portion of light and energy from God, the very source of both, then surely that divine light could illuminate the darkness inside the barges. However, this idea had no precedent. No one had ever attempted such a thing before. There was no guarantee of success, and so it became a test of faith. The brother of Jared then expanded on his idea. He realized he would need a vessel to contain the divine light. So he climbed a mountain and melted out sixteen small, transparent stones from a single rock.

Though this is described in just a single verse of scripture, it took place more than 4,000 years ago. To melt quartz—one of the few naturally transparent stones—requires heat exceeding 1,700 degrees Celsius. Even today, that level of heat is difficult to produce. How did he manage to create it back then? Such a feat could not have been accomplished overnight. He likely failed many times, each time turning to the Lord and seeking wisdom, until at last he succeeded. It may well have been a project that took weeks—or even months or years—to complete.

Nevertheless, God sees our efforts. He observes what we *think* and *how* we act in the midst of trials. He does not simply provide all the answers because **some knowledge can only be obtained through experience**. The Lord Himself has declared:

"For behold, it is not meet that I should command in all things; for he that is compelled in all things, the same is a slothful and not a wise servant; wherefore he receiveth no reward. Verily I say, men should be anxiously engaged in a good cause, and do many things of their own free will, and bring to pass much righteousness; **For the power is in them, wherein they are agents unto themselves**. And inasmuch as men do good they shall in nowise lose their reward."

(Doctrine and Covenants 58:26–28)

The key to making choices without regret in life is **to take responsibility for one's decisions**. Of course, failures may still arise from those choices. However, when we think for ourselves, seek guidance through prayer, and take action, even in failure, there will always be learning and growth. To take responsibility for one's choices means never blaming God or others for the outcome—regardless of what happens. When we do so, even failures will eventually become stepping stones to success and can even enable us to help others along the way.

When we learn to own our choices, there will no longer be wasted decisions in our lives.

Chapter 11: When Heaven Works Together

If Joseph Smith was the only one in this world to have directly seen Heavenly Father, and if that event carries such special significance, it is unlikely that we will have the opportunity to meet Heavenly Father directly in this life. However, this does not mean that we have no connection with heaven at all. Understanding this principle can lead to immense blessings and divine assistance for Latter-day Saints. Moroni left us the following words, as taught by his father, Mormon.

“And now, my beloved brethren, if this be the case that these things are true which I have spoken unto you, and God will show unto you, with power and great glory at the last day, that they are true, and if they are true has the day of miracles ceased? **Or have angels ceased to appear unto the children of men? Or has he withheld the power of the Holy Ghost from them? Or will he, so long as time shall last, or the earth shall stand, or there shall be one man upon the face thereof to be saved? Behold I say unto you, Nay;** for it is by faith that miracles are wrought; and it is by faith that angels appear and minister unto men; wherefore, if these things have ceased to be unto the children of men, for it is because of unbelief, and all is vain.” (Moroni 7:35–37)

44 Evil Spirits

Consider this: if Satan is allowed to wield influence in this world, then it is only natural that a counterbalancing power from heaven must also be provided. Without such divine aid, no one would be able to receive heavenly assistance, and all people would inevitably be drawn toward destruction by Satan’s influence. So, what kind of assistance has God provided, especially for the Saints laboring in the latter days?

Here, I would like to introduce a certain calculation. This calculation estimates how many evil spirits (Satan’s followers) persistently follow and attempt to tempt a single individual. Of course, no one can know the exact number, but this is a hypothetical estimate based on simple proportional reasoning.

We learn from the scriptures that in the grand council of heaven, one-third of the spirits sided with Satan, were cast down to the earth without obtaining physical bodies, and became evil spirits.⁷² Now, let us estimate

⁷² See Doctrine and Covenants 29:36; Revelation 12:4

the number of these spirits in a way that is easy to calculate. Suppose the total population of spirits in heaven was 3,000. The number 3,000 is just an example to help illustrate the ratio. No matter what number we use—300, 3 billion, or 30 trillion—the result stays the same proportionally. If one-third of the 3,000 spirits followed Satan, then 1,000 became evil spirits. The other 2,000 were sent to Earth to receive bodies and experience mortality.

However, these 1,000 evil spirits were cast down all at once at the beginning of the world, while the 2,000 righteous spirits were sent down gradually across different generations. If we consider the seven seals that John saw in Revelation as representing the 7,000 years of human history⁷³, we can assume that the 2,000 spirits are evenly distributed throughout these 7,000 years.

Now, let us assume that the average human lifespan is 80 years. If we divide 7,000 years into 80-year generations, we get approximately 87.5 groups. This means that the 2,000 spirits are divided into roughly 87.5 groups—that is, 87.5 generations—and each group consists of about 23 people.

Meanwhile, the 1,000 evil spirits remain constant throughout all ages and actively oppose every generation. If we compare these numbers, we get a ratio of 23 to 1,000—or approximately 1 to 44. This means that for each individual, there are around 44 evil spirits constantly working to tempt and deceive them.



Figure 28 Method for calculating the ratio of evil spirits

⁷³ See Doctrine and Covenants 77:7

What kind of attacks do evil spirits employ? The Bible often mentions cases of demonic possession, but those are exceptional cases. Normally, the primary objective of evil spirits, in alignment with Satan’s plan, is to prevent people from progressing in God’s training. In other words, their greatest goal is to keep people from receiving the guidance of the Holy Ghost. To counter these attacks, God declared to Ezekiel:

“A new heart also will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you: and **I will take away the stony heart out of your flesh, and I will give you an heart of flesh.**”
(Ezekiel 36:26)

Our hearts have been prepared to recognize and feel the influence of the Holy Ghost. When the Holy Ghost touches our hearts, we can learn and grow in astonishing ways. Therefore, Satan’s followers seek to fill our hearts with the cares of the world—concerns about money, relationships, work, family, the future, illness, or injury—overloading them with worries and anxieties, leaving no room for the influence of the Holy Ghost. The result of being completely filled with Satan’s and evil spirits’ influence is what the Lord described to Ezekiel as a “heart of stone.” A heart that is hardened, cold, and rigid cannot receive the Holy Ghost, and thus, it cannot grow. In other words, it cannot be “born again.”

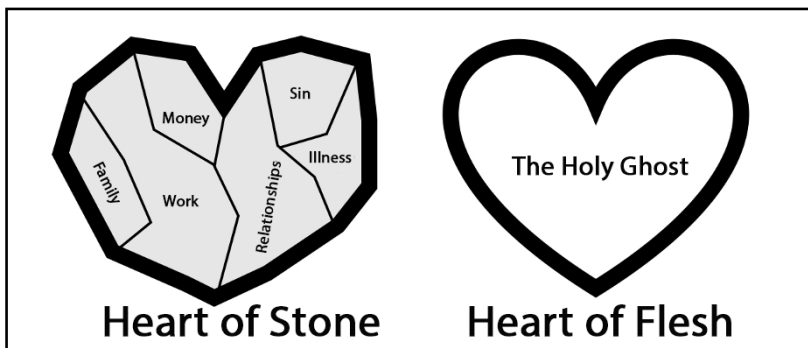


Figure 29 Stony heart and heart of flesh

Since forty-four evil spirits are constantly working against each of us, there is no way we can resist them on our own. That is why God has provided a

way for us to be saved from such a state and to receive a “heart of flesh”—a soft heart capable of receiving the Holy Ghost.

A clue to this is found in the Old Testament account of the prophet Elisha when he was surrounded by a great enemy army. Seeing the overwhelming forces, Elisha’s servant became afraid and asked, “Alas, my master! What shall we do?” The response of Elisha is recorded as follows:

“And he answered, Fear not: **for they that be with us are more than they that be with them.** And Elisha prayed, and said, Lord, I pray thee, open his eyes, that he may see. And the Lord opened the eyes of the young man; and he saw: and, behold, the mountain was full of horses and chariots of fire round about Elisha.”
(2 Kings 6:16-17)

What was the heavenly host that Elisha’s servant saw at that moment? The Doctrine and Covenants contains a passage that confirms this and gives us great courage:

“And whoso receiveth you, there I will be also, for I will go before your face. I will be on your right hand and on your left, and my Spirit shall be in your hearts, and **mine angels** round about you, to bear you up.”
(Doctrine and Covenants 84:88)

It is especially significant that the word “angels” in this verse is in the **plural form**. When we combine this with Elisha’s explanation, it means that “those who are with us in heaven, working for our cause, are greater in number than the 44 evil spirits.” But that is not all. This verse from Doctrine and Covenants also states that, in addition to those angels, our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ, is with us, and within our hearts—cleansed from worldly concerns and transformed into hearts of flesh—dwells the Spirit, the Holy Ghost.

This is the reason that, no matter how many enemies there are, we cannot be defeated. Indeed, the total number of evil spirits must be as numerous as the stars, since they constitute a full third of the hosts of heaven. Yet, despite their vast numbers, the Church that was restored in 1830 continues to grow even to this day. This undeniable fact stands as living proof that the heavenly host far outnumbers the adversary, and that the Holy Ghost, who strengthens us from within, is still with us at this very moment, guiding and protecting us.

The Hidden Power of Prayer

In order to receive such heavenly power and assistance, we must be born again, receive a new heart—a humble and tender heart of flesh—and be guided by the Holy Ghost. When missionaries teach someone who is hearing the gospel for the first time, they often explain it like this: “Prayer is a sacred opportunity to speak directly with our Heavenly Father. We pray in the name of Jesus Christ, and in return, Heavenly Father responds to us through the Holy Ghost.” It is a simple yet eternal truth, established before the foundation of the world—the divine means by which we, as His children, can speak with our Heavenly Father. Nephi also taught this principle:

“But behold, I say unto you that ye must pray always, and not faint; that **ye must not perform any thing unto the Lord save in the first place ye shall pray unto the Father in the name of Christ**, that he will consecrate thy performance unto thee, that thy performance may be for the welfare of thy soul.”

(2 Nephi 32:9)

For us, Jesus Christ is the only way to reach our Heavenly Father. Therefore, when we pray, it is natural that we do so in the name of Jesus Christ. When we do this, Heavenly Father answers us through the Holy Ghost. This principle is very simple, and every member of this Church knows it. But what effect does prayer actually have? At first, you might wonder why anyone would even ask such a question—but in truth, God’s plan is far more exalted, intricate, and effective than we tend to realize. Even in the simple act of prayer, God has embedded blessings beyond human comprehension. Isaiah describes the difference between God’s thoughts and human understanding as follows:

“For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, saith the Lord. For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways, and my thoughts than your thoughts.”

(Isaiah 55:8-9)

This moment—the very act of praying—is **when we can be closest to the Holy Ghost in our lives**. In the scriptures, this phenomenon is referred to as the “manifestation of the Holy Ghost” or the “manifestation of the Spirit.” Now, let us recall what we have discussed so far. Summarizing how the Holy Ghost influences us, we find the following truths:

- The Holy Ghost conveys to us the plan of salvation and the will of our Heavenly Father.
- Through His influence, the Holy Ghost continually draws us closer to God.
- The Holy Ghost teaches us according to our individual level of understanding.
- Those who rely on their own thoughts or human wisdom instead of the teachings of the Holy Ghost will be deceived.
- When a person receives the manifestation of the Holy Ghost, they are given (or refined in) the gifts of the Spirit.
- Through the Holy Ghost—the giver of revelation—we can receive personalized guidance from God.
- With the help of the Holy Ghost, we can remember everything necessary to fulfill the mission given to us in the premortal life.
- The Holy Ghost fills the emptiness within us with an abundance of divine truth.
- Through the Holy Ghost, we can feel love, joy, peace, patience, and other virtues in our daily lives.
- As we experience the baptism of fire and the Holy Ghost repeatedly throughout our lives, we can be reborn as new individuals.
- The words of the prophets, recorded by the power of the Holy Ghost, can only be read and understood through the same power of the Holy Ghost.
- The Holy Ghost rejoices when we seek truth.

The fact that such profound (and likely even greater) influence and blessings come through the manifestation of the Holy Ghost means that the act of “praying” is not merely about “talking with God.” Rather, it is the key to the next stage of our spiritual growth, given to us by God.

Now, let us consider: How many times a day do we pray? There are no specific commandments or scriptural regulations regarding the number of prayers we should offer each day. However, in the Book of Alma, Amulek gives the following counsel:

“Therefore may God grant unto you, my brethren, that ye may begin to exercise your faith unto repentance, that ye begin to call upon his holy name, that he would have mercy upon you; Yea, cry unto him for mercy; for he is mighty to save. Yea, humble yourselves, and **continue in prayer unto him**. Cry unto him when ye are in your fields, yea, over all your

flocks. Cry unto him in your houses, yea, over all your household, **both morning, mid-day, and evening**. Yea, cry unto him against the power of your enemies. Yea, cry unto him against the devil, who is an enemy to all righteousness. Cry unto him over the crops of your fields, that ye may prosper in them. Cry over the flocks of your fields, that they may increase. But this is not all; ye must pour out your souls in your closets, and your secret places, and in your wilderness. Yea, and **when you do not cry unto the Lord**, let your hearts be full, **drawn out in prayer unto him continually** for your welfare, and also for the welfare of those who are around you.”

(Alma 34:17–27)

There is a saying, “People turn to God in times of trouble.” When people face hardships and trials, they tend to rely on God **more than usual**. This is likely true even for ordinary Latter-day Saints. However, in the scripture we just read, Amulek teaches that we should pray continually—morning, noon, and night. If prayer brings down more than just the ability to express our desires to God—if it actually carries divine power and effects—then could it not be said that God allows trials to come upon us so that we will pray more frequently and rely on Him, thereby accelerating our growth more effectively?

In other words, it is a simple mathematical principle: If we increase our daily prayers even by one, the likelihood of experiencing the manifestation of the Holy Ghost also increases. If we increase our prayers even more, that probability rises even further.

If the key to becoming a true Latter-day Saint lies in **how many times we can experience “the manifestation of the Holy Ghost” in our lives**, then wouldn’t we take prayer—the moment with the highest potential for receiving that manifestation—more seriously, more frequently, and strive to pray continually, at all times?

Is the Lord’s Hand Shortened?

In the words of Isaiah, the Lord declares, “Is my hand shortened at all, that it cannot redeem?⁷⁴” There are times when we might hesitate to pray, wondering, “*Is it irreverent to ask God the same thing repeatedly?*” or “*If I pray multiple times a day, my words will become repetitive.*” But such

⁷⁴ See 2 Nephi 7:2

concerns stem from human reasoning. God does not view them the same way. If He did, why would Amulek teach us to “pray continually”? Even if our words repeat, or our petitions seem frequent, we must not withhold our prayers. Instead, we must trust in our Heavenly Father with all our hearts and continue to pray with sincerity and devotion.

Are you familiar with the account of the prophet Elisha and King Joash of Israel? As Elisha lay on his deathbed, the king came to visit him. Elisha instructed the king to take a bow and arrows and shoot through the window. As the king released each arrow, Elisha proclaimed, “The arrow of the Lord’s deliverance, and the arrow of deliverance from Syria: for thou shalt smite the Syrians in Aphek, till thou have consumed them.” Elisha urged the king to continue, but after shooting only three times, the king stopped. Upon seeing this, Elisha became angry and rebuked him, saying:

“And the man of God was wroth with him, and said, **Thou shouldest have smitten five or six times**; then hadst thou smitten Syria till thou hadst consumed it: whereas now thou shalt smite Syria but thrice.”
(2 Kings 13:19)

We should not rely on human reasoning but should pray to God again and again. When we cry out to Him with all our hearts, we open ourselves to the possibility of experiencing “the manifestation of the Holy Ghost.” In those moments, unseen miracles can unfold, and our hearts can be wondrously transformed.

Trials Are the Path to Prayer

If a person’s life had no obstacles, no trials, and they lived without any difficulties, there might be no one who prays to God. This is because they would feel no need to pray. If that were the case, the manifestation of the Holy Ghost would also cease. Without it, people would cease to grow in this life, spending their days in spiritual stagnation—returning to God unchanged, or perhaps unable to return at all because of their lack of development. Thus, trials are given to all people so that everyone may have the opportunity to grow through prayer. This was true even for Jesus Christ. Although He had received the most important calling as the Savior in the pre-existence, He too came to this world having forgotten all things, facing various trials and temptations. Through them, He received manifestations of the Holy Ghost and was guided to understand His divine mission.

Let us read Paul's words once again:

“For in that he himself hath suffered being tempted, he is able to succour them that are tempted.”

(Hebrews 2:18)

Through His own experience, the Lord has taught us that we, too, can come to know what we are meant to do. Let us read the following scripture once again:

“I give unto you these sayings that **you may understand and know how to worship, and know what you worship**, that you may come unto the Father in my name, and in due time receive of his fulness. For if you keep my commandments you shall receive of his fulness, and **be glorified in me** as I am in the Father; therefore, I say unto you, **you shall receive grace for grace.**”

(D&C 93:19-20)

If we pray only when faced with trials, our prayers become mere acts of “seeking God in times of trouble” and fail to lead us toward true spiritual growth. While trials are given for us to learn necessary experiences for personal growth, they are also meant to teach us how to pray. It is through trials that we come to understand the power of prayer and gain a personal testimony of its true meaning.

Elder George Q. Cannon explained the reason why Abraham was tested with the command to offer his son Isaac as a sacrifice in the following way:

“The purpose was to impress upon Abraham a lesson and to enable him to attain unto knowledge that he could not obtain in any other way. That is why God tries all of us.”

(George Q. Cannon, *Gospel Truth*, 1:113)

Trials are seldom joyous experiences. Those who are in the midst of trials may feel exhausted, drained, and unable to muster the strength to rise again. However, it is important to remember the following scripture:

“Many are the afflictions of the righteous: but the Lord delivereth him out of them all.”

(Psalm 34:19)

There may be times when you wonder, “*Why do I face so many trials?*” However, if we read the scripture in reverse, we can interpret it to mean that having many trials signifies that God recognizes us as righteous. Understanding this may give us the courage to endure the training that trials bring. When that period of refinement ends, rather than simply celebrating with “*It’s finally over,*” we should reflect on how earnestly we turned to God in prayer during that time. How deeply did we lay bare our hearts and cry out to God? When we recall these moments, our trials become learning experiences. If we can apply the same sincerity in prayer, even in times of peace, we will receive grace for grace as promised. Through Jesus Christ, we will receive the fullness of glory and be able to remember and fulfill the purposes we were meant to accomplish.

Trials Indicate There Is Still More to Learn

Just as one trial ends and brings a moment of relief, another will inevitably follow. This cycle will likely continue until we leave this mortal life.

However, as Elder Cannon stated, if trials serve as opportunities for God to teach us knowledge that can only be obtained in this way, then the continuation of trials means that **there is still more for us to learn.**

Some may think, “*It is impossible to learn everything about God while living in this world.*” But that is not the point. We are not meant to learn everything about God in this life; rather, **we are meant to learn everything we need to know during our time on earth.** Because of this, each person learns different things at different levels. The order in which we learn may also vary. However, what we come to understand in this life is of great importance when we enter the next world. Let us read from the Doctrine and Covenants:

“And if a person gains more knowledge and intelligence in this life through his diligence and obedience than another, **he will have so much the advantage in the world to come.**”

(D&C 130:19)

If we simply read this scripture, it may seem to suggest that those who study a lot will have an advantage in the next life. But is that really the case? In elementary school, middle school, high school, and higher education, we learn many things. It is clear that acquiring such knowledge provides various advantages in this world.

However, this scripture states that such knowledge will be advantageous “in the world to come.” It is said that in the next life, all things will be revealed⁷⁵, and nothing will be withheld from our understanding. If that is the case, one might think that there is no need to learn everything in this life, as we will come to know it eventually.

So then, what is the “knowledge” that we are meant to gain in this life? If we read carefully, it does not simply mention “knowledge” but rather “knowledge and intelligence.” In the Book of Abraham, it is written that we were originally intelligences. In reality, we do not fully understand what this intelligence is. Furthermore, it is unclear whether the intelligence mentioned here is the same as that referred to in the earlier scripture from the Doctrine and Covenants. However, the Book of Abraham teaches that **intelligence is something that can increase and develop**. If that is the case, then the knowledge and intelligence mentioned here must be essential for our spiritual growth. For example, based on what has been discussed so far, we can consider the following:

We came into this world to fulfill the duty that was given to us in heaven or that we ourselves promised to undertake. However, due to the veil of forgetfulness, we have lost all memory of it. Yet, our Heavenly Father has prepared a way for us to regain that knowledge. That way is through the Holy Ghost and the manifestation of the Holy Ghost. As our perfect example, Jesus Christ went through trials, received grace upon grace, and through that process, He came to understand His mission and carried it out completely. He fulfilled His role without lacking anything, perfectly accomplishing His purpose, and because of that, He was given victory and was allowed to become our King⁷⁶. Jesus Christ also taught that we, too, can come to understand our divine purpose through the same process. For that reason, we must learn from our trials, experience the manifestations of the Holy Ghost, and even in times without trials, diligently seek and pray so that we may receive as many manifestations of the Holy Ghost as possible. When we continue to repeat this process until the end, fulfilling the necessary growth and purpose of this life, what will be waiting for us in the next world? That, perhaps, is the true meaning of having an “**advantage**” or being “**favored**” in the world to come.

⁷⁵ See Doctrine and Covenants 130:9

⁷⁶ See Revelation 5:5

Relying on the Lord's Power

We are weak and cannot endure alone. Especially in a world where each of us is opposed by forty-four adversaries, we cannot prevail alone. That is why we seek and rely on the help of our Heavenly Father. And we rely on that power through Jesus Christ, who governs the universe in which we dwell. He is the victor. Because He has already overcome the world, He is able to lead and save us. When we engrave upon our hearts the final teachings of Jesus recorded by John, we as Latter-day Saints can find the courage to stand firm.

“These things I have spoken unto you, that in me ye might have peace. In the world ye shall have tribulation: but **be of good cheer; I have overcome the world.**”

(John 16:33)

And Christ, who is the victor, now stands as the head of our Church, guiding us to triumph in the final battle, saying:

“Behold, ye are little children and ye cannot bear all things now; **ye must grow in grace and in the knowledge of the truth.** Fear not, little children, for you are mine, and I have overcome the world, and you are of them that my Father hath given me... Wherefore, I am in your midst, and I am the good shepherd, and the stone of Israel. **He that buildeth upon this rock shall never fall.**”

(Doctrine and Covenants 50:40-41, 44)

Growth Graph

To work and grow with heaven means not standing still in the same place or remaining the same person. It means continually moving forward toward sacred places. It is a lifelong journey of learning, progressing beyond the basic principles of the plan of salvation. When we work with heaven, we will surely come to understand its wonders. We will also come to recognize our own growth. For example, if we were to represent this growth in a graph, it might look something like this.

At first, knowing nothing and struggling to survive, we face our first trial. This trial stands like a towering wall before us, and the effort needed to overcome it feels far beyond our strength—almost impossible. However, through 100% effort and sincere prayer, heaven works with us, and a miraculous wonder occurs. The Lord's victorious right hand lifts us beyond

what we could achieve on our own, compensating for what we lack. And so, we are able to overcome this trial.

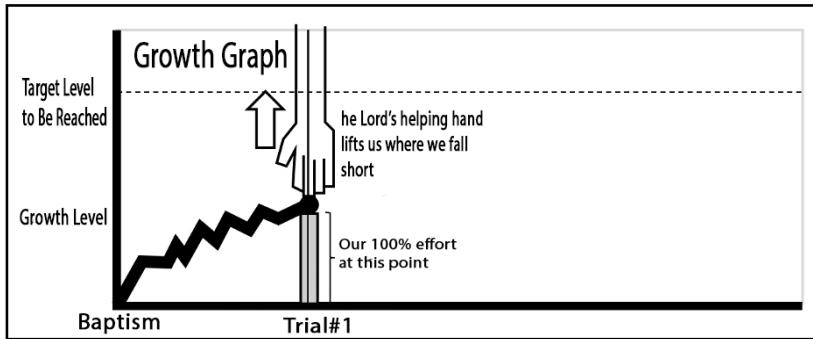


Figure 30 Growth graph 1

Then, after several years, a similar trial arises once again. If we recall our past experience and think, *"Back then, I put in that much effort, so if I do the same this time, I will be saved,"* we would be mistaken. We have grown. What was once our 100% effort may now only be about 50% in comparison to our current level of growth. This means that for a miracle to occur as we work together with heaven, we are now falling short by the remaining 50%. This is the growth graph. What we learn from this graph is that only when we put forth 100% effort according to our current level of growth can we witness the miracles that come from working together with heaven.

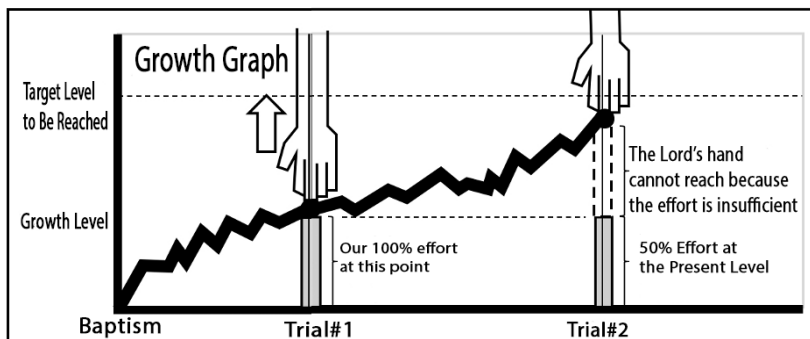


Figure 31 Growth graph 2

The first person in this dispensation to recognize that Heaven works in partnership with the Latter-day Saints was Joseph Smith himself. Toward the end of his life, he recorded the following testimony in a letter:

“Now, what do we hear in the gospel which we have received? A voice of gladness! A voice of mercy from heaven; and a voice of truth out of the earth; glad tidings for the dead; a voice of gladness for the living and the dead; glad tidings of great joy. How beautiful upon the mountains are the feet of those that bring glad tidings of good things, and that say unto Zion: Behold, thy God reigneth! As the dews of Carmel, so shall the knowledge of God descend upon them! And again, what do we hear? Glad tidings from Cumorah! **Moroni, an angel from heaven**, declaring the fulfilment of the prophets—the book to be revealed. **A voice of the Lord** in the wilderness of Fayette, Seneca county, declaring the three witnesses to bear record of the book! **The voice of Michael** on the banks of the Susquehanna, detecting the devil when he appeared as an angel of light! **The voice of Peter, James, and John** in the wilderness between Harmony, Susquehanna county, and Colesville, Broome county, on the Susquehanna river, declaring themselves as possessing the keys of the kingdom, and of the dispensation of the fulness of times! And again, **the voice of God** in the chamber of old Father Whitmer, in Fayette, Seneca county, and at sundry times, and in divers places through all the travels and tribulations of this Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints! And **the voice of Michael, the archangel; the voice of Gabriel, and of Raphael, and of divers angels, from Michael or Adam down to the present time**, all declaring their dispensation, their rights, their keys, their honors, their majesty and glory, and the power of their priesthood; giving line upon line, precept upon precept; here a little,

and there a little; giving us consolation by holding forth that which is to come, confirming our hope! **Brethren, shall we not go on in so great a cause? Go forward and not backward. Courage, brethren; and on, on to the victory! Let your hearts rejoice, and be exceedingly glad.**”
(Doctrine and Covenants 128:19-22)

We, the Latter-day Saints, are now moving forward in this great cause together with Heaven, pressing onward toward the great victory that is to come. As we begin to hear the approaching footsteps of both Heaven and the Saints, our courage will grow ever stronger.

Chapter 12: Understanding the Mysteries

In the scriptures, the word “mysteries” refers not to unsolved puzzles or detective stories, but to divine truths that cannot be known through human reasoning alone. These are sacred truths that can only be revealed through the Spirit. In this chapter, we will explore what these mysteries are and why they matter to our spiritual growth.

Nephi left us a clue when he said, “If you diligently seek, you will surely find.” This suggests that mysteries are “things that can be known through divine counsel.” What we must learn in this life can all be taught by the Holy Ghost. The ultimate lesson is the way back to our heavenly home. However, returning alone is not enough—it must be accompanied by fulfillment. To achieve this, we must understand our purpose for coming to this earth, fulfill the work we were meant to do, and prepare ourselves to enter the Celestial Kingdom.

Those Who Dwell in Zion

Who will be able to enter the Celestial Kingdom and dwell in Zion with Christ? Isaiah explains it in this way:

“The sinners in Zion are afraid; fearfulness hath surprised the hypocrites. Who among us shall dwell with the devouring fire? who among us shall dwell with everlasting burnings? He that walketh righteously, and speaketh uprightly; he that despiseth the gain of oppressions, that shaketh his hands from holding of bribes, that stoppeth his ears from hearing of blood, and shutteth his eyes from seeing evil; He shall dwell on high: his place of defence shall be the munitions of rocks: bread shall be given him; his waters shall be sure.”

(Isaiah 33:14-16)

This passage may depict the moment when the wicked, standing at a distance, witness Zion gradually being established in the days leading up to Christ’s return. Just before they are consumed, they cry out in astonishment at those who are with Christ. To stand in the presence of Christ, who will come in a resurrected body clothed in divine glory, requires one’s body to be changed so as not to be instantly consumed by His immense energy. The wicked, unable to undergo this transformation, cannot help but exclaim, *“How is it possible that there are people who can endure this!?”*

Isaiah is affirming, “Yes—there are those who can endure this!” Christ Himself also explained that when He returns, there will be those who dwell in Zion with Him.

“And **I will be your ruler when I come**; and behold, I come quickly, and ye shall see that my law is kept. **He that receiveth my law and doeth it, the same is my disciple**; and he that saith he receiveth it and doeth it not, the same is not my disciple, and shall be cast out from among you;” (Doctrine and Covenants 41:4-5)

Those who can be with Christ are His disciples. Before writing the sacred record in 3 Nephi about Jesus Christ’s visit to the Americas, Mormon took a moment to introduce himself anew. To help readers best understand who he was, he chose the most fitting description: “a disciple of Christ.”

“And behold, I am called Mormon, being called after the land of Mormon, the land in which Alma did establish the church among the people, yea, the first church which was established among them after their transgression. **Behold, I am a disciple of Jesus Christ, the Son of God.**” (3 Nephi 5:12-13)

He believed that if someone was striving to become a disciple of Christ, then by declaring himself as “a disciple of Christ,” he could convey his sincerity and honesty, allowing others to recognize the truthfulness of his writings—especially concerning Christ’s visit to the Americas. The term “disciple of Christ” likely carried deep and sacred meaning for those walking the same path. Paul also expressed in his letters how deeply he desired to be a disciple of Christ and the great efforts he made to achieve it.

“**Are they ministers of Christ? (I speak as a fool) I am more**; in labours more abundant, in stripes above measure, in prisons more frequent, in deaths oft. Of the Jews five times received I forty stripes save one. Thrice was I beaten with rods, once was I stoned, thrice I suffered shipwreck, a night and a day I have been in the deep; In journeyings often, in perils of waters, in perils of robbers, in perils by mine own countrymen, in perils by the heathen, in perils in the city, in perils in the wilderness, in perils in the sea, in perils among false brethren; In weariness and painfulness, in watchings often, in hunger and thirst, in fastings often, in cold and nakedness. Beside those things that are without, that which cometh upon me daily, the care of all the churches. **Who is weak, and I am not weak?**”

who is offended, and I burn not? If I must needs glory, I will glory of the things which concern mine infirmities.”
(2 Corinthians 11:23-30)

Paul left us a profound insight into what it truly means to be a disciple of Christ: “Who is weak, and I am not weak? Who is offended, and I burn not?” Here, Paul is not boasting about himself, but expressing his deep empathy for others. This compassion—this willingness to suffer with and for others—is perhaps the most fundamental quality of true discipleship.

Jesus taught that all the law and the prophets—the very foundation of the gospel—hang upon our ability to love and care for others.⁷⁷ To love and serve others is not just a noble trait; it is the absolute requirement for entering the glory of the celestial kingdom.

Paul further taught that no matter how well one knows the scriptures or how eloquently one speaks, it is all meaningless without love—a love that places others before oneself.⁷⁸ Even if someone becomes a scholar through diligent study, if they cannot lift and serve those in need, they will not be prepared to enter the celestial kingdom.

The Miracles We Do Not Yet Know

When Jesus was still in Judea, the Sadducees, who did not believe in the resurrection, tried to test Him by asking a question about it. In response, Jesus said:

“Jesus answered and said unto them, **Ye do err, not knowing the scriptures, nor the power of God.**”
(Matthew 22:29)

We too often misunderstand the gospel in this life, thinking we understand it based on incomplete knowledge— and without realizing it, we may end up forming our own version of the plan of salvation. We may look at ourselves or those around us and say things like, “*That person will probably be exalted,*” or “*I doubt that person will make it.*” Or we may think, “*Because I’m [this or that], no matter how hard I try, I’ll never make it to exaltation.*” Or on the other hand, “*I think I’ll probably be fine.*” But if we

⁷⁷ See Matthew 22:37–40

⁷⁸ See 1 Corinthians 13:1–3

were to say such things standing before Jesus, He might respond, **“Ye do err, not knowing the scriptures, nor the power of God.”**

The scriptures are a wonderful gateway to the gospel that God has given us. However, since they are meant to be read by people all over the world, they can only present the gospel in a way that is universally applicable. Each person in this world lives in a different environment, grows under different circumstances, and faces unique conditions. If the scriptures were to address every individual's situation in detail, even all the books in the world would not be enough. This means that beyond what is written in the scriptures, there exists God's will that has not been recorded, as well as a vast and magnificent plan that we have yet to comprehend.

For example, if a church member has been absent from church for a long time, does that mean they cannot enter the celestial glory? When we reflect on ourselves, can we truly say that we think of God every moment of the day without ever forgetting Him? Most likely not. From God's perspective, is the difference between forgetting Him for an hour and being away from church for ten years really so great? Even if someone has been temporarily distant from the church, they can still return as a disciple of Christ. Moreover, the gathering of Israel naturally includes those who are not currently attending church.

If we were to interpret the scriptures to mean that circumstances such as being unmarried, having a nonmember spouse, or having family members outside the Church prevent exaltation, how sorrowful would that be? Even if the scriptures do not provide every specific detail, we must continue to hold onto hope and strive forward. President Dallin H. Oaks spoke in the General Conference as follows:

“Trust in the Lord is a familiar and true teaching in The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. That was Joseph Smith's teaching when the early Saints experienced severe persecutions and seemingly insurmountable obstacles. That is still the best principle we can use when our efforts to learn or our attempts to find comfort encounter obstacles in matters not yet revealed or not adopted as the official doctrine of the Church. That same principle applies to unanswered questions about sealings in the next life or desired readjustments because of events or transgressions in mortality. There is so much we do not know that our only sure reliance is to trust in the Lord and His love for His children.”
(October 2019 General Conference, Dallin H. Oaks, "Trust in the Lord")

During the construction of the Kirtland Temple, Joseph Smith received a vision in which he saw those who would enter the Celestial Kingdom. To his astonishment, among them was his older brother Alvin, who had passed away at a young age. Alvin had neither been baptized nor sealed in the temple during his lifetime, yet he was found worthy to enter the Celestial Kingdom. Even Joseph Smith did not understand everything. Likewise, we often make mistaken assumptions because we do not fully comprehend the scriptures or grasp the power of God. Unless we learn through the Holy Ghost, we cannot correct these misunderstandings, place our full trust in the Lord, and move forward with peace in our hearts.

Miracles

As we move forward in faith, trusting in God and Jesus Christ, we encounter miracles beyond our imagination. The Savior has taught that when we strive to become His disciples, we will witness miracles.

“For I am God, and mine arm is not shortened; and I will show miracles, signs, and wonders, unto all those who believe on my name.”
(Doctrine and Covenants 35:8)

However, as previously mentioned, becoming a true disciple of Christ requires undergoing various trials and training. After we endure these trials, the blessings the Lord has prepared will come to us.

“For after much tribulation come the blessings. Wherefore the day cometh that ye shall be crowned with much glory; the hour is not yet, but is nigh at hand.”
(Doctrine and Covenants 58:4)

Because of these words, we can endure the trials we face. However, during these times of training, the challenges can be overwhelming, and tears may flow countless times. In those moments, we must lift our eyes to heaven and reaffirm that our Heavenly Father is there, seeking joy in our hearts. This is because feelings of anxiety, worry, distress, and sorrow create an opening for Satan’s temptations. Satan approaches when a shadow of darkness appears in our hearts. If such emotions persist, we become more susceptible to his influence.

So, when these emotions are overwhelming, when we do not know where to begin or what to do, what should we do? We do not need to attempt

something grand. It is enough to start by finding a small joy. For example, reading the scriptures and searching for the Lord's joyous promises can be uplifting. Listening to uplifting music that brings comfort to the heart may also be beneficial. One of the best ways, however, is to look around, find someone in need, and start serving them. When we are focused on others, we distance ourselves from our own sorrows. In our daily lives, we should try to find at least one thing each day that brings us joy.

Paul spoke about “the fruit of the Spirit⁷⁹” and taught how our emotions change when the Holy Ghost is near. Among those fruits, he included “joy.” He encouraged us to rejoice, reminding us that joy provides safety.

“Finally, my brethren, **rejoice in the Lord**. To write the same things to you, to me indeed is not grievous, but **for you it is safe...Rejoice in the Lord always: and again I say, Rejoice.**” (Philippians 3:1, 4:4)

Of course, there may be times when, in the midst of our struggles and suffering, the Lord's help manifests, and we witness miracles. And when we strive to find joy even in our hardships, our efforts may become a miracle to someone else. In those moments, we take yet another step closer to becoming true disciples of Christ.

The Holy Ghost of Promise

When we follow the guidance of the Holy Ghost, do what is right, receive the proper ordinances, and walk in the path of Christ, it is the role of the Holy Ghost **to confirm** that we have truly become His disciples. You may be familiar with the title “the Holy Spirit of Promise,” which refers to the Holy Ghost. No matter what we do in this life, the sacred covenants we make with God, and all priesthood ordinances—if they are not approved by the Holy Ghost, they will not be recognized in the next life.

“And verily I say unto you, that the conditions of this law are these: All covenants, contracts, bonds, obligations, oaths, vows, performances, connections, associations, or expectations, that are not made and entered into and **sealed by the Holy Spirit of promise, of him who is anointed, both as well for time and for all eternity, and that too most holy, by revelation and commandment through the medium of mine anointed,**

⁷⁹ See Galatians 5:22–23

whom I have appointed on the earth to hold this power are of no efficacy, virtue, or force in and after the resurrection from the dead; for all contracts that are not made unto this end have an end when men are dead.” (Doctrine and Covenants 132:7)

Even if one receives baptism, and even if one partakes of all the eternal ordinances in the temple, if there is darkness in their heart and the Holy Ghost does not grant approval, such ordinances will have no effect in the next life. However, there may be those who, when they were baptized or entered the temple, did not fully understand the meaning of these ordinances and were not in a state or mindset to be approved by the Holy Ghost. Does that mean they must start over from the beginning? Not necessarily. Once an ordinance has been received, it remains as something that has been performed. Then, as understanding deepens and one becomes able to act in a manner befitting that ordinance, the Holy Ghost can grant approval even to ordinances received in the past.

Therefore, in order to become true disciples of Christ and to have all our righteous actions approved by the Holy Ghost, we must continue to move forward, purifying ourselves with joy and striving ever onward.

The mysteries of God are called mysteries precisely because they cannot be explained by simply saying, “This is a mystery!” As we elevate our spiritual level and strive to serve as true disciples of Christ, we will, through the aid of the Holy Ghost, discover these mysteries. And when that moment comes, we will cry out in our hearts, “Oh, how deep is the mercy of God!”

Chapter 13: Those Who Place the Final Piece of the Puzzle

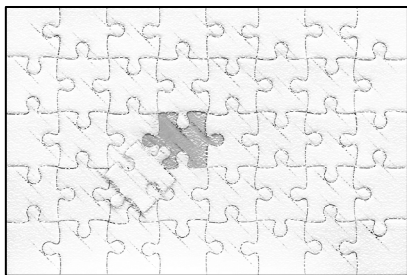


Figure 32 The last piece

Over the past six thousand years, the pieces of God's great plan have been gradually placed by the hands of great and righteous individuals. The ones entrusted with placing the final piece of this puzzle are the Latter-day Saints. Many of the more than ten million Church members currently living on this earth may think, *"I just happened to come across the Church and became a member by chance."* However, the

truth may not be so simple. All the prophecies found in the scriptures foretell the existence of the Latter-day Saints who would labor in this final chapter of history. Could it really be that those foreseen in prophecy thousands of years ago were gathered merely by chance? If that were true, would it mean that God simply rolls a die at random to decide who would be His laborers? That is absolutely not the case.

In Doctrine and Covenants 138, President Joseph F. Smith recorded a vision of the spirit world, where he saw the spirits of Joseph Smith, his own father Hyrum Smith, and other great leaders of the latter days. He described these individuals with the following words:

"The Prophet Joseph Smith, and my father, Hyrum Smith, Brigham Young, John Taylor, Wilford Woodruff, and other choice spirits **who were reserved to come forth in the fulness of times to take part in laying the foundations of the great latter-day work.**"

(Doctrine and Covenants 138:53)

Where, then, were they reserved? They were set apart in the premortal world—before coming to earth.

For six thousand years, they waited in heaven, anticipating the moment they would come to earth, preparing for the missions entrusted to them until the appointed time arrived. President Smith explained that they had been reserved until their time came to fulfill their divine work on earth. If that is the case, can we, who have come six thousand years after the beginning of humanity and have become Latter-day Saints—regardless of the method or

circumstances—really say that we were not also waiting? Did we come into this world aimlessly, without any purpose?

Let me ask again—among more than 8 billion people on earth, is it truly just a coincidence that we became members of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, or were born into families of faith? For those who joined from outside the Church and those born into Church families alike, could it not be said that they, too, were “**reserved to come forth in the fulness of times to lay the foundation of the great latter-day work?**” If we can believe in this possibility even slightly but still lack certainty, it may simply be because we have forgotten. But that which is forgotten can be reclaimed.

Now, the Final Baton Is in Our Hands

We must not think of the span of six thousand years as merely a number. Within that time lies the history woven by countless individuals who have undergone training after training. As humanity, as writers, scientists, inventors, warriors, politicians, medical practitioners, and protectors of families, people



Figure 33 When the final baton is passed

from various professions and backgrounds have utilized their gifts of the Spirit to the fullest, shaping history. Among them were those who fought as righteous individuals to further God’s plan of salvation. Their ultimate desire in this world was singular: to pass the baton to those who would follow, ensuring that it would reach the final generation—the one destined to establish the promised Kingdom of God.

“And, behold, all the remainder of this work does contain all those parts of my gospel which **my holy prophets, yea, and also my disciples, desired in their prayers should come forth unto this people.** And I said unto them, that it should be granted unto them according to their faith in their prayers...And **thus they did leave a blessing upon this land in their prayers, that whosoever should believe in this gospel in this land might have eternal life; Yea, that it might be free unto all of whatsoever nation, kindred, tongue, or people they may be.**”
(D&C 10:46–47, 50–51)

When this is accomplished, that will be the moment of complete victory for those who follow Jesus Christ. In the great tide of human history spanning six thousand years, the baton that has been passed down through countless righteous individuals to secure the triumph of this great work has now, at last, been placed in our hands—the hands of the final team. Because those who came before us received the promise and fulfilled their divine responsibilities, they have carried the baton to this point with victory after victory. That is why it is now in our hands, and we cannot afford to falter in our generation. We are the “Latter-day Saints”—**there is no one after us.**⁸⁰

“Wherefore, labor ye, labor ye in my vineyard **for the last time**—for the last time call upon the inhabitants of the earth.”
(D&C 43:28)

An Opportunity to Directly and Personally Understand the Words of Isaiah and John

We are truly living in a unique and blessed era. This is not merely because we exist in a time of advanced civilization and scientific progress. Rather, it is because we hold the key to understanding the prophecies that have been given to humanity for thousands of years—especially those of Isaiah and John, which have long been regarded as difficult to interpret. We have the ability not only to read and comprehend but also, most importantly, to witness with our own eyes the fulfillment of these prophecies.

The Lord Himself describes the significance of this privilege in a revelation:

“For verily I say unto you, the keys of the dispensation, which ye have received, **have come down from the fathers, and last of all, being sent down from heaven unto you.** Verily I say unto you, **behold how great is your calling.** Cleanse your hearts and your garments, lest the blood of this generation be required at your hands.”
(Doctrine and Covenants 112:32-33)

“And also that **you might be honored in laying the foundation, and in bearing record of the land upon which the Zion of God shall stand.**”
(Doctrine and Covenants 58:7)

⁸⁰ Among those who labor to bring forth the kingdom of God

In other words, this means that we have been entrusted with a work so remarkable and great that the righteous of the past would look upon us with admiration, saying, “These people have been given an extraordinary role.” That role is to help establish the Kingdom of God—even Zion—and to prepare the way for the return of the Lord Jesus Christ—a most sacred and special calling. The Lord Himself has declared that receiving this responsibility is an honor.

If we can truly grasp that we now stand at the very point where all the scriptures were written to lead, we can move forward with confidence and humility as we take on this sacred mission. We are both the “executors” and the “witnesses” of the prophecies that have been given in the past.

The fact that the true gospel and priesthood have been restored, that a prophet has been given, that the stage has been set through the Church, that direct revelation from God is being received both by the Church and individuals, that we are taught by the Holy Ghost, and that we can read and understand the Book of Isaiah and the Revelation of John—all of this means that the great latter-day work that God has planned has already begun.

“Behold, because of their belief in me, saith the Father, and because of the unbelief of you, O house of Israel, **in the latter day shall the truth come unto the Gentiles, that the fulness of these things shall be made known unto them.**”

(3 Nephi 16:7)

“God shall give unto you knowledge by his Holy Spirit, yea, by the unspeakable gift of the Holy Ghost, that **has not been revealed since the world was until now.**”

(D&C 121:26)

The great and final work has already begun, and everything necessary for our labor has been divinely prepared. The stage is set. Now, the fate of the world depends on whether we, as the actors, can fulfill our roles as the leading players in this great work.

The Names of the Other Tribes and What They Indicate

This Church of the latter days has already passed through multiple stages. First, as part of the preparatory steps for the Restoration, the Book of Mormon was translated and the priesthood was restored. The Church was then organized, and the first laborers were called. Through their efforts, temples were built, and the keys of the priesthood were bestowed. As a result, the gospel was preached to the world for the gathering of Israel. Ordinances for both the living and the dead began to be performed, and stakes of Zion were established outside of America. Additionally, temples are now being built at an accelerating pace in various nations, preparing the way for Zion.

Another clear indication that God's work is advancing in our time is the increase in lineage declarations given by patriarchs. The lineage of Israel, with Ephraim as its leader, was scattered and taken into captivity due to the people's wickedness. Therefore, when the Church was restored, it had to begin with the lineage of Ephraim. As a result, since the establishment of the Church until now, the vast majority of lineage declarations given by patriarchs have identified individuals as belonging to Ephraim, or to Joseph and Manasseh, his descendants. However, it is now being reported that in various parts of the world, other lineages are increasingly being declared. Because patriarchal blessings are deeply sacred and personal, it is not appropriate to inquire about the blessings of others. However, it is generally understood that declarations of lineages from tribes other than Ephraim, Manasseh, and Joseph are becoming increasingly common. This signifies that the Church is moving into another phase, and we are standing at a pivotal moment in this history.

Unless each tribe is identified in significant numbers, the prophecy in Doctrine and Covenants 77:11, which states that 12,000 high priests will be called from each of the tribes, cannot be fulfilled. We are now witnessing the beginning of this prophecy's fulfillment before our very eyes.

Chapter 14: What We Will See When We Fulfill Our Purpose

When we consider what it means to be a “Latter-day Saint,” our mission—to help establish the kingdom of God, Zion—will conclude either at the end of our mortal life or when Jesus Christ returns and Zion is fully established. However, the work of discipleship will continue beyond that—both in the spirit world and throughout the time of the resurrection.

Some may live to see the last days and enter Zion in mortality. In this chapter, we will explore through the scriptures the marvelous events that we, as Latter-day Saints, may witness when we fulfill our special calling.

The City Where the Righteous Dwell

In our lives, we go where the Lord calls us and labor in that place. However, that place does not have to be Zion, for Zion expands throughout the world along with its stakes. What is required of us is to work sincerely and earnestly wherever we are, to live as disciples of Christ by always thinking about how we can love and help others throughout our lives. We cannot become specific, prominent figures from the scriptures—like Moses or Abraham—because we are entirely different individuals. And unless we were foreordained in the premortal life, we likely will not become prophets either. However, there is one kind of special person from the scriptures we can become: those who are called “the righteous.”

The Lord desires that the righteous be scattered throughout the world for a divine purpose. While this is certainly necessary for the gospel to be introduced in all parts of the earth and for the gathering of Israel to take place, there are also important reasons specific to each land and region. Samuel, the Lamanite prophet, explained why the land of Zarahemla would not be destroyed in the following way:

“Yea, wo unto this great city of Zarahemla; for behold, **it is because of those who are righteous that it is saved.**”

(Helaman 13:12)

In a world where evil is rampant and its power is growing stronger, when we remain righteous, the land is blessed and can serve as a protection for other righteous individuals who have not yet come to know the true gospel. This protection grants them opportunities to receive the message of the gospel and time to prepare to receive the ordinances they need.

When you feel that your efforts are small and begin to wonder, “*How does this contribute to the building of Zion?*”—please remember the scripture above. Even if we do nothing particularly remarkable, God's purposes are gradually fulfilled through our continued righteousness.

Becoming Stakes That Move the Earth

Furthermore, the Lord's plans extend far beyond our current understanding. While the scriptures do not explicitly state this concept, I would like to present several verses to explain it. The reason why the Lord refers to Zion's stakes, which will spread across the world, as “stakes” has a profound significance.

Isaiah foresaw how Zion would be structured in the last days:

“Look upon Zion, the city of our solemnities: thine eyes shall see Jerusalem a quiet habitation, **a tabernacle** that shall not be taken down; not one of the **stakes** thereof shall ever be removed, neither shall any of the **CORDS** thereof be broken.”

(Isaiah 33:20)

From this verse, we see that Zion is portrayed symbolically as a tent—complete with stakes and cords. This imagery is not meant to suggest a literal tabernacle, but rather to convey the spiritual structure, strength, and unity of the Lord's people. Isaiah continues this metaphor by calling the people to enlarge their dwelling places, stretch forth the tent curtains, and strengthen the stakes, representing the expansion and fortification of Zion.

“Enlarge the place of thy tent, and let them stretch forth the curtains of thine habitations: spare not, lengthen thy cords, and strengthen thy stakes; For thou shalt break forth on the right hand and on the left; and thy seed shall inherit the Gentiles, and make the desolate cities to be inhabited.”

(Isaiah 54:2-3)

When the last days come, the wicked will be burned and destroyed, leaving only Jesus Christ, who is God, and the righteous to use the thousand years to prepare for the final judgment. Zion will become as one city, one nation, and one unified home under God.

Isaiah envisioned this spiritual unity through the metaphor of a great tabernacle—imagine a vast tent with a single central pillar supporting it, and

many cords extending outward, each secured by stakes driven firmly into the earth. This is the symbolic image of Zion.

Though there may not be a literal massive tent, Isaiah used this imagery to describe how Zion would be established: with gathering places for Saints around the world functioning as stakes—firm foundations supporting the great spiritual tabernacle of the Lord.

It seems that the stakes are driven into predetermined locations. Stakes are placed all over the world. When setting up a tent, the central pillar is first erected, and in order to evenly spread the canopy, the cords attached to each stake are pulled, revealing the shape of the great tabernacle. The question is, what does this “pulling” represent?

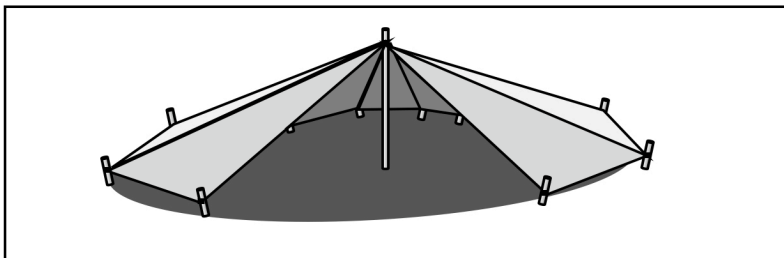


Figure 34 A tabernacle drawn by stakes

At this stage, we are in the midst of carrying out the Lord’s work of gathering Israel. Once a stake of Zion has been established, it remains immovable, serving as a place where we unite our hearts against the final and fierce assault of Satan and his followers—a place of refuge.

“And that the gathering together upon the land of Zion, and upon her stakes, may be for a defense, and for **a refuge** from the storm, and from wrath when it shall be poured out without mixture upon the whole earth.” (D&C 115:6)

But the time will come when Zion will be drawn toward its center by strong and mighty cords. This is the moment when Zion will be revealed. The Book of Revelation describes the following event:

“And there were voices, and thunders, and lightnings; and there was a great earthquake, such as was not since men were upon the earth, so mighty an earthquake, and so great.”

(Revelation 16:18)

Naturally, when the ground is drawn together, the earth will quake, and a massive earthquake will follow. But what exactly will cause this earthquake? In the Book of Third Nephi, we learn from the record that the great earthquakes during the destruction were caused by the land changing its shape. John describes this final great earthquake of the last days as being unlike anything humanity has ever experienced.

In the Doctrine and Covenants, Joseph Smith received a revelation that seems to be related to this event. Let us read:

“For behold, he (Jesus Christ) shall stand upon the mount of Olivet, and upon the mighty ocean, even the great deep, and upon the islands of the sea, and upon the land of Zion. And he shall utter his voice out of Zion, and he shall speak from Jerusalem, and his voice shall be heard among all people; And it shall be a voice as the voice of many waters, and as the voice of a great thunder, which shall break down the mountains, and the valleys shall not be found. He shall command the great deep, and it shall be driven back into the north countries, and the islands shall become one land; And the land of Jerusalem and the land of Zion shall be turned back into their own place, and the earth shall be like as it was in the days before it was divided.”

(Doctrine and Covenants 133:20–24)

If seen through revelation, the image of continents and islands across the world shaking, moving closer, and becoming one may appear as if the stakes of Zion, spread across the world, are being pulled by an unseen, powerful cord toward the central land of Zion. When this cord is fully drawn, people will see that a new land—Zion—has been established. Just as in the days of Noah, when the great flood covered the earth, and by the will of God, the sacred land was cut out in the shape of an eagle’s wings beneath the waters, so too will the other lands be brought back together, restoring their original form.

In the days of Noah, the only surviving humans were Noah and his family, who were on the ark and therefore unaffected by the great upheaval of the earth. However, when this next great movement of the earth occurs, an

unparalleled number of people will still be living on its surface. John, in his revelation, saw that this massive earthquake will take place when the seventh bowl of the seventh trumpet is poured out. This signifies the very end—the completion of the burning—signifying that all the wicked will be consumed by this global upheaval. The earth’s crust will shift, and even within the planet, the mantle may experience an unprecedented convective movement. In any case, no one will survive this immense upheaval of the earth.

At this final moment, just before Zion is established, a specific work assigned to the Latter-day Saints will take place. Right before the great earthquake that will reshape the world map and the consuming fire begins, the appearance of the Saints will start to change. Let us first read what John saw:

“And I saw another sign in heaven, great and marvellous, seven angels having the seven last plagues; for in them is filled up the wrath of God. And I saw as **it were a sea of glass mingled with fire: and them that had gotten the victory over the beast, and over his image, and over his mark, and over the number of his name, stand on the sea of glass, having the harps of God.**”
(Revelation 15:1-2)

If we read carefully, we find that three things are mentioned in this passage. The first is the announcement that the burning destruction is about to begin, as the seven angels with the seven plagues prepare for its commencement. The next two details are particularly fascinating: one is the sea of glass, and the other is the people who have overcome their battle against the adversary. The phrase “standing by the sea of glass” suggests that not the entire earth has transformed into a sea of glass, but rather that a portion of it has begun to change. Additionally, the word “sea” does not necessarily refer to the literal ocean of the present world. The Lord has provided an explanation of this “sea of glass” in the Doctrine and Covenants:

“Q. What is the sea of glass spoken of by John, 4th chapter, and 6th verse of the Revelation?

A. **It is the earth, in its sanctified, immortal, and eternal state.**”
(Doctrine and Covenants 77:1)

The earth we inhabit will ultimately be exalted and become the eternal dwelling place for those who reside in the Celestial Kingdom.⁸¹ It will resemble a “sea of glass,” radiant and filled with light. The reason it is referred to as a “sea of glass” is that it will serve a function similar to the Urim and Thummim, allowing us to access divine knowledge simply by seeking it.⁸² Thus, what John describes in this passage can be understood as the beginning of the earth’s transformation—a baptism of fire leading to its sanctification and renewal.

The critical question is where this transformation begins. John describes a place where those who have overcome their battle against the adversary stand, holding “the harps of God.” This signifies their preparation to sing praises to the Lord. However, considering the circumstances, this scene is quite puzzling. At that very moment, the seven plagues that will bring about the final destruction of the wicked are about to be poured out upon the world, and yet, these individuals are standing with instruments, ready to sing. Does this not appear strikingly serene amid the impending global destruction?

In a sense, the judgment is already complete at this point. The phrase “those who have overcome” signifies precisely that. The burning of the earth, as described in the Parable of the Wheat and the Tares, occurs once the separation between the righteous and the wicked has been finalized. Once all Latter-day Saints have fulfilled their roles and completed their final tasks, they will be transformed and will wait in a sacred place for the events to come. Several passages in the scriptures provide insight into this process, as seen in the following verse:

“Nevertheless, he that endureth in faith and doeth my will, the same shall overcome, and shall receive an inheritance upon the earth when the day of transfiguration shall come.”
(D&C 63:20-21)

“And there shall be silence in heaven for the space of half an hour; and immediately after shall the curtain of heaven be unfolded, as a scroll is unfolded after it is rolled up, and the face of the Lord shall be unveiled; And the saints that are upon the earth, who are alive, shall be

⁸¹ See Doctrine and Covenants 88:18–20

⁸² See Doctrine and Covenants 130:7-9

quickened and be caught up to meet him.”

(D&C 88:95-96)

“Then we which are alive and remain **shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air**: and so shall we ever be with the Lord.”

(1 Thessalonians 4:17)

“For the time soon cometh that the fulness of the wrath of God shall be poured out upon all the children of men; for he will not suffer that the wicked shall destroy the righteous. Wherefore, he will preserve the righteous by his power, even if it so be that the fulness of his wrath must come, and the righteous be preserved, even unto the destruction of their enemies by fire. **Wherefore, the righteous need not fear; for thus saith the prophet, they shall be saved, even if it so be as by fire.**”

(1 Nephi 22:16-17)

As the righteous and disciples of Jesus Christ, those who have strived until the very end, even if only drawing closer little by little, will on that day feel their bodies begin to shine. They will sense their hearts being freed from all the sorrows of this world. Then, as their bodies begin to rise into the air, they will behold a world they had never seen or even imagined. The transformation of the body means that their weak and fragile mortal flesh will be changed so that they may stand in the presence of the Lord.

Consider this: John declares that the Sea of Glass begins at the very place where these righteous ones stand. The gathering places of the Latter-day Saints are the stakes of Zion. Up until now, these stakes have been built as places of refuge for the weak and faithful. But when they have fully served their purpose, and when the saints are transfigured at the final moment, could it be that the opposite occurs? That is, the very places where the saints are changed and lifted into the air begin to transform into the Sea of Glass, becoming true “stakes” in the literal sense—anchored to Zion at the center. As the earth changes and Zion’s tabernacle is revealed, we recall the words of the Lamanite prophet Samuel: “A city where the righteous dwell is given a special blessing.” If this is true, then we are the ones called to sanctify these lands, to make them into true stakes of Zion. If such things are truly to come to pass as we strive to be righteous and faithful disciples of Christ, then how great and marvelous are the blessings—and responsibilities—entrusted to us.

Resurrected Within Zion

Many of us, as Latter-day Saints, will leave this world before that great day arrives. Yet the responsibility entrusted to us remains unchanged. As long as we are in this world, we must fulfill our duty as the righteous and as disciples of Christ. When our time here is complete, what awaits us is the First Resurrection.

The First Resurrection officially began with the resurrection of Jesus Christ. From that time until now, those who have been given missions leading up to the last days—such as the angel Moroni and John the Baptist—have already been resurrected. One thing to notice is that these individuals were **all righteous**. The order of resurrection is based on righteousness in this life. The resurrection of all people will begin with the righteous.

“For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God: and **the dead in Christ shall rise first**.”

(1 Thessalonians 4:16)

And when Zion is established, and the dawn of the Millennium breaks forth, the First Resurrection will begin in the midst of its radiance. In other words, the place where we awaken will be “Zion,” the Kingdom of God.

“Cry out and shout, thou inhabitant of Zion: for great is the Holy One of Israel in the midst of thee.”

(Isaiah 12:6)

We will dwell with Jesus Christ for a thousand years, performing sacred ordinances on behalf of all people and preparing for the final phase of God’s work. And at the end of the Millennium, the resurrection of the wicked will take place.

“For the day cometh that the Lord shall utter his voice out of heaven; the heavens shall shake and the earth shall tremble, and the trump of God shall sound both long and loud, and shall say to the sleeping nations: Ye saints arise and live; ye sinners stay and sleep until I shall call again.”

(Doctrine and Covenants 43:18)

“And again, another trump shall sound, which is the third trump; and then come the spirits of men who are to be judged, and are found under condemnation; And these are the rest of the dead; and they live not again

until the thousand years are ended, neither again, until the end of the earth.”
(Doctrine and Covenants 88:100-101)

If we truly desire to find joy as true Latter-day Saints, we should hold onto the hope of being resurrected at the beginning of the Millennium. We must seek out the duty given to us in this life and labor diligently until our time of trial comes to an end. The reward awaiting us will far exceed anything we can now comprehend.

Chapter 15: The Latter-day Saints

In Isaiah 18, our Heavenly Father declares that He is “quietly observing” the work of the Latter-day Saints. However, this does not mean that He is resting or doing nothing. Rather, He is continually sustaining and encouraging us from unseen realms, ensuring that our faith does not falter. God never ceases His work.

“For Zion’s sake will I not hold my peace, and for Jerusalem’s sake I will not rest, until the righteousness thereof go forth as brightness, and the salvation thereof as a lamp that burneth.”
(Isaiah 62:1)

Therefore, when we go forth in this final work, we do not need to worry, wondering, *“Is God truly with us?”* or *“Will He help us in times of trouble?”* God Himself has declared:

“Why sayest thou, O Jacob, and speakest, O Israel, My way is hid from the Lord, and my judgment is passed over from my God? Hast thou not known? hast thou not heard, that the everlasting God, the Lord, the Creator of the ends of the earth, fainteth not, neither is weary? there is no searching of his understanding. He giveth power to the faint; and to them that have no might he increaseth strength. Even the youths shall faint and be weary, and the young men shall utterly fall: **But they that wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings as eagles; they shall run, and not be weary; and they shall walk, and not faint.**”
(Isaiah 40:27–31)

I do not believe it is by chance that you have become a Latter-day Saint at this time, in this era. Surely, there is a profound purpose in the highest realms of heaven. Surely, before coming here, we made a solemn determination in the heavens. And to connect these purposes, God has granted us this opportunity. And **now is the time** to fulfill it.

The Ten Virgins

The Lord spoke of a profound matter in Doctrine and Covenants 33. He said that now is the eleventh hour, and we must trim our lamps, light them, and prepare oil. The eleventh hour refers to eleven o’clock at night—just before midnight, when the day is about to change. The remaining time is but a little.

The mention of trimming the wick and preparing oil comes from the parable of **the Ten Virgins**⁸³, which the Lord Himself taught while He was on the earth.

The ten virgins were invited to a wedding, chosen to join the bridegroom's procession, walk with him, and ultimately enter the bride's home to partake of the wedding feast. Since the wedding was to take place at night, they eagerly awaited the arrival of the bridegroom, anticipating the moment when they would enter the home where the bride awaited, and the feast would begin. However, the bridegroom did not arrive for a long time. In other words, though more than two hundred years have passed since the Restoration, the Bridegroom has still not come. Because of the delay, they began to grow drowsy and fell asleep.

At midnight, a cry was heard: "Behold, the bridegroom! Go out to meet him!" In their haste to join the procession, they quickly attempted to trim their lamps, but five of them, who were foolish, had not prepared extra oil. Their lights were about to go out. They turned to the five wise virgins and pleaded, "Give us some of your oil." But the wise virgins replied, "There is not enough for us and you." With no other choice, the foolish virgins left to buy oil. During their absence, the bridegroom arrived, and those who were prepared went in with him to the wedding feast. And the door was shut.

You are surely familiar with what happened afterward. The ten virgins represent us, the Latter-day Saints—those invited to the great wedding feast of the Lord. However, we have the potential to be either among the wise or the foolish. Now, it is the eleventh hour of the night. The arrival of the Bridegroom, Jesus Christ, is imminent. Which group do we want to belong to? At this moment, we have been invited to the wedding and granted the privilege to participate. However, for that to become a reality, our lamps must be trimmed to burn at their brightest, and sufficient oil must be prepared.

"For behold, the field is white already to harvest; and it is the eleventh hour, and the last time that I shall call laborers into my vineyard... Wherefore, be faithful, praying always, having your lamps trimmed and burning, and oil with you, that you may be ready at the coming of the Bridegroom—For behold, verily, verily, I say unto you, that

⁸³ See Matthew 25:1–13

I come quickly. Even so. Amen.”
(Doctrine and Covenants 33:3, 17-18)

“And at that day, when I shall come in my glory, shall the parable be fulfilled which I spake concerning **the ten virgins**. For they that are **wise and have received the truth, and have taken the Holy Spirit for their guide**, and have not been deceived—verily I say unto you, they shall not be hewn down and cast into the fire, but **shall abide the day**.”
(Doctrine and Covenants 45:56-57)

The Importance of Excitement

Remember that the “joy” Paul spoke of is a fruit of the Spirit, and **finding joy in our daily lives is a way to invite the Holy Ghost**. The joy that comes from inviting the Holy Ghost can be found in living the gospel of Jesus Christ. The gospel of Jesus Christ is a gospel of joy. The very origin of the word *gospel* means “good news” or “glad tidings.” Therefore, when we strive to become disciples of Christ, we must actively seek joy in our daily lives. It is not enough to simply wait for good things to happen. **We must seek them out.**

Even though we understand that trials are God’s training for us, they are not always pleasant. There may be times when, even though we intellectually understand the purpose of following God, our hearts struggle to keep up. We might even find ourselves asking, “*What good does it do to follow God?*” When those moments come, remember the words of Malachi:

“Ye have said, It is vain to serve God: and what profit is it that we have kept his ordinance, and that we have walked mournfully before the Lord of hosts? And now we call the proud happy; yea, they that work wickedness are set up; yea, they that tempt God are even delivered. **Then they that feared the Lord spake often one to another: and the Lord hearkened, and heard it, and a book of remembrance was written before him for them that feared the Lord, and that thought upon his name.** And they shall be mine, saith the Lord of hosts, in that day **when I make up my jewels**; and I will spare them, as a man spareth his own son that serveth him. Then shall ye return, and discern between the righteous and the wicked, between him that serveth God and him that serveth him not.”
(Malachi 3:14–18)

Our scripture, The Pearl of Great Price, takes its name from the parable Jesus told about the kingdom of heaven. In this parable, a merchant found a pearl of such great value that he sold all his possessions to purchase it. The gospel of Jesus Christ is that pearl. The merchant, being experienced, immediately recognized its value upon seeing it. We may not be experts, but by studying and searching, we can come to recognize its value. When we do, we will realize that it brings nothing but joy.

Paul, who was originally known as Saul, had once been an enemy of Jesus Christ. However, at a certain turning point, he began to study the gospel diligently. When he came to understand its words, prophecies, divine plan, and the will of God, he was so overcome with joy that he received the baptism of fire and the Holy Ghost—perhaps more than once. As a result, he recorded in his letters how valuable and joyful the gospel of Christ had become to him:

“Circumcised the eighth day, of the stock of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, an Hebrew of the Hebrews; as touching the law, a Pharisee; Concerning zeal, persecuting the church; touching the righteousness which is in the law, blameless. But what things were gain to me, those I counted loss for Christ. Yea doubtless, and I count all things but loss **for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord**: for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and do count them but dung, that I may win Christ, **And be found in him**, not having mine own righteousness, which is of the law, but that which is through the faith of Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith: That I may know him, and the power of his resurrection, and the fellowship of his sufferings, being made conformable unto his death; If by any means I might attain unto the resurrection of the dead. Not as though I had already attained, either were already perfect: **but I follow after, if that I may apprehend** that for which also I am apprehended of Christ Jesus.” (Philippians 3:5–12)

The gospel of Jesus Christ is a gospel of joy. If we come to understand the presence of the Holy Ghost, seek to learn the gospel of Christ through His guidance, and then put into practice what we have learned, we too can come to know the deep purposes of God—just as Paul, Nephi, and Joseph Smith did. In that moment, we will be filled with joy and a sense of excitement, wondering, “*What else lies ahead?*” Such excitement is essential—it is the very force that propels us forward on the path of discipleship.

As we continue to open the joyful “surprise boxes” that have been prepared for our success in this life, we will find ourselves taking step after step closer to Zion.

The Words of Mordecai

After reading all of this, some may still wonder, *“Was it truly not by chance that I became a member of the Church, or was there a divine reason behind it?”* If that certainty has not yet been obtained, then follow the path that has been prepared to gain it. Consider deeply whether it is a mere coincidence that we are here at this time and in this place. Ponder carefully the words Mordecai spoke to Esther, the daughter he had raised as his own:

When Esther was called to be the queen of Persia under King Ahasuerus, all the Jews in the kingdom faced the threat of annihilation. She alone had the power to save them. However, this was no simple task. To fulfill it, Esther would have to risk her life. Faced with such a decision, the young Esther hesitated. At that moment, her guardian, Mordecai, spoke to her with these words:

“For if thou altogether holdest thy peace at this time, then shall there enlargement and deliverance arise to the Jews from another place; but thou and thy father’s house shall be destroyed: and **who knoweth whether thou art come to the kingdom for such a time as this?”**

(Esther 4:14)

In this situation, it was clear that only Esther had the position and opportunity to resolve the crisis. However, Mordecai, perhaps understanding Isaiah’s words that “the plans of God cannot be overturned,” reminded her that even if she chose to remain silent, God would surely raise up deliverance for the Jews from another place. Yet he posed a question to her: “Esther, is it not possible that you were brought into the kingdom for this very moment?” When Esther recognized and reaffirmed “her purpose,” she turned to fasting and prayer and then acted upon her mission. As a result, a miracle occurred—not only were the Jews saved, but many people in that foreign land converted and joined the house of Israel.

“Who knows but that you are here, at this very time and place, for a purpose known to God?”

I encourage each of us to ask ourselves the same question.

Disciples of Christ

The Latter-day Saints are disciples of Christ. Isaiah describes them as “those who have written the name of Christ upon their bodies.”

“One shall say, I am the Lord’s; and another shall call himself by the name of Jacob; and **another shall subscribe with his hand unto the Lord** (as if to write or engrave on his hand that he belongs to the Lord), and surname himself by the name of Israel. Thus saith the Lord the King of Israel, and his redeemer the Lord of hosts; I am the first, and I am the last; and beside me there is no God. And who, as I, shall call, and shall declare it, and set it in order for me, since I appointed the ancient people? and the things that are coming, and shall come, let them shew unto them. **Fear ye not, neither be afraid: have not I told thee from that time, and have declared it? ye are even my witnesses.** Is there a God beside me? yea, there is no God; I know not any.”

(Isaiah 44:5-8)

The disciples of Christ have existed since the time of Adam. All who have lived according to the gospel of Jesus Christ are His disciples. Among them, it is the Latter-day Saints who bear the final and most significant responsibility. Consider this: Have all disciples of Christ throughout history known their roles from the beginning? Did Nephi know from the start that he would become a prophet in the Americas? Did Paul foresee that he would transform from a persecutor of Christ into one of His greatest defenders? Did Peter realize that one day he would move from being a fisherman of the sea to a fisher of men? Did Joseph Smith understand from his youth that he would be raised as an ensign for the restoration of Christ’s Church?

The answer to all these questions is *no*.

We, too, do not yet fully know the roles that await us as we strive and press forward in our lives. That is why we learn and put into practice what we have received. We come to “know” through the methods the Lord has prepared for us.

And when our time in this life comes to an end, may we, as disciples of Christ, be able to say that we have done all we could—pressing forward toward that glorious moment.

Christ Shall Come Clothed in Glory

The culmination of our era will be the Second Coming of our Bridegroom, Jesus Christ.

This time, the Lord will not come as a newborn child, as He did before. He will come clothed in the glory of God, shining brighter than the sun. The wicked will be consumed by that light, and the earth will be transformed, receiving holiness. Our bodies will be transfigured, our hearts filled with joy, and we will point to the Lord Jesus Christ, crying out, *“Behold, this is our God! This is He whom we have awaited for so long!”*⁸⁴

Life constrained by time and space will vanish, and there shall be no more day or night—only the glory of the Lord shining eternally upon those who have lived purely and righteously.

We shall embrace and rejoice with the people of Enoch, the Zion that descends from heaven, celebrating together our shared victory.⁸⁵

Amidst the light, we shall continue the sacred work of the temple, bringing forth the resurrection of the dead, performing the ordinances of God, and laboring with eternal priesthood as we await the day when we may once again behold the face of our Heavenly Father.

We shall share our joy with beloved companions who have persevered alongside us, and greet the righteous who faithfully carried the baton of justice through the generations to the very last day. With tears welling in our eyes, we will express our heartfelt gratitude to them and rejoice together in the victory.

5:9

There shall be no more tears of sorrow, for the Lord Himself will wipe them away.⁸⁶

⁸⁴ See Isaiah 25:9

⁸⁵ See Moses 7:63

⁸⁶ See Isaiah 25:8 and Revelation 21:4

Let us press forward one step at a time, dreaming of that glorious day, as disciples of Christ and as the Saints of the Latter Days.

The End

Afterword

This personal scripture study resource was created for my former Institute students to help them connect the gospel truths they learned in individual lessons into a unified theme.

Any theme common throughout the scriptures could have been chosen, but since we are now living as “the saints of the latter days,” I wanted to help them understand the meaning of God’s plan as it relates to us. With that purpose in mind, I have written gospel doctrines and principles centered on this theme.

This is by no means exhaustive. God’s plan is far too vast to be contained within these pages. However, I hope this will serve as a starting point—a beginning, a catalyst for deeper study.

I am still on this journey myself, merely standing at the starting line. Much still lies ahead. I eagerly look forward to the day when we will welcome the Lord together and rejoice with tears of joy.

May God’s abundant blessings rest upon the righteous and upon all those striving to become so.

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