

Prophetic Crossroads

A Cautionary Tale

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We have yet to take the Spirit of Elias seriously ***enough to move on to receive something further. But we are now facing a crossroads in which it may be possible to restore again and continue the work and move forward. Movinforward successfully however, will require the Spirit of Elijah.*** This time the Spirit of Elijah is not to prepare a people so that they might ascend into heaven but instead ***to prepare a people so that those who come will not utterly destroy them.*** There must be a people prepared to endure the burning that is to come. Just as Enoch's people were prepared, shielded and brought worthy to ascend so as not to be destroyed by the flood, the Spirit of Elijah must prepare people in order for them to endure the day that is coming that shall burn the wicked as stubble. ***That will be people living in a place of peace and they will be the only people who are not at war one with another. They will be people who accept a body of teachings and allow them to govern their daily walk; both with each other and with God, so that they receive "commandments, not a few" and "revelations in their day" because that is what the people of Zion must necessarily be willing to do.*** (*Things to Keep Us Awake at Night*, Denver Snuffer Jr., p.14, emphasis added).

A crossroad is a point in a journey where a choice must be made. Does one continue on their original path, or alter their course to align more with their stated objective? The answer to this question is determined by our determination and commitment to arrive at our destination. If our hope is more a wish, we may be inclined to compromise and surrender our desire to matters of convenience. In contrast, when we approach our journey with uncompromising resolve and commitment the path we pursue is the ONLY path leading to our goal. There have been many examples of crossroads in scripture with various outcomes. Some arrived at their promised lands while others fell short.

Moses and Israel

Following the Lord's miraculous deliverance of Israel from Egyptian bondage, Moses led Israel to their crossroad at Sinai. Upon arriving at Sinai, preparations were made to lead Israel to the mount and God's presence.

And this *greater Priesthood* [Spirit of Elijah] administers the gospel and *holds the key of the mysteries of the kingdom, even the key of the knowledge of God*. Therefore, in the ordinances thereof, the power of godliness is manifest, *and without the ordinances thereof, and the authority of the Priesthood, the power of godliness is not manifest unto man in the flesh, for without this no man can see the face of God, even the Father, and live*.

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) swore that *they should not enter into his rest — which rest is the fullness of his glory* — while in the wilderness.

Therefore, *he took Moses out of their midst, and the Holy Priesthood also . . .* RE T&C 82:12-14, emphasis added).

Moses led Israel to ascend to the mount and enter God's presence, but they refused to enter.

Joseph Smith and the Beginning of the Restoration

In the June 1831 conference, Joseph Smith ordained five, and Lyman Wight ordained eighteen, for the total of twenty-three. *For a moment they rejoiced. The heavenly priesthood returned! But the results that followed were anything but satisfactory. The authority did not "take" and the power did not come. Most of the men involved fell away and rejected Joseph shortly after their ordination*. The more receptive of the men were left confused. *The great blessing Joseph had waited years to receive turned into the first great crisis Joseph would confront*. (*The Holy Order*, Denver Snuffer Jr., p.34, emphasis added).

Those ordained to the Holy Order were ill prepared to receive it. They must have believed their ordination was sufficient for God to grant them power given to Enoch and others. It was evident as energetic as some were about their Priesthood ordination and promised power, their enthusiasm was short lived.

The powers associated with this Priesthood include power, by faith to break mountains, divide seas, dry up waters, turn waters out of their course, put at defiance armies of nations, divide the earth, break every band, stand in God's presence, do all things according to God's will and command, subdue principalities and powers according to the will of the Son of God and protect Zion from destruction by the world.

Shortly after their ordination the absence of these powers led to questions regarding Joseph Smith's inspiration to call these men and the validity of the Holy Order conceptually. Consequently, most if not all ordained to the Holy Order rebelled against Joseph Smith and abandoned the Church. Needless to say, little is spoken about these events.

Joseph was unwavering in his resolve to re-establish the Holy Order on Earth, proceeding to ordain a second group with essentially the same result. While two groups of ordained Holy Order members focused their criticism on Joseph, their criticism should have been on their lack of understanding and lack of self-awareness.

Behold, ***there are many called, but few are chosen, and why are they not chosen? Because their hearts are set so much upon the things of this world, and aspire to the honors of men, that they do not learn this one lesson*** — that the rights of the Priesthood are ***inseparably connected with the Powers of Heaven*** and that ***the Powers of Heaven cannot be controlled nor handled, only upon the principles of righteousness***. That they may be conferred upon us, it is true, but when we undertake to cover our sins or to gratify our pride, our vain ambition, or to exercise control, or dominion, or compulsion, upon the souls of the children of men ***in any degree of unrighteousness***, behold, the Heavens withdraw themselves, the spirit of the Lord is grieved, and ***when it is withdrawn, Amen to the priesthood or the authority of that man***. Behold, ere he is aware, he is left unto himself, to kick against the pricks, to persecute the saints, and to fight against God. 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.” (RE T&C 139:5, emphasis added).

In the majority of crossroad moments, failure to achieve power in the Holy Order is not a failure of the Lord’s servant but the inadequacies of those ordained by His servants.

Given the less than stellar response by those ordained to the Holy Order, Joseph Smith set out to instruct the Church more fully regarding the Priesthood and required righteousness inseparably connected with the “Powers of Heaven.” The absence of righteousness causes the Heavens or Angels to withdraw from the individual, withhold their powers, and the annulment of the ordination itself..

“Hence, many are called [ordained] but few are chosen [empowered].

On most of these occasions the Lord’s servants are blamed for the failure of the people to understand and comply with the laws associated with Priesthood empowerment. Joseph Smith lamented at the inability of his followers to understand and receive what the Lord offered through him.

There has been a great difficulty in getting anything into the heads of this generation. It has been like splitting hemlock knots with a corn-dodger for a wedge, and a pumpkin for a beetle. ***Even the Saints are slow to understand.*** I have tried for a number of years to get the minds of the Saints prepared to receive the things of God; ***but we frequently see some of them, after suffering all they have for the work of God, will fly to pieces like glass as soon as anything comes that is contrary to their traditions.*** they cannot stand the fire at all. ***How many will be able to abide a celestial law, and go through and receive their exaltation, I am unable to say, as many are called, but few are chosen.*** (DHC 6:184-185, emphasis added)

The irony in these examples is the people claiming to follow these men reject their teachings as they venerate them. To this day the Jews claim Moses as their great prophet and evidence they are chosen by the Lord because of Moses deliverance of Israel from Egyptian bondage. The same is true of Latter-day Saints. They claim Joseph Smith as their prophet and, like Moses, he stood in God’s presence and was chosen by Him. By extension they presume to be chosen as well.

In these and other examples, those claiming to be disciples of the dispensation heads, when offered the Holy Order of Priesthood rejoice and relish their ordination while ignoring the absence of power in their Priesthood.

In 2010, Boyd K. Packer, the President of the Twelve Apostles for the LDS Church, lamented in general conference that their church lacked priesthood power. As he put it, “We have done very well at distributing the authority of the priesthood. We have priesthood authority planted nearly everywhere. We have quorums of elders and high priests worldwide. ***But distributing the authority of the priesthood has raced, I think, ahead of distributing the power of the priesthood. The priesthood does not have the strength that it should have and will not have until the power of the priesthood is firmly fixed in the families as it should be.***” (Boyd K. Packer, The Power of the Priesthood, April 2010 LDS General Conference, emphasis added)

The fact of the matter is, Priesthood power is contingent on the righteousness of those ordained to the Holy Order. It cannot be distributed by institutional authority. The recipients faith and God’s judgment are the two determining factors on who receives Priesthood power and who does not.

As we approach the crossroad where the Lord offers the Spirit of Elijah and the Restoration of the Holy Order, it is incumbent upon us to understand what is required of us. Venerating the Lord’s servant and borrowing His virtue in the hope of covering our own shortfall did not work before, nor will it work in our day. The Powers of Heaven [Angels] could not be handled or controlled then and will not be available today, absent true faith and righteousness.

Wash Yourself, Make Yourself Clean

Your hands are full of blood. ***Wash yourself, make yourself clean; put away the evil of your doings from before my eyes. Cease to do evil, learn to do well.*** (RE Isaiah 1:3, emphasis added).

In the beginning of Isaiah’s book is an admonition to all who read his record. His admonition is for us to wash the blood from our hands and make ourselves clean. Following Isaiah’s admonition is the first step toward seeking greater knowledge and Priesthood power.

Adam is in possession of authority or “keys” over the Holy Order. He has a say who will be involved in each dispensation. He now exercises the right of dominion in the councils of Heaven as a resurrected man. ***But***

salvation for the living must involve those who are living to bear the burden to preach repentance and faith on Christ. Salvation is, was and always will be a mortal challenge and mortal obligation. It is not a test to prove those who are immortal. ***It is to prove the living.*** (*The Holy Order*, Denver Snuffer Jr., p.15, emphasis added).

Repentance goes hand in hand with faith in Christ. It is a necessary first step required by the Lord for all mortals. Isaiah declares we all have blood on our hands. Not that we all commit murder, rather, our Savior's blood was shed for our sins. With His blood we are stained and with His blood we are cleansed.

We should expect God's house to be ordered around only one principle: repentance. When the pride of a great organization replaces repentance, the heavens withdraw, and when they do, "Amen" to that portion of God's house. (*The Holy Order*, Denver Snuffer Jr., p.27, emphasis added).

Repentance-A Matter of Heart

After Jeremiah was carried captive into Babylon the Lord shared the following words of comfort to him:

For I know the thoughts that I think toward you, says the Lord — thoughts of peace and not of evil, ***to give you an expected end*** [hope]. ***Then*** shall you call upon me, and you shall go and pray unto me, and ***I will listen unto you.*** And you shall ***seek me and find me when you shall search for me with all your heart.*** ***And I will be found of you, says the Lord.*** (RE Jeremiah 11:1, emphasis added).

The Lord's ways are always matters of the heart. He requires our devotion to Him and that is why rote obedience absent sincerity of heart keeps the Lord hidden from casual seekers.¹ The burden of proof of His existence doesn't rest upon Him, it rests upon us. If we desire an "*expected end*," or promise of Eternal Life² we are

¹ "***The opposite of godliness; having the pretense of godliness or a form that mimics it.*** The Lord condemned the doctrines of men being taught for commandments when He said, ***They draw near to me with their lips, but their hearts are far from me.... They teach for doctrines the commandments of men, having a form of godliness, but they deny the power thereof*** (JSH 2:5). What does *having a form of godliness, but [denying] the power thereof* mean? Godliness means ***to be godly or close to God.*** It is possible to pretend to godliness (i.e., have a "form" that mimics it) without actually being close to God. The Lord lamented in the First Vision to Joseph Smith that men have merely a form of godliness — insubstantial, unredeeming, incapable of saving" (*A Glossary of Gospel Terms*, Form of Godliness, p.651, emphasis added).

² "Something far greater, more profound, more strongly felt, more firmly based than just expectancy from vague desire.¹ ***Hope involves unshakable faith or confidence. Hope comes from "many revelations and the spirit of prophecy" and is based upon "witnesses" coming from beyond the veil to confirm the expectations.*** It causes

required to call upon Him with real intent.³ He promises to hear us and reveal Himself to us when our search for Him is heartfelt.⁴ Obedience to the Lord's command is not through rote observance. Our obedience must be rooted in our love for Him.

If you love me, keep my commandments . . . (RE John 9:8, emphasis added).

When Aaron, a son of Mosiah, preached to the father of king Lamoni, Lamoni's father was so moved by Aaron's message the great Lamanite king said the following:

. . . What shall I do that I may have this eternal life of which thou hast spoken? Yea, ***what shall I do that I may be born of God, having this wicked spirit rooted out of my breast, and receive his spirit that I may be filled with joy? That I may not be cast off at the last day? Behold, said he, I will give up all that I possess, yea, I will forsake my kingdom that I may receive this great joy.*** But Aaron said unto him, ***If thou desirest this thing, if thou will bow down before God — yea, if thou repent of all thy sins, and will bow down before God, and call on his name in faith, believing that ye shall receive, then shalt thou receive the hope which thou desirest.***

And it came to pass that when Aaron had said these words, ***the king did bow down before the Lord upon his knees, yea, even he did prostrate himself upon the earth, and cried mightily, saying, O God, Aaron hath told me that there is a God, and if there is a God, and if thou art God, wilt thou make thyself known unto me? And I will give away all my sins to know thee,*** and that I may be raised from the dead and be saved at the last day . . . (RE Alma 13:9-10, emphasis added).

faith which is "unshakable." ***It is hope which is powerful, controlling, and causes a thing to come to pass because it is now their right to receive the thing promised. God has conferred that right upon them.***² Hope is more than a wish, as ***it requires one to secure a promise from God.*** It requires one to be at rest — ***secure in the knowledge the Lord has promised a glorious resurrection. Hope is waiting for the time of the Lord's promise to be fulfilled.*** Hope describes the state of mind of the recipient ***during the time interval after the promise, but before its realization. Hope involves unshakable faith or confidence.*** It is a concrete assurance, ***based upon a promise or covenant.*** Hope comes from knowing the Lord has promised one something. ***As sure as God's word cannot fail, one's hope is secure in Him.*** But men and women only obtain that hope from Him ***by getting Him to make a promise to them.***³ (*A Glossary of Gospel Terms*, Hope, p.685, emphasis added).

³ ". . . For behold, God hath said, A man being evil cannot do that which is good; for ***if he offereth a gift or prayeth unto God, except he shall do it with real intent, it profiteth him nothing*** . . ." (RE Moroni 7:2, emphasis added).

⁴ "Verily thus says the Lord: It shall come to pass that ***every soul*** who ***forsakes their sins***, and ***comes unto me***, and ***calls on my name***, and ***obeys my voice***, and ***keeps all my commandments***, shall ***see my face and know that I am***, and that I am the true light that lights every man who comes into the world . . ." (RE T&C 93:1, emphasis added).

The Lamanite king said he was willing to surrender his kingdom and all he possessed to have the “*wicked spirit rooted out*” and be filled with joy. After offering all he possessed in exchange for forgiveness of his sins, Aaron explained what the Lord required of him. If the king desired this great blessing all the Lord required was for the king to bow down before God and repent of all his sins. If the king called upon God in faith, believing he would receive Aaron said he would receive the “*hope*” [expected end] the king desired.

The king was willing to surrender everything but the Lord was content with his offering of his sins. In response to the king's plea the Lord granted his desire. The evil spirit was rooted out of him and he was filled with joy.

The pattern of forgiveness was not unique to the Lamanite king. There are numerous accounts of people who embrace the Gospel message, repent of their sins, ask forgiveness, and are lifted from the depths of despair instantaneously. More often than not the Lord's response to the sincere, humble of heart is immediate.⁵

It is important to understand what happens when one is forgiven of their sins. Sin causes our withdrawal from God. When repented of, the sinner immediately draws closer to God and their remorse of conscience is replaced with life changing

⁵ “Then said I, Woe is me, for *I am undone because I am a man of unclean lips, and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips; for my eyes have seen the King, the Lord of Hosts.* Then flew one of the seraphim unto me, having a live coal in his hand, which he had taken with the tongs from off the altar. And he laid it upon my mouth and said, *Behold, this has touched your lips, and your iniquity is taken away, and your sin purged.* Also, I heard the voice of the Lord, saying, Whom shall I send? And who will go for us? Then said I, Here am I; send me . . .” (RE Isaiah 2:2, emphasis added).

“And now it came to pass that when king Benjamin had made an end of speaking the words which had been delivered unto him by the angel of the Lord, that he cast his eyes round about on the multitude, and behold, *they had fallen to the earth, for the fear of the Lord had come upon them; and they had viewed themselves in their own carnal state, even less than the dust of the earth. And they all cried aloud with one voice, saying, O have mercy and apply the atoning blood of Christ, that we may receive forgiveness of our sins and our hearts may be purified! For we believe in Jesus Christ, the Son of God who created Heaven and earth and all things, who shall come down among the children of men. And it came to pass that after they had spoken these words, the spirit of the Lord came upon them and they were filled with joy, having received a remission of their sins and having peace of conscience* because of the exceeding faith which they had in Jesus Christ, who should come, according to the words which king Benjamin had spoken unto them . . .” (RE Mosiah 2:1-2, emphasis added).

“Now this was what Ammon desired, for *he knew that king Lamoni was under the power of God; he knew that the dark veil of unbelief being cast away from his mind, and the light which did light up his mind — which was the light of the glory of God, which was a marvelous light of his goodness — yea, this light had infused much joy into his soul, the cloud of darkness having been dispelled, and that the light of everlasting life was lit up in his soul.* Yea, he knew that this had overcome his natural frame, and he was carried away in God. Therefore, what the queen desired of him was his only desire. Therefore, he went in to see the king according as the queen had desired him; and he saw the king and he knew that he was not dead. And he said unto the queen, He is not dead, but he sleepeth in God, and on the morrow he shall rise again . . . And it came to pass that he arose according to the words of Ammon; and as he arose, he stretched forth his hand unto the woman, and said, *Blessed be the name of God, and blessed art thou; for as sure as thou livest, behold, I have seen my Redeemer; and he shall come forth and be born of a woman, and he shall redeem all mankind who believe on his name.* Now when he had said these words, his heart was swollen within him and he sunk again with joy . . .” (RE Alma 12:19-20, emphasis added).

joy. The response comes quickly and the effects are profound because of the contrast between the effects of sin verses the cleansing effect of forgiveness. Although dramatic, what occurs is the person experiences a return to innocence from which they had fallen. It is a joyful renewal. It returns the sinner to where they were prior to their withdrawal from God.

The Rising Comes After the Renewal

And now my beloved brethren, after ye have gotten into this straight and narrow path, I would ask if all is done. Behold, I say unto you, nay, ***for ye have not come thus far save it were by the word of Christ, with unshaken faith in him, relying wholly upon the merits of him who is mighty to save.*** Wherefore, ***ye must press forward with a steadfastness in Christ, having a perfect brightness of hope, and a love of God and of all men. Wherefore, if ye shall press forward, feasting upon the word of Christ, and endure to the end, behold, thus saith the Father: Ye shall have eternal life.***

And now behold, my beloved brethren, ***this is the way; and there is none other way nor name given under Heaven whereby man can be saved in the kingdom of God.*** And now behold, ***this is the doctrine of Christ, and the only and true doctrine of the Father, and of the Son, and of the holy ghost, which is one God without end.*** Amen. (RE 2 Nephi 13:4-5, emphasis added).

Our spiritual renewal or “rebirth” restores us to where we were prior to our sinful life. This is accomplished because, “*ye have not come thus far save it were by the word of Christ, and unshaken faith in him, relying wholly upon the merits of him who is mighty to save.*” In other words, the Savior did the work through His suffering to bring about our spiritual renewal. From this point forward we are free to choose, using our agency to determine where we go thereafter. It is our choice. Our opportunities are endless and eternal. Realizing those opportunities will be decided by the choices we make should we choose to “*press forward.*”

Nephi admonishes us to follow the course leading to eternal life. If we become steadfast and resolute as when we sought repentance, we build upon that resolve by pressing forward and “*feasting on the words of Christ*” while enduring to the end. Nephi’s words are well chosen and inspired. Words evoke mental images. When Nephi encourages us to “*feast*” it triggers a different mental image than words like “eating” or “dining.” Where eating and dining create images of formal settings, casual, relaxed consumption, feasting evokes images of gorging oneself, putting down the forks, knives, and napkins and tearing off a drumstick with your hand. There’s nothing

casual about a Viking dinner table. Jump in and don't stop until you can't consume another bite. Of course, with the words of Christ your appetite to consume His words only becomes more voracious.

Lehi, Nephi and Jacob all "*feasted*" on the words of Christ. Lehi expounded on the brass plates of Laban. He taught his sons about the prophecy of Joseph of Egypt from them. Nephi used the prophecies of Isaiah to teach his family and us about prophetic events the Lord forbade him to speak plainly about. Jacob taught us about the prophecy of Zenos and the Allegory of the Olive Tree revealing Israel's past and future. Zenos account is absent from the biblical texts, informing us content was removed and existing editions are incomplete.

Scriptures teach of past dealings with the Lord's chosen. They teach us future events and prophetic patterns, if studied, prepare us to face an uncertain future with confidence instead of fear. The scriptures inform us of divine process leading us from blindness to the "*perfect day*."

That which is of God is light, and he that receives light and continues in God receives more light, ***and that light grows brighter and brighter until the perfect day.*** (RE T&C 36:4, emphasis added).

Perhaps most importantly, the scriptures make us familiar with the Lord's voice.

These words are ***not of men, nor of man, but of me.*** Wherefore, you shall testify they are of me and not of man, for ***it is my voice which speaks them unto you, for they are given by my spirit unto you, and by my power you can read them one to another.*** And save it were by my power, you could not have them; wherefore, ***you can testify that you have heard my voice and know my words.*** (RE T&C 1, Joseph Smith History 15:35, emphasis added).

When men repent and call upon God in humility, with real intent, they begin to write under the influence of the spirit of inspiration.

. . . And then ***began these men to call upon the name of the Lord, and the Lord blessed them.*** And a book of remembrance was kept, in which was recorded in the language of Adam, for ***it was given unto as many as called upon God to write by the spirit of inspiration. And by them their children were taught to read and write, having a language which was pure and undefiled.*** Now this same ***Priesthood*** which was ***in the beginning shall be***

in the end of the world also (now this prophecy Adam spoke ***as he was moved upon by the holy ghost***) . . .” (RE Genesis 3:14, emphasis added).

After men and women repent and obtain forgiveness, experiencing a change of heart, pressing forward as they feast upon the words of Christ, they are endowed with the spirit of inspiration. They call upon God and He speaks to them through inspired thoughts, whisperings and all manner of revelation. This begins the process of ascending to the divine presence. Calling upon God, He informs and instructs us how to continue drawing nearer to him through “*deep and ponderous thoughts*”⁶ and familiarizing ourselves with His voice as He speaks scripture to our minds and hearts. This is how we begin hungering and thirsting after righteousness. Those who do so are filled with the holy ghost.⁷ Like Nephi, writing and pondering scripture becomes edifying and delightful. It feeds our souls and teaches us how to distinguish between the Lord’s voice and competing voices sent to deceive, misdirect and destroy.

Nephi’s Admonition

Nephi is the consummate disciple of Jesus Christ because he followed his own admonition. He feasted on the words of Christ because he desired to become a “*saved*” being and Christ is the prototype of the saved man. How did Jesus become saved, receiving eternal life?

Then Jesus affirmed to them, In the name of Father Ahman I tell you, ***The Son does nothing of himself, but I am following the path that my Father walks. Every thing the Father has done, I am likewise to do. My Father loves His Son, and has revealed to me every thing he has done, and I have a work to do for me to finish the path of my Father.*** You may not believe me, but before the end you will be in awe of what I am sent to do. ***The***

⁶ “A fanciful and flowery and heated imagination beware of; because ***the things of God are of deep import; and time, and experience, and careful and ponderous and solemn thoughts can only find them out***” (TPJS. p.137, emphasis added). Feasting on the words of Christ inherently draw us into deeper reflection on the things of God. “. . . And ***upon these I write the things of my soul and many of the scriptures which are engraven upon the plates of brass. For my soul delighteth in the scriptures, and my heart pondereth them and writeth them for the learning and the profit of my children.*** Behold, my soul delighteth in the things of the Lord, and ***my heart pondereth continually*** upon the things which I have seen and heard” (RE 2 Nephi 3:6, emphasis added).

⁷ “And again, more blessed are they who shall believe in your words ***because that ye shall testify that ye have seen me and that ye know that I am.*** Yea, blessed are they ***who shall believe in your words, and come down into the depths of humility, and be baptized, for they shall be visited with fire and with the holy ghost and shall receive a remission of their sins*** . . . And blessed are all they who do hunger and thirst after righteousness, ***for they shall be filled with the holy ghost***” (RE 3 Nephi 5:11 & 15, emphasis added).

Father has attained to the resurrection, and I am sent to do likewise” (RE T&C 171, Testimony of Saint John 5:3, emphasis added).

In the name of Father Ahman I testify to you, The time has arrived when even the spirits in Sheol [hell] will hear the voice of the Son of God. *Those who hearken to my testimony shall also progress upward on the pathway. The Father has the power of endless life within himself, and he has empowered the Son to attain this identical state through progression on his pathway. I hold authority to judge mankind because I am Son Ahman.* Do not doubt this, for the time is fast approaching when the dead will also be taught by my voice.⁸ The dead will rise from the grave: first the faithful in the resurrection of the just, and then the faithless in the resurrection of the unjust. Every soul will be judged by Son Ahman. *Whatever the Father tells me, I accept and teach, and my teachings are all just and true. I take nothing on myself apart from the Father’s instruction. I do not pursue my own agenda, but the Father’s agenda, for I act under his authority*” (RE T&C 171, Testimony of Saint John 5:5, emphasis added).

Jesus became the “*prototype of the saved man*” by doing exactly as the Father taught and showed to Him.⁹ The only way to become a “saved man” is to have a

⁸ “Search these commandments for they are true and faithful, and the prophecies and promises which are in them shall all be fulfilled. What I, the Lord, have spoken, I have spoken, and I excuse not myself. And though the heaven and the earth pass away, *my word shall not pass away, but shall all be fulfilled, whether by my own voice or by the voice of my servants it is the same.* For behold and lo, the Lord is God and the spirit bears record, and the record is true, and the truth abides for ever and ever. Amen” (RE T&C 54:7, emphasis added).

⁹ What situation must a person be in in order to be saved? Or what is the difference between a saved man and one who is not saved? We answer from what we have before seen of the Heavenly worlds: *They must be persons who can work by faith and who are able, by faith, to be ministering spirits to them who shall be heirs of salvation. And they must have faith to enable them to act in the presence of the Lord, otherwise they cannot be saved.* And what constitutes the real difference between a saved person and one not *saved is the difference in the degree of their faith — one’s faith has become perfect enough to lay hold upon eternal life and the other’s has not.* But to be a little more particular, let us ask: Where shall we find a prototype into *whose likeness we may be assimilated, in order that we may be made partakers of life and salvation?* Or in other words, where shall we find a saved being? *For if we can find a saved being, we may ascertain without much difficulty what all others must be in order to be saved — they must be like that individual or they cannot be saved.* We think that it will not be a matter of dispute that *two beings who are unlike each other cannot both be saved, for whatever constitutes the salvation of one will constitute the salvation of every creature which will be saved. And if we find one saved being in all existence, we may see what all others must be or else not be saved.* We ask, then: Where is the prototype? Or where is the saved being? We conclude as to the answer of this question there will be no dispute among those who believe the Bible that *it is Christ.* All will agree in this, that *he is the prototype or standard of salvation,* or in other words, that *he is a saved being.* And if we should continue our interrogation, and ask how it is that he is saved, the answer would be, *because he is a just and holy being. And if he were anything different from what he is he would not be saved, for his salvation depends on his being precisely what he is and nothing else.* For if it were possible for him to change in the least degree, so sure he would fail of salvation and lose all his dominion, power,

saved man show you the way. We do not have the privilege of living during the Savior's mortal ministry but the scriptures contain accounts of those who did. Those who came to know Him prior to His birth and after. Feasting on the Savior's words and the inspired words of those who were cleansed and conformed to image enables us to learn the words of Christ and be instructed of Him and by Him and the Father.¹⁰

As Jesus embodied the “**Word**” of the Father in every way, it is incumbent upon us to feast upon the words of Christ and emulate His example as He followed the example of the Father. That made Jesus “*the way, the truth, and the life.*”¹¹ If we desire to be saved beings, we must emulate the example set by the Son of God as He followed the example of our Heavenly Father. We may not attain unto perfection in this life, but we may do so in “***endless lives.***”¹²

Signs of Failed Attempts at Priesthood Empowerment

authority, and glory, which constitutes salvation. ***For salvation consists in the glory, authority, majesty, power, and dominion which Jehovah possesses, and in nothing else, and no being can possess it but himself or one like him.*** Thus says John in his first epistle, 3:2,3 [1 John 1:13]: Behold, now we are the sons of God, and it doth not appear what we shall be; but we know that when ***he shall appear we shall be like him***, for we shall see him as he is. And ***any man that has this hope in him purifies himself, even as he is pure.*** Why purify himself as he is pure? ***Because if they do not, they cannot be like him***” (RE T&C 110, Lectures on Faith Lecture 7:9, emphasis added).

¹⁰ “Judas (not Iscariot), asked, Lord, how is it you will manifest yourself to us, but not to the world? Jesus answered and said to him, ***If a man loves me, he will stand ready, watching for every communication I will send to him; and my Father will also love him, and we will come visit him, and continually abide by his side. Whoever claims to love me but does not stand ready, watching for every communication I will send, indeed does not love me. These teachings are not from me, but come from the Father who sent me***” (RE T&C 171, Testimony of Saint John 10:13-14, emphasis added).

¹¹ Do not allow your heart to be troubled. You are devoted to God and are also devoted to me. ***In the journey through my Father's realms are many stages with temporary abodes. If it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare an abode for your upward journey. And when I arise, I will prepare places for you, but I will be your companion again and visit each of you, so that where I travel, you may journey to also.*** And the path I follow upward you know, and the way of ascent you also know. Thomas said to him, Lord, we don't know where you are going; how can we know the way? You have not told us. ***Jesus said to him, I am the way, the record of the truth, and the means for Eternal lives, worlds without end: no man comes to the Throne of the Father without me. If you follow me, you will come to the Father's Throne through me and will thereafter be like him forever***” (RE T&C 171, Testimony of Saint John 10:9, emphasis added).

¹² “The Jews argued among themselves, demanding, How can this man give us his flesh to eat? Then Jesus said to them, In the name of Father Ahman I say unto you, Unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man, and drink his blood, you will never have endless life in you. Those who eat my flesh, and drink my blood, will obtain endless life. I will raise him up in the resurrection of the just at the last day. ***Just as the Father provided this life for me, I will provide it for you if you have faith in me. For my flesh will fill you with light, and my blood will quench you with truth. If you receive these, I will fill you with light and truth and we will be brothers, sons of God.*** My sacrifice is the bread I descended from Heaven to provide, not like the manna eaten by your deceased ancestors ***who rejected greater light and truth in their day. The light and truth I offer leads to endless lives, worlds without end***” (RE T&C 171, Testimony of Saint John 5:19, emphasis added).

A sign the Lord's people are following a perilous course in their attempts at restoring the higher priesthood is adopting the "*Chosen people*" philosophy. For centuries Jews considered themselves elite in the eyes of God because of His offer of covenant with them. Jewish converts to Christianity may have been susceptible to a similar conclusion. Christian religions considered themselves preferable to Jews because they had no hand in the death the Son of God. The Restoration that began with Joseph Smith had many who left mainstream Christianity for the renewed offer of covenant. Among those converts were those in the hierarchy who believed they were chosen by God and He would destroy those who remained in modern Christianity in deference to them.

In 2017 a small number of refugees from the Mormon Church entered a covenant with Christ. We must safeguard against the tendency of self-ascendency over people from other religions whom God loves equally. The presence of an offer of covenant from the Lord to any group of people does not elevate them in God's affections. If anything, it adds a burden of greater responsibility because the covenant is His attempt at saving all His children.¹³ It is not a "gold medal" award with the silver and bronze going to the less favored.

Self-Selection - Deep and Ponderous Thoughts

Though we are separated three levels from our Father in Heaven, ***it is us, and not He, who determines when we are willing finally to listen and hear Him.*** God is in all things. ***We choose to hear, or not to hear. Similarly, we elect to see or not to see. In that sense, we self-select whether we are among the "elect" by whether we are willing to receive what God is offering freely to us all.*** We have far more involvement than John Calvin ever imagined . . . Why were these twenty-five hundred witnesses of Christ chosen? ***The answer is they were where they should be (in Bountiful, near a surviving Temple) doing what they should be doing (preparing to celebrate the year end festivals). They chose themselves by doing what they should be doing, where they should be doing it. It is not the Lord who makes arbitrary choices. It is His children who elect to be and do what they are asked, and thereby qualify themselves.*** All are alike to God. ***But some abide the conditions and the rest do not. Anyone could abide the conditions. Only a few decide to do so. Those who do are self-selecting themselves to receive the things being offered to all of us.*** (Jr. Snuffer, Denver C.. The Second Comforter: Conversing With the Lord

¹³ "And the Father teaches him of the covenant which the Father has renewed and confirmed upon you, ***which is confirmed upon you for your sakes, and not for yours only, but for the sake of the whole world***" (RE T&C 82:18, emphasis added).

Through the Veil (pp. 164, 171), emphasis added). Mill Creek Press. Kindle Edition.

God gave us our agency and Satan seeks to steal it.¹⁴ Repenting and turning to face God, pressing forward while feasting upon the words of Christ leads us to reclaim the agency and light we lost. We surrender our agency when we succumb to the temptations and deceptions of the Devil. His hand is always detectable when it comes to matters of agency. He continues waging the war for our agency he initiated in pre-mortality. Satan and those who serve him always tip their hand when their actions threaten our agency. From the days of Adam, in the beginning of the world, the Father expressed hope His children would choose Him and the path of righteousness over the wiles of Satan.

In the original version of the Book of Moses in the Pearl of Great Price, the following passage shares a portion of a conversation between the Lord and Enoch:

And unto thy brethren have I said, and also given commandment, that ***they should love one another***, and ***that they should choose me, their Father***, but behold, they are without affection, and they hate their own blood; (LDS Pearl of Great Price, Moses 7:33, emphasis added).¹⁵

The Lord does not offer His covenant to people in deference to them over others. The covenant is offered because they love one another and choose Him over Satan and his temptations. Agency requires personal responsibility and consequences for our actions while the Devil offers false freedom and no consequences for misdeeds, both of which are a lie.

In every dispensation the Lord offers the opportunity of covenant, it is due to one man whom the Lord appoints as dispensation head who chooses to obey God and His commandments. Through faithful obedience to God's commandments and diligent service to others the Lord proves the man. When the man proves trustworthy and willing to submit to the God's will, the Lord commissions the servant to seek after and instruct others sharing greater light and knowledge.

And I now give unto you a commandment to beware concerning yourselves, to give diligent heed to the words of eternal life, for ***you shall live by every word that proceeds forth from the mouth of God***. For the word of the Lord is truth,

¹⁴ “ . . . And that wicked one comes and takes away light and truth, ***through disobedience, from the children of men, and because of the tradition of their fathers***. But I have commanded you to bring up your children in light and truth” RE T&C 93:11, emphasis added).

¹⁵ Joseph Smith and his scribes continued to edit the original text and in the second edit they changed the text to read, “they should serve me their God.” RE Genesis 4:17).

and whatever is truth is light, and whatever is light is spirit, even the spirit of Jesus Christ. ***And the spirit gives light to every man that comes into the world, and the spirit enlightens every man through the world that hearkens to the voice of the spirit, and everyone that hearkens to the voice of the spirit comes unto God, even the Father. And the Father teaches him of the covenant which the Father has renewed and confirmed upon you, which is confirmed upon you for your sakes, and not for yours only, but for the sake of the whole world.*** (RE T&C 82:18, emphasis added).

Like a spiritual homing device, every man, woman and child born to this earth has within them the spirit of Jesus Christ. It is described as intuitive and feeling. It is manifest at times with promptings of guilt and joy. Acting contrary to the word of God triggers feelings of guilt while obedience to God's will fills the heart with joy. We literally feel our way to God by heeding those feelings.¹⁶ When mankind is faithful to these promptings it leads to God the Father and the Father teaches them of His offer of covenant so the entire world may be redeemed.

¹⁶ "Then Paul stood in the midst of Mars' hill and said, You men of Athens, I perceive that in all things you are too superstitious; for as I passed by and beheld your devotions, I found an altar with this inscription: To the Unknown God. Whom therefore you ignorantly worship, him declare I unto you. God, who made the world and all things therein, seeing that he is Lord of heaven and earth, dwells not in temples made with hands, neither is worshipped with men's hands as though he needed anything, seeing he gives to all life, and breath, and all things; and has made of one blood all nations of men to dwell on all the face of the earth; and has determined the times before appointed and the bounds of their habitation, ***that they should seek the Lord if they are willing to find him . . .***" (RE Acts 10:14, emphasis added).

" . . . wherefore, the Lord commanded my father that he should depart into the wilderness. And the Jews also sought to take away his life; yea, and ye also have sought to take away his life. Wherefore, ye are murderers in your hearts and ye are like unto them. Ye are swift to do iniquity but slow to remember the Lord your God. Ye have seen an angel and he spake unto you. ***Yea, ye have heard his voice from time to time, and he hath spoken unto you in a still, small voice, but ye were past feeling, that ye could not feel his words.*** Wherefore, he has spoken unto you like unto the voice of thunder, which did cause the earth to shake as if it were to divide asunder . . ." (RE 1 Nephi 5:21. emphasis added).

"Wherefore, ***everything which inviteth and enticeth to do good, and to love God, and to serve him, is inspired of God.*** Wherefore, take heed, my beloved brethren, that ye do not judge that which is evil to be of God, or that which is good and of God to be of the Devil. For behold, my brethren, ***it is given unto you to judge, that ye may know good from evil. And the way to judge is as plain, that ye may know with a perfect knowledge as the daylight is from the dark night. For behold, the spirit of Christ is given to every man, that they may know good from evil.*** Wherefore, I shew unto you the way to judge. ***For everything which inviteth to do good and to persuade to believe in Christ is sent forth by the power and gift of Christ. Wherefore, ye may know with a perfect knowledge it is of God.*** But whatsoever thing persuadeth men to do evil, and believe not in Christ, and deny him, and serve not God, then ***ye may know with a perfect knowledge it is of the Devil,*** for after this manner doth the Devil work; for he persuadeth no man to do good, no not one, neither doth his angels, neither do they who subject themselves unto him. 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 child of Christ***" (RE Moroni 7:3, emphasis added).

In addition to instructing us in the means to judge between good and evil, the Lord revealed how to discern if we follow the spirit of Jesus Christ or the spirit of the evil one.

And the whole world lies in sin and groans under darkness and under the bondage of sin, ***and by this you may know they are under the bondage of sin, because they come not unto me, for whoever comes not unto me is under the bondage of sin.*** And whoever receives not my voice is not acquainted with my voice and is not of me. And by this you may know the righteous from the wicked, and that the whole world groans under sin and darkness, even now” (RE T&C 82:19, emphasis added).

God nor Satan may compel us to obey their words. We are enticed through their whisperings and when we diligently heed the voice of God He draws us nearer by giving greater light, understanding and direction. When we heed Satan or those who conspire with him, the spirit of Jesus Christ withdraws from our minds, confusion replaces understanding and we become susceptible to greater temptations and surrendering of our agency. We labor under the bondage of sin.

And now Alma began to expound these things unto him, saying, It is given unto ***many to know the mysteries of God;*** nevertheless, they are laid under a strict command that ***they shall not impart — only according to the portion of his word which he doth grant unto the children of men, according to the heed and diligence which they give unto him.*** And therefore, he that will harden his heart, ***the same receiveth the lesser portion of the word.*** And ***he that will not harden his heart, to him is given the greater portion of the word, until it is given unto him to know the mysteries of God, until they know them in full.*** And they that will harden their hearts, ***to them is given the lesser portion of the word until they know nothing concerning his mysteries; and then they are taken captive by the Devil and led by his will down to destruction. Now this is what is meant by the chains of hell.*** (RE Alma 9:3, emphasis added).

We have two opposing forces, one offers us opportunities of sharing vast stores of knowledge, greater freedom and joy in the process. In contrast, Satan misrepresents and counterfeits similar claims designed to steal agency and offer a false freedom free of consequences for our misdeeds. He represents his ability to provide these rewards and abandons those who serve him when they are taken captive, bound by our willingness to submit to his falsehoods. When God calls us into account for our choices, there will be great cause for rejoicing or an enormous burden of guilt we bear.

And again, verily I say unto you, the earth abides the law of a celestial kingdom, for ***it fills the measure of its creation and transgresses not the law.*** Wherefore, ***it shall be sanctified.*** Yea, notwithstanding it shall die, it shall be quickened again and shall abide the power by which it is quickened. And the righteous shall inherit it, for notwithstanding they die, they also shall rise again, ***a spiritual body.*** They who are of a celestial spirit shall receive the same body which was a natural body, even you shall receive your bodies. ***And your glory shall be that glory by which your bodies are quickened.*** You who are quickened by ***a portion*** of the Celestial glory shall then receive of the same, ***even a fullness.*** And they who are quickened by ***a portion*** of the terrestrial glory shall then receive of the same, ***even a fullness.*** And also, they who are quickened by ***a portion*** of the telestial glory shall then receive of the same, ***even a fullness.*** And they who remain, shall also be quickened. Nevertheless, ***they shall return again to their own place, to enjoy that which they are willing to receive, because they were not willing to enjoy that which they might have received.*** For what does it profit a man if a gift is bestowed upon him, and he receive not the gift? Behold, he rejoices not in that which is given unto him, neither rejoices in him who is the giver of the gift. (RE T&C 86:4, emphasis added).

Those who are obedient to a portion of the Celestial, Terrestrial or the Telestial glories [the glory of God is intelligence, see RE T&C 93:11] receive a fulness of those glories. Those who fail to receive a portion of any of these degrees of glory will be quickened but only receive what they were willing to receive. In other words, they received what they chose to receive. All of these degrees given according to the individuals choice or what they desired.

Adoption in Reverse

When the subject of adoption is discussed, it is generally thought of in the context of two parents assuming responsibility for providing and nurturing someone not conceived by them. Adoption from a Gospel perspective is reversed. A person is not adopted by parental selection. Rather, adoption in the economy of God honors the agency of the individual. Each individual determines their spiritual lineage by emulating those whom they serve.¹⁷ The choice may be conscious or random, but

¹⁷ "Gotta Serve Somebody," You may be an ambassador to England or France, You may like to gamble, you might like to dance, You may be the heavyweight champion of the world, You may be a socialite with a long string of pearls, But you're gonna have to serve somebody, yes indeed, You're gonna have to serve somebody, It may be the devil or it may be the Lord But you're gonna have to serve somebody. Might be a rock'n roll addict prancing on the stage, Might have money and drugs at your commands, women in a cage, You may be a business man or some high degree thief, They may

every choice reflects a decision between discipleship of the Lord or Satan. The Savior taught this principle to a group of Jewish leaders confronting Jesus over His notion they were in bondage, referring to the bondage of sin.

If the Son sets you free from sin, you are free indeed. I know that you are Abraham's descendants, but you conspire to kill me because my teachings have no place within you. ***I teach you what the Father has shown to me while I was in his presence, and you follow the teaching of your father.*** They answered and said to him, Abraham is our father. ***Jesus replied to them, If you were really Abraham's children, you would do the works of Abraham.*** But instead you plan to kill me. And why do you plan to kill me: ***I am a man that has only told you the truth that I have heard from the Most High God; Abraham would never do such a thing. You follow the example of your real father.*** Then they [Jewish leaders] said to him [Jesus], You are the product of extramarital fornication involving an unknown number of men, and we are not. We have one Father, even God. Jesus said to them, ***If God were your Father, you would love me, for I am sent by and represent God. I am not speaking my own words or pursuing my own agenda, but the Father's words and agenda.*** Why do you fail to comprehend my words? Your refusal to hearken and submit to my teachings ***makes you deaf indeed. Your father is the accuser, and you share the envy and rebellion of your father. He was a rebellious destroyer from the beginning, and fought against the truth, because he prefers lies. When he spreads a lie, he advances his agenda. He is the source of deceit in this fallen world.*** And because ***I am the Source of truth, you are unable to believe me.*** Which of

call you Doctor or they may call you Chief. But you're gonna have to serve somebody, yes indeed, You're gonna have to serve somebody. Well, it may be the devil or it may be the Lord, But you're going to have to serve somebody. You may be a state trooper, you might be an young turk, You may be the head of some big TV network, You may be rich or poor, you may be blind or lame, You may be living in another country under another name. But you're gonna have to serve somebody, yes, You're gonna have to serve somebody. Well, it may be the devil or it may be the Lord, But you're gonna have to serve somebody. You may be a construction worker working on a home, You may be living in a mansion or you might live in a dome, You might own guns and you might even own tanks, You might be somebody's landlord, you might even own banks. But you're gonna have to serve somebody, yes, You're gonna have to serve somebody. You may be a preacher with your spiritual pride, You may be a city councilman taking bribes on the side, You may be working in a barbershop, you may know how to cut hair, You may be somebody's mistress, may be somebody's heir. But you're gonna have to serve somebody, Well, it may be the devil or it may be the Lord, But you're gonna have to serve somebody. Might lie to wear cotton, might like to wear silk, Might like to drink whiskey, might like to drink milk. You might like to eat caviar, you might like to eat bread, You may be sleeping in a king-sized bed. But you're gonna have to serve somebody, yes indeed, You're gonna have to serve somebody. It may be the devil or it may be the Lord, But you're gonna have to serve somebody. You may call me Terry, you may call me Jimmy, You may call me Bobby, you may call me Zimmy, You may call me R.J., you may call me Ray, You may call me anything but no matter what you say, You're gonna have to serve somebody, yes indeed, You're gonna have to serve somebody. Well it may be the devil or it may be the Lord, But you're gonna have to serve somebody. (Music and Lyrics by Bob Dylan).

you can truthfully show that I have missed the mark? And ***if I teach the truth, why do you refuse to believe me? Everyone who follows the Most High God hearkens to God's words. Because you do not follow the Most High God, you cannot hear him.*** (RE T&C 171, The Testimony of Saint John 6:19, emphasis added).

Jesus distinguished the spiritual lineage from literal lineage by whom we follow and how we follow them. The Jews claimed Abraham as their father. Jesus countered by saying, “*If you were Abraham's children you would do the works of Abraham.*” After accusing Jesus of being the product of extramarital affairs the Jewish leaders claimed they descended from God, the Father. After refuting their claim, Jesus cut to the chase by declaring the Jewish leaders followed Satan, the accuser. Like him, they emulated his example as accuser, murderer and father of lies. The devil sought to pursue his own agenda as opposed to the Savior who taught only truth He received from the Father.

The Savior concludes his statement with an interesting point. “*Because you do not follow the Most High God, **you cannot hear him.***” People fail in understanding this point. They become cynical and agnostic because they cannot hear God's voice when others profess to hear Him. It is not because God is selectively choosing one person over another. It is because ***only*** those seeking to follow God enjoy the privilege of hearing His voice when He speaks to them. He speaks to us through the power of His Spirit and His Spirit will not always strive with a man but withdraws when we refuse to heed its promptings to choose right over wrong.

Beginning with Noah and perusing the landscape of scripture, the Lord made the following declarations to His prophets regarding how long His Spirit will strive with a man:

And the Lord said unto Noah, ***My spirit shall not always strive with man . . .*** (RE Genesis 5:7, emphasis added).

For because they yield unto the Devil and choose works of darkness rather than light, therefore they must go down to hell. ***For the spirit of the Lord will not always strive with man, and when the spirit ceaseth to strive with man, then cometh speedy destruction.*** And this grieveth my soul. (RE 2 Nephi 11:11, emphasis added).

Behold, my son, this thing ought not to be, for repentance is unto them that are under condemnation and under the curse of a broken law. And the firstfruits of repentance is baptism. And baptism cometh by faith unto the

fulfilling the commandments, and the fulfilling the commandments bringeth remission of sins, and the remission of sins bringeth meekness and lowliness of heart. And because of meekness and lowliness of heart cometh the visitation of the holy ghost, which Comforter filleth with hope and perfect love, which love endureth by diligence unto prayer until the end shall come, when all the saints shall dwell with God. Behold, my son, I will write unto you again if I go not out soon against the Lamanites. Behold, ***the pride of this nation, or the people of the Nephites, hath proved their destruction, except they should repent.*** Pray for them, my son, that repentance may come unto them. But behold, ***I fear lest the spirit hath ceased striving with them . . .*** (RE Moroni 8:5, emphasis added).

. . . And for the space of three hours did the Lord talk with the brother of Jared, and ***chastened him because he remembered not to call upon the name of the Lord.*** And the brother of Jared repented of the evil which he had done and did call upon the name of the Lord for his brethren who were with him. ***And the Lord said unto him, I will forgive thee and thy brethren of their sins, but thou shalt not sin anymore. For ye shall remember that my spirit will not always strive with man. Wherefore, if ye will sin until ye are fully ripe, ye shall be cut off from the presence of the Lord . . .*** (RE Ether 1:8, emphasis added).

. . . And now behold, my son, I fear lest the Lamanites shall destroy this people, for they do not repent. And Satan stirreth them up continually to anger one with another. Behold, I am laboring with them continually. And when I speak the word of God with sharpness, they tremble and anger against me. And when I use no sharpness, they harden their hearts against it. Wherefore, ***I fear lest the spirit of the Lord hath ceased striving with them. For so exceedingly do they anger, that it seemeth me that they have no fear of death. And they have lost their love one towards another, and they thirst after blood and revenge continually.*** And now, my beloved son, notwithstanding their hardness, let us labor diligently; for ***if we should cease to labor, we should be brought under condemnation. For we have a labor to perform whilst in this tabernacle of clay, that we may conquer the enemy of all righteousness and rest our souls in the kingdom of God.*** (RE Moroni 9:1, emphasis added).

. . . For I, the Lord, ***cannot look upon sin with the least degree of allowance;*** nevertheless, he that repents and does the commandments of the Lord shall be forgiven, ***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, says the Lord of Hosts. (RE T&C 54:5, emphasis added).

And if it so be that we are faithful to him, we shall obtain the land of promise. And ye shall know at some future period that the word of the Lord shall be fulfilled concerning the destruction of Jerusalem, for all things which the Lord hath spoken concerning the destruction of Jerusalem must be fulfilled. ***For behold, the spirit of the Lord ceaseth soon to strive with them; for behold, they have rejected the prophets, and Jeremiah have they cast into prison, and they have sought to take away the life of my father, insomuch that they have driven him out of the land. Now behold, I say unto you that if ye will return unto Jerusalem, ye shall also perish with them.*** And now if ye have choice, go up to the land and remember the words which I speak unto you, that ***if ye go, ye will also perish.*** For thus the spirit of the Lord constraineth me that I should speak. (RE 1 Nephi 2:3, emphasis added).

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.*** For I know that such will sorrow for the calamity of the house of Israel, yea, they will sorrow for the destruction of this people. They will sorrow that this people had not repented, that they might have been clasped in the arms of Jesus. Now these things are written unto the remnant of the house of Jacob, and they are written after this manner because it is known of God that ***wickedness will not bring them forth unto them.*** And ***they are to be hid up unto the Lord, that they may come forth in his own due time.*** And this is the commandment which I have received. And behold, they shall come forth according to the commandment of the Lord, when he shall see fit in his wisdom. And behold, they shall go unto the unbelieving of the Jews. And for this intent shall they go, that they may be persuaded that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of the living God; that the Father may bring about, through his Most Beloved, his great and eternal purpose ***in restoring the Jews, or all the house of Israel, to the land of their inheritance which the Lord their God hath given them, unto the fulfilling of his covenant;*** and also that the seed of this people may more fully believe his gospel which shall go forth unto them from the gentiles. For this people shall be scattered, and shall become a dark, a

filthy, and a loathsome people, beyond the description of that which ever hath been amongst us, yea, even that which hath been among the Lamanites, and this because of their unbelief and idolatry. For behold, *the spirit of the Lord hath already ceased to strive with their fathers, and they are without Christ and God in the world, and they are driven about as chaff before the wind. They were once a delightful people, and they had Christ for their shepherd. Yea, they were led even by God the Father. But now behold, they are led about by Satan, even as chaff is driven before the wind, or as a vessel is tossed about upon the waves without sail or anchor, or without anything wherewith to steer her; and even as she is, so are they.* And behold, *the Lord hath reserved their blessing, which they might have received in the land, for the gentiles who shall possess the land.* But behold, it shall come to pass that they shall be driven and scattered by the gentiles. And *after they have been driven and scattered by the gentiles, behold, then will the Lord remember the covenant which he made unto Abraham and unto all the house of Israel. And also the Lord will remember the prayers of the righteous which have been put up unto him for them.*

And then, *O ye gentiles, how can ye stand before the power of God except ye shall repent and turn from your evil ways? Know ye not that ye are in the hands of God? Know ye not that he hath all power, and at his great command the earth shall be rolled together as a scroll?* Therefore, *repent ye, and humble yourselves before him, lest he shall come out in justice against you, lest a remnant of the seed of Jacob shall go forth among you as a lion and tear you in pieces, and there is none to deliver.* (RE Mormon 2:6-7, emphasis added).

Those who've entered faithfully into the covenant this day *are going to notice some things. The spirit of God is withdrawing from the world. Men are increasingly more angry without good cause. The hearts of men are waxing cold. There is increasing anger and resentment of gentiles.* In political terms, *it's rejection of white privilege. Language of scriptures description of the events now underway calls it the end of the times of the gentiles. This process with the spirit withdrawing, will end on this continent, as two prior civilizations ended in fratricidal and genocidal warfare.* For the rest of the world, it will be as in the days of Noah in which,

as that light becomes eclipsed, the coldness of men's hearts is going to result in a constant scene of violence and bloodshed. The wicked will destroy the wicked. The covenant, *if it is kept*, will *prevent you from losing light and warmth of heart as the spirit now steadily recedes from the world.* The time will come when you will be astonished at the gulf between the light and truth *you will comprehend* and the darkness of mind of the world. Be charitable and patient and labor to reach others. They will judge you harshly, but nevertheless be kind to them. *They're going to grow to fear you, but that's only part of how darkness responds to light. Give them no reason to fear you.* The time will come for us to gather, but between now and then, be leaven. **Preserve the world.** Be salt. **Preserve the world**, even if it hates you. (*Closing Remarks*, Denver Snuffer Jr., p.1, emphasis added).

As evidenced by these scriptures, our daily walk involves a perpetual process of choices adding or removing the Spirit of God from our lives. Light and truth or degrees of darkness, which is varying degrees of the absence of light and truth. There is a point at which the Spirit of the Lord ceases striving with us. When that time arrives those with whom the Spirit ceased to strive with are slated for imminent destruction. It is a merciful act to stop them from further condemnation. We must make wise choices when it comes to the Lord and His servants. We must learn to judge righteously.

Wherefore, *everything which inviteth and enticeth to do good, and to love God, and to serve him, is inspired of God.* Wherefore, take heed, my beloved brethren, *that ye do not judge that which is evil to be of God, or that which is good and of God to be of the Devil.* For behold, my brethren, it is given unto you to judge, that ye may know good from evil. ***And the way to judge is as plain, that ye may know with a perfect knowledge as the daylight is from the dark night.*** For behold, *the spirit of Christ is given to every man, that they may know good from evil.* Wherefore, I shew unto you the way to judge. For *everything which inviteth to do good and to persuade to believe in Christ is sent forth by the power and gift of Christ. Wherefore, ye may know with a perfect knowledge it is of God.* But whatsoever thing persuadeth men to do evil, and believe not in Christ, and deny him, and serve not God, then *ye may know with a perfect knowledge it is of the Devil, for after this manner doth the Devil work; for he persuadeth no man to do good, no not one, neither doth his angels, neither do they who subject themselves unto him.* 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 child of Christ.*** (RE Moroni 7:3, emphasis added).

Some call it intuition, others common sense. The reality is all are given the light of Christ to guide them in their return to God and His presence. Note those who lay hold good on every good thing become children of Christ. We are led to repentance by feeling guilt and joy. Guilt when our choices cause withdrawal of the Spirit of Christ. Joy when we choose correctly and we increase in Spirit, light and truth.

Following repentance we witness our willingness to covenant with God by baptism. Included in the covenant is the promise we take upon ourselves His [Christ's] name and always remember the Savior. Taken literally, one struggles to imagine how we fulfill this commitment to God. How is it possible to ***“take upon them the name of thy Son, and always remember Him, that they might have His Spirit to be with them?”***¹⁸

The answer to this question is found in how we live our lives. Do we always remember Him in our dealings with our fellow man?¹⁹ Do we strive to do as the Savior would do given the same circumstances. Or do we rationalize and compromise His principles we espouse because of situational ethics? The Lectures on Faith make it clear for us to claim covenant blessings, we must live as those who honored divine covenants before us.

¹⁸ “. . . And the elder or priest did minister it; and they did kneel down with the church and pray to the Father in the name of Christ, saying, O God the Eternal Father, we ask thee in the name of thy Son Jesus Christ to bless and sanctify this bread to the souls of all those who partake of it, that they may eat in remembrance of the body of thy Son, ***and witness unto thee, O God the Eternal Father, that they are willing to take upon them the name of thy Son, and always remember him, and keep his commandments which he hath given them, that they may always have his spirit to be with them. Amen***” (RE Moroni 4, emphasis added).

“The manner of administering the wine. Behold, they took the cup and said, O God the Eternal Father, we ask thee in the name of thy Son Jesus Christ to bless and sanctify this wine to the souls of all those who drink of it, ***that they may do it in remembrance of the blood of thy Son, which was shed for them, that they may witness unto thee, O God the Eternal Father, that they do always remember him, that they may have his spirit to be with them. Amen***” (RE Moroni 5, emphasis added).

¹⁹ “And then shall the king say unto them on his right hand, Come, you blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom ***prepared for you from the foundation of the world.*** For I was hungry, and you gave me food. I was thirsty, and you gave me drink. I was a stranger, and you took me in; naked, and you clothed me. I was sick, and you visited me. I was in prison, and you came unto me. ***Then shall the righteous answer him, saying, Lord, when did we see you hungry, and fed you? Or thirsty, and gave you drink? When did we see you a stranger, and took you in? Or naked, and clothed you? Or when did we see you sick, or in prison, and came unto you?*** And the King shall answer and say unto them, Truly I say unto you, ***inasmuch as you have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, you have done it unto me***” (RE Matthew 11:22-24, emphasis added).

It is in vain for persons to fancy to themselves that *they are heirs with those, or can be heirs with them, who have offered their all in sacrifice, and by this means obtained faith in God and favor with him so as to obtain eternal life, unless they in like manner offer unto him the same sacrifice, and through that offering obtain the knowledge that they are accepted of him.* (Smith, Joseph. Lectures on Faith: Restoration Edition (pp. 65-66). Restoration Scriptures Foundation. Kindle Edition, emphasis added).

Our objective is eventual perfection through correct choices. While conceptually possible, because the only difference between a perfect person and one who is imperfect are their choices, reality remains when we use our agency to conform as best we can, Christ and His Atonement transforms us into His image to bring us over the finish line.²⁰

Institutional Righteousness vs. Discipleship

The sheer volume of scripture may seem intimidating and their perceived complexity overwhelming. First impressions may cause us to lose faith in our ability to familiarize ourselves with scripture and God's ability to enlighten and inspire us in our efforts. Our lack of self-confidence or faith makes us susceptible to seeking guidance and instruction from those who overcome their fears, pressing forward to understand what God has revealed.

²⁰ "Behold what manner of love the Father has bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God. Therefore, the world knows us not, because it knew him not. Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it does not yet appear what we shall be; but we know that when he shall appear, we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is. And every man that has this hope in him purifies himself, even as he is pure" (RE 1 John 1:13, emphasis added).

"And if a man be meek and lowly in heart, and confesses by the power of the holy ghost that Jesus is the Christ, he must needs have charity. For if he have not charity, he is nothing; wherefore, he must needs have charity. And charity suffereth long, and is kind, and envieth not, and is not puffed up, seeketh not her own, is not easily provoked, thinketh no evil, and rejoiceth not in iniquity, but rejoiceth in the truth, beareth all things, believeth all things, hopeth all things, endureth all things. Wherefore, my beloved brethren, if ye have not charity, ye are nothing, for charity never faileth. Wherefore, cleave unto charity, which is the greatest of all. For all things must fail, but ***charity is the pure love of Christ, and it endureth for ever. And whoso is found possessed of it at the last day, it shall be well with them.*** Wherefore, my beloved brethren, ***pray unto the Father with all the energy of heart that ye may be filled with this love, which he hath bestowed upon all who are true followers of his Son Jesus Christ; that ye may become the sons of God; that when he shall appear, we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is; that we may have this hope; that we may be purified, even as he is pure. Amen***" (RE Moroni 7:9, emphasis added).

The Lord warns against pursuing this course because it slows our progress in coming to know Him in the best of circumstances. In the worst of circumstances it makes us vulnerable to deception from those who teach ignorantly but innocently as well as those who intentionally deceive and manipulate others in pursuit of their agenda as opposed to the Lord's.

Lehi's dream of the Tree of Life metaphorically contrasts the problem of seeking guidance from those who have the appearance of purity.

And it came to pass that while my father tarried in the wilderness, he spake unto us, saying, Behold, I have dreamed a dream, or in other words, I have seen a vision. And behold, because of the thing which I have seen, I have reason to rejoice in the Lord because of Nephi and also of Sam; for I have reason to suppose that they and also many of their seed will be saved. But behold, Laman and Lemuel, I fear exceedingly because of you. For behold, methought I saw in my dream a dark and dreary wilderness. ***And it came to pass that I saw a man and he was dressed in a white robe; and he came and stood before me. And it came to pass that he spake unto me and bade me follow him. And it came to pass that as I followed him, I beheld myself that I was in a dark and dreary waste . . .*** (RE 1 Nephi 2:7, emphasis added).

Lehi followed the man who beckoned him for many hours until his despair with the surrounding darkness caused him to stop following the man. Lehi prayed to the Lord in search of mercy and the Lord responded.

“And after ***I had traveled for the space of many hours in darkness, I began to pray unto the Lord*** that he would have mercy on me according to the multitude of his tender mercies. And it came to pass, ***after I had prayed unto the Lord, I beheld a large and spacious field*** [the darkness was dispersed]. And it came to pass that ***I beheld a tree whose fruit was desirable to make one happy***. And it came to pass that I did go forth and partake of the fruit thereof, and beheld ***that it was most sweet, above all that I ever before tasted***. Yea, and ***I beheld that the fruit thereof was white to exceed all the whiteness that I had ever seen***. And as I partook of the fruit thereof, ***it filled my soul with exceeding great joy***; wherefore, ***I began to be desirous that my family should partake of it also***, for I knew that ***it was desirable above all other fruit***. And as I cast my eyes around about, that perhaps I might discover my family also, and I beheld a river of water and it ran along, and it was near the tree of which I was partaking the fruit. And I looked to behold from whence it came, and I saw the head thereof a little way

off. And at the head thereof I beheld your mother Sariah, and Sam, and Nephi, and they stood as if they knew not whither they should go. And it came to pass that ***I beckoned unto them; and I also did say unto them with a loud voice that they should come unto me and partake of the fruit, which was desirable above all other fruit.*** And it came to pass that ***they did come unto me and partake of the fruit also.*** And it came to pass that I was desirous that Laman and Lemuel should come and partake of the fruit also; wherefore, I cast mine eyes towards the head of the river that perhaps I might see them. And it came to pass that I saw them, but ***they would not come unto me and partake of the fruit.*** (RE 1 Nephi 2:7-9, emphasis added).

Lehi was not delivered from the dark and dreary waste until he stopped following the man in white and sought the Lord directly. Immediately after being removed from the dark and dreary waste, Lehi clearly saw the tree and partook of the fruit that was most desirable over all things. Immediately after partaking of the fruit, Lehi turned and beckoned his family to partake as well. All but Laman and Lemuel followed Lehi's beckoning and partook of the fruit.

These events raise several questions. First, how much sooner would Lehi been removed from the dark and dreary waste had he never heeded the beckoning hand of the man in white? Why was Lehi able to lead most of his family to the tree of Life when the man in white remained in the dark and dreary waste? The obvious answer is that Lehi was led by the Lord to the Tree of Life while the man in white had never partaken of the fruit and was trying to lead others to a destination he had never been. This is why the Lord warned His latter-day saints not to give heed to those who beckoned them.

“Wherefore, I, the Lord, knowing the calamity which should come upon the inhabitants of the earth, called upon my servant Joseph and spoke unto him from Heaven, and gave him commandment, and also gave commandments to others that they should proclaim these things unto the world. And all this that it might be fulfilled which was written by the prophets: ***the weak things of the world should come forth and break down the mighty and strong ones, that man should not counsel his fellow man, neither trust in the arm of flesh, but that every man might speak in the name of God, the Lord, even the Savior of the world, that faith also might increase in the earth, that my everlasting covenant might be established, that the fullness of my gospel might be proclaimed by the weak and the simple unto the ends of the world and before kings and rulers.*** Behold, I am God and have spoken it. (RE T&C 54:4, emphasis added).

We circumvent spiritual progression by looking to others for guidance and instruction, particularly if they look the part of purity but have not partaken of the fruit themselves. The words of the prophets foretold the Lord would break the mighty and strong ones with the weak so no one receives credit for the work the Lord does in the last days. He uses weak people who ignore those who beckon them in white robes. They receive the gift of faith in Christ because they are led from the mists of darkness by Him. Once they partake of the fruit or ascend to know Christ and His doctrine personally, others heed their beckoning's over those with false virtue dressed in white.

Institutional righteousness consists of men dressed in white beckoning others to follow them. They substitute structure for discipleship, leading those who follow in a wandering path that is dark and dreary. They occasionally stumble into spiritual experiences because God is merciful and they believe their experience is a witness of the institutions divinity as opposed to the validity of God rewarding the faithful. In reality, credit should be given to the Lord and the individual who's faith has been rewarded. Institutional commandments consist of the doctrines of men²¹ and their followers are never lifted from the darkness because the precepts they follow rarely lead to true discipleship because their instruction contains truth mingled with falsehoods.

The men in white co-opt ordinances and revelations from those who ascended to the Tree of Life and partaken of the fruit. With unsubstantiated confidence in their institutional authority they alter and discard teachings they don't understand or that conflict with an established narrative. Current leadership is venerated over past leaders. Contrary to the Lord's declaration regarding leadership that:

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 . . . (RE T&C 139:6, emphasis added).

The body of the institution lives under constant threat non-compliance with their precepts leads to forfeiting eternal life and their family connections. The Lord does not turn a blind eye to those who are misled by men in white. The leaders believe in all sincerity they are the Lord's anointed because they ascended the leadership ladder and are

²¹ "My object in going to inquire of the Lord was to know which of all the sects was right, that I might know which to join. No sooner therefore did I get possession of myself, so as to be able to speak, than I asked the personages who stood above me in the light which of all the sects was right (for at this time it had never entered into my heart that all were wrong) and which I should join. I was answered that I must join none of them, for they were all wrong, and the personage who addressed me said that all their creeds were an abomination in his sight, that those professors were all corrupt, that, They draw near to me with their lips, but their hearts are far from me; they teach for doctrines the commandments of men, having a form of godliness, but they deny the power thereof. He again forbade me to join with any of them, and many other things did he say unto me which I cannot write at this time.

deemed sufficiently righteous to be anointed because of their longevity and compliance to the institutional system. The institution automatically grants their status of being called and elected in exchange for institutional control of all their personal writings so their history can be managed and transformed to support the established narrative.

In the end, vast troves of wealth in control of the institutional class, hoarded at the expense of the poor and needy turns to witness against them. When the Lord calls them to account and they surrender the institutional wealth to the Lord, believing themselves to be the servants who received five talents from their Master and returned to Him a trillion talents.²² That is when their wealth transforms from a testament to their faithfulness to a witness of their wickedness. With one pointed question from the Savior, the green ink on their hands from counting currency turns blood red from those who sacrificed their time, talents and everything with which the Lord has blessed them as well as the poor, homeless and needy who needlessly suffered when the institution had sufficient means to ease their pain. The question will be “Why?” Why was this wealth withheld from the poor. Why was this wealth exacted from the poor? “Inasmuch as ye have done it unto the *least* of these my brethren, you have done it unto *Me*.”²³ Why the endless construction of temples to redeem the dead when there is greater need among those suffering among the living. Truly this program ends up being a “covenant of death and hell” the Lord disannuls.²⁴

²² “Now I will liken these things unto a parable. For it is like a man traveling into a far country, who called his own servants and delivered unto them his goods. And unto one he gave five talents, to another two, and to another one — to every man according to his personal ability — and immediately went on his journey. Then he that had received the five talents went and traded with the same, and gained five other talents. And likewise he who received two talents, he also gained two other. But he that had received one went and dug in the earth and hid his lord’s money. After a long time, the lord of those servants came and reckoned with them. And so he that had received the five talents came and brought five other talents, saying, Lord, you delivered unto me five talents; behold, I have gained besides them five talents more. His lord said unto him, Well done, good and faithful servant. You have been faithful over a few things, I will make you ruler over many things. Enter into the joy of your lord” (RE Matthew 11:16-17, emphasis added).

²³ “Then shall they also answer him, saying, Lord, when did we see you hungry, or thirsty, or a stranger, or naked, or sick, or in prison, *and did not minister unto you?* Then shall he answer them, saying, Truly I say unto you, *inasmuch as you did it not to one of the least of these my brethren, you did it not unto me. And these shall go away into Everlasting punishment, but the righteous unto life eternal*” (RE Matthew 11:25, emphasis added).

²⁴ “Wherefore, hear the word of the Lord, *you scornful men that rule this people* which is in Jerusalem. Because you have said, We have made a covenant with death, and with hell are we at agreement; when the overflowing scourge shall pass through, it shall not come unto us, for *we have made lies our refuge and under falsehood have we hidden ourselves* — therefore, thus says the Lord God: Behold, I lay in Zion for a foundation a stone, a tried stone, a precious cornerstone, a sure foundation. *He that believes shall not make haste.* Judgment also will I lay to the line, and righteousness to the plummet; and *the hail shall sweep away the refuge of lies, and the waters shall overflow the hiding place. And your covenant with death shall be disannulled, and your agreement with hell shall not stand; when the overflowing scourge shall pass through, then you shall be trodden down by it. From the time that it goes forth, it shall take you . . .*” (RE Isaiah 8:4, emphasis added).

In the end, those who rely on institutional righteousness are disappointed when that which was promised will not be realized and those who made the promises without God's authorization suffer multiple "wo's" for their presumption of power and authority. Their pledge of allegiance, they realize, was not to the Lord but to the preservation of the institution. The institution the Lord had within His power to preserve all along without their help.²⁵

Like Lehi, we must learn we cannot "know the Lord" vicariously through others. Our salvation is incumbent upon us personally and we cannot be absolved of that responsibility by following others who beckon us to follow them. Devotion must be to Christ and no other.

Discipleship

The word "disciple" is derived from discipline. ***A disciple follows the Master.*** (*A Glossary of Gospel Terms*, Disciple, p.623, emphasis added).

A disciple is a person who follows the example of their mentor. There are differing opinions on how discipleship is accomplished. Those interpretations may or may not measure the degree to which one practices discipleship as well as their devotion to the Master.

Misinterpretations and misunderstandings about how God's grace applies in our daily lives has the tendency to influence a person's more casual approach to discipleship in a manner never intended by the Lord.

In Lehi's dream of the Tree of Life, Lehi beheld the rod of iron [word of God] leading to the Tree with the most desirable fruit. The rod ran parallel to the straight and narrow path leading to the Tree. As multitudes pressed forward to the path there arose mists of darkness, like a thick fog, making it impossible to navigate the strait path by sight alone. Dark mists are lies, deceptions and temptations of Satan.

Pressing through the dark mists is impossible without grasping the rod of iron and relying on the rod to lead us through to the Tree.

²⁵ "Truly I say unto you, it is ***not everyone that says unto me, Lord, Lord, that shall enter into the kingdom of Heaven, but he that does the will of my Father who is in Heaven.*** For the day soon comes that men shall come before me to judgment, to be judged according to their works. And many will say to me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in your name, and in your name have cast out devils, and in your name done many wonderful works? ***And then will I say unto them, You never knew me. Depart from me, you that work iniquity.***" (RE Matthew 3:47, emphasis added).

And *I beheld a rod of iron, and it extended along the bank of the river and led to the tree by which I stood. And I also beheld a straight and narrow path which came along by the rod of iron, even to the tree by which I stood*; and it also led by the head of the fountain unto a large and spacious field, *as if it had been a world*. And I saw numberless concourses of people, many of whom were pressing forward that *they might obtain the path which led unto the tree by which I stood*. And it came to pass that they did come forth and commenced in the path which led to the tree. And it came to pass that *there arose a mist of darkness, yea, even an exceeding great mist of darkness, insomuch that they who had commenced in the path did lose their way, that they wandered off and were lost*. And it came to pass that I beheld *others pressing forward, and they came forth and caught hold of the end of the rod of iron; and they did press forward through the mists of darkness, clinging to the rod of iron, even until they did come forth and partook of the fruit of the tree*. And after they had partaken of the fruit of the tree, they did cast their eyes about *as if they were ashamed*. (RE 1 Nephi 2:10, emphasis added).

It is instructive to consider how events described in Lehi's dream played out in his life. Lehi found God in Jerusalem [partaking of the fruit].²⁶ After Lehi experienced these visions he wrote them down with the prophecies and teachings he taught his

²⁶ "Wherefore, it came to pass that my father Lehi, as he went forth, prayed unto the Lord, yea, even with all his heart in behalf of his people. And it came to pass *as he prayed unto the Lord, there came a pillar of fire and dwelt upon a rock before him, and he saw and heard much*. And *because of the things which he saw and heard, he did quake and tremble exceedingly*. And it came to pass that he returned to his own house at Jerusalem. And he cast himself upon his bed, *being overcome with the spirit and the things which he had seen. And being thus overcome with the spirit, he was carried away in a vision, even that he saw the Heavens open and he thought he saw God sitting upon his throne, surrounded with numberless concourses of angels in the attitude of singing and praising their God*. And it came to pass that *he saw one descending out of the midst of Heaven, and he beheld that his luster was above that of the sun at noonday. And he also saw twelve others following him, and their brightness did exceed that of the stars in the firmament*. And they came down and went forth upon the face of the earth. *And the first came and stood before my father and gave unto him a book and bade him that he should read* [record of heaven, word of God]. And it came to pass that *as he read he was filled with the spirit of the Lord* [that is what happens when we immerse ourselves in the word of God]. And he read, saying, Woe, woe [condition of deep suffering, three woe's suggests ascending levels of intensity] unto Jerusalem, for *I have seen thine* [Jerusalem's] *abominations*. Yea, and many things did my father read concerning Jerusalem: *that it should be destroyed and the inhabitants thereof; many should perish by the sword and many should be carried away captive into Babylon*. And it came to pass that *when my father had read and saw many great and marvelous things* [light and truth], he did exclaim many things unto the Lord, such as, Great and marvelous are thy works, O Lord God Almighty! Thy throne is high in the Heavens, *and thy power, and goodness, and mercy are over all the inhabitants of the earth*; and because *thou art merciful, thou wilt not suffer those who come unto thee that they shall perish*! And after this manner was the language of my father *in the praising of his God, for his soul did rejoice and his whole heart was filled because of the things which he had seen, yea, which the Lord had shewn unto him*" (RE 1 Nephi 1:10, emphasis added).

children [beckoning to them].²⁷ The pattern for those whom God reveals Himself too is, they write by the inspiration of God to testify and instruct their children.²⁸ Nephi followed his father's example in writing revelations, prophecies and instructions the Lord gave him for his instruction and the instruction of his children.²⁹

Adam, down through the Patriarch's and dispensation heads, came to know God and received revelations and prophecies from Him. They wrote down the content and it became scripture for instructing their children in language and doctrine. Those who followed this pattern formed a "**Priesthood**" that perpetuated through many generations.

Unfortunately, due to the fall of Adam, the language became defiled leading to less revelation, light and truth being given mankind, particularly from father's to their children. Father's represent knowledge in the economy of God. Tempered by their wives wisdom, their posterity were instructed by harmonizing both gifts for the instruction of their posterity.³⁰ This is why the Lord gave to Joseph Smith a temple

²⁷ "And now I, Nephi, *do not make a full account of the things which my father had written*, for *he hath written many things which he saw in visions and in dreams. And he also hath written many things which he prophesied and spake unto his children*, of which I shall not make a full account. But *I shall make an account of my proceedings in my days*. Behold, I make *an abridgment* of the record of my father upon plates which I have made with mine own hands. Wherefore, after that I have abridged the record of my father, then will I make an account of mine own life" (RE 1 Nephi 1:4, emphasis added).

²⁸ "And *Adam listened unto the voice of God and called upon his sons to repent . . . And then began these men to call upon the name of the Lord, and the Lord blessed them. And a book of remembrance was kept*, in which was recorded in the language of Adam, for *it was given unto as many as called upon God to write by the spirit of inspiration. And by them their children were taught to read and write, having a language which was pure and undefiled*. Now this *same Priesthood* which was *in the beginning* [pre-mortality] shall be *in the end of the world also* [meaning those who establish Zion in the last days follow the same pattern to achieve the same result] (now this prophecy Adam spoke as he was moved upon by the holy ghost) . . ." (RE Genesis 3:14, emphasis added). It is incumbent upon those who establish Zion in the last days to restore this pattern and establish a language, like Adam's that is pure and undefiled. It comes from Heaven and begins when the Spirit of Elijah is sent by God to restore connections and conversations between Earthly and Heavenly beings. We learn how to "speak with the tongue of Angels" when we receive the holy ghost. [see RE 2 Nephi 14:1]

²⁹ ". . . For I had spake many things unto them, and also my father before his death, many of *which sayings are written upon mine other plates*, for a more history part are written upon mine other plates. And *upon these I write the things of my soul and many of the scriptures which are engraven upon the plates of brass. For my soul delighteth in the scriptures, and my heart pondereth them and writeth them for the learning and the profit of my children. Behold, my soul delighteth in the things of the Lord, and my heart pondereth continually upon the things which I have seen and heard*" (RE 2 Nephi 3:6, emphasis added).

³⁰ "And in that day the holy ghost fell upon Adam, which bore record of the Father and the Son, saying, I am the Only Begotten of the Father from the beginning, henceforth and for ever, that as you have fallen, you may be redeemed — and all mankind, even as many as choose. And in that day, *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

endowment taking us back to the days of Adam and Eve and before. Joseph Smith knew this Priesthood would be returned in the last days. It is essential for the kingdom of God on Earth's preparation for joining the kingdom of God from Heaven.

Laying hold of the rod of iron or the word of God is not solely a matter of fulfilling an obligation and commandment of God. There are more practical reasons we overlook in our simplification of the Gospel of Jesus Christ. As corrupted as our scriptures have become, they guide us to the purest words and language ever spoken. The teachings of Jesus Christ and His true disciples. That is why Nephi delighted in writing and pondering scripture. When we feast as Nephi on the Lord's word, the Spirit of God joins with us and sanctifies us while enlightening our understanding.

Surrendering to our ignorance of scripture and relying on others to lead us keeps us from finding the Lord and becoming His true disciples. We remain mired in mists of darkness relying solely upon institutional righteousness. Staying on the path that is straight and narrow is only accomplished when we take hold of the Lord and His word while navigating through Satan's dark mists. Seeing may be believing, but when you pass through dark fog, your vision and judgment are impaired. If you have the words of Christ and His true disciples your language becomes sanctified and you receive the means for partaking of the most precious fruit and beckoning your posterity to it as well.

Give Diligent Heed to the Words of Eternal Life

Christ was the literal embodiment of the Father's teachings. Only by doing the will of the Father in all things could Jesus present Himself as the example leading to the throne of the Father in the Heavens.

Jesus said bluntly to them, I am the bread that gives life; ***he that follows the path with me will never hunger for light; and any who believe on me shall never thirst for truth.*** Unfortunately, as I have already told you, even though you have seen me, you do not believe me. But my Father has provided ***some who will heed my words, and those who follow me I will safely***

transgression my eyes are opened, and in this life I shall have joy, and again, in my flesh I shall see God. ***And Eve his wife heard all these things and was glad, saying, Were it not for our transgression, we should never had seed, and should never had known good and evil, and the joy of our redemption, and the eternal life which God gives unto all the obedient. And Adam and Eve blessed the name of God, and they made all things known unto their sons and their daughters . . .*** And thus the gospel began to be preached from the beginning, being declared by holy angels sent forth from the presence of God, and by his own voice, and by the gift of the holy ghost. And thus all things were confirmed unto Adam by a holy ordinance, and the gospel preached, and a decree sent forth that it should be in the world until the end thereof. And thus it was. Amen" (RE Genesis 3:4 & 13, emphasis added).

keep. I am descended from above *as a Messenger sent to follow Father Ahman's plan.* Father's plan is that *by completing my ascent I will have the power to rescue creation, losing nothing.* Moreover, *those who are here on this journey with me will be added upon for evermore if they have faith in me. They will rise up to likewise generate endless lives, worlds without end.* (RE T&C 171, 'Testimony of Saint John 5:16, emphasis added).

The promise of Eternal *lives* are enjoyed by those who have faith in Christ. Their lives become a constant sacrament of light and truth. Their objective is to be transformed into the image of the Father and Son, sharing their attributes and preparing to save their own lives in the process of saving others.

Traditional teachings about the grace of Christ tend to cause misunderstanding of our obligations to God. It is true Christ suffered for us and He saved the creation for all mankind. That becomes the net below the trapeze of life. But we have our agency enabling choices leading to endless opportunity if we awaken from the dark mists and seriously follow the example of Jesus and His disciples.

You would not approach the Bar Exam or other professional examinations without preparation. You would take classes, study materials instructing you on the requirements. You would seek internships to gain experience. You do that because your future depends on it.

Our sojourn in this life is the grandest and greatest opportunity we will experience. The scriptures are the text book, Christ and His disciples are our instructors and family life and parenting is our internship for Godhood. We can sit back and take our lives as it randomly flows to us. We will rise from the dead, reconnect with our loved ones and lament over lost opportunities as we *“return again to their own place, to enjoy that which they are willing to receive, because they were not willing to enjoy that which they might have received.”*³¹

The grace of Christ allows you to survive this life. Our agency determines how far we go beyond survival. Father Ahman's plan provides endless opportunities for receiving greater light, truth and progressing through endless cycles until we learn all that is required. The sooner God trusts us as much as we trust Him, is when we enter officers candidate school in a manner of speaking. We become transformed into His image and by doing so, arrive in a position of saying in differing degrees, *“I am the way*

³¹ See RE T&C 86:4

the truth and life” because we too are not sent to do our will but the will of Him that sent us and died for us.

Neglecting opportunities God provides leads to denying ourselves advancement to godliness and returning to His presence. Not by our works, but by our knowledge.

When you shall make his soul an offering for sin, he shall see his seed; he shall prolong his days, and the pleasure of the Lord shall prosper in his hand. He shall see of the travail of his soul and shall be satisfied; ***by his knowledge shall my righteous Servant justify many, for he shall bear their iniquities.*** Therefore will I divide him a portion with the great, and he shall divide the spoil with the strong — because he has poured out his soul unto death, and he was numbered with the transgressors, and he bore the sin of many, and made intercession for the transgressors. (RE Isaiah 19:1, emphasis added)

Christ advanced by following what He learned from the Father and then completing His path to Fatherhood by doing exactly what His Father did. For us to ascend on this path, we, like Christ, must do as He did. We must learn to become “*sentinels*,” always in search of truth from the Lord.

Christ’s words *If you love me, keep my commandments* appear several times in the Gospel of John. ***The words could be better translated to mean: “If you love me, act as a sentinel (or guard), ready to receive further instructions from me.”*** The current King James translation was based on the recognition that the canon of scripture had closed and revelation had ended. Therefore, they took those things into account as they rendered their translation.¹ ***But recent revelation indicates that the canon of scripture is not closed; God is sending further instructions, and man must stand ready to receive it.*** (*A Glossary of Gospel Terms, If You Love Me*, p.687, emphasis added).

Acting as a sentinel suggests a perpetual effort to look for the word of God in our daily walk. We cannot take wealth, power or prestige with us into the realms that follow. That is why Christ admonishes all to give heed to the words of eternal life:

And I now give unto you a commandment to beware concerning yourselves, ***to give diligent heed to the words of eternal life, for you shall live by every word that proceeds forth from the mouth of God.*** For ***the word of the Lord is truth, and whatever is truth is light, and whatever is light is spirit, even the spirit of Jesus Christ.*** And ***the spirit gives light to every man that comes into the world, and the spirit enlightens every man through the***

world that hearkens to the voice of the spirit, and everyone that hearkens to the voice of the spirit comes unto God, even the Father. And the Father teaches him of the covenant which the Father has renewed and confirmed upon you, which is confirmed upon you for your sakes, and not for yours only, but *for the sake of the whole world*.

And the whole world lies in sin and groans under darkness and under the bondage of sin, and *by this you may know they are under the bondage of sin, because they come not unto me, for whoever comes not unto me is under the bondage of sin*. And whoever receives not my voice *is not acquainted with my voice and is not of me*. And *by this you may know the righteous from the wicked*, and that the whole world groans under sin and darkness, even now” (T&C 82:18, emphasis added).

This is a complex verse worth unpacking. The Lord begins with the command to give “*diligent heed*” to the words of eternal life. Eternal is another name for God, so the words of Eternal life are the words God speaks.³² We are commanded to live by every word God speaks, without exception. The Savior revealed to Joseph Smith a series of synonymous terms representing different facets of the same thing. The Lord speaks only truth. His words are to be trusted and applied. He cannot lie.

The truth He speaks is also light. If we give diligent heed to the words of eternal life, we increase in light. Our minds become enlightened. Like a room with a dimmer switch, the higher the slide is raised, the greater the intensity is the light and the greater clarity of our vision. The clearer our vision, the greater our understanding. We become gatherers of light, we see more clearly and more ably discern between falsehoods and truth. God sent us to Earth with the intent of expanding our light.

Verily I say unto you, he that is ordained of me and sent forth *to preach the word of truth by the Comforter, in the spirit of truth*, does he preach it by the spirit of truth or some other way? And *if by some other way, it is not of God*. And again, *he that receives the word of truth, does he receive it by the spirit of truth* or some other way? *If it be some other way, it is not of God*. Therefore, why is it that you cannot understand and know that *he that receives the word by the spirit of truth, receives it as it is preached by the spirit of truth?* Wherefore, *he that preaches and he that receives, understand one another, and both are edified and rejoice together. And that which does not edify is not of God, and is darkness. That which is of God is light, and he that receives light and continues in God receives*

³² “. . . Behold, I am God, Man of Holiness is my name, Man of Counsel is my name, and *Endless and Eternal is my name* also. . . ” (RE Genesis 4:17, emphasis added).

more light, and that light grows brighter and brighter until the perfect day (RE T&C 36:4, emphasis added).

This outlines the process in which God intends for light to be gathered. It is mutually beneficial because when light is shared by the “*spirit of truth*,” which is also light, both understand one another, both are edified from the exchange and rejoice together. If you are a gatherer of light, a “*sentinel*” in constant search of light you will one day arrive at the “*perfect day*.” And what is the perfect day? It is when you attain perfect understanding, you are transformed through the Atonement of Christ into His perfect image and attributes, and you see Him as He is and you are like Him.

Whatever is light, is also spirit, or the Spirit of Truth. The Spirit of Truth is classified into three categories. The three categories are explained in the Glossary of Gospel terms:

Capitalization and context of how this term is used result in three different meanings :

spirit of truth — the light given to everyone; a description of ***something sought after to help guide or answer,***

Spirit of truth — an event in which ***the holy ghost ministers*** (as in an ordinance), or ***when Christ takes ownership over something as His;*** and

Spirit of Truth — a proper noun; a formal name for Christ, in the context of scripture” (*A Glossary of Gospel Terms*, Spirit of Truth, p.810, emphasis added).

We begin with the spirit of truth being given to everyone. We gather additional light and truth, we advance to the second category described as an event, where the holy ghost ministers to us and that administration becomes the real ordinance of which traditional ordinances only point too. This is the realization or actual event where a person is sanctified, increased in light and truth and adopted by Christ.

The crossroad this paper refers to points to this level of advancement. We must have sufficient light and truth to advance spiritually so Zion may be established and Christ dwell among us.³³ This will be the “*perfect day*.” Herein is the offer of great

³³ “But if they [gentiles] 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.*** And they [gentiles] shall assist my people, the remnant of Jacob, and also as many of the house of Israel as shall come, that ***they may build a city which shall be called the New Jerusalem.*** And then shall they [gentiles] assist my people, that they may be gathered in, who are

blessings, but also great peril if we don't rise to the occasion and become people who qualify to rise to this level. There is no effort that assures the success of the New Jerusalem and Zion more than our embrace of truth like sentinels and "*feasting upon the words of Christ*" so we recognize His voice whenever He speaks. We must hear it and give diligent heed as well.

scattered upon all the face of the land, in unto the New Jerusalem. And then shall *the Powers of Heaven* [Angels, Patriarchal Fathers, Spirit of truth, Spirit of Elijah] *come down among them* [preparatory], and *I also will be in the midst* [Spirit of Truth, Spirit of Messiah]. And *then shall the work of the Father commence at that day*, even *when this gospel shall be preached among the remnant of this people*. Verily I say unto you, *at that day shall the work of the Father commence among all the dispersed of my people, yea, even the tribes which have been lost, which the Father hath led away out of Jerusalem. Yea, the work shall commence* among all the dispersed of my people, with *the Father to prepare the way whereby they may come unto me, that they may call on the Father in my name*. Yea, and then shall the work commence *with the Father among all nations*, in *preparing the way* [Aaronic, preparatory, Spirit of Elias, spirit of truth] whereby *his people may be gathered home to the land of their inheritance*. And they shall go out from all nations, and they shall not go out in haste nor go by flight, *for I will go before them, saith the Father, and I will be their rearward*" (RE 3 Nephi 10:1, emphasis added).